

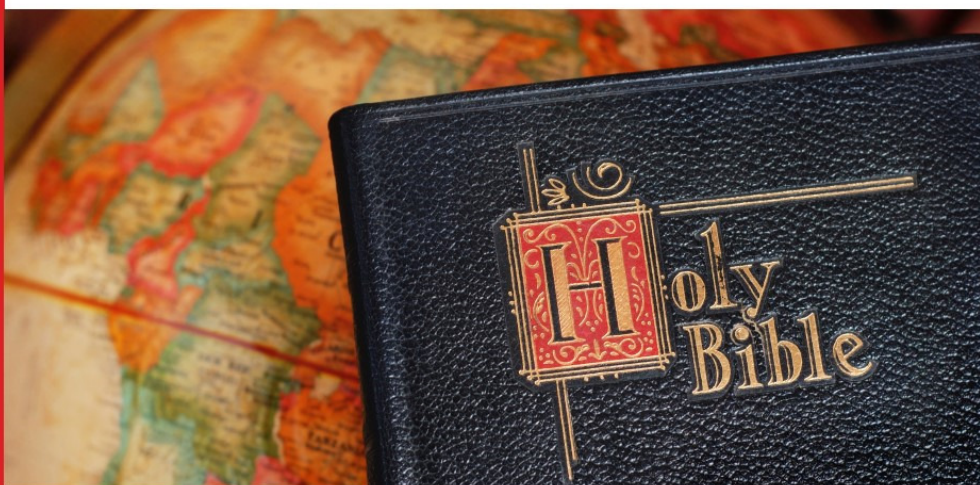
December 2016

Issue 2

Volume 2

# Kērussōmen

A Journal of Theology for the  
African Church



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A PUBLICATION OF CENTRAL AFRICA BAPTIST COLLEGE & SEMINARY

# Kērussōmen

A JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY FOR  
THE AFRICAN CHURCH



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

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*Editorials:* submissions should be around 1,000 to 2,000 words each, addressing a topic of practical or pastoral concern.

*Articles:* submissions should be between 2,000 and 5,000 words in length and be of substantive scholarly nature, addressing a topic of practical Christian concern. Article submissions should demonstrate awareness of and interaction with key resources on the topic at hand and should follow Turabian format.

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

## Acknowledgements

*Volumes printed in Zambia by:*  
Mission Press  
P.O. Box 71581, Ndola, Zambia  
[www.missionpress.org](http://www.missionpress.org)

*Cover Design by:*  
Tanis2Web  
Micah Tanis  
[mjtanis@gmail.com](mailto:mjtanis@gmail.com)

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It is a delight for me to write this introduction to *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

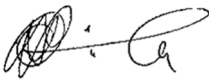
To the Reader:

This edition of *Kērussōmen*, Vol 2 Issue 2, marks one full year from the publication of our first volume. We are delighted to place this new edition into your hands.

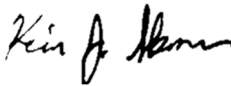
The purpose of *Kērussōmen* is to aid the work of Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary in fulfilling its purpose to train the next generation of servant leaders in Africa for Great Commission living. The Great Commission is about making disciples of Christ and living out obedience to all he commanded (cf. Matt 28:19–20). Interestingly, Christians almost immediately think of how to live out that obedience in their own time and cultural context, as well they should. But it is often in the study of history where Christians are awakened to the fact that they are not the first followers of Christ to have wrestled through the demands of obeying Christ, nor are they the first to count the cost of doing so in our own context.

This emphasis on the historical unfolding of the Great Commission in other contexts will be an important theme in the next edition of *Kērussōmen* 3/1 (2017) which will commemorate the five-hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. To prepare your thinking about this topic, we have included a brief editorial on the significance of the Reformation (see pp. 5–10). We hope you enjoy your reading in this edition and we look forward to presenting you with the next edition in July of 2017.

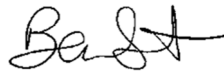
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# TO EVERY NATION

## An Editorial on the Expansion of God's Church in South Africa

*by Sihle Xule*

### **Christ continues to build his church in South Africa.**

Some have said South Africa has become synonymous with bad governance, crime, racial tensions, and the list goes on. While some of those sentiments may be exaggerated, and some containing some truth. One big truth remains that Christ continue to build his church in South Africa.



### **History**

Gospel missionary work in South Africa dates back to the early 1700's when the Dutch settlers were still flocking in through the Cape. It said that one of the first Protestant missionaries was George Schmidt, who sailed down to South Africa from the Netherlands in the year of 1737. He was followed by the London Society Missionaries who were reaching the Xhosa people. The Methodists and other denominations started trickling in spreading the gospel in South Africa. One can

remember the impact of men like Andrew Murray whose name is honoured across denominational borders even today because of how impactful his ministry was.

The great depression in England caused by the Napoleonic Wars led to much emigration from England to the Colonies, and those known as the Settlers of 1820 came out to South Africa in the hope of finding means of livelihood, and some opportunity for improvement and advantage at present denied them in the home country. Baptist families were among a group of some 4500 British emigrants that left England for South Africa in 1820. By a general understanding Mr. William Miller, who was sent by the Baptist Missionary Society, is acclaimed the first pastor or leading brother among the Baptists of the 1820 Settlers, whose spiritual work began in Grahamstown, where they met for worship under a tree on the farm.

The first ordained Baptist preacher to travel to South Africa was William Davies, who was sent by the Baptist Missionary Society in England. He arrived in 1832 and ministered in Grahamstown for a short period. Work in Kariega, about 16 miles from Grahamstown, began in 1834. A German settlement around 1860 brought the first German Baptist work led by Carsten Langheim. A German pastor, Carl H. Gutsche, baptized J. D. Odendall, who founded the first Dutch-speaking Baptist church in South Africa in 1886. The Baptist Union was founded in 1877 by four English-speaking churches and one German-speaking church. The South African Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1892. Black Baptist churches united to form the Bantu Baptist Church in 1927, under the auspices of the South African Baptist Missionary Society.

Currently there is one main association of Baptist churches in South Africa called the Baptist Union of South Africa. The BUSA has done tremendous work through the years planting



Baptist work throughout the country. It has two Bible colleges in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Many years later after the establishment of baptistic work in South Africa, what normally happens in mostly countries, South Africa was no different, liberalism and straying away from core baptistic beliefs became the order of the day. This was happening across denominations. Most of Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, and other denomination became unashamedly liberal. Thank God that some remained evangelical. Some of the Baptist churches were also affected by this and also strayed away. By God's grace most of the churches in the Baptist Union remain evangelical, although some are now influenced by the Charismatic movement. The influence of men like Martin Holdt, who were unashamedly Reformed, helped to propagate the more Reformed Baptist side of Baptist Union churches. The progress has been steady but slowly making an impact.

Regarding theological education, Baptist churches tend to get their men mostly from three institutions. Baptist College in Randburg, Cape Town Baptist College or Christ Baptist Seminary. The first two institutions are directly linked to the Baptist Union whilst Christ Baptist Seminary is an independent institution with close ties with John MacArthur's' Masters Seminary in the US.

There is a growing number of independent Baptist churches with no affiliation to the Union. Most of those would be part of the association of churches called Sola 5 churches. Sola 5 churches in an association/fellowship of like-minded evangelical, reformed Baptist churches from across Southern Africa. It's been good to see more churches from South Africa joining this association.

There has also been an encouragement in the growth of other evangelical networks across South Africa, who are committed to faithful expository preaching at their churches. Networks like Acts 29 and REACH, (acronym for Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church), are one of those that are seeking to be faithful to Scripture. They are also big in church planting, which is very encouraging.

Getting back to Baptist churches, what needs much prayer though is sound Baptist churches in the township, where majority South African are. Most of the faithful Baptist churches are in suburbs and cities. Baptist churches in the townships are the ones that have been mostly seduced by the health and wealth gospel, many have succumbed. Faithful ones are few and far in between. Considering that millions of South African live in these townships, planting of sound Baptist churches should be something at the top of the agenda.

We continue to thank the Lord for a great Baptist heritage in South Africa and would covet prayers of the saints around the world that the Lord would keep these churches faithful, grow them as He sees fit and that we would see more planted across this country of South Africa.

***Sihle Xulu*** is a member of Biercheligh Baptist Church in Kempton Johannesburg South Africa and is a graduate of the London theological Seminary.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

*An Editorial*

*by the editors of KĒRUSSŌMEN*

The year 2017 marks the five hundredth anniversary of a series of events which together are called the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation began as a movement to protest the corrupt practices and unbiblical teachings of the Roman Catholic Church with the goal of reform, to bring the church's teachings and practices back in line with the Scriptures. While there were many significant people and events leading up to it, the beginning of the Reformation is usually identified with a Catholic monk in Western Europe by the name of Martin Luther. Luther penned "The 95 Theses," a list of grievances against the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church which history tells us he nailed to the door of the cathedral in Wittenburg, Germany on 31 October, 1517.

Martin Luther was concerned that the Roman Catholic Church did not acknowledge the ultimate authority of Scripture but instead viewed church tradition as an equal and oftentimes greater authority on matters of Christian belief and practice. In addition, the Roman Catholic Church was guilty of teaching that a person could be justified before God by grace which could be earned through performing the sacraments. Martin Luther was converted when, as a university lecturer, he was teaching through Romans and personally came to accept that "the just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17). After his conversion, Luther became an outspoken critic of the theology of the Roman Catholic Church where it had departed from biblical orthodoxy.

In addition to opposing the church's corrupt doctrine, Luther was also concerned with a variety of unbiblical practices within the church. For example, the Pope would allow the church to sell *indulgences*, official papers which the church

claimed would authorized the buyer to receive forgiveness of sins; such fund-raising strategies supplied the needed revenue for the church's construction of new cathedrals. The Catholic Church was also guilty of forbidding its clergy (both priests and nuns) from marriage; Martin Luther boldly opposed this teaching and married Katharina von Bora. Through their family, they demonstrated that one of the most effective ways a church leader could instruct people in the gospel was through the exercise of hospitality in a godly home. Luther also strongly opposed the practice of reading from the Latin Bible in public worship, a Bible which was unintelligible to the vast majority of people in his day; he personally undertook the task of translating the Scriptures into German, the common language of his people, in order for them to study, interpret, and apply for themselves. Luther also opposed the liturgy of the Catholic Church which made worshippers passive bystanders; he wrote hymns to be sung corporately by the gathering of God's people for worship. One of Luther's most well-known hymns is "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," a testimony of his confidence in God and his resolve to follow Christ despite Satan's opposition.

Luther's ideas were quickly and widely disseminated throughout Western Europe, thanks in large part to the invention of the printing press several decades earlier. Luther's concerns resonated with many who read his pamphlets and sermons. His work became a catalyst to other Reformers such as Philip Melancthon (1497–1560), Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531), John Calvin (1509–1564), Theodore Beza (1519–1605), and others.

But what began as an effort to reform the church and to bring it in line with Scripture ultimately became a division within the church. This division took place because the Roman Catholic Church responded negatively to the Reformers' concerns. Luther was condemned as a heretic and the Catholic Church launched a "Counter-Reformation." Luther and others

realized that if the established church was unwilling to reform itself according to the demands of God's Word, believers within the church were bound by conscience to break fellowship with them and continue in obedience to Christ, even if it meant being persecuted by the Church. These Christians who broke fellowship with the Catholic Church became known as Protestants. The result, then, was a new branch within Christendom which has come to include Lutherans, Anabaptists, Baptists, and others.

Unfortunately, the biblical ideals of the Reformation later became politicized as various rulers within Europe began waging war, based in part on which religion would become officially recognized by the state (e.g. The Thirty Years War, 1618–1648). The principles of religious freedom born out of the Reformation combined with the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment became powerful formative influences resulting in political revolution, both the American Revolution (1775–1783) as well as the French Revolution (1787–1799).

Interestingly, though the Reformation powerfully shaped the church and culture of Western Europe and later of North America, the Reformation had little direct impact on the Christian church in Eastern Europe, Asia, or Africa. Obviously then, this begs the question whether the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation is at all relevant for believers around the world, and for African Christians in particular.

Despite its distant geographic origins, the Reformation and its ideals are relevant to Christian everywhere. Consider the following reasons why the history and ideals of the Protestant Reformation have direct bearing on twenty-first century Christians in Africa:

1. Every Christian should be convinced of the ultimate authority of Scripture.

The Reformation was largely a conflict concerning what should have ultimate authority over the Christian's beliefs and practices. The Reformers defended the principle of *sola Scriptura*, "Scripture alone" as the final doctrinal authority over the Christian. *Sola Scriptura* is equally relevant to today's Christian church; while the threat of the Catholic magisterium (authority claimed by the Church to definitively establish doctrine) might be lessened, numerous other competing authorities are pressing to occupy a higher place of authority in the Christian's life, whether it is personal experience, traditional cultural practices, or denominational leaders. God-given authorities are not to be ignored, but Christians are obligated to obey what God has clearly laid down in Scripture even when doing so brings them in conflict with human authorities (Acts 5:29).

2. Every Christian is responsible before God to read, interpret, and apply God's Word for themselves.

The Catholic Church's practice of reading from the Latin Bible prevented average Christians from studying and applying the Scriptures for themselves and made them dependent upon the magisterium for their understanding of Scripture. Martin Luther's famous words before the council which condemned him as a heretic capture this conviction:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason — for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves — I

consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus, I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

3. Every Christian should have the courage to speak boldly against practices and teachings which contradict Scripture and undermine the gospel.

The Reformers believed and taught from Scripture that sinners were justified before God by grace alone (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*) in Christ alone (*solus Christus*) apart from any works of their own. Today, numerous religious systems and sects both inside and outside of Christianity teach that people can gain acceptance from God on the basis of their works (such as worshipping on the Sabbath, performing sacraments, or other religious duties). Christians in Africa need to graciously and firmly speak out against these threats to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

4. Every Christian should boldly pursue obedience to Scripture, even if it requires breaking fellowship with other Christians and churches in order to preserve the integrity of the gospel.

The Reformers rightly began by laboring to lead the church back to the centrality of Scripture and biblically informed church practices. Likewise Christians today ought to boldly stand against any in their own circles who teach doctrines of

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<sup>1</sup>*Luther's Works*: 32:112–113

men in place of sound doctrine. However when internal reform is no longer possible, it becomes necessary to separate from apostate churches and form new fellowships around the gospel in order to preserve its purity.

5. Every Christian should be committed to the centrality of the glory of God in their personal lives and the life of the Church.

God's sovereignty in choosing to redeem some from among the mass of rebellious humanity means that redemption is a spectacular display of the majesty and power of God. The redeemed sinner has no room nor impulse to boast in himself but only in God's glory. This reality is captured in the last of the five "solas" of the Reformation—*solī Deo gloria*.

With these reasons in mind, the next edition of *Kērussōmen* will commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. The issue will focus on recounting some of the historical development of the Reformation, developing a number of its biblical themes, and discussing the practical outworking of Reformed thought in Zambian and other African contexts. We pray that these truths strengthen your resolve to pursue Christ and obedience to his word, regardless of the cost.



KENOSIS THEORY: AN ATTACK ON THE DOCTRINE OF  
INCARNATION

*An Editorial*

*by Ken Banda*

**Introduction**

We are living in a time when there are many doctrines coming on our door steps which contradict the fundamental teaching of the scriptures. Well-known among the many doctrines that have infected the Church like cancer is the health and wealth gospel which teaches that when you put your faith in Jesus Christ all your problems will be gone because the death of Jesus on the cross took away all your sickness and by his stripes you have been healed. Poverty is seen as a curse and you have to confess health in your life and what you speak in faith God will do it. This doctrine attacks the sovereignty of God.

**Kenosis Theory**

I am going to deal with yet another very serious yet less well-known heresy which results in the denial of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The whole of the Bible is one story and Jesus Christ is the main character in this grand story which begins in the book of Genesis and finds its consummation in the book of Revelation when Jesus Christ reigns as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Therefore, every believer who has been a student of Scriptures for any number of years will not miss this truth revealed in the Bible. The Gospel of John introduces us to Jesus Christ (John 1:1) who was preexistent God who came and put on flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). He was fully God and fully man and had to become man so that he could be associated with us in our fallen nature in order to be the representative of man in obedience. He also must be fully God so that he could not sin but live a perfect life and become a perfect sacrifice for sins.

However, there are many theologians who deny this teaching by holding to a doctrine called by theologians Kenosis theory. This editorial will address what this theory is all about, its history, and its dangers in the church today.

This theology become common in the early 1860–1890 in Germany and 1890–1910 in England, and teaches a unique view on the doctrine of incarnation. The word kenosis comes from the Greek term κενόω “*kenoo*” meaning to empty. “It is a theological term used in connection with dual nature of Jesus as fully human and fully divine.”<sup>1</sup> This theory teaches that Jesus when he came here on earth gave up some his divine attributes. Those who teach it commonly use Philippians 2:7 as the basis upon which they build their argument. In Philippians 2:7 there is a term translated “emptied himself,” and according to this view they hold that Jesus emptied of himself some of his divine attributes such as omniscience and omnipresence. They argue that since he was human, he had to learn things and he did not have infinite knowledge of things, and he was not in every place at the same and therefore gave up his omnipresence, and he was not all-powerful which can be seen from being weak and got tired and he was limited by time and space. Wayne Grudem comments that according to proponents of the view, this emptying is “viewed as a voluntary self-limitation on Christ’s part, which he carried out in order to fulfill his work of redemption.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Evaluating Kenosis Theory**

In order to properly understand the implications of this teaching, one needs to examine the history of the doctrine of the incarnation. One of the common historical views of the kenosis

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Lockyer, *Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 613.

<sup>2</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan), 550.

was Apollinarism that held to the view that Christ had a human body and a human soul but he had the divine *logos* instead the human spirit and the divine *logos* suppressed the passive human body and soul.<sup>3</sup> Another common early view was Nestorianism which taught that Jesus had divided persons.<sup>4</sup> Jesus' humanity had a form of divinity given upon him and the deity took upon itself the form of a servant, the result being Jesus Christ. The third view was that of Eutychianism, which held that there was only one nature in Christ.<sup>5</sup> "The divine nature was not fully divine nor was the human nature genuinely human."<sup>6</sup> These three ancient views each denied the true meaning of the incarnation and were each condemned by the early church. When we study church history we do not see any orthodox church teaching or commenting that Philippians 2:7 meant that Jesus gave up some of his divine attributes.

When we take a closer look at the context of the passage in question, it does not suggest that Jesus Christ gave up some of his powers or some divine attributes, but rather it teaches the contrary. "He did not empty Himself of any part of His essence as God. Instead, He took upon Himself existence as a man."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, holding this heresy is to deny the true biblical teaching of the Scriptures. Throughout the Scriptures we see that Jesus Christ demonstrated to us those attributes of

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<sup>3</sup>Apollinarius (died AD 390) was bishop of Laodicea in Syria and a vocal opponent of Arianism, which denied the true divinity of Christ. His teachings were declared heretical in AD 381 by the First Council of Constantinople.

<sup>4</sup>Nestorius (AD 386–450) was Patriarch of Constantinople from AD 428–431. His teachings were condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431.

<sup>5</sup>Also called Monophysitism; Eutyches (AD 378–454) was a leading monk at a prominent monastery outside Constantinople during the Nestorianism controversy. He was condemned and deprived of his orders by a local council of bishops in AD 448.

<sup>6</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1984), 252.

<sup>7</sup>Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, and Wayne House, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), Php. 2:7.

omniscience and omnipresence. He knew Nathanael before he was called by his brother Philip (John 1:48). The immediate context in Philippians 2:5–8 however does not mention any attribute that Jesus could have possibly given up. Instead, it is talking about his humility that moved him according to the will of God the Father.

The kenosis theory is dangerous because it will mean that if this doctrine is true then Jesus was not fully divine. If Jesus was not fully divine, then he would not be the perfect sacrifice for our sins and his atoning work would not be sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world. The correct doctrine therefore, is the one theologians call Hypostatic Union which teaches that Jesus was both fully man and fully God. And he did not give up any of his divine attributes while on earth. The hypostatic theory which is the correct theory affirms that in the person of Christ his human nature retains its distinctive attributes and his divine nature also retains its distinctive attributes. This distinction of natures is by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature is preserved. These two natures are united in one person the Lord Jesus Christ. Although this is a difficult doctrine to grasp with our finite minds, we can at least see that doctrine taught throughout the Scriptures (cf. Colossians 2:9). The Chalcedonian Creed defined hypostatic union saying that the “two natures of Christ occur together” which simply came to mean the union of Christ’s human and divine natures in one being. Bishop Handley C. G. Moule, writes,

Whatever is meant by the “made Himself void” [emptied Himself], *eauton ekenōsen*, which describes His incarnation here, one thing it could never possibly mean—a “*kenōsis*” which could hurt or distort His absolute fitness to guide and bless us whom He came to save. That [emptying] placed Him indeed on the creaturely level in regard of the reality of human experience of growth, and human capacity for suffering. But never for one

moment did it, could it, make Him other than the absolute and infallible Master and Guide of His redeemed.<sup>8</sup>

The right interpretation should be that he did not give up his divine attributes but rather as John MacArthur put it, he gave up some of his privileges while he was here on earth.<sup>9</sup> We can see that in the New Testament Scriptures, for example he did not have independent authority as he submitted to the will of his Father while on earth. He did not have his heavenly glory as before and his face to face relationship with God in his prayer he mentions the glory they had with his Father before to be restored (John 17:5).

## Conclusion

As Christians and more so as teachers of the Bible we should denounce the doctrine of Kenosis and instead teach that the incarnation of Jesus Christ is properly described by the doctrine of the hypostatic union of Christ. It has its basis in the scriptures. Denying the humanity and incarnation of Jesus Christ is to deny his perfect atoning work on the cross. Jesus Christ who is God became a man so that we would have a way to have fellowship with God, to experience life, just as he had been for all eternity (1 John 1:1–4). Because of his humanity he is the one and only mediator between God and men and his original purpose in his humanity was to fulfil God's original purpose from the beginning for man to rule over creation. Denying the humanity of Jesus Christ is to deny the very core of our Christian faith and that is salvation. If he was not full deity then his sacrifice was not perfect and sufficient to take away sins and if he was not fully man then he was not a perfect mediator between God and men

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<sup>8</sup>Handley C. G. Moule, *Philippian Studies* (London: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), 99.

<sup>9</sup>John MacArthur, *Philippians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 126.

and also he cannot be our example and pattern in life. But we know that these are both taught very clearly in the Gospels as well as the Epistles. He was fully man and fully God and he is our perfect sacrifice for our sins and he has sat down at the right hand of God in majesty as our intercessor and he has been one day every knee shall bow that which is in heaven, on earth and under the earth and say that he is Lord. He will reign with the rod of iron in righteousness and truth. I am inviting pastors in Africa to have a strong stand against this doctrine and take a deliberate stand to study the Scriptures so that we can teach the truth of the Gospel. Let us not smile and let these doctrines on our door steps, but rather let us be consistent in teaching that Jesus Christ who was God became man and he will forever have two natures. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Amen.

**Ken Banda** is pastor at Faith Baptist Church in Garneton and is also teaching part-time in the education program at Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary. He is currently enrolled in CABC's Master of Ministry program.

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## THE ROLE OF CHRIST'S HUMAN NATURE IN SALVATION

*Chifumbe Kapenya*

### **Introduction**

The human nature stands as the image of God on earth (Gen 1:27). Its origins can be traced to the immediate intervention of God (Gen 1:26). From inception, the human nature was created a free moral being with individuality and the power and freedom to think and to do. This makes man a rational being. Thus man's ability to reason and make choices elevates him to stand out in the six day creation. Furthermore, man was created in a physical body made of dust (Gen 2:7). This physical body of flesh possesses extraordinary members such as mind, heart, hands, head, and legs, and their fascinating abilities makes man an amazing machine with complex systems. Interestingly, it is this human nature that Christ willingly adopted in solidarity with men in order to save them. Eventually this human nature of Christ played a role in redeeming humans from suffering, affections, sorrows, and death to eternal life. This article seeks to discuss the role of Christ's human nature in salvation.

### **Methodology**

In order to appreciate the value of Christ's human nature, we shall review a brief history of church history. We will then explore the biblical understand of the flesh. Only then we will study Christ in the flesh through two distinct lenses, namely the power of reason/choice and limitations and weakness of the flesh. Finally, we will shall discuss the theology of Christ's human nature in soteriology.



### **A Brief History of the Nature of Christ in Church History**

The human nature of Christ has been a heated debate in the history of Christian church lasting the past 2000 years. At the outset, there were two main Christological schools concerning the nature of Christ, Alexandria and Antioch.<sup>1</sup> The Alexandrians stressed the unity between the person of Christ and his divinity. They coined the slogan “*logos-sarx*” (Word-Flesh) to cement this school of thought. However, they maintained that the Word assumed the flesh of human nature at the incarnation yet this did not mean that Christ’s human soul was distinct from the Word. On the other hand, the school of Antioch held that the humanity of Christ had two distinctive natures. They claimed that the human soul and the divine Word are two distinctive natures held in hypostatic union. The Antiochenes adopted the phrase “*logos-anthropos*” (Word-human being).<sup>2</sup> From these major schools of thought arose different views on the human nature of Christ such as the Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and many more.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted however that these controversies over the nature of Christ are always accompanied by particular views of salvation and thereby frame one’s theology of salvation. Thus it is important to decipher each school and their effect on the theology of salvation. For our study, the above historic review is enough to conclude with a subscription to the Alexandrian school because the Bible claims that Jesus was both divine and human (Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 2:20, John 20:28).

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<sup>1</sup>Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 36-37.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 37-39.

<sup>3</sup>For more information on the humanity and deity of Christ see Jerry Hullinger, *New Testament Life and Belief* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Piedmont International University, 2014), 278-279.

Another aspect of Christ's human nature which is of importance is the concrete- versus abstract-nature views. Oliver Crisp explains that the concrete-nature view "states that Christ's human nature is a concrete particular, perhaps a human body." He goes on to explain that an abstract-nature view favors that "Christ's human nature is a property, or set of properties, necessary and sufficient for being human."<sup>4</sup> The overwhelming facts as we will see lead to the concrete-nature view.

### **Members of the Body: The Flesh**

The human nature was created from dust (Genesis 2:9). This human nature of dust is a physical human body with many parts; members of the body. Generally, the members of the body are the physical parts of the body like blood, heart, kidneys etc. However, to the Hebrews, the members of the body refers to the whole body. The Hebrews generally employed this term "flesh" to refer to the human body either partially or as a whole.<sup>5</sup> In the Hebrew mind, the physical members of the body can be summarized in one Hebrew word בָּשָׂר (*dasar*) meaning "flesh."<sup>6</sup> The word flesh appears 273 times in the Old Testament. What is fascinating is that this word "flesh", as it stands in the Old Testament has never being used in reference to God. Probably it is because God is a Spirit according to Genesis 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 15:44. In other words, of the many things that man shares in common with God, flesh is the only one thing that man does not have in common with God, for as Christ put it "A spirit

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<sup>4</sup>Crisp, 42.

<sup>5</sup>J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Bimillennial Press, 1952), 11-16.

<sup>6</sup>James Strong, *Strong's Expanded Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), s.v. "בָּשָׂר."

has not flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39).<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the Greek word for flesh is *σαρξ* (*sarx*).<sup>8</sup> The term flesh has various meanings in the New Testament.<sup>9</sup> However, Bruce Milne notes that “the word flesh (*sarx*) is a startling one. John deliberately bypasses ‘man’ or ‘a body.’ ‘Flesh’ stands for the whole person; it refers to human existence in its frailty and vulnerability... Jesus identified with us to that degree.”<sup>10</sup> Hence for Christ to be fully numbered with sinful humans, he had to take up that which humans had, and that is flesh (John 1:14). Thus the Scriptures tell us that Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3).

### **Christ in the Flesh**

Biblically, the prologue of the fourth gospel (John 1:1-18), serves as the best introduction of the incarnation to flesh.<sup>11</sup> The prologue explains events before and after the incarnation and affirms that Jesus acquired human flesh at his incarnation (John 1:14). The fact that Christ shared the flesh of the children of men (Hebrew 2:14), can be seen in many places in scriptures. Firstly we notice that Christ was born of a woman like all men (Luke 2:7). Like any ordinary child, Jesus grew from childhood to adulthood for the scripture confirms that “the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:25). Luke further adds to say, “Jesus increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). Like any other child it is natural to develop

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<sup>7</sup>William Dryness, *Themes in the Old Testament Theology* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998), 61-62.

<sup>8</sup>Strong, s.v. “*sarx*.”

<sup>9</sup>William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2007), 84.

<sup>10</sup>Bruce Milne, *The Message of John* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 46.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Stephen S. Smalley ch. 1 “The Prologue” in *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1998), 135-137.

physically in stature and favor of men. Even so the boy Jesus grew. However, notice that Jesus *increased in wisdom*. This growing in wisdom reveals that truly he had a human nature, because in the earthly created order only humans grow in knowledge and wisdom. Jesus was a real human being like any of us with temptations, appetites, and physical weakness. He journeyed and was wearied just like the rest of us (John 4:6). He was thirsty (John 19:28), hungry (Matt. 4:2, Matt. 21:18) angry, and grieved (Mark 3:5). He could get physically weak (Matt. 4:11, Luke 23:26) and he experienced pain (Matt. 17:12).<sup>12</sup> In these texts, the New Testament ascribed to him human emotions such as compassion, love, mercy, anger, joy, perplexity, horror, distress, and astonishment.<sup>13</sup> Oliver Crisp goes as far as claiming that;

Jesus of Nazareth, like all human beings, may gain or lose contingent properties (such as having a right arm, or possessing a good memory), but may not gain or lose one or more of his essential properties and remain the same concrete individual. Such essential properties a particular human being possesses might include having a particular soul, having a particular parentage, or having a particular genetic code.<sup>14</sup>

Following the above comment, one could suggest that Jesus could get a cold, have flu, or get a rash on his body. The point is Jesus was completely and totally human like us and yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

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<sup>12</sup>John Piper, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die* (Wheaton, Illinois; Crossway, 2006), 24.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. B.B. Warfield, "On the Emotional Life of Our Lord," in *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950), 93-145.

<sup>14</sup>Crisp, 94.

Having considered the texts above, there is then no doubt that at the incarnation, the Word which was God acquired real physical flesh (John 1:1-3, 14). This flesh that Jesus possessed was a full ordinary human body, with all the members, emotions, systems, and brain power that it comes with.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Power of Reason and Choice**

Man was created with the ability to derive a deeper understanding of God, of himself, and of the created world. This ability is known as the power to reason and think logically.<sup>16</sup> Undoubtedly, humans are the only earthly creatures known with capability of exercising control over their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and passions. Man's power to exercise reason and think logically is necessitated by his consciousness. Consciousness means that man is capable of being aware of his/her own thoughts, feelings, and actions.<sup>17</sup> The conscious is fed by the five senses that humans possess. Man is able to acquiring a pool of knowledge through the five senses that feed him data. However, unlike other created animals, man can use the data rationally. Much more, man can process the data which thus presents man with an opportunity of choose. Hence Werner Gitt concludes, "Our senses determine the quality of our conscious life, and influence many of our decisions."<sup>18</sup> Consequentially it is man's consciousness that make reasoning

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (Paulist Press: New York, 1994).

<sup>16</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.2000), 446.

<sup>17</sup>For more detailed information on consciousness, cf. Robert van Gulick "Consciousness," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consciousness/> (First published June 18, 2004; substantive revision January 14, 2014).

<sup>18</sup>Werner Gitt, *The Wonder of Man* (Bielefeld, Germany: Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung, 2003), 11.

to choice possible. Thus if man can reason in knowledge and grow in knowledge then he must choose from that knowledge. Therefore, man possesses the reasoning power that facilitates the ability to choose. Man's foundation of choice is based on the reality that he can reason from cause to effect.

Unfortunately, through this same power of reason and choice man sinned against God (Gen 3:1-10). In the Garden, God instructed man to "freely eat of every tree of the garden" (Genesis 2:16) except the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil" (v.17). William Dryness informs us that "in Hebrew the 'knowledge of good and evil' usually means moral knowledge, the point at which a child can discriminate between good and evil he becomes morally responsible."<sup>19</sup> In other words, God was presenting Adam and Eve with a pool of knowledge that demanded choice. In this God gave Adam and Eve the privilege of choice.<sup>20</sup> Their reasoning to choice is captured in Genesis chapter three. In this chapter we notice how the dialogue moves from reasoning to choice. Firstly, the serpent began with reasoning with Eve to sin by using her five senses (Genesis 3:1-5). From here, one can contend that sin is rational. As the Epistle of James puts it, "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14, 15). After the serpent had reasoned with Eve to sin, he presented a choice to her, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil," and she choose to eat and sin (Gen 3:5). Wayne Grudem comments, "Eve trusted her own evaluation of what was right and what would be good for

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<sup>19</sup>Dryness, 71.

<sup>20</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C. Cook, 2001).

her rather than allowing God's words to define right and wrong."<sup>21</sup> Again, one can contend that sin is a choice. The same thing happened to Adam, first he is reasoned into sin and then he made a choice (Genesis 3:6). In the tragic end, Adam and Eve reasoned their way to freely choosing to sin and disobeyed God.

Remember, in his solidarity with humans Christ possessed the full human nature. Naturally then this would also include him possessing the power of reason which later births the ability of choice. Christ had to possess the power of reason and choice. Consequently Scripture tells us that in the remote past Christ reasoned with the God-head (Eph. 1:4, Matt. 25:34). It was this reasoning that birthed the choice to redeem sinful men (2 Tim. 2:13). Despite this clear thought and clear decision there came a time when Christ's reasoning and vibrant choice had to be tested. The test happened in the human nature for earlier he reasoned as God. Moreover the words of God stand forever, the choices of men can change. Gethsemane was to be the testing place where the reasoning of Christ was to be tried and his choice was to be pushed to the limit. Would he be true to His choice of being the ultimate sacrifice for man (see Matthew 26:39, 42 and John 1:29)? In this we see a striking parallel between the reasoning to choose of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1-7) and that of Jesus. While Adam and Eve reasoned and chose to disobey God (Gen. 3:6), Jesus reasoned and chose to obey the Father at all costs (Matt. 26:42). The love of Christ for man and his desire to obey God weighed heavily in the mind of the Redeemer. His mission of saving man was clear (John 10:10). His objective of being obedient to the Father was equally clear (John 8:28). In his prayer, "If this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it," Jesus reveals that he was not only reasoning through the events but also made a clear choice. We should celebrate that

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<sup>21</sup>Grudem, 493.

even in this hour of anguish and pain, Christ's reasoning was clear, he was going to give his immortal life for sinful mortal men. Christ's choice was clear, he would rather die than endure eternal life while men perished eternally in sin's sting, death. Thus on the cross, Christ willfully submitted to save the human race and his choice is the foundation of the history of salvation.

### **Weaknesses and Limitations of the Human Nature**

Paradoxically, as much as Christ was willing to be numbered with man by retaining human nature, it should be noted that the human body or flesh presented some weakness and limitations to Christ in his endeavor to save men. These weakness and limitations are seen in the following:

#### *Limited by Time*

Humans are creatures confined in time. Humans are governed by signs for seasons and periods which reflect time (Gen. 1:14, Eccl. 3:1). Time is part of the earthly created order and cannot be separated from space and matter. The reckoning of time in the Bible is "primarily in relation to questions of man's significance and existence."<sup>22</sup> Time in the New Testament is denoted by two Greek terms, *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* is time which can be physically measurable while *kairos* is not measured time but time of events.<sup>23</sup> Man operates under *chronos* time because he is part the created order while God operates under *kairos* time because "God is spirit, and as Lord of creation is not confined by the phenomena of time and space which He created."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, God is timeless in His own being (cf.

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<sup>22</sup>Werner Gitt, *Time and Eternity* (Bielefeld, Germany: Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung, 1999), 42.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 42-45.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 45.



Psalm 90:2, Job 36:26).<sup>25</sup> However, incarnation confined a transcendent God (Isa. 48:3) into a particular *chronos* time zone and made him a part of space and proximity. He who is out of time was confined to live a life in a particular space and observe times and seasons. It is troubling to consider why a God who called the world into existence spent three years ministering to men when he could have ministered to all in only days all even hours. All this was for love (John 3:16).

*The human body limited Christ to particular geographical points*

The Scriptures describe God as a mighty creator of all that is (Gen. 1:1, John 1:3, 1 Cor. 1:16, Heb. 1:2). He is above creation and yet he is omnipresent (cf. Jer. 23:23-24). He can be anywhere and everywhere at the same time (Isa. 66:1). As a result, “we cannot say that some of God or just part of God is present, for that would be to think of his being in spatial terms as if he were limited somehow by space.”<sup>26</sup> This omnipresence of God is uncommunicable to man. Unlike God, man is fixed to particular geographical locations. However, Christ at incarnation adopted a human body, which implies he was limited to geographical places and locations.

*Christ retained a fallen human nature*

Over the years, theologians have debated as to what nature Christ retained at incarnation. Some claim it was an unfallen

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<sup>25</sup>Wayne Grudem suggests that “God see all time equally vividly.” This is true in the sense that to God a thousand years is as yesterday when it is past as a watch in the night (Psalm 90:4), and that a thousand years can be a day to him (2 Peter 3:8). Grudem advances that “in God’s perspective, any extremely long period of time is as if it just happened. And any very short period of time (such as one day) seems to God to last forever: it never ceases to be ‘present’ in his consciousness. Thus God sees and knows all events past, present, and future with equal vividness.” (Grudem, 170).

<sup>26</sup>Grudem, 174.

human nature, like Adam before the fall, while others have favored a fallen nature position which claims that at incarnation Christ retained a fallen nature. However, it is clear that Jesus took on humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin.<sup>27</sup> The weaknesses of the sinful body caused Christ, pain, sorrow, suffering, stress, tiredness (John 11:35, Matt. 8:24; 21:12; 26:38; Mark 15:34). This “fallen nature” view is well revealed in Gethsemane. In Gethsemane the fallen human nature disappointed Jesus in that it was too weary and He was “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (Matt. 26:38). In his own words, “The spirit is willing, but the body is weak” (Matt. 26:41). The weak flesh could not bear Christ to the cross. His body metabolism broke down, the 207 muscles on his face could not hold together as his visage was marred and his skinned hung off like that of an aged person (Isaiah 52:14). The disciples could not recognize his face as it was marked with bloody sweat (Luke 22:44). In all this, His spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh is weak. By the time they laid the cross on him, the weak body had reached depraved un-desirable levels that he failed to bear it and he gasped beneath it (Luke 23:26). The sinful body failed the cross.

*Christ will forever retain his humanity*

According to Scripture, Christ will retain humanity forever.<sup>28</sup> When Christ was resurrected, he was a human being yet spiritual. He could penetrate through walls and yet he could be touched (cf. John 26:26-27). After resurrection, Christ never presented himself in a different form but he always came in human form. That is why speaking of the resurrected Christ the

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<sup>27</sup>Jerry Hullinger, *BSN501 New Testament Class Notes* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Piedmont International University, 2016), 66.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 67.

Bible says, “After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). In the finale, it is this same human body that He ascended with to heaven (Acts 1:9). Accordingly, on account of his resurrection, Paul advances that God “will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself” (Phil 3:21). The phrase “will transform these humble bodies,” implies that we will also retain human bodies in the “likeness of his glorious body.” It is a miracle that God will forever retain his humanity.

### **The Flesh of Christ in Soteriology**

Biblically, it is undeniable that Christ came in the flesh of humans. However, the incarnation into flesh does not save us in itself. Rather, the incarnation established the necessary precondition for salvation.<sup>29</sup> What is interesting is that the flesh of Christ proved needful in the redemption story. According to the Scripture, Christ did several things in/with the flesh that are fundamental to the redemption story:

#### *He condemned sin in the flesh*

Christ took up the flesh of men so as to condemn sin in the flesh for “He took up likeness of sinful flesh in order to condemn sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3). In its raw form, this text implies that God could not condemn sin in the flesh while on the throne, but that condemnation of sin in the flesh could only be done when God becomes flesh himself. The text revolves around the word “condemned.” The word Paul uses for “condemned” is *katakrinoo*. The Greek word *katakrinoo* means to judge against or pass a

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<sup>29</sup>Milne, 47.

sentence.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, the word reveals that the flesh of Christ passed judgment against sin. Grammatically, the word “condemned” in this text appears as a first aorist active indicative of *katakrinoo*. The aorist active indicative would imply that, “He condemned the sin of men and the condemnation took place in the flesh of Jesus.”<sup>31</sup> Further, A.T Robertson highlights that the grammatical order of the text was clearly set out by Paul. In the grammatical order *katekrinen teen hamartian en tee sarki* (condemned the sin in flesh), Robertson notices the use of the article *teen*. The article *teen* was not repeated before *en tee sarki* (in flesh). If it had been, Robertson claims “Paul would have affirmed sin in the flesh of Jesus, but he carefully avoided that.”<sup>32</sup> This means Jesus did not condemn the sin in his flesh but rather condemned sin with his flesh. Jesus had no sin in him yet he used his flesh to condemn sin.

However, the major question is how Christ condemned sin in the flesh. Through the efforts of the flesh, men could not even at their best condemn sin in the flesh; that is, man could not render sin powerless. Christ took up the flesh and “so condemned it to lose its hold over men-at once to let go its iron grasp, and ultimately to be driven clean away from the domain of human nature in the redeemed.”<sup>33</sup> Likewise, Paul inform us that “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). In his death Christ condemned sin in the flesh by crucifying it. Christ rendered the power of sin in the body

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<sup>30</sup>Strong, s.v “*katakrinoo*.”

<sup>31</sup>A.T. Robertson, “Romans 8:3” in *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Biblesoft, Inc. 2006.

<sup>32</sup>A.T Robertson. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the light of Historical Research* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), 784.

<sup>33</sup>Andrew Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary*, Electronic Database. Biblesoft, Inc. 2006.

powerless through crucifying it. Hence anyone who accepts Christ renders sin in their body powerless in that Christ is the one controlling and responding to the bodily temptations and propensities. Adam Clarke affirms, “The design and object of the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ was to condemn sin, to have it executed and destroyed; not to tolerate it as some think, or to render it subservient to the purposes of his grace, as others; but to annihilate its power, guilt, and being in the soul of a believer.”<sup>34</sup> The flesh of Christ met the sinful flesh on its own grounds for “the flesh being the seat and origin of transgression, the atoning sacrifice was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that thus he might meet sin, as it were, on its own ground, and destroy it.”<sup>35</sup> This act of condemning sin, Christ only could do in the flesh.

*He perfected salvation through suffering*

Christ took upon flesh in order to “perfect salvation through suffering” Heb. 2:10. The story of salvation was planned before the foundation of the world, including the aspect of Christ coming to die a cruel death of the cross. The benchmark for this idea is in Hebrews 2:10. According to this verse the process of salvation necessitated the author of salvation coming and perfecting salvation. This perfection could only be done in the flesh. Interestingly, the Greek word translated “perfect” is *τελειόω* (*teleioo*). This word can also be translated as “matured or “equipped.”<sup>36</sup> This seems to suggest that Christ’s act of taking on flesh was equipping him to complete salvation, for “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of

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<sup>34</sup>Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, Electronic Database. Biblesoft, Inc. 2006.

<sup>35</sup>Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, Electronic Database. Biblesoft, Inc. 2006.

<sup>36</sup>The Word 3.1.2.1.026 (*τελειόω*)

their salvation perfect through suffering” (Hebrew 2:10). John Piper explains that “when it says that he was ‘made perfect through suffering,’ it does mean that he was gradually getting rid of defects. It means that he was gradually fulfilling the perfect righteousness that he had to have in order to save us.”<sup>37</sup> It cannot be over emphasized, Christ needed the flesh to perfect our salvation. Yet in a much more captivating sense, Robertson expresses it in this way:

If one recoils at the idea of God making Christ perfect, he should bear in mind that it is the humanity of Jesus that is under discussion. The writer does not say that Jesus was sinful (see the opposite in Heb. 4:15), but simply that "by means of sufferings" God perfected his Son in his human life and death for his task as Redeemer and Saviour. One cannot know human life without living it.<sup>38</sup> In the plan of salvation, it was paramount that the Saviour should bear flesh with an aim of having an opportunity to perfect salvation for humanity.

#### *He identified with us*

The Bible teaches that it was imperative for Christ to put on the human flesh “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 ” (Hebrew 2:14). Hebrews tells us that He took sinful flesh so that he could identify with humanity. But it should also be appreciated that Christ did not need to come in the flesh to identify with humanity for he is all knowing, but rather He took up flesh to experience our sensation and our impression of temptations and weaknesses, and that would render a total identity of solidarity

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<sup>37</sup>Piper, 25.

<sup>38</sup>A.T. Robertson, *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Electronic Database. BibleSoft, Inc. 2006.

with humanity.<sup>39</sup> That is why the eternal Word which was in the beginning with God (John 1:1) assumed human nature and pitched his tent for a while in among men (John 1:14), lived among them so as to shear in their day to day pain.<sup>40</sup> As the old churchman William Barclay puts it “through his sufferings, Jesus Christ identified himself with us.”<sup>41</sup> Christ could not be identified with sinful men while in a spiritual body hence his coming in the flesh.

*He experienced our inclinations towards sin in order to be a merciful and faithful high priest*

Exceptionally, it was needful for Christ to experience our inclinations towards sin and our natural desire of sinning. Since we are born in sin, shaped in iniquity, and live in transgressions, we are inclined to sinning. We love sinning and we are at home in sin, hence Christ comes to experience that inclination so that he can fully comprehend through experience that which makes men feel inclined to sin. This would later make him an enduring minister who give sinners more mercy and faithfulness for he knows how it is hard for them to give up sin. As the Scripture says, “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest” (Hebrews 2:17). Here, the writer advances a reason for Christ's becoming human in redeeming humanity. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown put it this way:

Mercy is a priest's prime requisite, since His office is to help the wretched and raise the fallen; such mercy is to be found

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<sup>39</sup>The Greek word for suffering in Hebrews 2:18 is πάσχω (*pascho*). This word means to experience a sensation or impression, usually painful. (Strong, s.v. πάσχω).

<sup>40</sup>Hendricksen, 84-85.

<sup>41</sup>William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible New Testament: The Letter to the Hebrews* (India: Theological Publications, 2009), 33.

in one who has a fellow-feeling with the afflicted, having been so once Himself (Heb. 4:15); not that the Son of God needed to be taught mercy by suffering; but, in order to save us, He needed to take manhood with all its sorrows, qualifying Himself by experimental suffering with us, to be our sympathizing High Priest in all our sorrows.<sup>42</sup> It is clear that this ‘flesh’ experience of all our inclinations to sin made Christ a better High Priest.

*He experienced death and destroyed death and the devil*

God is infinite and has eternal life. From eternity past to eternity future, life resides ‘in’ God (John 5:26; 6:48, 53; 11:25).<sup>43</sup> God is eternal life (1 John 5:11-13). This means that God cannot die. On the other hand, man is infinite and does die. Man dies because of sin. We should understand that “the sting of death is sin” (1 Corinthians 15:56). Meaning that sin is what produces death, if sin is dealt with then death will be powerless (Romans 3:23). Death is the product of sin (Romans 3:23). Therefore the incarnation into flesh made it possible for Christ to experience his own death. While God cannot die and man can die eternally, a God-Man can die and resurrect.

Above and beyond, one of Christ’s missions in the flesh was to destroy the power of death and the devil. The Bible says, “so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). In his first advent, Christ came to destroy the power of sin in man and on the earth and by so doing destroyed death and the devil. It then becomes apparent to us that, the devil could only be destroyed by Christ coming in the flesh.

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<sup>42</sup>Andrew Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary*, Electronic Database. Biblesoft, Inc. 2006.

<sup>43</sup>William Hendriksen advances that the phrase “in him was life” in John 1:4 means that all life resides in the Word. He notes that it is not only through God where one can have life but “in” him. (Hendriksen, 71.)



Overwhelmingly it is satisfying to note that Christ's human nature enabled him to work total salvation for us by first being able to condemn sin, secondly to perfect salvation, thirdly to identify with us, fourthly to experience our inclination for sin in order to be a faithful high priest and lastly to undo the penalty death and destroy the devil. We can harmoniously conclude that without these five actions of Christ and many others, salvation would not have been possible for man. Christ's flesh made our salvation possible.

### **Conclusion**

The human nature of Christ is fundamental to the redemption of man. As much as we cannot understand the incarnation, how an almighty creator God can take up created flesh and become man, we can appreciate the fact that without Christ taking up our human nature, our salvation would not have been possible. We equally have to appreciate the humility and the unbounded love of Christ for us. The Bible says we are sinners (Rom 3:23) and we are sin (Rom 5:7). Hence nothing in us is worth loving and dying for, however, Jesus loved us in our sinfulness and died for us.

Furthermore, the study of Christ's human nature exposes the effects of sin and the limits of sinful flesh, namely that sin is so destructive to human nature to the point of making it weak so that it could not bear divinity. This is strange because man was made to reflect divinity, nevertheless through Christ men can again reflect the divinity of God.

We can conclude that, in Christ's solidarity with the human nature, the flesh terribly failed him. Sin has brutally deformed the human nature so that it could not endure Christ in the climax of salvation. On the other hand his will was headstrong, and it was to save his brothers. While the world is exalting the

pleasures of the flesh and its passionate lifestyle, we are implored by Christ to put faith in his divine choices rather than the flesh, for the arm of flesh will fail but the choice of living for Christ will endure forever. Choose Christ today!

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“GOD EMPOWERS AFRICAN CHARMS” (UKWIMBA KATI  
KUSANSHA NA LESA): A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO AN AFRICAN  
PROVERB

*Martin Mwamba*

**The Contemporary Use of this African Proverb by Christians**

It was sudden that a professing Christian and a member of a Bible-believing church suffered an ill fate. It happened one night that burglars broken in at midnight whilst she and her family were in profound sleep. They stole assets from the living room such as TVs, a Home Theater, phones, and cash, and they departed unnoticed. The woman and her family woke up to a shock the next morning. They learned with much sadness that all their assets had been stolen by unknown home breakers. With tears dropping from her eyes, she lamented as she explained to her pastor the situation at hand, then the pastor offered much needed comfort and counsel, and he prayed with her for God’s will to prevail. As soon as she left the pastor, she resolved to visit a witchdoctor (*in’anga* or *sangoma*) to get a charm that will cause the thieves to bring back the stolen properties and thus be identified. She was given the charm (a root of an unknown tree wrapped in a red and black piece of cloth) and told by the witchdoctor to chant mystical words and put it in the corner of the house. She was told the charm would expose the thieves and cause them to bring back the assets. Unfortunately, the results were not in her favor. Later on, when she was confronted by fellow Christians as to why she took that step knowing that she was a believer; she responded using a well-known Bemba proverb, “Ukwimba kati kusansha na Lesa” (“God is mixed in digging deep and the use of charms,” or “charms are mixed with God for them to work”).

### **The Effects of this Proverb on African Culture**

In Zambia many people use this Bemba proverb to justify their actions of combining use of their traditional charms with the ultimate God. Other tribes may not precisely say it the same way, yet the truth remains that they have their way in their clans that justifies the action of using charms and roots of certain mystical trees. Every African at their core is religious, and it is true that in their ontology there is an element of “African traditional religion.” And so, when using those charms they claim that it is the supreme God “Lesa” not the lesser gods who empowers medicine men, witch doctors, and the charm to cure or perform its intended purpose. Thus, it is necessary that as we defend and contend for the faith we discuss this saying in detail and analyze its affect on one’s view and worship of the true God of the Bible. Therefore, the question that believers or rather those who claim to be born again Christians must answer is, “Does the Supreme God empower the African charms?” Are Christians biblically justified to use charms and then to use this African proverb to justify their actions? Let’s examine this proverb “Ukwimba kati kusansha na Lesa” and observe how it has affected the overall mindset of both professing Christians and non-Christians in Zambia.

John Mbiti had it right when he researched and commented that “For Africans, the whole of existence is a religious phenomenon; man is a deeply religious being living in a religious universe”<sup>1</sup> His research conducted across Africa proves that an African is a religious person, and religion is core to his ontology (existence or being). Because of this ontology, people view their cultural and traditional actions in light of their spirituality. Even people in churches today in Africa would prefer to consult

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<sup>1</sup>John Mbiti. *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1990), 15.

diviners and witchdoctors (*in'anga* or *sangoma*) to receive a quick solution to their daily problems. It is not surprising that some of our church members attend the Sunday morning worship service in church, and yet later in the evening or during the week they go for deliverance gatherings in our communities, some even to the extent of travelling to other countries just to seek miracles and immediate solutions to their problems. In fact, in their homes some seek out these services on TV channels or radio, and then watch or listen all day. Let me illustrate with a personal example. I have a live broadcast program on Faith Radio 106.9 FM Kitwe, and one day a women texted me during the program. She said she had been working, and after retiring she had gotten her pension money, and now when going back home she was robbed. She continued, “I will take off my church uniform as a Christian and go *kuli shi in'anga* (“to the witchdoctor”) and bewitch them.” Then her question was, “Is it right for a Christian to visit the witch doctor?” The phone response from other listeners was interesting and shocking. Some suggested that she should go because God takes too much time to respond, and others said it is fine because witchdoctors give fast solutions, adding that they (witchdoctors) are also used by the same God. The response I got from the public gave me the general consensus and the worldview of most Africans inclusive of even the professing Christians in our culture. So, we have then a window into the view of the people’s perception, and the effect of this African proverb. One Bemba man from Kasama district in Zambia, explained the subject of the proverb to me in this way: “*Ukwimba* means digging, and *kati* means in detail or use of most detailed charms or African medicine, *kusansha na Lesa* means to mix with God for empowerment.”<sup>2</sup> He explained

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<sup>2</sup>I am indebted to Mr. Evans Chileshe for the personal interview on this proverb.

that people have traditionally used this proverb whenever they use charms or African traditional medicines, because they believe that for these charms and medicines to work they should be empowered by the supreme God who created them.

### **The Syncretism of African Charms with the God of the Bible**

When people visit witchdoctors' shrines, they often find them with Bibles and perhaps with choir maidens singing religious songs of "praise." While administering charms or African traditional medicines, the witchdoctor will tell them that "we also pray to God to give power to the charms for them to work for you," and he may even quote a Scripture out of context with poor hermeneutics to support his case. And thus it is not surprising that when these witchdoctors lose their market, they may even start to masquerade as "prophets" and "apostles." This is why we are experiencing a mushrooming of churches and international ministries, founded by these impostors just to dehumanize people and squander their money in the name of deliverance and fake miracles. It is sad to note that Christians and non-Christians alike go to them thinking they will offer solutions to their problems, yet they end up being deceived and robbed of their money. It is for this reason that John Mbiti argues that no faith has yet penetrated deeply into the religious world of traditional African life; and while this is so, 'conversion' to Christianity must be taken only in a relative sense.<sup>3</sup> In as much as we may agree with his logic on the basis of the cases described above of even professing Christians resorting to charms and justifying themselves with a stated proverb, yet we would also counter that the Gospel and true biblical Christianity has penetrated the heart of the some Africans, who are now even antagonistic to these vices. Nevertheless, the foundational

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<sup>3</sup>Mbiti, 264.



beliefs on which this proverb and its fruits are rooted are undoubtedly culturally and traditionally oriented in nature. And so, this calls for all Bible believers and churches to engage in polemics, launching an attack on the foundation of African Traditional Religion, as we also engage in an apologetic response for the defense of our faith.

### **A Biblical Response to Those who Use this Proverb**

This proverb and the beliefs behind it demonstrate deviation from the true worship of the ultimate and supreme God, and confusion about the separation of the Holy Creator from traditional ritual practices. The actions by some professing believers to use charms and consult witchdoctors (*in'anga*) for solutions to their problems (barrenness, joblessness, love problems, pursuit of wealth, and recovery of stolen properties) have resulted in demon worship and total syncretism. It is in fact syncretism of the highest degree in Christianity today. The creator God should not be attached to or understood as the one empowering the charms. We must never attribute to Him or mix Him with African traditional religious affairs. However, “it must be noted that the god of ATR and the God of the Bible do share some similar characteristics... but the god of ATR and the God of the Bible are not same person!”<sup>4</sup> The creator God is Holy, and He demands holiness from His people (1 Peter 1:15, Lev. 20:26). Therefore, it is inconceivable that God would allow Himself to be mixed with charms or would empower witchdoctors. God has said: “There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of

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<sup>4</sup>Philip Hunt. “A Christian Response to African Traditional Religion,” 1–21.

the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. ...You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.” (Deut. 18:10–13). God constrains His people to look to the Scriptures for the solutions that they pursue. And He forbids using charms and consulting mediums (Isaiah 8:19–20, Lev. 19:3, 20:6, 1 Chron. 10:13). In addition, it is also necessary to note here that even the use of such African proverbs to justify use of charms is the heart of hubris before the Creator God. It is clearly the devil and his fallen angels or demons that empower such African charms. (Acts 8:9–24, Exodus 7:22, Eph. 6:10–20).

### Conclusion

God is transcendent and holy, and He demands perfection from his people. Because of God’s holiness and commands, believers must not engage in divination and the use of charms. If you are a professing Christian, and yet you always resort to witchdoctors (*in’anga*), and the use of charms whenever you encounter a problem, you must repent and ask for God’s forgiveness. Perhaps you must evaluate your life if you are really are truly saved, and if not ask the Lord Jesus Christ to save you. Moreover, it clear that the Supreme God does not empower the African charms, and thus it follows that Christians are not biblically justified to use such charms or use this African proverb to justify their actions. Thus, to believe “Ukwimba kati kusansha na Lesa” is to believe a lie. We must choose to trust and wait on God in every circumstance, and His Word must be our final authority as we encounter conflict with our African traditional proverbs and belief system.

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THE MARRIAGE PROCESS IN ZAMBIA  
A CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON THE INCREASING CHAOS AND  
DILEMMA

*Kennedy Bota*

**Introduction**

When individuals in Zambia set out to enter marriage, they in theory have a choice between doing so in the customary or traditional way on one hand and the statutory marriage way on the other hand. In the urban popular parlance, the two types of marriage are sometimes referred to as Local Court Marriage on one hand and High Court Marriage<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, which is largely in reference to the court of law which the parties under the respective marriages—the wife and the husband—may resort to for the resolution of their marriage disputes: customary/traditional marriages in the Local Courts and statutory marriages in the High Court. This essay sets out to demonstrate that in practice, the process where individuals get married in church can be and is actually riddled with chaos and poses sustained dilemma in an increasing way to Christian people; it is a process which needs to be streamlined in order to give order to the chaos and resolve the dilemma by decisively choosing either one or the other. We argue further that between the two processes, it is the statutory marriage process which is closer to the Christian and biblical prescriptions regarding marriage which Christians ought to practice. The customary and traditional marriage and processes ought to be avoided.

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<sup>1</sup>These terms have not necessarily been adopted in this essay. Rather, the two types of marriages and their processes will be referred to by various terms: civil marriage, marriage under statute, white wedding, church marriage, customary or traditional marriage, etc

## **Two/Dual Processes, One End?**

### *The Typical Route to Wedlock*

Typically, when a Christian young man<sup>2</sup> in this part of the world embarks on the path to finding a wife, he may date one or several girls from among whom he proposes one. A successful proposal marks the beginning of an informal relationship which is formalised by the young man finding a *go-between* who negotiates the proposed marriage with the girlfriend's parents and which negotiations yield an agreed sum of money a substantial if not entire payment of which will facilitate the girl's parents' approval of her giving her hand to the young man in marriage. Upon making a payment towards if not the entire sum agreed, the young man and his fiancée are given leave by the girl's parents to commence plans for a church wedding. As a matter of fact, almost invariably, the church wedding which eventually takes place hopefully after pre-marital counselling by some church designated persons has to do with marriage under an Act of Parliament the Marriage Act<sup>3</sup>. The initial processes of the *go-between* and the girl's parents pertain to one distinct set, the customary or traditional process, while the church related processes are yet another distinct set altogether. The foregoing typical example is a merely skeletal and abridged model. Mushota captures what is in reference in the following words:

In practice, although people in Zambia marry under customary law, the vast majority of those who choose civil also combine with processes required for contracting a

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<sup>2</sup>The author needs to immediately state that he went through this same process being here attributed to the 'Christian young man' (over twenty-five years ago!) and is therefore a participant in the chaos and has suffered from the dilemma being registered. The 'Christian young man' may well be the one who is proposed by a girl or lady although the rest of the processes are exclusively attributable to the former and not the latter.

<sup>3</sup>*The Marriage Act*, Chapter 50 of the Laws of Zambia

valid customary marriage, such as engaging in marriage negotiations through families and a *shibukombe* or *nkhoswe* a go-between; they depend very much on the consent of the parent, without which there can be no marriage. They practice the payment of *lobola* by the groom's family to validate the marriage and have the right to the children of the marriage. A statutory marriage is a union of the two parties to the marriage but in the Zambian context their families are very much part of the alliance. Parties' families usually observe the statutory solemnisation ceremony as well as the traditional ceremony of the feast and rites of handing over the bride to the groom's family.<sup>4</sup>

The statement above gives a typical example of the Christian young man's journey to wedlock is a marriage process which is really a series of processes which neatly fall under two distinct regimes of law: the customary law regime on one hand and the statutory law regime on the other hand. The statutory law regime belongs to what is sometimes called 'received law'<sup>5</sup> or 'civil marriage'.

Now, all of these processes achieve one goal which is the union of the man and wife but, as they say, the devil is in the details! The position espoused in this essay is that between the processes under the customary and tradition marriage on one hand and those under received law or civil marriage on the other hand, there is a world of a difference and that Christians ought to lean towards the received law and particularly be decisive in excising or expunging features of processes under customary and traditional marriage on their way to and after the church weddings. This is because processes under customary

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<sup>4</sup>Lilian Mushota, *Family Law in Zambia*, (Lusaka: Unza Press, 2005), 55

<sup>5</sup>This law is called 'received law' as a way of contrasting it from customary law which is supposed to be indigenous. Received law is in effect English law.

and traditional marriage are not only redundant to someone who has wedded in church or contracted a marriage under statute but they are largely opposed to Biblical standards of marriage. There are at least two sticky points about the customary and traditional marriage process which makes it inimical to Biblical standards of marriage and which this article seeks to dwell upon: the requirement for payment of dowry and the polygamous nature of what ensues out of the process.

#### *Dowry or Marriage Payments*

Marriage under customary law is validated by the payment of what is popularly known as dowry or some such other payment made with respect to the marriage. There are as many variations in what exactly it is that the husband-to-be pays as there are ethnic groupings but payment for marriage is cross-cutting. In fact, there is a myriad of payments that are required of a man as condition precedent for him to take or be finally given the wife-to-be's hand in marriage by her family. An example of just four ethnic groupings, the Bembas, the Chewas, the Kaondes and the Tongas:<sup>6</sup> Among the Bembas, the man is or was required to pay *Nkobekela* which went to the intended bride and symbolised engagement as well as *Nsalamu* and *Mpango* paid

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<sup>6</sup>Lilian Mushota, *Family Law in Zambia*, opcit has catalogued a whole range of payments under several ethnic groupings; see pages 80 to 83 under her discussion on 'Marriage Payments'. The ethnic groups she specifically mentions are Chewa of Katete, Tonga of Gwembe Valley, Bemba of Kasama, Kaonde of Solwezi, Gova of Kafue, Chokwe of Kaoma, Lamba of Mpongwe, Lala of Serenje and, Chishinga of Kawambwa. Doubtless, the domicile of the respective tribes or ethnic groupings are specified because there may be variations in practice even within the same ethnic group from locality to locality. Yizenge A. Chondoka, *Traditional Marriage in Zambia*, (Ndola: Mission Press, 1988), discusses the payments due under Patrilineal Group: Namwanga, Lozi, Ngoni, Senga, Lunda (Northwest), Mambwe and Lungu and, the Mtrilineal Group: Bemba, Luvale, Kaonde, Lamaba and Lima, Plateau Tonga, Gwembe Valley Tonga, Ila, Soli, Lenje, Nsenga, Chewa

to the girl's parents. Reciept of *Nsalamu* and *Mpango* by the girl's family sealed the marriage contract. The Chewa would *inter alia* insist on payment of *Ntambo* and *Nthakula* designating the bride wealth and *Kacheka* which is for the bride's mother and goes towards appreciation for bringing up the girl. As for the *Kaondes*, the man pays *Kapangabalume* for engagement and *Miketo* or *Bindelo* which is the bride wealth to the family. Among the Tongas, there is *inter alia*, *Chiumankoma* paid for commencement of the marriage negotiations and *Luselo* which is the bride wealth.

In the case of *Fenias Mafemba -vs- Esther Sitali*<sup>7</sup> the Supreme Court of Zambia considered a case relating to parties who were Lozi and who had lived together purporting to be man and wife for fourteen years without the man's payment of dowry or *lobola* or *sionda* as it is variously referred to in Lozi and affirmed the High Court's decision which held that there was no marriage between the deceased woman and the surviving man as the man had "failed to comply with the Lozi customary law relating to marriage because he failed or neglected to pay lobola to the appellant and thereby rendering his relationship with the deceased as mere friendship or concubinage."<sup>8</sup>

Payment of dowry appears to be part of the marriage process not just in Zambia but across Sub-Sahara Africa. It is a big issue in South Africa where it is called *lobola* and is extant through East Africa and all the way to West Africa. The Theological Advisory Group, an East African Christian think tank had this to say regarding dowry:

As we have seen in our study of African customary marriages....dowry (more properly speaking, "bride price") had a very important place in sealing the marriage

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<sup>7</sup>*Fenias Mafemba -vs- Esther Ngula Sitali* (2007) ZR, 215

<sup>8</sup>*Esther Ngula Sitali -vs- Fenias Mafemba* (2005) ZR, 143 at 143 head note



relationship. Dowry was a form of economic compensation to the bride's parents for their loss of their daughter. More important, dowry was the legal exchange which validated the marriage and confirmed the consent of both parents of the bride and bridegroom. Without the payment of the dowry no marriage was recognised as valid.<sup>9</sup>

Now, there are two questions that ought to be faced and answered by way of critique of the practice of demanding dowry: first, is the practice in keeping with the requirements of the of the Bible and the delineation of a Christian marriage or not? And second, is the practice legitimate in the current times where the social and economic setting has changed markedly? There seems to be a conspiracy of silence among Christians in Zambia on these questions but this author will hazard a straight forward answer that the requirement for dowry is not in keeping with scripture but is opposed to Christian teaching on marriage. Furthermore, this practice has no legitimacy in the modern setting. Of course, nowhere does the Bible specifically forbid payment of dowry. Rather, dowry was paid in Bible times. Abraham paid something in respect of his son Isaac's marriage to Rebekah (Genesis 24:23) while Jacob laboured in the service of his father-in-law for seven years in order for him to get his beloved Rachel's hand in marriage (Genesis 29:18-20). But apart from any biblical command or requirement for dowry, the practice in the Old Testament was a deliberate offering of some gift rather than a demand from the bridegroom's side. In any event, the marriage of the ideal couple, of the very first wedding in Eden between Adam and Eve had no such condition. No dowry was paid for Eve. Rather, she was as much a gift to Adam as

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<sup>9</sup>Theological Advisory Group, "Payment of Dowry and the Christian Church," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 15.2 1996, 128. Accessed October 04, 2016, [biblicalstudies.org.uh/pdf/ajet/15-2\\_128.pdf](http://biblicalstudies.org.uh/pdf/ajet/15-2_128.pdf)

Adam was to her. No wonder the words “therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24) are conceived to be foundational in the teaching on marriage, a scripture that does not mention and arguably leaves no room for payment of dowry at any point. That there is the practice prevalent in Biblical times of dowry *per se* cannot justify its existence now, otherwise we may as well take the prevalence of slavery and polygamy during those times as being justification of these clear vices. There is no connection between the practice of dowry in the African context with the biblical occurrence; without doubt, it is a mere coincidence that there are incidences of dowry in the Bible and the practice in our setting, and it cannot at all be claimed that our forefathers who began the practice got inspiration from the Bible which they had no idea about anyway.

Stephen David<sup>10</sup> writing against payment of dowry in the Indian way whereby it is the woman’s family who pays the husband-to-be’s family advances several other reasons why payment of dowry is anti-biblical: first, it violates the commandment of “love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:33) under which believers are expected to love and which love is supposed to be a selfless act of giving and helping others. Believers are not supposed to be greedy seekers of money. Second, seeking dowry is to Stephen David identified with the lust for money which believers are forbidden to have. (1 Timothy 6:10). Admittedly this is a hard stance that is typical of a decisive position against the Indian system called the *Jahaz* or *Aunnipot* which was outlawed as far back as 1961 in that part of

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<sup>10</sup>Stephen David, “Why is Dowry Wrong? A Biblical Perspective”, January 31, 2008, accessed on October 11, 2016, <http://www.sakshitimes.net/blog/2008/01/31/why-is-dowry-wrong-abilical-perspective-234/> January 31.

the world and is there ranked as a social evil without hesitation.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from being wanting in Biblical support, the requirement for dowry is by its very essence unconscionable as it commoditises the would-be-wife and renders the getting of the hand of the woman in marriage transactional. Of course, this accusation is objected to with vehemence by all, but it still stands that dowry is consideration for the woman's hand in marriage and this was so even in the customs characteristic of the Bible times regarding which Freeman says as follows:

The dowry comes not *with* the bride, but *for* the bride. In Oriental marriages the bride is given only on receipt of consideration. *In many cases the transaction amounts to actual bargaining and sale*; this, however is not necessarily the case. Custom regards the father of the bride as entitled to some compensation for the trouble had in in her training, and for the loss of service experienced by her departure from home. If this compensation cannot be rendered in money, jewels, or cattle, it may be given labor. It was in this way that Jacob became herdman to Laban. Moses probably served Jethro in a similar manner for the sake of having Zipporah.<sup>12</sup> (emphasis supplied)

In order to inquire into the legitimacy of the practice of and demand for dowry under customary marriage, it is necessary to understand its rationale. Why was dowry demanded by our forefathers? Surely they were not irrational in it all. At least three reasons seem apparent: first, it represented some form of economic compensation to the parents of the woman for the loss

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<sup>11</sup>The payment of dowry is prohibited under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and the Indian Penal Code

<sup>12</sup>James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, (Plainfield NJ: Logos International, 1972) 37.

of their daughter if not for their investment in her in birthing and bringing her up. Second, it yielded the headship over the woman to her husband-to-be (from her father) and, third, it gave the man the right to the children of the marriage. By requiring to be compensated for their investment in the daughter, the understanding was that in being given to the husband, the parents of the girl were incurring some detriment while at the same time enriching the husband-to-be and his family. In the present times, purportedly in parallel to the practice in the old times, the amount of money that will be demanded by the girl's parents will rise with her level of education so that the more educated she is, the higher the dowry is demanded. The Theological advisory group puts this point succinctly clear albeit rather crudely: "Education Raises the Cost of the Dowry: If the girl is highly educated, she costs more. Traditionally, the woman was an asset. She could help with her work. *Today, the more education she has, the greater will be her worth.*" (emphasis supplied).<sup>13</sup>

The giving in marriage of a woman especially in patrilineal settings may have indeed meant economic loss to her family and gain to her husband and her husband's family to the people of those days but the same cannot be said in the present days. Neither can this stand from the teaching of the Bible on marriage. In the Bible, the repose that the parties in a marriage attain is mutual and not one sided; the woman cedes to the husband as much as the man does to the woman both from the conjugal side and materially as per 1 Corinthians 7:4. "For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." There is some striking

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<sup>13</sup>Theological Advisory Group, "Payment of Dowry and the Christian Church," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 15.2 1996, 128, opcit

irony in the present scenario whereby even with the highest of dowry fully paid by the man, the married woman will still be counted by her parents and family as a present asset still available to them as a matter of right and no reference or reckoning is made to the dowry received and consumed. She continues being their daughter whose capacity to be of help and usefulness is enhanced by her new status as a married person which is in keeping with the teaching of the Bible of “two are better than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12). Compensation for the investment to the parents of the woman by her husband-to-be in the present times is plainly unjust enrichment which families ought to rethink.

As regards the yielding or surrender of headship over the woman from her father to the husband, the man does not need to pay for this which is an order of creation. It is God who authored the headship of a husband over his wife when in His order of creation God created Adam first and then Eve second from Adam’s rib (Genesis 2:21–23). And in the disastrous circumstances of the fall, God reinforced the husband’s relative station of precedence over the wife (Genesis 3:16). It is not by default though that it is so but by God’s perfect design the analogy of which is the relationship between Christ and the Church over which Christ is the head. (1 Corinthians 11:3) “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church*, his body, and is himself its Savior” (Ephesians 5:22–23, emphasis supplied).

The man’s right over the children as a reason for dowry is perhaps held as the most important so much so that in patrilineal systems the required payments are high and in terms of cattle because the ultimate produce from the woman, the children, will be the man’s. A summary response to this is that none between the wife and the husband can be said to own the

children to the exclusion of the other. It is outmoded to think of children as belonging to either the one as against the other: children belong to the mother as much as they do to the father. When it comes to the custody of minor children in case of separation of their parents, it is the welfare or what is in the children's best interest which will dictate and not whether or not the father paid dowry. The point is that principles of civil marriage have gained major inroads into the customary law and all that is archaic under customary and traditional arrangements are of no effect. The attitude of the courts is to act decisively against any custom and traditional practice that disadvantages women. In a recent case of Joseph *Simbaya -vs- Stella Saili*<sup>14</sup>, a High Court Judge<sup>15</sup> over ruled an established Namwanga custom that disentitled a woman from any share in the real property of the marriage on dissolution thereof. Putting it in the clearest of terms, the judge said the following:

The dictum in the *Chibwe* case is on point because it recognises the dynamism of culture and the evolution of the world into a global village incorporating enhanced human rights for all. The world has changed and there is no place for archaic customs that are clearly discriminatory and injurious to those affected by their application....

That for me is underlying factor and women should not to be denied a share of the family property just because she is a woman. This is discriminatory, offensive and repugnant to natural justice and morality. Any customary law which prescribes such treatment of women needs to evolve that particular practice and align itself with the modern world in which it now finds itself.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>*Simbaya -vs- Stella Saili* (2012) volume 2, 551.

<sup>15</sup>Justice Kondolo

<sup>16</sup>Opcit, 558,559

In the case cited by the High Court – *Rosemary Chibwe -vs- Austin Chibwe*<sup>17</sup>, the Supreme Court<sup>18</sup> expressed an opinion instructive in matters that have to do with the application of customary law in family law when it was said as follows:

We observe in this case with interest the dichotomy resulting from application of an unrecorded customary law, against the background of the changed environment of macroeconomic with its ramifications, the growth of the common law of Zambia with the changes in the social values influenced by the international values received in Zambia through its ratification of various international instruments more or less creating two justice paradigms. In fact, this existence of two justice paradigms results in some cases in gross disparities bringing about inequality before the law contrary to our Constitutional provisions. It is incumbent for all the courts to uphold the Constitution. Our Constitution has provided that in Zambia, courts must invoke both the principles of equity and law concurrently, a point which some judicial officers at local court and subordinate court fails to put into practice.<sup>19</sup>

Demand for dowry is illegitimate further because it exposes women to abuse and vulnerability; women are put in a position under which they may be taken advantage of in so many different ways. This may sound ironic because it is the man and not the woman who is bound to pay the dowry; but remember that this notwithstanding, it is the woman who is at the centre of it all. She is the scapegoat and with time will bear the brunt of all the negative ramifications and the inherent harm of the

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<sup>17</sup>*Rosemary Chibwe -vs- Austin Chibwe* (2001) ZR, 1

<sup>18</sup>Justice Chibesakunda delivering the judgement

<sup>19</sup>*Chibwe -vs- Chibwe*, opcit, 7,8

practice. India as a case in point is an example where it is documented that there is an element of exerting coercion on the woman's family and that dowry is a major contributor to violence against women resulting in various offences against them: physical assault, emotional abuse and murder as well as cruelty against them in marriage.<sup>20</sup> Kangende<sup>21</sup> referring to the Zambian scenario says as follows regarding the instability and exposure of women as a result of dowry (*lobola* as he puts it):

*Lobola* is unpopular among most Zambian men. They equate it to wife-buying at exploitative prices. As a result, some men batter their wives and regard them as their private property which they can use and dispose of in any way they deem fit.

As a marriage consolidating and stabilising factor, *lobola* has been ineffective because some marriages start off on rocky ground precipitated by wrangles about *lobola* charges or delayed payments.

### *By Nature Polygamous*

Marriage under customary law is inherently polygamous; and this goes to the very substance of this species of marriage and relegates it not only to a status that is overtly 'non-Christian', but also places it in a position whereby legally it is a safe haven<sup>22</sup> for men who are polygamous with all that may be antecedent to polygamy including sheer extra-marital

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<sup>20</sup>Wikipedia, "Dowry system in India", October 10, 2016, accessed on October, 11, 2016 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dowry\\_system\\_in\\_India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dowry_system_in_India)

<sup>21</sup>Kenneth Kangende, *Male Superstitions of Sex*, (Lusaka: Minta Publishers, 2003) 69

<sup>22</sup>Per Chirwa J. in *Janet Mpofu Mwiba -vs- Dickson Mwiba* (1980) ZR, 175, 178



relationships or adultery. Mwansa<sup>23</sup> clearly underscores that in the traditional society, polygamy serves a social function of accommodating illicit sexual behaviour and expressly concludes that “Polygamy, therefore, serves to remove this stigma. Indulgence in extramarital relationship while one’s wife is pregnant is a most serious offence in traditional Africa, since it is believed to endanger the lives of both the mother and the unborn child. Plurality of wives acts as a ‘safety valve.’”

In contrast, marriage under statute – the marriage in church – is monogamous in essence and carries the credentials of being Christian. The understanding and definition of marriage under statute crystallised during times well before England began to feel ashamed of being referred to as a Christian Nation (and when perhaps it was so!) and marriage and the process were an ecclesiastical concern. The marriage vows, “to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part,” for instance have been recited in church weddings for hundreds of years and are said to have formed part of English church standards from as far back as 1552.<sup>24</sup> During the delivery of his celebrated judgment in the case of *Hyde -vs- Hyde and Woodman* in 1866, Lord Penzas referred to the position or status of ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ the way it was conceived throughout ‘Christendom’ and under ‘the laws of all Christian nations’. Lord Penzas’ definition of marriage which of course does not apply in the European nations which have abandoned the Bible captures what is arguably the scriptural meaning thereof, when he said that, “I conceive that marriage, as

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<sup>23</sup>K.T. Mwansa, “Bigamy Law in Zambia: A Critical View,” *Zambia Law Journal*, Volume 14 (1982): 40

<sup>24</sup>BBC, “Religions – Christianity: Marriage and Weddings”, June 23, 2009, accessed on October 17, 2016, [marriage.dclm-uk.org-marriage-procedure-in-the-church](http://marriage.dclm-uk.org-marriage-procedure-in-the-church).

understood in Christendom, may for this purpose be defined as the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others....”<sup>25</sup>

The description of statutory marriage as Christian marriage has received affirmation by the Zambian Courts so that in the case of *Janet Mpofu Mwiba -vs- Dickson Mwiba* for example, it was said clearly that “The basis of marriage is English law in the Christian marriage, the voluntary union for life of one man with one woman to the exclusion of all others....”. Of course the Biblical standards of marriage are that it is monogamous (and not polygamous) and heterosexual rather than homosexual and divorce is the exception to, rather than the prescription of God’s design. It hit the disciples when Jesus Christ taught them the permanency of marriage and relying upon the Mosaic Law, they asked Him why divorce was countenanced. Jesus’ answer took them back to Genesis 2 where the model of marriage is as it were cast in steel. He noted that it was not meant to be so from the beginning of the creation of God when he made Adam and Eve male and female. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Mark 10:4–9)

Mushota<sup>26</sup> identifies what could be termed as departures of customary marriage from Lord Penzas’s definition as being that customary marriage is not necessarily voluntary and neither is it a union of one man and one woman or for life. Rather, it can be an arranged marriage, it can be polygamous and a wife may be easily divorced. Prior to 1963, it was not open for the indigenous people to contract marriage under statute but they were restricted to only marry under customary law arguably because in the eyes of the colonialists, this is all that was there for them

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<sup>25</sup>*Hyde -vs- Hyde and Woodman* (1886) LR1 P&D 130 as cited in Mushota opcit, 57

<sup>26</sup>Mushota, opcit, 57

or perhaps it was thought that the locals were predisposed to polygamy and it would be onerous for them to be in marriages that restricted how many wives they were to marry. In 1963, the law was changed to allow individuals other than European settlers to marry under statute and this development was punctuated by a misfortune of a prominent Zambian who, as it were, only accustomed to marriage of a polygamous nature, got married under what was then called the Marriage Ordinance when his earlier marriage was still subsisting, the case of *The People -vs- Chitambala*.<sup>27</sup> Chitambala had married Annie Mumbi and they had three children when without divorcing Mumbi, Chitambala married another woman, Grace Lombe. He was convicted of the criminal offence of bigamy and sentenced to twelve months of imprisonment.

Now, customary marriage although potentially polygamous is convertible to statutory marriage provided that the man will have not married another woman or, in short, the marriage is still not yet polygamous. Where this happens, the statutory marriage takes precedence and the couple's marriage commitments cease to be under customary law and its traditional dictates. Of course there is no consideration or marriage payment applicable for marriage under statute and all that is required is fulfilment of the formalities prescribed under the Marriage Act (i.e., it must be solemnised by a licensed church minister or such other officer, it must take place in a in a designated or licensed place and must be preceded by notice by one of the parties of their intention to marry not less than twenty one days prior to the event and, the parties must be of a given age). The marriage process under statute is the one which is aligned to church weddings so much so that ministers who preside over church weddings by and large do so by virtue of

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<sup>27</sup>*The People -vs- Chitambala* (1969) ZR, 193

being officers licensed under the Marriage Act. However, it needs to be underscored that the popular trappings of a church wedding like particular wedding attire, the father handing the bride to the bridegroom and rings and cakes and the reception, etc, etc are not essential and in fact do not even necessarily form part of the marriage process under statutory marriage. Indeed, this author does not eulogise the church wedding in its different formats for the sake of it but only because in essence, this holds out to appertain to a Christian while the customary and traditional marriage has the highlighted fundamental flows.

### **The Chaos**

The chaos that the Zambian marriage process suffers from is manifold but the scope of this paper only allows us to consider four aspects of the problem. First, there is the carrying of unnecessary and redundant encumbrances of customary and traditional marriage into Christian marriage. The man and wife begin the process the traditional and customary way and then convert the marriage from customary to statutory marriage which is Christian but the couple hangs on and, as it were, subject their marriage to the requirements under customary law which is a regime of marriage which they have vacated. And by the way, what is in reference here is not just the Zambian marriage process generally but the marriage process of the Christian young man that has been described above who kick-starts the process by courting one girl whose parents he gets over to see through a go-between. Fast-forward to the ceremony in church under this process: what happens there is that having already settled the dowry or part thereof, the woman is already the man's wife under customary law and effectively, the ceremony in church is but converting a customary marriage into a statutory marriage! By lining before the 'altar' in church and being pronounced as 'Mr and Mrs', the couple has died to

customary marriage; customary marriage is the old that has passed.

The encumbrances of customary marriage which the couple takes into Christian marriage does take different forms. To begin with, there are processes to do with the first night of the man and wife. Under most tribes in Zambia, there is keenness if not nagging pre-occupation to know if the woman was a virgin or not as well as to inquire into the manliness of the man (and curiously not the man's virginity!). There have been actual incidences which have caused stress to the newly-weds who dread the night following the wedding because there are *aligizi* and *ifimbusa* who are delegated by their respective relatives to continue with their business after the church process and follow the couple to the place where they are to consummate the marriage. Some Christian leaders feel impotent at this point, being Zambian, and they respect the Zambian tradition and customs, which they believe should approximate to whichever processes are at play so long there is no manifest spiritism or rituals.

Then there are processes to do with payment of dowry or completion of the *nkongole*. In some traditions, it is disrespectful to pay the whole sum which the man is charged so you only pay something towards it. In other instances though, it is a question of ability since the bride and bridegroom have a huge budget to take care of so the family of the girl give the man some breathing space. The point though is that the omission to pay the balance has no effect on the marriage that ensues subsequent to the church service and as a matter of fact, the debt if ever is overtaken by events.

Another encumbrance has to do with issues of rites and rituals that take place after marriage and these include *matebeto* and *ukwingisha* among the Bembas who are here taken as a notorious example. Plainly, it is pointless and redundant for

those married under statute to indulge in these extra processes as their marriages are under a different regime altogether and the statutory marriage which ensues from the church wedding supersedes the customary marriage that necessitates these rituals and rites.

The second aspect of the chaos is the fact that there is at once a myriad of authorities in traditional and customary marriage on one hand and abounding ignorance on the other hand. This multiplicity of authorities and conspicuous ignorance has led to so much uncertainty and inscrutable ingenuity: you cannot question anything because it is like any one can say and defend anything. Lately, there are issues of *ichisekela nsalamu*, *ichilanga mulilo*, and *matebeto* which are taking place virtually every weekend as pre-wedding events. These are supposed to belong to one tribal group but are getting wide adaptation and adoption across tribes. But the trouble is ignorance and controversy over which is which and what precedes what. And worse still, Christian people and church leaders are often the least informed who are on the instructor's chair and on the receiving end. It would appear that whosoever calls the shots actually casts a spell upon Christians; they just change colours when they are the ones to give the girl. There have been stories and reports of respected Christians who are church leaders but who when it comes to marriage negotiations and procedures affecting their own or in which they are involved rigidly insist on the most questionable, unconscionable and unreasonable terms. People with no known history of traditional and cultural activism suddenly manifest serious inclinations towards the indefensible all in the name of tradition and Zambian culture and more so in the name of standing by their tribe, by their *mwambo*, *intambi* opposition of which is taken personally offensive.

Third, owing to the multiplicity of authority and ignorance the traditions and customs which people are mesmerised to indulge in, there is unpredictability in all the foregoing; things are in a state of perpetual flux. What happened in the 1980s regarding the process is not now at play and vice versa. How? One would have thought that there was some element of antiquity to customary law. That seems not to be the case because of reliance on oral tradition in a setting where the old people, the *nkalambas* have carried the customs and traditions to the grave.

Fourth, there is to the chaos increasing commercialisation of every bit of the process. That the dowry is largely commercialised all but goes without saying. Even tribal groupings among which all that was asked for were hoes and axes now demand for sums of money that even surpass those that asked for cattle. In the name of urbanisation and modernisation, so much money is now involved. Then you have some *go-betweens* who demand commission or cuts from the saving that will ensue from the bargain during the negotiations which the *go-between* will attain. The commission is supposed to come from the man which is not only exploitative but also sheer corruption.

### **The Dilemma**

The dilemma in all this chaos briefly touched upon above, is basically that there is at the centre of it a man and a maiden whose way is characteristic of what confounded the writer of Proverbs 30:19 when he confessed of his failure to understand the way of a man with a maiden or the way of a man and a woman who have fallen in love. The two have to ride the storm and somehow find their way to get together! They may be uncomfortable about a lot things, embarrassed about quite a bit of it and may be beset with crippling terms and have no choice

in the matter; but they are ready to endure it all for the sake of love. The two find themselves thoroughly socialised to merely walk into and get inaugurated into a prior established package. They are individually who according to Sharp and West “are passing merely the bearers of a set of pre-established statements about meaning of a collective conscience defined in tribal terms.”<sup>28</sup> This dilemma is not a novelty but arguably it is one which must have prompted the amendment in the law in 1963 to extend the Christian marriage process to indigenous Zambians. During debate of the amendment in the transitional Parliament, one of the Members of Parliament, Mr John Mwanakatwe is reported to have said as follows:

...the possibility is that in the not distant future we shall be able to make it possible for Africans to be able to contract their marriage by English law. I say so because though African marriages are valid by customary law, we know that in cases, particularly in the urban areas, *it is no longer possible for the educated Africans to subject themselves to the rigorous nature of customary law, so that the proposed law will definitely be a landmark in so far as the Africans of this Territory are concerned. Now with the westernisation of African people, it is very often extremely worrying and embarrassing to educated African people when men have died and complicated customary rules have to be applied.*<sup>29</sup> (Emphasis supplied)

Doubtless some Christians will see no dilemma to talk about in the process under discussion. Apart from identifying with the traditional and customary marriage and all the processes that belong to it, some churches, for example, are willing agents in

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<sup>28</sup>John Sharp and Martin West, “Dualism, Culture and Migrant Mineworkers: A Rejoinder from Anthropology,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Volume 39 (June 1982): 67

<sup>29</sup>Hansard No. 109 of 5 Nov. 1963, p.6. as cited in K.T. Mwansa, “Bigamy Law in Zambia: A Critical View,” *Zambia Law Journal*, Volume 14 (1982): 34



the negotiations, including the fixing of, collection and settlement of dowry. There is no offence to the Scriptures, they argue, so there is no evil intended.<sup>30</sup> Without attempting to deliberately mystify and demonise innocent processes, a suggestion here is that the 'complicated rules' and processes may not just be redundant but complicit of rituals. Some of the processes described by Chondoka and attributed to the traditions among the Bembas including *ukulasa imbusa*, *ukushikula* and *ukutema akalongo* are plainly ritualistic. Consider for instance when he says as follows concerning *ukutema akalongo*:

Not many people witnessed the ceremony. It was in fact, a ritual of handing installed three little anthill-shaped pot supporters (*amafwesa*) around the fire, on which the little marriage pot with water in it, would be balanced while heating. Once that was done, all three, husband, wife and *nasenge* took the little marriage pot filled with water holding it with two fingers (thumb and first finger) on the brim and put it on the fire. When the water was warm. The aunt put a little in a basin and poured it on the fingers of the husband and the wife. That was washing their hands, purifying them. If the ritual was not done, the spouses would die of consumption, *ukukowela*.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>On its website, the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Midlands Region, UK, there is the statement under 'Marriage Procedure in the Church' that after the dowry list has been collected by the designated person in the church, it is to be submitted to the Marriage committee for scrutiny and approval before payment is made. [marriage.dclm-uk.org-marriage-procedure-in-the-church](http://marriage.dclm-uk.org-marriage-procedure-in-the-church), 2016. Accessed October 04, 2016

<sup>31</sup>Yizenge A. Chondoka, *opcit*, 99

Furthermore, according to Elizabeth Colson<sup>32</sup> an anthropologist who worked among the Tonga of Southern Province from as early as 1946, even the taking of the bride to the husband was effectively ritualistic and formed part of the Tonga marriage rituals which involved *mizimo* or spirits.

### **Resolution of the Chaos and dilemma**

The view of the author is that ideally, the dilemma would be simply resolved by altogether abandoning the go-between, the negotiations and the dowry payment and sticking to the procedure under the Marriage Act. But often the circumstances which the man and the maiden find themselves in are not ideal at all and the forces which they face are not their match. The principle that should operate is suggested to be “Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do” (1 Corinthians 8:8); so, get a go-between, pay the price for your loved one—it is immaterial—and walk down the aisle to the altar. It is not that it is essential for you to do all this. After taking the vows and being pronounced man and wife at the altar, move on and now get rid of all trappings of customary law and practices and traditions that you do not need anyway!

Those Christians who are on the giving end of the marriage process (parents of brides), ought to consider yielding their daughters without demanding consideration for them and ensuring that they do not commoditise their daughters and commercialise and render the marriage process of their daughters transactional. Our daughters and sisters and aunts and nieces are beyond financial value and so is what we have invested in them including the investment of our character and

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<sup>32</sup>Elizabeth Colson, *Tonga Religion in the Twentieth Century*, (Lusaka: Bookworld Publishers, 2006) 163

love; we cannot possibly be compensated for any of this, not in terms of chickens or goats of cattle or land and not in so much cash be it Zambian Kwacha or United States Dollars.

The church as an establishment with a critical stake in the marriage process ought equally to take its rightful place and be unequivocal about its role as the arbiter in the creation of marriage recognised under the law. The church and its officers should not be under the influence of whoever is calling the shots in traditional and customary arena. Neither will it be healthy especially in the long run for the church to continue giving space and accommodation to it.

### **Conclusion**

This essay analyses what process a typical Zambian Christian who takes marriage as part of his or her practice of the faith will go through. Effectively, the man is allowed by his wife-to-be to meet her parents through a go-between in keeping with the Zambian customs and tradition. Almost invariably, the man and his wife-to-be desire to and actually end up with a wedding in church culminating in a marriage certificate thus ending what is commonly known as a High Court marriage which is really marriage under statue. The formal steps of complying with the Zambian customs and traditions have been explained to be not in conformity with the tenets of Christian marriage and the Bible more so as relates to dowry and the polygamous nature of the resultant marriage. Reference has been made to the chaos and the dilemma in all the foregoing, the resolution of which really lies in understanding the whole marriage process as it is and side-lining the customary and traditional processes in all ways and by all means possible and necessary.

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## DISTINGUISHING THE TRUE GOSPEL FROM THE SEDUCTIVE FALSE GOSPEL

*Isaac Makashinyi*

### **Introduction**

I was privileged to have been brought up in a Christian family. My father was elder in an evangelical church until his death in 1999. I grew up feasting on a weekly diet of sound gospel preaching. Looking back, yes, there were some hermeneutical inaccuracies here and there in the sermons of the various preachers we had, including my father, but by and large, what we heard was the evangelical gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and it was under such gospel preaching that I got saved at a youth gathering in 1985.

Today, we have many preachers and many churches from whom we are hearing all kinds of different messages that are heralded as the gospel. And sometimes, people are at a loss, to distinguish between truth and error with respect to the many “gospels” they hear. In the first century, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the church in Galatia, and in that letter, he makes one of the most shocking statements which indicts the Galatian Christians for abandoning the Gospel: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel...” (Galatians 1:6, ESV). Paul made it emphatically clear that the Galatians had flopped in the all-important test of distinguishing between the true and authentic Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the counterfeits to which they were exposed. Sadly, Paul’s indictment of the Galatians Christians is a message the church today desperately needs to hear. The church today has been invaded by many false gospels which are no less subtle,

appealing and seductive than those encountered and embraced by the Galatians.

There is no doubt that the church today is in far greater need of the gospel than never before. Not because people today are most lost than before, but because they are more exposed to the distortions of the gospel than ever before. And there is no greater message they need to hear than that which we call the gospel. In this article, I would like to address four questions: (1) what is the gospel? (2) Why is it important that we define the gospel correctly? (3) What are some of the current common distortions of the gospel? And (4) what corresponding effects does the true gospel bring in the life of the church and individual believers?

### **What is the gospel?**

The gospel is the central message that should lie at the heart of the church's missionary activity. It is the divine message in the redemptive plan of God whose contents are focused on the risen and exalted Lord Jesus Savior. As we see in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, it is the proclamation of the good news of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearances, together with the apostolic explanation of the doctrinal significance of these great facts.

The word *euangelion* in the New Testament times meant good tidings, good news, and it carried with it a note of excitement. Good news was and is the type of message one might shout across the street to a friend or neighbor. "My daughter has gotten 6 points in her grade 12 exams!" "Arsenal have won this year's English premier league!" "It's a boy!" The Christian message of the gospel has that same note of excitement and delight.

It is finished! O what pleasure,



Do those wondrous words afford!  
Heavenly blessings without measure  
Flow to us through Christ the Lord.

It is the message of salvation that has made its triumphal progress throughout the world, growing and bearing fruit in the lives of those who have been evangelized. It is a message, which of course, does not originate from man, but has its origin in God himself. It is “God’s gospel” (1 Thess. 2:2, 8; 2 Cor. 11:7; Rom. 1:1; 15:16). It is also variously phrased in the New Testament “the word of the cross” (1 Cor. 1:18), “the word of faith” (Rom. 10:8), or “the word of the Lord” (1 Thess. 1:8).

Paul declares that the gospel is the “power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). The word power (Greek word *dunamis*, where we get our English word dynamite) is obviously not a reference to its explosive power, as if the gospel will blow men to pieces, but it refers to intrinsic power. The gospel is dynamic and powerful in the transformation of human lives.<sup>1</sup> The goal of the operation of this divine power is bring sinners to salvation. For we are all sinners before God, subjects of His wrath and penalty of sin. The Christ of the gospel message delivers us from the penalty and power of sin (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13; Phil. 1:28; Eph. 2:5, 8; Phil. 2:12; 2 Cor. 1:6; 7:10). And it is via the word preached, received and believed by the sinner that salvation comes home to his heart. God forgives and accepts sinners not because of what they do but because of what Christ has done. It is His work, not theirs, that justifies sinners. It is His righteousness granted by grace and received through faith that saves sinners. That is the transforming, life-giving message of the gospel.

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<sup>1</sup>Johnson, Lewis S. “The Gospel that Paul Preached,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 128 no 512 Oct-Dec 1971, p 331.

So the New Testament meaning of the term gospel is clear and precise: “it is the good news of God’s merciful rescue of an otherwise doomed humanity through the mediatorial life and work of Jesus Christ. At its center is the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, whose sinless life and atoning death supply the ground of salvation for all who repent and believe.”<sup>2</sup> The gospel is good news, news of God’s grace to the unworthy, news of a victory of righteousness and love in which the people of God forever share.

### **Why is it important that we define the gospel correctly?**

It is important that we understand the gospel and define it correctly and biblically. I will suggest some reasons why we must take this question seriously:

First, the correct definition of, and maintenance of the integrity of the gospel is a matter of life and death. Why would the apostle Paul be stirred in his heart as he challenged the Galatian Christians, and denounced the Judaizers who were tampering with the Gospel? Was it not because Paul thought in biblical categories, and one of the fundamental categories of biblical thought is this: That what you believe is the difference between life and death. In other words, contrary to the mentality that is prevalent in our day, it is not the sincerity of your belief that is the difference between life and death, but the object of our belief. To believe the truth is to be saved. To believe a lie, no matter how sincere you are, is to be damned. This is what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who

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<sup>2</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999). Vol. 3, p. 63.

are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore, God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thess. 2:9-12). The lie may be spoken in the very language of some of the gospel-thought forms; the terms of forgiveness and pardon; God and Christ may be profusely used, but if there is a tampering with what God means in those words, and a tampering with the proportion that God gives to those words in their meaning, you may believe that tampered gospel ever so sincerely, only to be damned by your sincere belief. So, if we believe a wrong gospel, we shall do so to our destruction.

Second, Romans 1:16 which I have cited above, tells us that the gospel is the “power of God to the salvation of everyone who believes.” There can be no possession of God’s salvation apart from the gospel that God Himself has given. And so we have to be concerned about the meaning of the gospel for our own eternal safety.

Third, if you have believed and embraced the true gospel, you have to be concerned that you are accurately conveying that gospel to others. One of Paul’s reasons for writing to Timothy was to defend the gospel against attack and against falsification, and to ensure its accurate transmission to the generations yet to come.<sup>3</sup> What we have received and has been committed to us by our Lord, we must be concerned to proclaim faithfully as we received it.

Fourth, the life and wellbeing of the church depends upon it. Unless the integrity of the gospel is preserved, true and godly living cannot be long maintained, for the only soil in which and

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<sup>3</sup>John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p 21.

out of which true godliness grows is the soil of a pure gospel. Therefore, one of the great concerns of the apostles in the inspired epistles was to explain the nature of the gospel to those who have already embraced it that they might advance the cause of godliness and holiness amongst the people of God. The book of Romans is a classic example of this. Paul wrote the book as a systematic explanation of the gospel to those who have already embraced it, that understanding it, there might a promotion of holiness of life.

Fifth, it secures the safety and wellbeing of unborn generations. Our forefathers thought long and hard of the legacy they would leave to future generations. And they were willing to risk all for the sake of passing on the unadulterated and pure gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fredrick W. Faber puts it succinctly in the words of this hymn:

Faith of our fathers, living still  
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword,  
O how our hearts beat high with joy  
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!  
Faith of our fathers! holy faith!  
We will be true to thee till death!

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,  
Were still in heart and conscience free;  
And blest would be their children's fate,  
If they, like them should die for thee:  
Faith of our fathers! holy faith!  
We will be true to thee till death!

### **What are some of the common distortions of the gospel?**

It is an undeniable fact that the gospel has gone through massive distortions, aberrations, compromises and over

simplifications. I would like to highlight some of the forms of the “gospel” that we are hearing so frequently today.

*A Syncretistic Gospel*

According to *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, syncretism, is “the mingling together of different philosophies or religions, resulting in hybrid forms of philosophy or of religion.”<sup>4</sup> In our African context, it would mean a theology which finds itself torn between traditional African beliefs and Christian faith. The result of such reconciliation of different beliefs and practices in religion is a mixture into one single belief, and if the gospel is understood from such a perspective, you come up with a dangerous concoction. The gospel birthed in such a theological milieu sees Christ principally as our healer (witch doctor). Jesus is seen as successful spiritual healer, very much like the venerated traditional healers. The pastors, modern day prophets and apostles personify the liberating, delivering and healing ministry of Christ. In Christ, the witch doctor tradition is continued on one hand, but radically Christianized on the other. So people flock to these supposed “men of God,” not to hear the saving gospel preached, but to be delivered from all kind of evil forces that haunt them and to get their breakthrough, whatever that means.

*A Moralistic Gospel*

The gospel is reduced to a belief that it is there to simply make tenable, improvements in your behavior. It is a works-righteousness belief that seeks acceptance before God through self-effort. The Bible makes it very clear in the book of Romans

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<sup>4</sup>M. E. Glasswell, “Can There Be an African or Black Theology,” *The Modern Churchman*, 18 (Summer, 1975): 165.

and Galatians that we are justified not by our works, not by our efforts, not by our deeds, but by faith—and by faith alone. The only way you can receive the benefit of Christ’s life and death is by putting your trust in Him—and in Him alone. People are so easily seduced into believing that they can actually gain all the approval they need by their behavior. I have often spoken to many people in the course of our church evangelistic efforts who believe they are Christians simply because they are living what they consider a morally upright life. There is no mention of repentance and confession of sin, but simply a desire to live their lives after the example of Christ. This is a subversion of the Gospel and communicates a false gospel to a fallen world, an insidious false gospel that promises the favor of God and the satisfaction of God’s righteousness to sinners as being dependent on how you behave and commit yourself to moral improvement. The remedy to moralism comes directly from the Apostle Paul when he insists that “a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus.” Salvation comes to those who are “justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.” (Gal. 2:16).

### *A Prosperity Gospel*

The prosperity gospel has become one of the most dominant belief systems in Africa. The context obtaining on our continent has made this kind of teaching become very attractive and thrive. The context is that replete with social and economic problems like poverty, unemployment, school fees and barrenness, etc. People are not concerned about the state of their souls before God, but with a job, a husband, a child, a car, an education, a visa to the West. The prosperity gospel assumes that every Christian has a right to be prosperous; that God will make every Christian prosperous if the believer does the right

things. It assumes that poverty is an indication of lack of faith. But this is not Scripture's teaching.

*A Mystical Gospel*

Mysticism has always plagued the church of the Lord Jesus Christ for many years. It is fashionable today to hear preachers speak of "moving in the anointing" or "being in the supernatural." When you listen carefully to what they are saying, you discover that they are importing New Age concepts into Christianity. They are holding to a belief that one can attain religious knowledge by direct communication from God, and by passive absorption of the human activities into the divine.<sup>5</sup> It is characteristic of mysticism that it makes its appeal to the feelings as the sole, or at least as the normative, source of knowledge of divine things.

An appeal is made to experience in a way that makes it sacrosanct and infallible, and elevated to the same status as the word of God, and in some cases, above the word of God. The gullible are given the impression that the gospel is about attaining to this higher order. It is the error of Gnosticism and it finds itself in mainstream Christianity through the backdoor. So mysticism baptized with the name of Christianity is not thereby made Christianity. Warfield warns us that "a rose by any other name will smell as sweet. But it does not follow that whatever we choose to call a rose will possess the rose's fragrance."<sup>6</sup>

This gospel distortion places more importance on a special spiritual experience or feeling (the subjective) than on true biblical faith that rests on Christ (the objective). Christianity is a

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<sup>5</sup>A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), p. 32.

<sup>6</sup>B. B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Studies in Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), Vol 9, p. 666.

religion that touches all of life and the human experience, including emotions and the experiential. The error of mysticism overemphasizes the emotional and experiential dimension of Christianity, forgetting that God works in our lives through the gospel even when we can't feel it directly. We are to pursue Christ first and the experiences will follow. This view "reduces the gospel to dynamic emotional and spiritual experiences." We could go on and on to look at other gospel distortions, but time and space does not allow me to proceed beyond these that I have stated above. We need to quickly move on to our last question.

### **What corresponding effects does the true gospel bring in the life of the church and individual believers?**

We have many people in Zambia who claim to be Christians. They speak the Christian language, they attend church and other Christian gatherings, but sadly, their lives show not the slightest trace of a life that has come under the transforming power of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you ask such people what they know about the gospel dynamics, you would be shocked the kind of answers you would get. These people wear Christianity on their sleeves, but its impact on their lives is next to nothing. Without sounding overly judgmental, I have met prominent individuals in our society – politicians, executives, businessmen, etc. who speak eloquently on "Christian talk," but whose lives betrays the poverty of vital Christianity in their souls. Sadly, even sound evangelical Christians have been deceived into accepting and embracing these pretenders as believers, and even accepting them into church membership.

The question is: does the gospel make any difference in our lives when we get saved? Does it really have any impact upon one's life? The answer is a definite yes. The gospel is the good news of changed lives (2 Cor. 5:17). When Christ's life comes into



us by the Spirit, He shapes us into a new kind of person. The gospel is not just a truth about us that we affirm with our minds, it is also a reality we must experience in our hearts and souls, and never leaves us the same. You can't claim to be a Christian and yet leave like the devil's cousin. And this is one of the most distinct characteristics of the true gospel – the transformative power it exerts upon the redeemed sinner.

Lost, self-centered, God-rejecting, Christ-denying sinners, pleasure seekers, perverse, sexually immoral, stubborn, defiant and disobedient sinners are changed, not by a redoubled effort to follow the example of Christ, or any personal improvement plan, but they are changed by the gospel and a deepening understanding of its implication upon their lives. The gospel re-structures our motivations, our self-understanding and identity, and our worldview. As Tim Keller puts it, “behavioral compliance to rules without heart-change will be superficial and fleeting.”<sup>7</sup>

Paul, writing to the church in Rome, speaks of the goal of his missionary communion as “to bring about the obedience of faith...among the nations” (Rom. 1:5). This refers to Christian behavior, a total response to the gospel, not simply at our initial conversion, but a believing obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ and what He requires of His people. What lies at the heart of the gospel is not just that a Christian is declared righteous, but that he is a person made righteous to live a transformed life. This is the logic, for example, of Paul's thinking in Romans 6. As Christians, we have died to sin, and so we cannot go on living in sin, the same way we did before. Being a new creation, the old things have passed away and new things have come. We have

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<sup>7</sup>Tim Keller, *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (New York: Penguin Books, reprint 2011), p. 119.

been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. We have been granted the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have been given a new nature, we are a new creation. And all of that is linked to dying. This dying concept is at the heart of understanding the experiential transformation of the gospel that saves.

Regarding Christian conduct, Paul sees the gospel as an inspiration and guide for it: "Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27).

### **As churches, what do we need to do to allow the gospel to shape our life and ministry?**

*Those who called has called to gospel ministry must shepherd their people to think and live in a manner worthy of the gospel.*

The health of a local church is dependent on how accurately, effectively, and broadly its pastors bring the gospel to bear in the real lives of their people, and the degree to which the people have a deep personal understanding of and appreciation for the gospel. We must make clear the connections between the gospel and its doctrinal and behavioral implications. That is what we see the inspired writers of the epistles do all the time. Gospel truths are married to expected conduct.

For example, in Romans 5:1 Paul states, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The logic of this verse is very clear. Something follows from the essential truth of the gospel. Our having peace with God is not the gospel itself, but is a powerful

implication of the gospel. And understanding this gospel truth is part of conforming one's thinking to the glorious gospel. But not only is the gospel to shape our thinking, there are massive behavioral implications of the gospel as well. The gospel is not only to renew our minds, but to inform our conduct too. When we read our Bibles, we must do so in order to detect the behavioral connections to the gospel. When Paul appeals to the Corinthians to "flee from sexual immorality" he explicitly bases his appeal on the gospel - "you are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body" (1Cor 6:18-20). When he urges forgiveness he explicitly references the gospel as both motivation and model (Eph 4:32). When he tells husbands to love their wives he does so by linking his exhortation directly to the gospel (Eph 5:25). Many more examples could be given. Ultimately, all Christian behaviour should flow out of the gospel. If even a quarter of the Zambian population lived in the full light of the gospel obligations, don't you think we would be seeing a much different Zambia?

*We must be confident in the effectiveness of God's ordained means to save sinners.*

The pressure to lay aside gospel preaching is all around us. We are bombarded with everything but gospel preaching. However, God has sovereignly ordained the means by which He will save all who will be saved. In Romans 10:14-17 we see the call to send preachers of the gospel so that people will call upon the Lord and be saved by faith. We must resist the subtle forces inside and outside the church to lay aside gospel preaching for the more popular fads and gimmicks. Even if people reject the message of the gospel, the truth is that it remains "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). Since it is the power of God for salvation, we must therefore preach it with all fervency and urgency.

*We must steer away from the danger of compromising the gospel by proclaiming it in vague, imprecise terms.*

If we are to be true to our calling, then we must preach the gospel clearly even though it necessarily offends some of our listeners. An imprecise gospel is a vague articulation of the gospel which is inoffensive to most people. A gospel that doesn't talk about man's lostness and sinfulness is not gospel at all. We must make the gospel a non-negotiable in our ministry. We must preach it clearly and in unambiguous terms. And as members of evangelical congregations, we must never allow our pastors to tickle our ears with anything that has no semblance to the true gospel. Let stand "firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27).

## **Conclusion**

One of the greatest instruments that God has used in the history of the church was the apostle Paul. Paul's ministry was related to the saving purposes of God in which the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was central. As believers today, we must be committed to and involved in this same gospel. And in this way, we will identify with God's gracious plan of salvation. But do so, let us be certain that what we believe and what we propagate is the unchanging glorious gospel of Christ. Let us acquaint ourselves with the counterfeit, subversive, and seductively false gospel. The world's hope lies in the church's commitment to contend for this gospel entrusted to us.

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BOOK REVIEW: EXPOSITORY APOLOGETICS

*Andrew Matoke Ogeto*

Voddie Baucham Jr. *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015. 210 pp.

Apologetics is probably one of the least addressed categories in popular Christian literature. When you visit your local Christian bookshop, you will find that there are only a handful of books that address this topic. Therefore, we are always thankful when we see another book that will help us better defend our faith in this dark generation.

Voddie Baucham has written a new book on apologetics entitled *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word*. I must say that when I first heard the title I was a bit puzzled. I had to keep reminding myself that the book was not about preaching but about apologetics. The word “expository” is definitely a buzz word in the homiletics world therefore I was curious to find out what this word had to do with apologetics.

When we hear about apologetics we often think of winning arguments, thesis statements, eloquence or rhetoric, and logic. Yes, all these may be good tools to use, but in this book the author tries to demystify our understanding of apologetics. The first chapter of the book is occupied with providing a cogent and clear definition of expository apologetics. Indeed, anytime a whole chapter is dedicated to a “definition” then one can be sure of a sufficient treatment of the subject at hand. Baucham defines it as “merely the application of the principles of biblical exposition to the art and science of apologetics” (20). He recalls how he used to get responses after preaching that remarked that his preaching sounded like someone making a case for truth. He asserts that an expository apologetic is about “being biblical...easy to remember...and being conversational.” In this

first chapter the author emphasizes over and over that contrary to what most of us think apologetics should “aid gospel proclamation.” The reference point for Baucham’s definition of apologetics is taken from Van Til who stated that apologetics is “the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life” (21). This is indeed a breath of fresh air for any believer who has struggled with the idea of apologetics. According to Baucham, vindication can be done either through answering questions or wrestling with error. Baucham highlights four aspects that necessitate apologetics. That is, biblical illiteracy, postmodern thinking, open opposition to biblical truth, and opposing religions. Anyone passionate about the gospel will easily identify these needs. The author also identifies three audiences to whom he is writing to: the evangelist, the preacher and the disciple. In addition, he emphasizes that much of this book is written to the evangelist. This immediately tells you that he wants to see unbelievers reached with the gospel. Since the call to reach the lost is a call to all Christians then apologetics ceases to become a discipline for the learned, eloquent, and sharp, or what Baucham calls the Navy Seals of Christianity.

Since this book is hinged on 1 Peter 3:13–17 then the second chapter is in my estimation the engine of this book. I also found it to be exegetical, pastoral, and challenging. If, according to Baucham, 1 Peter 3 is the essence of apologetics then I would have expected a longer exposition of this passage than he has done. I would have expected the author to camp here for a while knowing that, as he rightly admits, our understanding of apologetics is skewed. In this chapter Baucham proves that any Christian who understands Peter’s instruction in this passage can be convinced that apologetics is for every Christian, that it is rooted in the context of humility, holiness, and suffering, and that it ought to be a natural part of our Christian walk. The

broader context that precedes the key text of 1 Peter 3:15 teaches us about the identity, attitude, speech, and character of the apologist. At the heart of this chapter, according to Baucham, is the discussion of our righteousness and how that teaches us about apologetics and the apologist. The author argues that our righteousness makes us strangers and aliens, it brings opposition and suffering, it is born of our devotion to Christ, it requires an explanation, it shapes our explanation, and lastly it vindicates our explanation. At the end of this chapter Baucham powerfully concludes:

By framing the discussion with suffering on either side, Peter makes it clear that he is not offering a means by which Christians dominate discussions, overthrow empires, or change public opinion. Apologetics is ultimately an expression of our willingness to suffer rather than compromise. It is the explanation for our suffering, both in terms of why we suffer and how we suffer. Apologetics is our answer to those at whose hands we suffer as well as those who witness our suffering (47).

In the chapter, *Why Unbelief?* the author argues that “our hearers don’t have an information problem; they have a sin problem.” This should caution us from doing apologetics in a way that just bombards our hearers with information as if that will cure their unbelief. In my estimation, this should produce a humility and dependence upon God because he alone can change people’s hearts. The author clearly unpacks for us Romans 1:16–31, showing us that the Gospel is the solution to man’s sinful state of unbelief. When this is coupled with biblical exposition of other passages and further research, one is left feeling not only the urgency for apologetics but also confidence in the gospel.

In the next five chapters the author attempts to demonstrate what expository apologetics looks like. These are in a sense the



applicational sections. In chapter four we see Paul's expository apologetics. In chapter five the author shows us how to learn apologetics by using creeds, confessions and catechisms. As much as there are immense benefits in using them, it is important to remember that since they have been crafted by men, not all creeds, confessions, and catechisms are biblical. Therefore, one has to be diligent to scrutinize them. Moreover, in these chapters he presents case studies and tools that will equip and encourage any Christian towards expository apologetics. Since the author claims that the motivation to write this book was mainly due to responses he got from his preaching, I would have been disappointed if he didn't show how preaching and apologetics are related. He does this very well not only in the ninth chapter but he provides a sample expository apologetics sermon that he had preached previously.

In conclusion, because of the approach to apologetics the author has taken this is not only a must read, but a book worth coming back to. This book has not only fueled my intentionality in seeking out evangelistic opportunities but even more so given me confidence in God's Word.

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BOOK REVIEW: *MAKING DISCIPLES IN AFRICA*

Chopo C. Mwanza

Jack Chalk. *Making Disciples in Africa: Engaging syncretism in the African Church through Philosophical Analysis of Worldviews*. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2013. 192 pp.

This book came as a result of Jack Chalk's experience teaching and living in Africa; it is also an adaption of his doctoral thesis entitled "Genesis 1–11 and the African Worldview: Conflict or Conformity?" His purpose for writing the book is stated as "... concerned with the religions of Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the areas of conflict and conformity in the worldviews behind those religions" (1).

Chalk believes that there are many things in the way the West has presented the Gospel that have tended to promote syncretism, rather than conversion. Among these are the pluralistic teachings from liberal universities in the West, the desire not to offend leading to people being soft on those aspects of African traditional religion that are non-Biblical, and the desire to contextualize Christianity to Africa leading to not properly handling the Word of God. Chalk therefore proposes a worldview approach to effectively reach the African people. The goal is to see true conversion among Africans, and according to Van Rheeën's work *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*, which Chalk relies on, a changed worldview is necessary to genuine conversion.

Chalk uses Genesis 1–11 to set out the tenets for the biblical worldview and the worldview of African traditional religion. A key component of the Biblical worldview is the proto-evangel in Genesis 3:15, which Christians understand is the gospel in seed

form: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

In contrast to the biblical worldview, the key concept in African traditional religion is what is referred to as “vital life force.” Chalk quotes an online article entitled “Ethical Issues in Uganda” which reads: “we may note that what has been named *The Vital Force Principle* within African thinking has a profound religious meaning in that this vital force is hierarchical, descending from God through ancestors and elders to the individual.” Morality and ethics flow from this, because “whatever increases life or vital force is good; whatever decreases it is bad” (90)

Another difference between the Biblical worldview and that of African traditional religion is how they perceive conception of time, the nature of the spiritual world, death and the nature of life after death. In the Christian worldview, all things are under the control of God, while African traditional religion places a high value on ancestors. Ancestors are the “living dead” with places of reverence and influence over society and everything that happens good or bad is their doing and often connected to what mood they are in.

Chalk recommends approaching Christian syncretism in the African church and Christians through teaching worldview, rather than doctrine. He believes that once people grasp the Biblical worldview, then the particulars of doctrine will fall into place. He proposes that the following questions (topics under three categories) should be asked and answered as opposed to the “traditional” approach.

Ontology Questions:

Is there a Supreme Being, and if so, what is it like?

What is the origin and nature of man?

What is reality and what is ultimate reality?  
What is truth?

#### Cosmology Questions

What is the origin and nature of the universe?  
What is God's relationship with the universe?  
What is the meaning of time?  
Do laws and causality govern the universe absolutely?

#### Teleology Questions

Why do man and the universe exist and do they have a final end?  
Does evil have a purpose?

#### Ethics/Morality Questions

Who or what determines what is moral and immoral?  
How do we know what is right?

#### Aesthetics Questions

What is man's relationship with the natural environment?  
Is there aesthetic value to religious experience?

#### Philosophy of History Questions

What is the meaning of history?  
Is history cyclical or linear in progression?

#### Epistemology Questions

What can we know and how can we know it?  
What justifies a belief?

Chalk goes on to consider whether or not there is continuity or discontinuity between the Christian and African worldview. To do so he examines the approach proposed by Dr. Manasseh Kwame Dakwa Kwame Bediako, who claimed that western missionaries did not just bring the gospel with them but imposed their way of life as well. He further argued that

“anywhere Christianity has taken hold in a culture there is something of Christianity rooted in that pre-Christian culture” (138). Bediako believed that Christianity “completes” or fills in what is missing in the African culture in the same way that Christian Jews are sometimes called “completed Jews.” However, Chalk’s presentation makes it clear that Bediako’s approach entails the African worldview of ancestors and spirits filling in the “gap” in the Christian worldview regarding the spirit world. This filling in involves Bediako stating that Jesus is the Supreme Ancestor through his life, death, resurrection and ascension to the realm of spirit power. As would be expected of any evangelical Christian, Chalk critiques Bediako as diminishing Jesus Christ’s nature and place from that of God to that of a mere ancestor. Indeed, in Bediako’s view, God’s self-consciousness is lost as he becomes part of the multiplicity of divinity. Chalk rejects this approach as highly syncretistic and therefore unbiblical; he sums up his critic by saying “Dr. Bediako makes very little use of scripture in his theology for Africa. There is no mention of sin, judgement, heaven or hell which are basic to Christian theology but which have been shown to be in conflict with the African worldview” (150).

The second approach examined is the one proposed by Gehman, who sees both continuity and discontinuity between the Biblical worldview and that of African traditional religion (ATR). Chalk favors this approach and lists Gehman’s points of continuity as:

1. Christian faith is a fulfilment of the African’s desires.  
Gehman says “...because of human nature, man has an inner hunger and thirst that cannot be met apart from a personal faith and trust in God through Christ” (151).
2. African culture manifests continuity with many elements of Hebrew culture; the Hebrew culture and religion resonates

with the African culture in that there are several similarities in cultural beliefs and religious practices.

3. ATR provides valuable points of contact, such as belief in a Supreme Being and life after death. The points of contact provide a starting point for dialogue in the effort to evangelize the African.

Gehman goes on to present four points of discontinuity, namely:

1. ATR does not lead people to Jesus Christ. ATR does not recognize the problem of sin and the need for salvation by a savior.
2. ATR represents degeneration from true faith, not a development that leads to true faith.
3. ATR differs radically from the Christian gospel in its teachings. Specifically, 'The former is a man-centered religion, while the latter is God-centered. Sin in ATR is against traditions of society and the ancestors, while sin in the Bible is rebellion against God and transgression of his law.' With the concept of sin being different, the view of salvation is different, thus differentiating the reason and manner God deals with humanity.
4. Converts from ATR stress discontinuity, not continuity.

In concluding the discussion on continuity and discontinuity Chalk says "The traditional African worldview cannot be accommodated in total as Bediako proposes, but perhaps neither does it need to be rejected in total as some might conclude, thus leaving room for the continuity/discontinuity model. There are some aspects of the African worldview and culture that conflict with the biblical worldview. Those aspects... need to be addressed in the process of making disciples" (152).

Chalk concludes the book by giving recommendations on how the church should go about "making disciples in Africa." He

claims that if genuine conversion and subsequent growth is to take place among Africans then change of worldview should take place. He suggests that can be done by dealing with the questions and topics that were listed earlier in the review so that the African's worldview is replaced with the biblical worldview.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I will give one point of disagreement, one clarification and a commendation. In his suggested topics to deal with when teaching worldview Chalk omits the nature and work of the spirit world or if it is included then it is by implication. I believe you cannot deal with African Traditional Religion without discussing the nature and work of the spirit world and its relationship to the affairs of men. Therefore, I would include that topic in the list of topics suggested by Chalk.

The second comment is a point of clarification. In his presentation, Chalk almost sounds like he suggesting there is a black and white dichotomy between philosophy and doctrine. As he says in the earlier chapters of the book, teach worldview and the particulars of doctrine will fall in place. I just do not see how you can teach the Christian worldview without teaching the doctrine of the bible. It is however very likely that what Chalk is trying to deal with is the tendency to copy and paste religion from one culture to another. So, he does believe doctrine must be taught but it must be taught in a way that relevant and uproots the unbiblical worldviews of the culture. That's definitely a point needing clarification.

If the reader wants an understanding of the biblical worldview and the African worldview, then *Making Disciples in Africa* is the book to read. It is a readable, well-researched work that deals with many issues that form the foundation of African Traditional Religion that are often left unexamined or cloudy in many other works. Chalk sets out to engage syncretism in the

African church, and both his diagnosis and prescription are spot on! I highly recommend this book to every Christian on the African continent.

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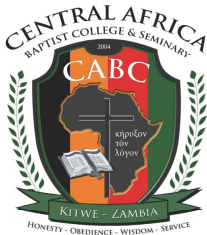
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