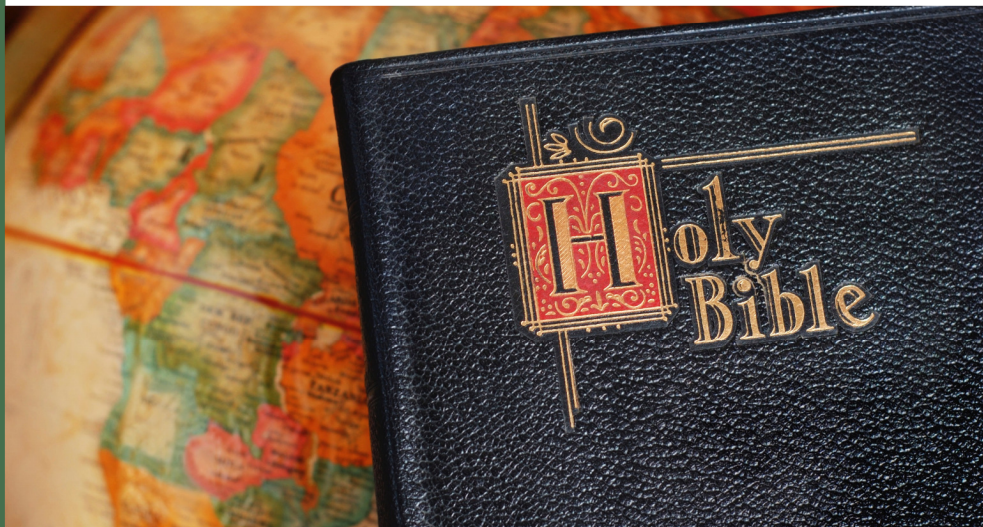


July 2016

Volume 2 Issue 1

Kērussōmen

A Journal of Theology for the
African Church



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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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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.

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It is a delight for me to write this introduction to Volume 2 of *Kērussōmen*, a theological journal published by Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary.

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.

The journal’s title, *Kērussōmen*, is a Greek name which means, “Let us preach!” We place this 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

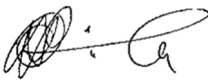
To the Reader:

As promised in the first edition of *Kērussōmen*, we are pleased to present our readers with the first issue of Volume 2. As *Kērussōmen* is published semiannually, this edition is designated Volume 2, Issue 1 and is abbreviated 2/1 (2016). The next edition, 2/2 (2016), is scheduled for publication in December.

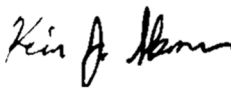
The purpose of *Kērussōmen* is to aid the work of Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary in fulfilling its purpose to train the next generation of servant leaders in Africa for Great Commission living. This emphasis on the Great Commission reflects our conviction that making disciples of all nations is the task of *every* Christian in connection with his or her local church. In other words, the Great Commission is not simply a task which pastors are hired to perform on behalf of the church.

To equip our readers for this task—both pastors and church members—we have launched a new regular editorial entitled “To Every Nation.” In each new issue of *Kērussōmen*, “To Every Nation” will feature a new African country with details on the historical development of the Christian faith there, the present condition of the Christianity, and ongoing challenges to the spread of the gospel. Our hope is that, through exposure to the global progress of the church, our readers’ visions will be expanded, gospel partnerships will be formed, and godly Christians will go to the far-flung places of the earth to make new disciples of Christ who will worship God in spirit and in truth!

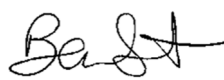
The editors:



Chopo C. Mwanza



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TO EVERY NATION

An Editorial on the Expansion of God's Church in Madagascar¹

by Tim Cantrell

with Faly Ravoahangy & Haja Ralambomanana

When most people today hear the word “Madagascar,” they think of the movie, not the country. They might even think of King Julian, the lemur, not King Jesus and what he is doing on a real island, the fourth largest island in the world, with over 23 million souls.



Over the past five years, our church has had the great privilege of an annual mission trip there. Through having Malagasy members and interns in our church for many years, God has given us a love for this island and its people; we have learned much. To that end, let me share with you a few encouragements of what Christ is doing through his church in Madagascar, as well as a few ways you can pray for this vast island.

¹Editor's Note: this report was originally posted on the IX Marks blog and can be found at <https://9marks.org/article/how-christ-is-building-his-church-in-madagascar/>. Used with permission.

A Church Birthed in Prayer and Suffering

When William Carey went to India in 1793, he wrote this while sailing past Madagascar: “I hope . . . that the multitudes of heathen in the world may hear the glorious words of truth. Africa is but a little way from England; Madagascar but a little way farther. . . . A large field opens on every side, and millions of perishing heathens, tormented in this life by idolatry, superstition, and ignorance, and exposed to eternal miseries in the world to come, are pleading.” That plea was heard by an older Bible school teacher in Wales, who had a great burden for Madagascar, and began praying and challenging his students to go there.

Two young Welshmen soon took up the challenge and in 1818 arrived in Madagascar with the gospel. But only one of them, David Jones, survived—after losing his wife, family, and coworkers all to malaria. Yet by 1835, Jones and his team had finished translating the entire Bible, just before an outbreak of fierce persecution and expulsion of missionaries (the Malagasy Bible was the first African Bible translation of the modern missionary era).

An evil queen believed Christianity was a threat to her kingdom and to their animistic ways. If believers would not renounce their faith, they were hurled to their death from high cliffs in the capital city (where martyr monuments still stand today). Yet the Malagasy church now had God’s Word, so portions of Scripture were hidden and smuggled by believers from village to village. They stood firm during these fiery trials until religious freedom returned thirty years later (see *Triumph in Death*, by F. Graeme Smith, a moving story).

A Church Withstanding Liberalism & Pragmatism

Nearly 200 years later, the original missionary church plants have gone liberal mostly, plus there is a large Roman

Catholic presence (due especially to French colonisation from 1896 to 1960). Yet one group of churches that has remained conservative is the FFBBM (Malagasy acronym for “Association of Biblical Baptist Churches in Madagascar”). They began when another Welsh missionary, Brinley Evans, came in the 1930’s and established a faithful, Bible-teaching church in Antananarivo, the capital city.

Today, that original church is still going strong, and is only on their third pastor in 80 years! They have planted many churches and led a movement that now has over 100 churches across the island. They were originally called “Bible Mission” churches, but then in the 1960s the government required that they identify with a major denomination. So they chose Baptist. Yet the older leaders still today will remind you, “We are biblical first, then Baptist.” Their churches have been largely elder-led, Calvinistic, and non-charismatic.

Visiting these churches is like stepping into a time warp; it’s like these Baptists have missed the entire twentieth century! They have had the biblical discernment to resist the pragmatic church growth trends that are so rife in Western churches. I recently interviewed the current president of the FFBBM, Pastor Willy, and here were some of his insights:

“We are very cautious when baptising teens, because they must be ready for fully active church membership. All candidates must first take a nine-month course; then they will be examined by some elders and deacons, or sometimes before the whole congregation. Only after membership would we invite them to the Lord’s Table.”

Willy then notes, “This lengthy process has made us unpopular with some missionaries who want more results to report to donors. But we know the Malagasy people and the

great cost for them to leave animism and the old ways to follow Christ, so we cannot rush it. We want quality over numbers.”

I asked if their churches practice church discipline. He said, “Yes, because it’s biblical, Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5. We have no choice; we must keep the church pure, and we must restore those who stray and bring them back.”

He also said, “The youth will not change our music; we do choir for all ages, we sing songs for the whole church. It must not sound like the world, we will not move our bodies like the world.” I have seen firsthand how their churches love to sing God’s praise together joyfully and beautifully – they are a very musical people.

What an encouragement and confirmation to visit churches in a very different context, yet holding the same biblical convictions. Not that these Baptists don’t face plenty of their own challenges, but clearly some good biblical foundations have been laid.

A Church Growing Deeper and Wider

Many of these Baptist pastors are eager to learn more about expository preaching, which has been the main purpose of our visits. One hundred pastors from across the island travel far (some taking two–three days) to attend our training, as they sit for long hours and days on wooden chairs or benches, craving biblical knowledge. Many have little or no theological education. Pray for the Lord to raise up much more training for these pastors, so that they can impart truth to the next generation and have well-fed, thriving churches that exalt Christ. Pray also for more Bible study tools to be translated into Malagasy and for good French books to be supplied to church leaders.

Pray also for them as they seek to plant churches in some of the least reached and remote parts of the island. Due to decades

of corrupt leaders, the country is extremely poor, with little infrastructure and few roads. Though the gospel came to their island nearly 200 years ago, there are still thousands of villages that have yet to hear the name of Christ. If you visit some villages and ask, “Who is Jesus Christ?” they will answer, “He doesn’t live here. Maybe try the next village over.”

Tourism books rave about this fascinating country, about all its exotic plants and animal species. Yet it also makes me think of the Lord’s rebuke to Jonah for caring more about a plant than about lost people with eternal souls, for whom Christ died (Jonah 4:10–11).

Please join me in rejoicing at how God’s Word is at work in Madagascar, and also in praying for the spread of his Word in that needy place.

Tim Cantrell is Pastor-Teacher at Antioch Bible Church, Johannesburg, South Africa where he has been serving since 1998.

THE TOMATO VENDOR’S MINISTRY

An Editorial

by Caleb Nakina

Pastoring Versus Governing

While motivating me to join the undergraduate theological training, a pastor-friend of mine said, “The pastorate is better than any career in life. It is better to be a pastor than even to be a president.” His reasoning was convincing enough then. He cited the fact that the pastor commits himself to the eternal rather than to the temporal well-being of his followers. I agreed with him. Pridefully, I was excited to hear that I was going to college to pursue a higher calling than the presidency. That I could be greater than an Obama was alluring, but as I grew in the grace and knowledge of Christ, the prospect of being greater than a president started to lose its appeal.

While I was in college, another pastor-friend gave me an opportunity to teach a Bible study series about the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts that He gives to believers. In my study of 1 Corinthians 12 (and related passages), I learned things that started to better shape my thoughts on the comparison between the pastor’s and the governor’s offices. How can one compare the taste of a chocolate bar to that of a chicken steak? They are both good in different ways. I would be hard pressed to say which was better.

Christiano Ronaldo once used a similar argument during an interview in which he was asked to assess how he compared to Lionel Messi's soccer genius. Said Ronaldo, “It is like comparing a Ferrari to [a] Porsche. They are both really good.” Had the Real Madrid star been humble, he would not have added, “but I am a little bit better than him.” With this latter addition, Ronaldo messed his publicity stunt. We might argue that chicken has a slight edge over chocolate since the former is unprocessed.

However, such an argument would be fallacious. It does not really answer the question; it simply shifts the discussion. Whether or not the chicken is unprocessed does not tell us whether or not it tastes better. Messi's, arguably, more natural talent does not say whether or not he is a better footballer than Ronaldo. Maybe, as Ronaldo says, they are just Porsche and Ferrari. As many pro-Ronaldo opinions may exist as anti-Ronaldo ones.

At least, since, after I prepared and taught the Bible lessons on spiritual gifts, I do not think that the pastoral vocation is better than the presidential one. I think the pastoral vocation is better for my pastor-friends since God has called them to it. The presidency is better than the pastorate for someone who is called to be a president. The man whom God has called to be a pastor sins if he tries to be a president instead. In like manner, the person whom God has called to be a president sins if he attempts to become a pastor instead. In other words, it all depends. It depends on what God has called one to. Whatever God has called you to be is not just better than any other profession, for you, it is the best profession in the world. It is exactly what God created you to be.

Two Birds, One Stone

The tomato vendor, the doctor, the good neighbour, and the lawyer, each has a responsibility to worship God through the specific opportunities that God provides.

One time I was headed home from work. It was so late that the PSVs that I depended on were scarce. I saw a man walking towards home, and I thought to make friends with him so as to walk home together for more safety since our city is full of Nairobi. I managed to make friends with him, and I invited him to church after a brief chat to make his acquaintance. I

killed two birds with one stone. I walked home a lot more confidently than if I had been alone, and I was able to seize the strange opportunity that God provided to do the work of His ministry. Two birds, one stone. The question is, does it take a pastor to share the gospel thus? The tomato vendor, the doctor, the lawyer, or just the good neighbour could do exactly what I did. That too is ministry. I would argue that God has called each one of us, no matter our profession, to minister the gospel. Even if one's profession is as ordinary as that of a tomato vendor, God has called us all to be worshippers who participate in the making of other worshippers. Christian, whatever else God has called you to, he has definitely called you to the ministry of proclamation of the gospel. Christians can think of ways to kill the two birds of financial and eternal security with the one stone that is their career. For instance, a doctor by profession ought to keep in mind that he/she has been called to participate in the Great Physician's mission of restoring sinners to Himself. The housewife is called to be a good neighbour by showing her neighbours that the eternal fountain of living water is to be found only in Christ (cf. John 4, especially verse 39).

So, if the gospel-proclamation ministry is every Christian's responsibility, then the pastorate is no better than the presidency as long as they both maximise whatever opportunities God brings their way to do the Father's business.

Scriptural Punchline

But, you may argue, the pastor does gospel ministry more often, and I agree that his role may grant him more opportunities to share the gospel. Remember, however, that Christ (the Judge of our works) looked at the widow who had less money to give to the temple and said that her pennies were more than the paper bills of those who had even more paper bills to spare. She had given her all, God saw that. Christ looked

at the percentage of her giving rather than the weightage. Will He not judge those with fewer opportunities for the evangelization of the world but who maximise such opportunities by the same standard with which he judged that widow? Surely, He will.

Furthermore, the pastor's primary role is not necessarily directly evangelistic, even though some pastors may be evangelists (cf. 2 Tim 4:5). A governing text behind the thoughts in this editorial is Eph 4:4–7; 11–16. Those graciously gifted to be leaders among Christ's flock are so gifted to equip the saints for the work of ministry (verse 12). It is the saints, and not just the leaders who do the work of the ministry. (Note that the leaders are also included in the term “saints.”)

To think that the pastoral vocation is better than any other vocation is ignorant at best, and arrogant at worst. The arrogance may be masked if you compare it to a prestigious office like the president's, but can you imagine a pastor who asserts that his office is higher than that of the tomato vendor? Does such a pastor not sound eerily like the Pharisee in Luke 18:9–14? Such reasoning does not work for the unity of the body of Christ, but for the glorifying of one member of Christ's body over the rest (cf. 1 Cor 12:4–31). All spiritual gifts are equal, and none is more equal than others.

In agreement with Piper, “I pray that God will open our eyes today so that we can see that all of us believers, each with his peculiar gift, are part of a cosmic mission given to the church by the Creator... your God-given ability to dispense grace and strengthen faith, may seem small, but as a part of God's eternal revelation of his glory it takes on stupendous proportions.”¹

¹<http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/the-cosmic-church>.

Caleb Nakina is a 2013 graduate of Central Africa Baptist College and is a member of Emmanuel Baptist College in Nairobi Kenya.

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS VOTE?

An Editorial

by Sandala Mwanje

Introduction

In a few short weeks Zambia will be heading to the polls to decide who will lead the nation. As a Christian, the biggest question in mind is not only, “whom will I vote for,” but “why?” This question is important because Christians must be Christians even in the voting booth!

Who is a Christian? It’s one who: “Is in the world, but not of the world” (John 17:16), “has been raised with Christ” (Col 3:1), “a citizen of heaven and, a stranger in the world” (Heb 11:13), one who “desires a better country, a heavenly one” (Heb 11:16). These things are all true of one who has come to believe in the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross.

In light of the descriptions above, we can safely say, a Christian’s loyalty is first and foremost to the Kingdom of Christ, then to his earthly kingdom. Therefore this truth should keep us level headed as we think of issues of governance and voting. In other words, a Christian must not put off his Christian values in matters of voting/politics.

Vote to the Glory Of God

“So, whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). We take this as a Christian maxim. How do we practically apply this in the issues of voting? The following questions may help drive the point home; Is it to the glory of God if I vote for a candidate who calls evil good, and good evil? Is it to the glory of God if I vote for a candidate who doesn’t care about justice? Is it to the glory of God if I vote for a known wicked candidate? Is it to the glory of God if I vote for a party whose policies are in direct conflict with biblical values? I

have heard many fine Christians say, “I don’t care if the man is a murderer or not, as long as he can do the job!” Dear Christian, you must think beyond your stomach. The slogan, “Let’s eat and drink for tomorrow we die,” is not for the godly but the ungodly.

The glory of God is the chief end of man and we ought to seek it in all matters.

Remember the Role of Government

This is basically a question of design and purpose. According to the Bible, government primarily exists to maintain law and order (Rom 13:1–7). Everything else that may be the job of government must be premised on this. A government that pleases the Lord is a government that administers justice and equity (2 Sam 18:15; 1 Kings 3:28; Prov 29:4). If this foundation is destroyed, the whole structure will be a mess!

Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what each of the candidates are saying about law and order. We must also examine the candidate’s personal relationship with the law. Lastly, we must take note of their close associates. The old adage goes, “show me your friends, and I will tell you your future.”

Remember that Tax Is for Common Good

The underlying principle here is that of stewardship. In Mathew 25:15–30, the Lord Jesus gives two most important qualities of a good steward: faithfulness and ability to add value. Unfaithfulness is perhaps the root cause of poverty in Africa. In most cases, those who aspire to public service are motivated by selfishness. They go in to get rather than to give.

Before we cast our votes, we must remember that we are employing people who will administer not only our affairs but also our shared resources. In other words, we are entrusting them with our wealth. Therefore, they should not only be shrewd talkers but faithful people. They must have a record of

faithfulness in their personal affairs as well as public affairs. This is no small matter and we ignore it at our own peril.

Lastly, they must be competent for the position(s). They must possess the necessary qualifications needed to add value to our country.

Obey Your Conscience

In matters of grey, obey your conscience. It is neither right nor safe to go against conscience. You must be at peace with your voting choice! But for our conscience to be a reliable guide, we must be in close fellowship with God. We must pray!

When you obey your conscience, also acknowledge that others are entitled to vote according to the leading of their conscience. God alone is the Lord of the conscience.

What about The So-called Lesser Evil Argument?

What should Christians do when their voting choices are reduced to two or more evils? I don't believe in the "lesser evil" argument. Evil is evil and Christians should have nothing to do with evil either directly or indirectly. When our choices are reduced to two or more evils, it is safer to obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). In other words, when our earthly duties are in conflict with our Christian DNA, we must choose the latter. Let's not be modern Judases who will betray God's Kingdom for pieces of silver!

Conclusion

Lastly, when all is said and done, remember that our unity is in Christ rather than our political choices. Our earthly civic duties are but temporal engagements, for we are pilgrims. Our ultimate desire is God's perfect Kingdom! To that we say, "Maranatha!"

I trust the Lord will stir the Christians of this country to be the salt that they are even in these matters. Happy Voting!!!

***Sandala Mwanje** is a 2009 graduate of Central Africa Baptist College and is currently serving as the Vice President of the college.*

PROCREATION AND INFERTILITY

An Editorial

by Isaac Kapula

Infertility in an African marriage leaves a gap in the marriage union, because to African couples the chief purpose of marriage is to provide an opportunity for the unborn members of the family to come into existence. The person, who fails for some reasons to have children, is one of the most miserable members of the society, since no one will respect him/her. Even his/her death is regarded as a relief, to get rid of the cursed member of the family. I came across a lady by the name of Naomi, who claims to be a believer in the Apostolic Faith Missions Church, a Pentecostal. The woman is married for 5 years but without a child. Her church doctrine and her African traditional beliefs do not embrace infertility in marriage. She went through a very painful experience in her life. This article will describe Naomi's fate with its world-view, compare it with the Biblical one and eventually give suggestions of how we can engage such problems.

The belief that every married human adult should procreate is serious and has effects in many African Churches. The world-view behind it goes deeper into the African Traditional beliefs, despite the church today using Scriptures for support. John Mbiti, in his book *African Religions and Philosophy*, commenting on the above subject says,

It is a religious obligation by means of which the individual contributes the seed of life towards man's struggle against the loss of original immortality. Biologically both husband and wife are reproduced in their children, thus perpetuating the chain of humanity. A person who, therefore, has no descendent in effect quenches the fires of life, and becomes

forever dead since his line of physical continuation is blocked if he does not get married and bear children.”¹

So Africans with this mentality value child bearing far more than other aspects of marriage such as love, companionship and sexual pleasure. Naomi, with such perspective of life, has suffered much from both the community and the fellow believers in her church. She saw herself as futureless and purposeless in life. She came to me in much sorrow and depression. Her husband still loves her regardless of their condition. So, rather than enduring the shame she had gone to consult different doctors and “men of God” resulting in no solution. I met her when she was tired of those attempts and only wanted consolation.

The Biblical perspective on procreation does not grant that every person must procreate. Those who hold to that view in churches pervert the truth of the Scriptures. These people use the same verses that we use in the Biblical world-view to support their world-view in a wrong way. So, what I did was to use the verses they quote to prove to Naomi that their understanding was in error. They use Genesis 1:28 to argue that God created man to procreate himself. Well, there is an aspect of truth there, but does that verse apply to every individual person or does the verse speak on general terms? To answer that question I led Naomi to the origin of infertility in the Bible. The Bible shows that [the] condition of man to be fertile or infertile is under God’s control, Gen 30: 1–2. So, if God, who was in control of Rachel’s procreation, kept her from child bearing, and at the same time said every person should procreate, is that not contradicting Him? We also looked at the popular verses

¹John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (Jordan Hill, Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1989), 133.

Deuteronomy 7:14 and Exodus 23:26, which point out that, “None of your men or women will be childless, nor any of your livestock without young.” These verses are conditional promises of which the Israelites did not even obey. Again the verses are pointing to the whole community of Israel and not addressed to Naomi but to Israel as a nation. However, we find barren women in the Promised Land like Hannah, 1 Sam 1:1–2. From these verses we further looked at Verses that pronounced blessings on barren women like; Psalm 113:9; Isa. 54:1; Gal.4:27. All these verses show that in God’s plan there is a place for a barren woman. If God does not want women to be barren how can He pronounce blessings on them? The assertion that it is God’s will that every married person should procreate is one extreme and unbiblical position found in the church today. I explained to Naomi that the creation ordinance of Genesis 1 and 2 as indicated in the Scripture is not child-bearing, but that marriage is for companionship and unity. When Eve was presented to Adam, he recognized the oneness between the two, loved her and the Scripture declares that “for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh, Gen 2: 23–24. This is what true marriage is for; children are an additional gift, Psalm 127:3–5. When you focus on children you miss the purpose of marriage and desire the gift rather than obeying the Giver.

When engaging couples like Naomi’s in our community, we should emphasize the following principles which I used:

1. Help the person understand what marriage is. Show them from Scriptures (Gen 1 & 2) God’s original will for marriage. Before Adam and Eve had children, there was love, unity, and companionship. This is the same pattern we see in Abraham’s marriage, (Gen 12–21).

2. Help the person to understand infertility in light of the Scriptures. I mentioned to Naomi that her actions prove that she is self-centered. God had given her life, good health, and marriage, which other ladies are seeking, and she cannot appreciate all except for children. I also showed her that it is not her fault to be barren, but that God knows and has a will for her (Gen. 30:1–2, 22; Jer. 32:26–27; 1 Cor. 12:8–9).
3. Help the person to avoid jumping to conclusions about the causes and cure of infertility. I pointed out that infertility is just like any other disease. She should not conclude without knowing God's will for her life, Phil 2:13. I also mentioned to her that God is sovereign, He is the giver of children, and does so according to His own timing and will (Eccl 11:5).
4. Help the person not to judge childlessness as a curse or assign a stigma to it. I pointed out to Naomi that even she who is childless, if she accepts her status as God's will for her, she can bring glory to God and rejoice in the Lord (Isa 54:1). A couple with many children may be more miserable than she is in life. She could live and learn to trust God and love her husband.
5. Help the person to consider other options like adopting children. I pointed out to her that adoption is an ideal solution to issues of childlessness. Couples with adopted children are not childless, but are the parents of the adopted children. The Bible teaches that believers are adopted children of God, that he loves us, and that we are his forever, (Eph 1:5; Gal 4:4–7).

I believe that with these five suggestions, a person facing the challenge of infertility could be helped.

We have seen that infertility has a place in God's will for man. Yes, God told man to be fruitful and fill the earth, but that does not mean every person will have children. The Biblical worldview acknowledges infertility and knows that God is in control. It is imperative to help the person know the will of God in light of Scripture. Naomi was helped and eventually she asked me why her church and friends believe that procreation is for every person? I then explained to her that their view is unbiblical, as we have seen. It is a belief traditionally held by us Africans. We conceive it as we live in our community, and it is a worldview, which we hold and add to the Bible when we become believers. I pointed out to her that her church and community base their conviction on extra-biblical beliefs, which is not correct. I pointed out that if it was God's will for everyone to have children, why do we have men born sexually inactive and those who have the gift of celibacy? Everything behind Naomi's condition is according to God's will for her, the so-called men of God were just misleading her and she should reject such false teachings. Naomi's eyes opened and she realized how she was misled by wrong beliefs. The principles in this article can help us also to care for the many people passing through the same problems in our churches.

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AFRICA, THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL, AND THE PROBLEM OF
UNGUARDED CHURCHES¹

An Editorial
by Ken Mbugwa

There can be no denying that distortions of the gospel have crept into many churches throughout Africa, chief amongst them being the prosperity gospel. But before effectively dealing with the issue of the prosperity gospel, we must ask why so many in African churches allowed this false gospel to slip in unchallenged. Where were the gate-keepers, the whistle blowers? And even now, why is there such deafening silence from so many of the now-indigenized African churches?

The problem of the prosperity gospel today, as much as anything, roots in an ecclesiological problem from yesterday.

Generally speaking, it appears as though the gospel efforts of years past in Africa did not come with any mechanisms by which professing Christians could protect and preserve the gospel from these constant threats of distortion. For instance, little attention has been given to carefully understanding the doctrine of conversion and what it means for meaningful church membership or church discipline. Likewise, missionaries and pastors have not asked what the gospel has to do with church government, the responsibility of every member for guarding against false teachers, or the need for a plurality of elders. Instead, the gospel is taken for granted and the African church suffers. It remains in desperate need of missionaries and churches who both understand the problems and are equipped with better and more biblical solutions.

¹Editor's Note: this article was originally posted on the IX Marks blog and can be found at <https://9marks.org/article/africa-the-prosperity-gospel-and-the-problem-of-unguarded-churches/>. Used with permission.

Where Are All the “Christians”?

Missionaries who labor in reached parts of Africa are today faced with a society that has been inoculated against the gospel. Cities are filled with people who have been baptized and acknowledged as members of churches from one denomination or another, thus affirming their status as Christians, even though many live lives that show no fruit of the Spirit’s work or evidence of a life of repentance and faith in Christ. For example, 80 percent of my fellow Kenyans would identify themselves as Christians, yet many go to church irregularly, if at all. They do not need the gospel and church, or so they think, because they are already “Christians.”

Others who might frequent church more than this former group attend churches where the gospel is not articulated clearly. Though they are fervent in their religion, a great part of this group would struggle to articulate the gospel even in its most basic form. True gospel ministries established decades ago have in many cases grown into theologically weak churches that have given in to teaching variations of the prosperity gospel.

It’s no wonder false gospels are wreaking havoc in Africa with little to no resistance. When churches are filled with those who do not know the gospel and are in many cases living lives unworthy of the gospel, then they cannot protect themselves from distortions in both gospel doctrine and gospel living, let alone raise an alarm among their community about the counterfeits that are masquerading as truth.

We know God remains faithful, and he has indeed scattered his own in these places. It is our constant prayer and hope that he will raise up many more of that breed so that they one day would define the church landscape of Africa, that the prosperity gospel might die here. But today, the problem persists. So how can we do missions in a way that will protect the gospel for the present generation and for the generations to come?

Is Theological Education Enough?

A great deal of missionary effort is at present being focused on theological education. In many cases the pastors in the cities do not have any form of theological training. Generally speaking, previous missionary efforts did not place an emphasis on equipping the pastors who were left “in charge.” This absence of enduring discipleship has resulted in increasingly shallow theology, leaving many local churches susceptible to whatever error its society was infected with at present.

As a response, theological institutions are being established across the continent. Conferences and seminars abound as we play catch-up after realizing that past missionary efforts, though helpful in bringing many to the Lord, proved unreliable in preserving the gospel for the next generation. This is a good work, and it is an urgent work. Yet despite the renewed efforts to train pastors, our continent still lacks enough qualified men to do the training as well as sufficient resources to finish the task.

A Blind Spot Remains

That said, a blind spot still plagues these commendable missionary efforts. Most efforts in church planting and pastoral training lack an emphasis on the local church. Systematic theology and other branches of Christian doctrine are greatly emphasized, as they should be, but ecclesiology remains unfortunately assumed and, as a result, misunderstood. This is a sad reality primarily because these assumed local churches are God’s primary plan for how the gospel will be displayed and preserved for the coming generations—not seminaries, not conferences, not theological training centers.

In an ecclesialogically heavy letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you

so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim 3:14–15). How a church conducts its life together has everything to do with how they preserve the truth.

The present generation in Africa would have been served well by churches that had been just as willing to excommunicate them as they were to baptize them. Having a city filled with people who claim to be followers of Christ but are living lives unworthy of the gospel distorts the truth of the gospel for both this generation and the next. God does not desire to preserve truth through theologically accurate books. He wants lives that reflect that truth by living it out together in local churches.

We Need Faithful Churches

If we teach churches today that the buck stops with them and that they are not mere bystanders in the mission but gatekeepers of the gospel, then maybe they might fire the next pastor who starts preaching heresy. If we teach churches that conversion is more than saying a prayer and if we stopped asking people to walk down the aisle or raise their hands to receive Jesus, we might have smaller churches captivated by the awe-inspiring grace of God rather than the eloquent, misguided pastor in a shiny suit. We might have churches that will guard the gospel more fervently for the glory of their God.

The plagues of the prosperity gospel and false converts are not at the heart of the problem for the African church. They are mere symptoms of a more fundamental problem. God wants the local church to be built up so that it can withstand different winds of error. It might be prosperity gospel today and Gnosticism tomorrow. Focusing more missionary effort on building healthy churches will help protect the gospel for our generation and for the one yet to come.

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PAUL KASONGA (1902–1954) ZAMBIA’S FIRST INDIGENOUS
BAPTIST PREACHER

Conrad Mbewe

Not too long ago, Central Africa Baptist College (CABC) named its library the “Paul Kasonga Memorial Library.” You may have been one of those wondering who this Paul Kasonga was. His full names were Paul Kaputula Kasonga. He was the first indigenous Baptist leader in the history of Zambia. He was later joined by Anasi Lupunga and Bob Litana, and the three were finally ordained together as the first indigenous Baptist pastors in 1953. Paul Kasonga died the following year from leprosy, which had dogged him almost all his life. However, by that time he had been the unrivalled leader of the Baptist cause in this country for at least 20 years. This is a brief biographical sketch of his life.

Childhood and Conversion

Kaputula Kasonga was born about 1902. Very little, if anything, is known about him before he showed up at the doors of the mission school in Kafulafuta in order to pursue his education. Two Baptist missionaries from England, Henry Masters and William Arthur Phillips, commenced the Kafulafuta Mission in 1905. They came in from Nyasaland, which is present day Malawi, and settled down in the Kafulafuta area in order to establish Baptist work for the very first time in Northern Rhodesia (today’s Zambia). Later, Clement Doke joined them in 1914 and his sister Olive Doke followed in 1916. These two and a few others came from South Africa.

It was towards the beginning of 1916, when Kaputula showed up at the missions school. He was about 14 years old. As he sat through the various Bible lessons God soon opened his

eyes to see his sinfulness and the all-sufficient salvation procured for him in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus one evening—on the 9th of July 1916 to be precise—he knocked on the door of one of the missionaries, Clement Doke, and asked if he could give his life to the Lord. “Shikulu Doke,” he said, “I want to turn over my heart.” Let us allow him to tell this event in his own words:

I came to the Mission at Kafulafuta at the beginning of 1916 and in the middle of that year Walona Doke arrived. I was then a schoolboy and heard the Word of God from Shikulu Filipo and Shikulu Wale and Shikulu Doke. The words of a hymn we sang, ‘Jesus is Coming Again,’ arrested me and made me think. So I went to Shikulu Doke that night and had a talk with him and there and then gave my heart to the Lord.¹

That was the story of how one of the earliest converts among the Baptists in Zambia came to Christ, at about 14 years of age. When schools closed Kaputula disappeared from school and did not return for the rest of that year. However, as the missionaries went around preaching the gospel from village to village they finally found him because of his witness. Each time they went to a village they would ask, “Have you heard of Jesus?” and the answer was invariably, “No, who is he?” But one day upon asking the same question in one village, they got the answer, “Yes, we have heard about Jesus. Kaputula told us about him.” That is how they found their long lost convert. Sadly, they found that Kaputula had contracted leprosy and was segregated from the rest of the village. He was living alone across the river

¹Olive Doke, *Paul the Leper: Apostle to the Lambas* (Johannesburg: South African Baptist Missionary Society, 1955), 3.

in a small hut. The missionaries organised for him to be brought to Kafulafuta and with the use of medicine were able to arrest the disease and Kaputula was able to continue his schooling.

Having learnt how to read and write, Kaputula was assigned the task of accompanying Clement and Olive Doke to start a new school in Kawunda Chiwele. Kaputula recalled the event:

Shikulu Doke and Walona Doke went with me and Mose Katanga to open the school. They left us there while they went off itinerating in the villages. Whilst there, Mose and I constantly preached the Word of God in the surrounding villages, and quite a number responded to the message and became hearers.²

It was soon after this that Kaputula testified to the Lord's saving grace through the waters of baptism and changed his name from Kaputula to Paul. The day was March 7, 1920. Kaputula wrote, "At that time we had only the Gospel of John and Mark, together with Jonah, in print in the Lamba language. These we read constantly. This reading and talks I had with Shikulu Filipo and Shikulu Doke led me to ask for baptism. I had never seen a baptism, but several of us were seeking baptism at the same time, so Shikulu Doke had classes for instruction with us. We were five: Katandika afterwards Luke Mavula and Ngolofwana being Reuben Chumpuka, and Chilayi his brother now known as Mako, and Jakobi Mununga and myself." That is how Kaputula Kasonga became Paul Kasonga, named after the great apostle Paul.

²Ibid., 4.

The Early Years in Chirupula

The first assignment that Paul Kasonga had as a preacher came soon after that. It was a call that came from Chirupula, some one hundred and sixty kilometres southeast of Kafulafuta. Chirupula was a nickname given to a white farmer, J. E. Stephenson, who lived in the area, because of his fierce whipping. He had become so much part of the life of the area that he had even married African wives and had children with them. This is the man who had asked the mission superintendent to send them a teacher who could open a school on his farm. The lot fell on Paul. How he responded to this call and how his ministry went there is best told in Paul's own words:

At first I refused to go because I was afraid of the fierceness of Chirupula, but Shikulu Filipo talked with me and strengthened me by reminding me of the story of Joseph when he was sold into Egypt. He said I must not be afraid for it was God who wanted me to witness and work for Him there. His words strengthened my heart and I consented to go. I went in faith that strength would be given me and that God would go before me, and He did. When I arrived I found that my fears were groundless, for Chirupula received me very kindly and trusted and liked me, and I was very pleased and happy. There, too, I used to go to the surrounding villages, when my work was done, and give out the gospel message. I had charge of Chirupula's six children for the school hours. His two wives and the wife of the neighbouring doctor were very interested in the words I had to tell them about Jesus, and often came to talk with me...

On Sundays I gathered the people on the estate at Chiwefwe for a service, if I was not out in the villages... Bwana

Chirupula was so pleased with me and with the fact that he could trust me that he did not want me ever to leave him. In fact, when I intimated that I wanted to go home and rest, he got angry and said he would report me to the magistrate at Ndola. His brother Peter, though, told him that that was not right and that if I was happy I would come back after a rest. So the Bwana consented to my going home for a holiday and Reuben Chumpuka was sent down to take my place. By the time I got back to Kafulafuta I found that Shikulu Doke and his wife had left to go down South and that Shikulu Cross had come to take his place and Walona Stern had come to keep Walona Doke company. That was in 1921.³

Paul used to smoke as a Christian. He never smoked in the presence of the missionaries in Kafulafuta because they discouraged anyone from smoking. In fact, they punished the schoolboys if they found them smoking. But now that Paul was alone in Chirupula he smoked publicly, and yet it was while he was in Chirupula that he gave up the habit completely. How did that happen? In Chirupula there was a strong Seventh Day Adventist presence and they taught that Christians did not smoke. So, when Paul went around the villages preaching the gospel, the people were confused to see him smoking also. As this apparent contradiction came to his attention, he was so convicted of it that he prayed to God to help him overcome this addiction and indeed the Lord helped him. That was how he stopped smoking.

Paul's return to the mission was not really a holiday. He learnt carpentry from the missionaries – a very useful skill in those days. He also soon got involved in preaching the gospel

³Ibid., 6.

and many people came to the knowledge of the Saviour through his preaching.

Paul's holiday was soon over and he returned to Chirupula. However, his return was short-lived, as the leprosy had returned. He was taken back to his small village hut across the river from his village. The disease spread quickly and sores developed all over his body. He was such a pitiful sight. All kinds of herbal medicines were used to try and cure him but it was all in vain. Paul trusted in his God and spent almost all his time reading the Lamba New Testament, which had only come into print that year. In due season, his fingers and his toes dropped off, and so his younger brother who used to bring his food would turn the pages for him as he read the Scriptures. God spoke to him through its pages and he grew in spirit by leaps and bounds. One day a witch doctor came to offer to heal him, but Paul could not accept this. "If you will use your medicine without any of your witchcraft incantations and spirit worship, I will accept it; but if not, go!" The witchdoctor was impressed by Paul's stance and offered to try and help him without any of his spiritism and worship. He burned powerful medicinal herbs and applied them to Paul's body and that is how he slowly began to heal.

"The Full Harvest" at Kafulafuta

Paul wrote to the missionaries at Kafulafuta about his healing and asked if he could go and join them once again. They were surprised to hear from him because they had lost hope that they would ever see him again and they gladly consented to his return. They sent two men with a hammock to go and collect him. When they returned, the missionaries thought they came back with an empty hammock. Paul was in there but he had become so thin that he was just skin and bones. He could not even walk. The missionaries wept when they saw what the disease had done to him. As for Paul, he was still all smiles and

full of joy at what the Lord had done for him. He was glad to be back among the brethren. With further medicine and good food, Paul was able to regain most of his strength and earlier body size. That was how Paul returned to Kafulafuta and he remained there for the rest of his life.

Having lost all his fingers and toes, Paul had to learn to walk and write again. As he regained his strength, he began to use a walking stick to walk around. In due season, he learnt to walk on the stump that was left of his feet. Similarly, he learnt to hold a pen in between the stump of his thumb that was left and his palm, and with practice learnt to write again. As he developed in both walking and writing, he started taking some classes in the school again and was glad that he could be used of the Lord once again.

It was not long before Paul became the acknowledged African leader of the Lord's work among the Baptists not only at Kafulafuta but also in the whole of Lambaland. He was a born leader. His life was a wonder to behold. Even the missionaries noticed that they had a leader in their midst and so gave Paul the task of preaching in the morning services at the mission station. In 1931, for the first time the missionary reports going back to the South African Baptist Missionary Society included one African on the list of its leaders, and his name was Paul Kasonga. The people heard him gladly because he had a way with words in his mother tongue. No missionary could preach in Lamba as he did. Also, because he knew the mindset of his own people, he used the sword of the Spirit to drive out sin from the darkest recesses of their souls in a way that no missionaries could. He used a lot of illustrations in his preaching. His stories made biblical truths come alive. One moment he would have the worshippers roaring in laughter as they saw the folly of their thoughts and customs, and the next moment he would use the same illustrations to drive home very solemn truths with

powerful conviction. Paul was also very involved in translation work. Because he knew the various shades of meaning behind the Lamba words, he was able to help the missionaries find the right words as they translated various biblical texts and other books from English to Lamba.

One area that Paul was truly gifted in was that of counselling. At his home, at any time of the day or night, you would find enquirers queued up waiting their turn to receive counsel from his lips. Many backsliders were restored to the Lord through his patient personal instruction. Many marriages that were on the verge of collapse, especially because of childlessness, were also restored after a couple of visits to his home for counsel. Some who were already separated were reunited as a result of his counsel. This was despite the fact that Paul himself never married because of his leprosy condition. One of Paul's friends, Shedelesi, wrote:

He, with his wisdom, was instrumental in saving many marriages which would have come to divorce. Those who were determined to separate, after long conversation and prayer with Paul, have gone away in a different frame of mind, and, with God's help have kept together. They are with us today as happy families, living witnesses to Paul's loving tenderness and understanding, and yet persistence, in maintaining God's laws about marriage.⁴

At one time when all the missionaries left to go on furlough, Paul was left in charge of the entire station without a single missionary to supervise him. He found in Anasi Lupunga a kindred spirit and the two worked wonderfully together. They started prayer meetings in which they particularly prayed for

⁴Ibid., 13.

the other professing Christians who were taking their Christianity lightly. By the time the missionaries returned from furlough they found a kind of revival had broken out in their absence. There was a greater seriousness about the things of God and a deeper spirituality among the people at the mission station. Olive wrote:

It is lovely to come back and find how true and stalwart the Christians have been in one's absence, and how the faithful evangelists, Paul and Anasi, have not ceased to guide and teach insomuch that there has been a steady growing in grace and increase in attendance. They have realised God's power and presence, and are happy in his presence.⁵

Despite his condition, Paul went throughout Lambaland preaching the gospel in the villages. Bob Litana recalled one of those trips when he accompanied Paul and Olive Doke. He wrote:

We started in Lesa's country and then went on through Nduweni down to Machiya. Miss Doke and I stayed to have a meeting at Mukwangu, while Paul went on with his men to Shikayuni in Mukubwe's country. When he came back, we all started off on a long journey, which took us through the forest with no villages, as we wanted to reach Fungulwe. We tried the shortest route as time had gone. But we lost ourselves and nearly died of thirst. We had to turn back to the Lufuwu River and camped there that night. Next day we got to Milambo following the banks of the river. Further on, Walona Doke got ill with fever. So I said to Paul that we ought to suggest to Walona that we return straight home

⁵Doke, "Letter from Miss Doke" Lambaland Newsletter No. 68, cited in Mbewe, *Insights from the Lives of Olive Doke and Paul Kasonga for Pioneer Mission and Church Planting Today* (Carlisle: Langham Monographs, 2014), 108.

because she was ill. But Paul said, “No, let us suggest that she go back with the carriers. We will make a machila to carry her in; but we will stay preaching God’s Word in the villages. But if you are afraid that she may get worse on the way, you go back with her and I will stay.” When we went to suggest to Walona that she go back to the mission because she was ill, she refused, and furthermore, forbade us even to send a letter to Mr. Cross, in case he insisted on her returning. She said, “Even if I die on God’s journey, it is quite all right.” Then Paul said, “That is a good answer, let us go to Lubwesya and rest a few days there.” On that journey, a great number of people changed their hearts and numbers came asking questions of the things of God and the way of life. Sometimes we did not have time to eat. During those days, Paul very diligently taught the people. He was never tired of speaking of the things of God.⁶

These trips around the villages were only abandoned when a few years later the leprosy broke out again on Paul’s body. He again lost more of his body to this awful disease. Paul was largely confined to his house. Thankfully this time the mission staff had a new arrival – Sister Greening – whose medical knowledge enabled her to treat Paul’s condition. Thus Paul was restored to health again, but he could no longer go on the long journeys out of the mission station. He had to be wheeled around on a bicycle in order to get around the mission station.

At the mission station, Paul and Olive Doke worked very closely together, especially in their evangelistic work. Many people were brought to Christ as a result of this. Olive Doke recounted how one such conversion took place. It was that of a

⁶Doke, *Paul the Leper*, 12.

lady called Chalwe. In the *Lambaland Newsletter* of April 1934, Doke wrote:

You may imagine that my heart gave a leap of thankfulness as I realised that at last our prayers on her behalf were being graciously answered. After talking and praying with her, I sent her down to Paul, for he makes things so very real to them...Paul and I had long talked with her and pointed out what a real Christian should be in the everyday life, wholly given up to God's will and guidance...We had a long talk together, Paul pleading with her to give up everything for Christ, who did so much for her and at last with a happy glow on her old lined face she said, "I will..." She attended the baptismal classes that Paul had so that she might fully understand the steps she was taking, and on the last Sunday of the old year [1933], she confessed her Lord in the waters of baptism.⁷

That was how Chalwe was baptised, being welcomed into church membership by Paul Kasonga. She remained a faithful member of the church until old age totally incapacitated her. She went to be with the Lord towards the end of 1938, full of years and full of faith.

Another testimony that Olive shared was the conversion of Jimu Cheleka. Again, you cannot miss the fervour with which Paul was engaged in the work of evangelism. She wrote in 1935:

Paul is bubbling over with joy today! I thought something was up when I went down to Sunday School today and saw his face beaming. He could hardly wait to tell me his news.

⁷Olive Doke, "A Long Trek" *Lambaland Newsletter* No. 72 (April 1934), cited in Mbewe, *Insights*, 105.

“Jimu Cheleka is even now in the vestry, he has come at last to give his heart to the Lord.” Jimu, who is a nephew of old Chalwe, and a cousin to Sandawunga Katanga, has for years done all he could to upset the work here, and perhaps Paul himself has suffered more than anyone at his hands.⁸

Souls were getting saved from sin and the church at Kafulafuta was growing.

Paul's failure to go around the villages did not stop him from ministering to the churches all over Lambaland. Where he could not go physically, he went through his letters. Elison Chimbila, who was a deacon in the church at Kafulafuta, became his scribe because Paul could not write very well, having lost his fingers. Paul wrote letters of encouragement or admonition or guidance and comfort to various churches and to various individuals in those churches who needed help right across Lambaland. It is a wonder how much God did through his servant despite his infirmity.

Whenever Paul was unwell, Olive Doke prayed much for his recovery. She knew how indispensable he was to the work, humanly speaking. In 1931 when he was very ill, Olive wrote:

Now today Paul has been taken suddenly ill with a bad heart attack. I am just crying to God that he will raise him up again; he means so much to the work. Pray for him, friends! Surely God has still a great work for him to do among his own people.⁹

⁸Olive Doke, “Jimu” Lambaland Newsletter No. 73 (Jan 1935), cite in Mbewe, *Insights*, 112.

⁹Olive Doke, “The Village Baptism” Lambaland Newsletter No. 59 (1931), cite in Mbewe, *Insights*, 106.

Final Ordination and Death

You do not need to be a genius to guess that when the time came for the missionaries to appoint their first indigenous elders at Kafulafuta, Paul was the first person they had in mind. His untiring devotion and his strong Christian character commended him to them for this office. So he was appointed as an elder together with other Lamba men. These men used to have their meetings twice a month in Paul's home, where they dealt with all the issues related to the life and ministry of the church. This was a great relief for the missionaries because they could now concentrate on other aspects of the mission station. Apart from preaching, Paul was also in charge of preparing young converts for baptism. Because of his poor condition of health and also because he put in so much time in the Lord's work, the church supported him financially through most of this time, even though he was not really in full time employment in the church. He was greatly honoured and loved throughout the whole of Lambaland.

Finally, the missionaries felt it was time to ordain some men who were the fruit of their labours into the Baptist ministry of the Baptist Union of South Africa. The Rev Guyton Thomas conducted the ordination service in June 1953 and three men were ordained on that occasion—Paul Kasonga, Anasi Lupunga and Bob Litana. Paul only served slightly over one year as an ordained minister in the Baptist church before he went to be with the Lord. His last sermon, preached from a wheelchair, was on Sunday July 18, 1954. As he preached that Sunday morning no one knew that they were listening to his farewell sermon. His last Sunday on earth was actually on August 1. It was communion Sunday and so the people came in from all the local churches in the area. Adamson Chilulumo preached a stirring sermon and Paul gave the closing benediction as he sat on his wheelchair. He had to be fed the elements of the Lord's Supper

because he had no fingers. When the crowds dispersed, he asked that the missionaries take a photo of him. This surprised them because they rarely took any photos on Sunday. Little did they know that this was to be the very last photo to be taken of Paul in this life. On Monday, Paul felt unwell but felt much better in the evening. However, in the early hours of the morning on Tuesday August 3, 1954, Paul quietly slipped into eternity in his sleep. That was how this servant of God entered into his eternal inheritance.

Conclusion

It is gratifying that Central Africa Baptist College has named its library after such a man. Though weak in body, God used him mightily to lay the foundation of Baptist work in this country. R. L. Frey wrote about him, saying, “It is nearly impossible to look at the history of the Baptist church in Zambia without mentioning the name Paul Kasonga. He had such a great influence among the Lamba people, that he cannot be forgotten.”¹⁰ May the name of this library cause many people to enquire about him and learn that God can use anyone! As Jesus once said to the apostle Paul, who was praying that a thorn in his flesh be removed, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

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¹⁰R. L. Frey, *History of the Zambia Baptist Association 1905–2005* (Limbe, Malawi: Assemblies of God Press, 2009), 68.

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PRESBYTERIAN AND CONGREGATIONAL TYPES OF CHURCH
GOVERNMENT IN LIGHT OF ACTS 15 AND THE REST OF
SCRIPTURE

Kennedy Bota

Introduction

The Presbyterian, Congregational, and Episcopalian systems of church government, which are the foremost types of church government, all claim to be in conformity with the Scriptures and adherent to the practice of the early church, as demonstrated in Act 15. However, a close examination of each of these types of church government yields the conclusion that each of these systems *per se* only adheres to the Scriptures to a limited degree and only a hybrid of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism most approximates to Acts 15 and the rest of the New Testament practice. Even with Episcopalianism out of the way though, there is an endless raging debate between adherents of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism relating to the various aspects of what each of these positions stand for. This essay describes what each of these types of church government designates before discussing the import of Acts 15 and examining the two systems of church polity, critically looking at the extent to which either of them adhere to the import of Acts 15 and the rest of the Scriptures.

Episcopalian, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism as Types of Church Government

The division of the church between the church officers, who are called priests on one hand and the general membership, or laity, on the other hand, distinguishes the Episcopalian type of church government. In essence, churches which are Episcopalian in their government are governed by bishops and

final authority under this system is reposed outside the local church. The term *episcopal* comes from the Greek word *episkopos* which means ‘overseer’ and is translated as bishop in the Authorised Version. Enns refers to the Methodist Church as being the ‘simplest form’ of an Episcopalian form of church government.¹ Meanwhile, the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church respectively are the more and most complex structures with the bishops overseeing several churches and exercising power to ordain ministers or priests and, in case of the Roman Catholic Church, claiming to derive authority through apostolic succession traced from the New Testament apostles.

As regards the Presbyterian and Congregational types of church government, an apt description thereof is given by Grudem as follows:

The presbyterian forms have a government by elders, some of whom have authority not only over their local congregation, but also, through the presbytery and the general assembly, over all churches in a region and then the denomination as a whole. The congregational forms of church government all have final governing authority resting with the local congregation, although various degrees of self-rule are given up through denominational affiliation, and the actual form of local church government may vary considerably.²

The term *presbyterian* is derived from the Greek word *presbuteros* which according to Vine means either “an old man”

¹Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 369.

²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 923.

or “an elder” and is used in reference to either age or rank or position of responsibility.³ Under this type of church government which is also termed *federal*, there is a stratum of structures that govern the church starting with the ‘session’ which is made up of elected ruling elders presided by the teaching elder.⁴ The presbytery immediately transcends the session and constitutes all teaching elders and one ruling elder from each local congregation in a district. Then you have the synod followed by the general assembly, which is the highest body or court.⁵ Teaching elders are those elders who are ordained and are also referred to as ministers while ruling elders are laymen chosen from among the church members. It is noteworthy that notwithstanding the definition of the Presbyterian type of church government as that of elders, there is in this type of church government authority being reposed not in the local assembly but beyond it. Mark Jones says in this regard that,

Despite what you may think, Presbyterian ecclesiology is not primarily defined by churches governed by presbyteries. Presbyteries can encompass the elders of a local church, a regional church, and what is termed a “general assembly.” ... *Presbyterians affirm the authority of presbyteries beyond the local church.*⁶

³W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Peabody: Hedrickson Publishers), 360.

⁴Enns, 369.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Mark Jones, “Why You Should Be Presbyterian,” *The Gospel Coalition Blog*, entry posted 13 December 2013, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-you-should-be-a-presbyterian> (accessed 15 November 2015). Emphasis supplied.

As regards Congregationalism, this is a type of church government in which the democracy and autonomy of the local church are emphasised.⁷ By the autonomy of the local church is meant that there is no authority outside thereof that has any power over the local church, and by democracy is meant the fact that all the members participate in the making of decisions relating to the guidance and government of the church. Examples among churches that practice the congregational type of church government include Baptists, Congregationalists, and some independent churches.

The scope of this article does not accommodate any meaningful treatment of Episcopalianism which is here discounted summarily being a system most foreign to holy writ more so as it plainly decries the priesthood of all believers and is characterised by a false division of the church that shuts out non-clergy from the government of the church. The claim to apostolic succession which is typical of this type of church government is also a particularly repugnant fiction.

Acts 15 and the Structure of Church Government

Acts 15 which is a record of what is known as the Jerusalem Council is at once an important chapter in the book of Acts and a critical scripture interpreted to lend support to the adherents of both the Presbyterian and Congregational types of church government. The importance of this portion of Scripture has led some Bible students to consider it as “the centre of the book.”⁸ This chapter of the Bible records how the early church came up with an amicable resolution of an issue which could have otherwise torn it apart, the issue being essentially a dispute

⁷Enns, 370.

⁸Michael Morrison, *Decree of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) Part 1: The Literary Flow of Acts 15*, <http://www.gci.org/acts/decreel>, Accessed on 7th November 2015.

premised on two questions: firstly whether or not Gentiles have to first become Jews prior to converting to Christianity and, secondly, whether or not Gentile believers should observe the Law of Moses subsequent to their conversion. The background to these questions and to Acts 15 as a whole is essentially the spread of the Christian faith beyond the people who were predominantly Jewish as recorded in Acts chapters 8, 10, 13 and 14. Morris gives an apt summary of the chapter when he says that:

In the story flow of Acts, the Jerusalem Council resolved issues and enabled the gentile mission to go forward with the approval of the Jerusalem church. The council helps explain the church's transformation from being essentially Jewish toward being a predominantly gentile community freed from characteristics of Judaism.⁹

Acts 15 has important applications and ramifications for the way churches are governed and there is attendant upon it different and opposing interpretations by various camps. Some understand it to reveal a centralised authority over local churches with Jerusalem as the headquarters while others understand it to give credence only to the independence and autonomy of local churches who are nevertheless “not isolated or insular.”¹⁰

Presbyterianism sees a synod and a presbytery in action in Acts 15 and at any rate embodies the interpretation that the body that met to deliberate matters was as a council. Ellicott commenting on Acts 15:6 for example puts it as follows:

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰The Puritan Board, Acts 15 and the Council (Archive), http://www.puritanboard.com/archive/index.php/+_5514.htm, Accessed on 8th November 2015.

The meeting rightly takes its place as the first of a series of councils, synods, which mark the course of the Church's history. It bore its witness that government of the Christian society was not to rest in the autocracy of a single will, but in the deliberative decision of those who, directly or indirectly having been appointed by the choice, or with the approval, of the people, represented the whole community. Presbyters had an equal voice with the Apostles, whose position was analogous to that of the later bishops.... Strictly speaking, it was, in the later ecclesiastical language, a provincial and not an ecumenical synod, called to decide what seemed a question of discipline rather than of doctrine.¹¹

Congregationalists, on the other hand, refute the interpretation that Acts 15 is an example of Presbyterianism in action. Even the very terming of the gathering in Acts 15 as the 'Jerusalem Council' is not accepted by some Congregationalists. It is denied that Acts 15 speaks of any synod or council or that several churches sent delegates to debate a doctrinal issue and formulate decrees which are binding on all the churches that had sent representatives thus setting the norm for all churches in the future. Commenting on the text, Jackson clearly championing the Congregationalist position says the following:

Baptists believe in democratic procedures that permit open discussion of problems and divergent views. This is right and it is biblical. Please read carefully Acts 15. *Note that this is not a council as is often stated, but a business meeting of the local church in Jerusalem* (v. 22). It has many features that we

¹¹Acts 15:6 Commentaries, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts15-6.htm> Accessed on 8th November 2015.

can observe with profit. This meeting was called to discuss a vital question of doctrine raised by the churches in in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Must a believer also keep the law in order to be saved? Messengers were sent to secure the saints at Jerusalem. There is no indication that the Jerusalem church ruled over other churches, but only that they determined the pure doctrine which they had received, and then verified it to these inquiring churches.¹²

That the divergence between the two understandings is fundamental is discernible from the afore cited opinions of Elliot, representing the Presbyterian position and, Jackson for the Congregationist position, from which note that the former holds that what was to be decided at the meeting in Acts was a question of discipline rather than doctrine and the later holding rather categorically that it was to discuss a question of doctrine. It in the circumstances admittedly sounds overly courageous to attempt finding any space for hybrid between the two systems.

Even in the midst of apparent irreconcilable positions, however, it would appear to be an agreed position that at least three categories of players are identifiable in Acts 15: the apostles, the elders and, the assembly; these subsume the different constituencies of the church at Jerusalem that met to deliberate the issues at hand. Commenting on verse 22, Spencer and Exell remark that the phrase “the apostles, and the elders” marks the constitution of the governing part of the church at Jerusalem and that the addition of “the whole church” in verses 22 and 23 is indicative of the part that believers had in the approval of the decision of the elders.¹³ Even if the apostles and

¹²Paul R. Jackson, *The Doctrine and Administration of the Church* (Schaumburg, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press, 1980), 35. Emphasis supplied.

¹³H.D.M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, ed., *The Pulpit Commentary*, 23 vols, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950) 18.2:2

the elders pass for leaders while the believers are held to be the congregation, the question would still be what specific parts the two constituents play in the governance of the church.

Presbyterianism versus Acts 15

As already observed above, Presbyterianism conceives of its sessions and presbyteries and synods as being in conformity with Acts 15. Yet, the question is: where do these sessions and presbyteries and synods are as organs of incremental authority outside the local church or congregation leave the critical principle of the autonomy of the local church? Sessions and presbyteries and synods are—it is contended—a clear negation of the autonomy of the local church. Presbyterians read rather too much into the Jerusalem Council with their interpretation that there is in the council a synod and presbytery in action. Of course even the adherents of Presbyterianism recognise the necessity of the autonomy of the local church if not that of the general members or the congregation and not the local church corporately. Thus, Berkhof a distinguished Presbyterian writing on the subject of the power of the church or where in the church power resides, says as follows:

*The Reformed system honours the autonomy of the local church, though it always regards this as subject to limitations that may be put upon it as the result of its association with other churches in one denomination, and assumes it in the fullest right to govern its own internal affairs by means of its officers.*¹⁴

¹⁴Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), 584. Emphasis supplied.

Effectively, it is Berkhof's argument that Presbyterianism adheres to or observes the principle of the autonomy of the local church; but really, contextually this is a vain attempt because what Presbyterianism does by its superior courts of sessions and synods is that it negates the autonomy of the local church. One thing which is characteristic of Presbyterianism, therefore, is that it subjects the autonomy of the local church to the oversight of bodies outside it.

Contrary to the visible limitation to the autonomy of the local church that is characteristic of Presbyterianism, Acts 15 gives sufficient emphasis to the principle of autonomy to the local church. This is the pattern in the Bible, both in the book of Acts and in the epistles. In any event, in Acts 15, it is the church at Jerusalem which is in session if ever and its resolutions are resolutions for that church which only happens to be a model for the rest of churches owing to its special place in the history of the development of the church and the role that the apostles played in it. In other words, without the participation of the apostles, it is doubtful if as much importance would have been attached to the *modus operandi* of the gathering. The special place and role which the apostles played in the early church (as contrasted with that of the elders) is underscored by John A. Spender who says as follows:

Although the authority of the elders was moral and spiritual rather than personal or civil, it was unique and temporary in the church. An elder had authority only in the church where he served, but the apostles could move among the churches and speak or write "a word from the Lord," thus providing an element of non-autonomy in the earliest years of the church. When the apostles wrote to the churches, they addressed the saints, not religious officials. In their letters many issues arose

that bear upon the autonomous nature of the local church government, but each confirms what has already been learned.¹⁵

Admittedly, there is room for churches to associate with other churches or inter/cross-local church association but this ought not to be subjection or subordination of one local church to another. Presbyterianism's hierarchy of courts of sessions and presbyteries peaking up with the synod is, therefore, clearly not patterned after Acts 15 or any other scripture.

Congregationalism versus Acts 15

Contrary to Presbyterians who see a synod in the Jerusalem Council, Congregationalism sees in this gathering a church members' general meeting. But was this council really analogous to a church members' general meeting? Holding so, it is argued, would be outstretching what really transpired if this was to be viewed against what actually happens at typical general members meetings in the Congregational style. It is 'democracy' among the general membership in a local church which Congregationalism rather spiritedly champions. The 'democracy' in issue is one where it is the general membership that calls the shots and has the last authoritative say. Jackson has the following to say as he answers the question 'Who Controls the Church?':

The church is a group led by its own majority vote. Neither the pastor nor the deacons can rule the church. This is clear from Matthew 18:17 where the church is the final authority in discipline. It is also evident from Acts 15 where the whole church determined the vital decision on true doctrine. The church has divinely provided officers and leaders, but the

¹⁵John A. Spender. "The Autonomy of the Local Churches," *Emmaus Journal* 06:2 (Winter 1997): 186.

Lord has chosen to rest the final power in the entire group, subject to His own Headship.¹⁶

Clearly, therefore, Congregationalism seeks to keep the members' space of ultimate control of the church by way of the general members' meeting with majority votes. The contention of this author is that even if we are to take the meeting in Acts 15 as designating that of the general membership, the meeting in Acts 15 does not give the picture of a general meeting of members in which the members in exercise of their democratic rights give the executive or elders the terms of reference of how they are to order the business of the church in the periods in between members meetings. Admittedly, the deliberations in Acts were held not in camera but in public in so far as the assembly of the believers at Jerusalem were concerned. The participation of the members in the deliberations, though, does not in this writer's view suggest that the members, as it were, gave the leaders being the apostles and the elders their terms of reference or marching orders regarding which the leaders were bound to report back to the members.

Arguably, in view of Acts 15, the power base in church does not come out as being with the members or the congregation but with the leaders and apparently Mbewe wholly agreeing with this position has this to say on this whole issue of the power base in the church with respect to the members meetings and rest of other players in the church:

Negatively, Christ's headship in the church has not been entrusted to the church member's meeting or to the deacons – not even to the pastors alone! It is to the body of elders. I emphasise this quite deliberately because, although we pay lip

¹⁶Jackson, 42.

service to this truth about elders being overseers in the church, the seat of power in most of our churches has subtly shifted to one of these three.¹⁷

Mbewe further points out, and disapprovingly so, that in some churches, the elders cannot do anything without the authorisation for them to do so by the church members' meeting in which meetings every member including the elders has one vote. This does not obviously stand well with what transpired in Acts 15 and has no foundation in the rest of the Scriptures.

Presbyterianism and Congregationalism

The argument in this article is that while full-blown Presbyterianism would or does oust the autonomy of the local church and altogether reposes power in representative organs within and outside the local church, full blown congregationalism overrides the church officers and renders them mere rubber stamps of the members' orders or wishes and that either positions are to that extent not in conformity with Acts 15. Under focus in the examination of the subject at hand being pertinent to Biblical church government is the proper alignment and understanding of the concerns of the local church's autonomy, the essence of the Biblical office of elder and the role of the ordinary church member in the governance of the local church. It is apparent that while both the Presbyterians and Congregationalists accommodate the vocabulary of all these terms, their respective practices are at cross-purposes.

The word autonomous is somewhat synonymous with the word independent and comes from the Greek word "autos, self" and "nomos, law or rule" and refers to "the power and right of

¹⁷Conrad Mbewe, *Foundations for the Flock* (Hannibal Missouri: Granted Ministries Press, 2011), 38.

self-government.”¹⁸ John A. Spender stresses that although the words autonomy or autonomous are not scriptural terms, they are from the biblical, practical and logical perspective a necessity.¹⁹ In other words, every local church ought necessarily to be autonomous. Non-autonomous local churches are to the extent of their want of autonomy unbiblical. As it has been observed above, Presbyterianism fails the test of autonomy of the congregation as local churches are as a rule and practice subjected to external bodies and assemblies and are to the extent that they do so unbiblical. Inversely, Congregationalism’s defence of the autonomy of the local church squarely conforms to the Scriptures.

It has to be admitted that discourse pertaining to the balance of power in the local churches between the elders on one hand and the congregations on the other hand can be emotive and endlessly controverted. Anyhow, as regards the office of church elder *vis-à-vis* the church member, it is the elders who are reposed with authority to govern and rule the church and not the general membership of the church or congregation. The elders are God’s stewards as Titus 1:7 says and they ought to be obeyed as rulers among God’s body as Hebrews 13:17 says. Alexander Strauch emboldens this point when he says that “the authority to govern and teach the local church resides in the plurality of elders – Christ’s under shepherds, God’s household managers.”²⁰ If we are to categorise the apostles and elders as one grouping in Acts 15, it is very plain where the power base lay. It was not with the congregation but with these leaders; they deliberated and reasoned and they resolved subsequent to which they as it were brought the members of the

¹⁸Spender, 1.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership, An Authoritative Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, (Littleton: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995), 291.

church into the loop so that Luke's record is that "then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church...." (Acts 15:22). There is no voting in this all. Indeed no voting in the pattern of general meetings characteristic of Congregationalists is discernible anywhere in the scripture at all. While acknowledging that Christ's presence is in the whole congregation and not just with the elders but with all the members since they are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Alexander Strauch says the following:

The congregation governs itself through the congregational elders. It is not governed by any external person or group. The New Testament does not indicate that the congregation governs itself by majority vote, and there is no evidence that God has granted every member one equal vote with every other member. Rather, the New Testament congregation is governed by its own congregational elders. The elders, according to the express instruction of the New Testament, have the authority to shepherd the congregation.²¹

Now, it is recognised that in justifying the preponderance of the elders' determination, some proponents of the view that elders and not the congregation ought to rule have pulled out all kinds of reasons that effectively demean the importance and relevance of the congregation in the governance of the church. Contributing an essay with a self-explanatory heading, "Elders Rule! But Congregations Decide," Kevin Bauder puts it as follows:

Those who think that churches should be governed by self-perpetuating boards of elders have two main arguments.

²¹Ibid., 293.

The first is that sheep (i.e., ordinary believers under the care of shepherds or elders) are not competent to make church-wide decisions... their second argument, namely, that elders are supposed to rule and congregations are supposed to obey.²²

This author dissents from any suggestion that the reason for championing the preponderance of the determination of the elders is owing to want of spiritual competence and deficiency among the congregation. The congregation was in the Jerusalem Council brought into the loop because believers collectively and individually have spiritual capacity and competence to move with the decision of the leaders. In any event, the leaders and the rest of the church members are together a holy priesthood.

Conclusion

Aspects of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism as types of church government are discernible from Acts 15 and it is obviously important to look at the rest of the scriptures in order to assess the extent to which the respective positions reflect the teaching of the scriptures. To the extent that it assigns powers to a plurality of elders and not just a single individual or the general church membership, Presbyterianism is in the view of this writer in conformity with Acts 15 and the rest of the Scriptures; in its full blown mode though, Presbyterianism so substantially limits the autonomy of the local church that it would need to be tempered with aspects of Congregationalism under which the local church reports to no other body.

²²Kevin T. Bauder, "Elders Rule! But Congregations Decide" Central Baptist Theological Seminary web site, entry posted on 07 February 2014, <http://www.centalseminary.edu/resources/nick-of-time/elders-rule-but-congregations-decide> (accessed on 15 June 2016).

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A CLOSER LOOK AT HUMILITY

Kapenya Chifumbe

Humility is one of the most profound doctrines of the Bible yet one rarely taught in Christendom today. Barely do we hear of it in either pulpits or Bible studies. It can be suggested that one may attend regular church meetings his whole life yet never hear a sermon on humility. Maybe it is because few contemporary scholars have written extensively about this the greatest of all virtues, so modern preachers have not found the subject of humility in libraries nor have their favorite authors written about it. It is high time the doctrine of humility got her head out on the street of Christendom.

Definition

In order to establish a definition of biblical humility a word study is necessary, after which other definitions can be considered. In the Old Testament Hebrew, the word used for humility is “עָנָה” transliterated as *ʾānā-wā(h)* (cf. Num 12:3, Ps 9:18, Isa 29:19) which means a state of mind or circumstances that need one to be humble, lowly, meek or poor.¹ While in the Greek New Testament, the word used for humility is “ταπεινοφροσύνη,” transliterated as *tapeinophrosynē*, (cf. Acts 20:19, Eph 4:2, Phil 2:3) meaning humiliation of mind, humbleness of mind, humility of mind, lowliness of mind.² Considering this word study in the NT and OT, we can deduce that according to the Bible humility is a state of mind (like love). Yet for a more complete theological understand and definition of humility, we need to study the creation account of man.

¹James Strong, *Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), s.v. “עָנָה.”

²Ibid., s.v. “עָנָה.”

The story of humility can be traced way back before the fall. In Genesis chapters one, two and three, we clearly see that we are a product of God's intelligence. We owe our existence to God; we owe our life to Him. The life that we possess is continually from Him who is the source of life (John 1:4). And this life is guaranteed by living in obedience and dependence on Him (Deut 30:20), for in Him all things hold together by the word of His power (Col 1:17) and in whom all things continue to have their existence (Heb 1:3, John 1:3).³ God's creation is directly dependent on His care and concern for it. The relation of the creatures to God could only be one of unceasing, absolute, universal dependence. In contrast to all other creatures, "Man was prompted to seek closer communion with God, not by a sense of guilt, but by a feeling of dependence and a desire to render homage to God."⁴ We are wired for dependence upon God. Hence when man came from God's hands, mankind understood that "its chief care, its highest virtue, its only happiness, now and through all eternity, is to present itself an empty vessel, in which God can dwell and manifest His power and goodness."⁵ This accords with Thomas Aquinas who explains that the word humility is derived from the Latin *humilitas* which comes from the word *humus* means "the earth which is beneath us." This is the same earth or *humus* or *adamah* in Hebrew that God used in creating man (Gen 2:6-7). Later, Aquinas defines humility as, "A quality by which a person ... willingly submits himself to God." Equally, Bernard of Clairvaux defines humility as, "A virtue by which a man knowing himself as he truly is,

³William Dryness. *Themes in the Old Testament Theology* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press. 1998), 72.

⁴Louis Berkhof. *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans. 1996), 276.

⁵Andrew Murray. *Humility: The Beauty of Holiness* (Chicago: Moody Press. 1896), 1.

abases himself.”⁶ Therefore, we can harmoniously conclude with Andrew Murray that “humility is the place of entire dependence on God, it’s our first natural duty, the highest virtue of our existence and the root of every quality.”⁷ Humility is simply dependence on God, our natural place.

Humility and the Fall of Man

This now naturally moves us to consider the fall of man. There is a great connection between humility, the place of the creature, and sin. The fall of man is the epic demonstration of what humility means to man.

Genesis three introduces us to the serpent, which the devil possessed to tempt the woman. Reading through the entire story manifests the temptation as hanging on the thought that, “you will not surely die ... your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:4, 5). In accordance with the devil, death is not the issue but rather having opened eyes, knowing good and evil, and being like God were more important. The serpent insisted that by eating the fruit, the woman would move up one level to being divine, thus being like God. The serpent further insisted that this would bring about humanity’s independence from the limitations of God’s rule over them. In the serpent’s poison, this independence from God, who is the life giver, would guarantee humans to possess and source their own life. The call to independence from God is contrary to how they were created. In amplifying this text Wayne Grudem adds, “Adam and Eve were creatures of God, dependent on him and always to be subordinate to him as their Creator and Lord. But Eve, and then Adam, succumbed to the temptation to ‘be like

⁶Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*. trans. Joseph Rickaby (London: Aeterna Press, 1924), bk. IV, ch. LV.

⁷Murray, 1.

God' (Gen 3:5)."⁸ Thus by sinning man exchanged dependence on God for independence. This exchange cost man everything because he lost his all, God.

As earlier noted, temptation hangs on the premise of exchanging dependence on God for independence. It is an exchange of humility for pride. Therefore what was lost in Eden is not the image of God (Gen 9:6), nor the character of God, nor is it Man's place in creation. All these were either obliterated, defaced or disfigured. What was lost in Eden was humility, the place of entire dependence on God. When we sin, we lose humility because sin is to the satisfaction of self (cf. Rom 6:16–19).

Humility and Salvation

Pride therefore, or the loss of this humility, is now the root of every sin and evil. Thus nothing can be our redemption, but the restoration of the "lost humility," the original and only true relation of the creature to its God. The story of man's redemption is basically the reinstitution of the "Lost Humility" back to earth. Redemption is simply the restoration of man back to his place of humility.

In making salvation possible, Jesus thought:

being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:9).

⁸Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 493.

Thus when Christ Jesus comes to redeem his brothers, He comes to bring humility back to earth, to make them partakers of it, and by it to save them.⁹ Humility was Christ's message (Matt 5:5, Luke 15), it was his life (Matt 11:29), his death (Phil 2:9), and ultimately his resurrection.

Furthermore, the humility of Christ made it possible for man to be lifted up from the pits of sin, for sin matures from a proud heart, therefore it takes humility to save a sinful proud heart. Christ's humility is not in lowing his character and qualifications (Phil 2:9). His humility was in him becoming human in solidarity with sinful man in order to save man. It was the incarnation that established the necessary preconditions for salvation.¹⁰ Paul explains, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb 2:14). In becoming flesh Jesus identified with us (John 1:14) and it was this flesh (humility) that reproduced and perfected our salvation (Heb 2:10). We can be content in this, that our constant feeling of total dependence on Christ and Christ alone is an antidote against all self-righteousness. Our only shield from temptation and sin, our only place of safety, our only point of resurrection is humility.¹¹

Humility is therefore a virtue which is necessary for salvation, and as such is enjoined by Our Divine Savior, especially when He said to His disciples: "Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls" (Matt 11:29). Humility as Jesus claims, is our place of rest

⁹Murray, 1.

¹⁰Bruce Milne. *The Message of John* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-varsity Press, 1993), 47.

¹¹Berkhof, 347.

from sin. His humility is our salvation. His salvation is our humility.

The Need for Humility Today

There is an even greater need for humility today, for the following reasons:

1. Humility and religion
Some have urged that humility is a sign of genuine Christian religion (Mic 6:8). In the Christian religion we are called to emulate Christ's perfect example. He was a humble servant (John 13:1–16), even to the point of death (Isa 53:7–8; Acts 8:32–33, Phil 2:5–8).
2. Humility and the kingdom
Humility is necessary for one to enter God's kingdom, and to be the greatest in the Kingdom (Matt 5:3; 18:1–4, Matt 20:26–27; Mark 10:43–44).¹²
3. Humility and prayer
Humility is also vital to prayer. A posture of mental humbleness is important to prayer as seen in 2 Chronicles 7:14, Daniel 6:10; and 9:3–20. Equally it can be urged that one cannot fast without a mind of humility (cf. Lev 16:29–32; 23:27–32; Ezra 8:21, 23; Psalm 35:13; Daniel 10:1–3, 12). Furthermore, in Scripture deep prayer sessions were done through falling prostrate before the Lord (cf. Ezekiel 1:28; Daniel 6:10; Rev 1:12–17). It was Jesus who denounced hypocritical worship and false humility (Matthew 6:5–8, 16–18). The greatest prayer

¹²J. Knox Chamblin, *Paul and the Self: Apostolic Teaching for Personal Wholeness* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993).

warrior of old, E. M. Bounds had this to say, “Prayer makes a godly man, and puts within him ‘the mind of Christ,’ the mind of humility, of self-surrender, of service, of pity, and of prayer.”¹³ Surely humility is a prerequisite to prayer.

4. Humility and leadership

Christian leadership is servant leadership. Then it can be said that humility is the foremost test of a truly great leader (Luke 22:24–27). The Bible emphasizes and elucidates Christian humility in leadership (Acts 20:18–21).

Conclusion

The redeemed soul, that which has been saved from sin, has but one stamp, humility. There cannot be true and complete salvation without humility. Humility is the only platform on which the creature can stand in the presence of God, for God resists or opposes the proud but gives more grace to the humble (James 4:6). For this reason humility is the only soil in which grace can take root, the absence of humility robs grace of its sting. Thus this is a call to Christendom, churches, pastors, and members to consider the highest of all virtues, humility. Among the peculiarities which should distinguish God's people from the world today is their humility. You are not redeemed until you are humble. Humility!

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¹³E. M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 547.

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BOOK REVIEW: *AFRICA BIBLE COMMENTARY*

Conrad Mbewe

Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed. *Africa Bible Commentary*. Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006. 1,586 pp.

On Monday, 19th June 2006, in Cape Town, South Africa, the *Africa Bible Commentary* was officially launched on African soil. By a number of strange providential happenings, I happened to find myself there among a small group of guests. Pieter Kwant, the International Programme Director of Langham Partnership International (UK), who co-sponsored this project, gave a short history of the exciting events that led to the birth of this \$1.2 million commentary project. The General Editor of the commentary, Tokunboh Adeyemo, used the story in Acts 8 of the Ethiopian eunuch asking Philip about the man in Isaiah 53 to tell us that many other Africans asking similar questions would now have their questions answered by this new commentary. He was, however, quick to warn us against any over-optimism about this book project because of the now familiar adage, “If you want to hide anything from an African, put it in a book!”

The guest speaker, Caesar Molebatsi, promised to be as short in his speech as he is in stature and then never kept his promise. Typical of him! All the same, he challenged the audience to ensure that this commentary leads us to an authentic biblical Christianity in Africa. I purchased my copy and got it autographed by him and Dr. Adeyemo. Since then I have given the commentary “a good look” and thought of sharing some of my findings with our readers. You can already see that this is not the typical “book review” that you normally read in magazines. I readily admit that am too elated to stick to the rules!

The first pleasant surprise I had when I opened the commentary was to find two well-known Zambian Baptist pastors – Joe Kapolyo and Joe Simfukwe – among the seventy African scholars who wrote parts of this commentary. Joe Kapolyo wrote the commentary on the Gospel of Matthew while Joe Simfukwe wrote an article on Funerals and Burial Rites. Both of these works are fine pieces of scholarship. The other contributors came from all over Africa – Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Congo DR, Ghana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malagasy, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leon, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe – 23 countries in all. They sneaked in one “African American”, who did the two articles on widows, to complete the list.

We were also informed during the official launch of the commentary that the contributors were 70% male and 30% female. Then in terms of denominations we have evangelical Anglicans, Baptists, Church of Christ, Lutherans, Methodists, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, etc. Conspicuous by its absence on the list of nations is South Africa, arguably the country with the strongest economy on African soil. What could this be saying about the state of conservative evangelicalism among the “black” churches there? Be that as it may, I do not know of any other work on African soil that has brought together so many African Christian scholars from such a variety of African countries. In Christ, we are truly united.

Readers who are familiar with the one-volume commentary, *The New Bible Commentary* published by InterVarsity Press, will find many similarities between that commentary and the Africa Bible Commentary. One of them is that the commentary is written from the perspective of conservative evangelical scholarship. (Tokunbo Adeyemo stated at the official launching of the commentary in Cape Town that the authors had to work

within the doctrinal basis of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa). That is most refreshing because such scholarship is rare on African soil. The two major voices we are hearing today are either Liberal (in the seminaries) or extreme Charismatic (in the churches). This commentary steers clear of both of these positions, which, in my opinion, do not respect the finality and sufficiency of Scripture. So, anyone wanting a conservative evangelical commentary with a peculiarly African flavour will definitely find it in this commentary.

As a reviewer coming from a Reformed Baptist position, I went straight to those “critical” passages that are foundational to the five Sola’s of the Reformation to see how they are commented on. I will readily admit that I came away fairly satisfied. Clearly, the commentators allowed the passages they were commenting on to speak for themselves – however uncomfortable that might be – which is an important aspect of conservative evangelicalism. Even the passages in Romans and Ephesians that teach God’s sovereignty in election and predestination are handled faithfully. Romans chapter 9 is brilliantly handled!

However, it should not come as a surprise to the readers of this magazine to know that the commentary does not take a cessationist position on the extra-ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. The contributors assume that the extra-ordinary gifts of the Spirit are still in operation today. Thankfully, they do not give a wholesale commendation for what is happening today. Instead, as they write about them, they are constantly cautioning against the abuse of such “gifts” which is so rampant today in Africa. Even the writer of the commentary on Acts does a fairly balanced job despite the fact that he sees “altar calls” here and there, and thinks (on the basis of Peter’s citation of the prophet Joel) that “both men and women are qualified to be God’s ministers” and therefore warns against our traditional

interpretation of 1 Timothy 2. Be that as it may, he certainly has the traditional Reformed interpretation of the receiving of the Holy Spirit by the Jews (chapter 2), the Samaritan (chapter 8), the Gentiles (chapter 10) and John's disciples (chapter 19), i.e. that these events symbolised the initial inclusion of each of these groups into the New Testament church.

What makes this a commentary for Africa is the way it is applied to the African context. All the books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, are made to speak to us as Africans. The articles on various issues that are very relevant to Christianity in Africa are a great delight to read. Subjects such as HIV and AIDS, funerals, circumcision, street children, inheritance of widows, witchcraft and demons, lobola, tribalism, polygamy, land, debts, etc., will not be found in your average commentary from the West (or the East) but they are all handled in this one volume. The wealth of information that the contributors have managed to put together in so little space is just incredible. If one wants a small compendium of articles dealing with the many issues that challenge Christians in Africa today, then this commentary should have a place on their shelves. Of course, because of the limitation of space, it is not surprising that some of the articles fail to deal with the issues in a satisfactory way.

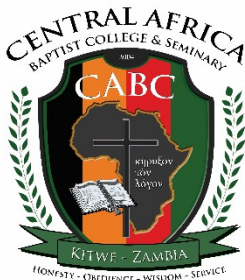
I was particularly disappointed with the article on "the role of women in the church." I think that the author betrayed his bias at the expense of telling us what he thinks the Bible actually teaches on the subject. For instance, he says absolutely nothing about the whole matter of female submission in mixed congregations – which is obviously the issue that the apostle Paul seeks to address. He needed to say something tenable about that even if it meant him finally leaving us with a view we would not agree with. Accusing those of us who see things differently from him as having "deeply entrenched patriarchal, hierarchical and sexist attitudes and practices" – which, in the language of

the streets, simply means having “bigoted and old fashioned views” – does not really help. We too can call him all kinds of names but such name-calling does not serve God’s purpose. Thankfully, those who wrote the commentaries on 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy make up for this deficiency to a large extent.

Having said this, I must not detract from the contribution that this commentary is poised to make towards the growth of evangelical Christianity in Africa. There will be a few areas where we must certainly beg to differ with the authors of the various articles, but it would be sad if for that reason we threw away the baby with the bathwater. We must be grateful that the general position of this commentary is healthy and biblical. So, for a commentary of this size, and therefore of this price (I bought mine for R310), with a conservative evangelical perspective on matters that affect life on the African continent, I cannot but commend it to everyone. If you can find something better, please let me know.

Finally, let me comment on the list of well-known and respected recommenders on the cover. It says something. Standing out are authors like Rick Warren and John Stott. Rick Warren is the author of *The Purpose Driven Life* which has sold over 25 million copies worldwide and is the bestselling hardback book in the history of America. If you do not know John Stott then you deserve a belated welcome to planet earth! The only African on the list of the five recommenders is a high court judge in Nigeria, Justice James Ogenyi Ogebe. We should not blame the publishers for this. It should simply tell us that we African Christians do not know our own home-grown authors. Hence the publishers used authors from the USA and Europe to assure us of the high quality and trustworthiness of authors in our own back yard. We need to develop the whole area of publishing and marketing of books on African soil. Only then will this tendency of using people in the USA and Europe to

recommend African books to us reduce. Until then, let Warren and Stott assure us as Africans that our fellow Africans writing about Africa for Africa have done a good job!



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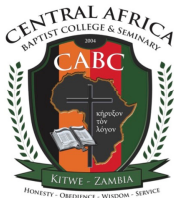
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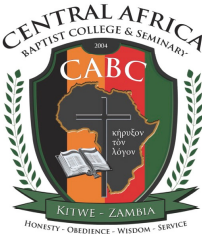
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