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Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA

An AJET Editorial

Many statements have been uttered about Christianity in Africa. While for some, Christianity is growing at an alarming rate with thousands of professions of faith every day, for others, its growth is very gradual - "it is a mile long and an inch deep." "But, has anyone ever considered to ask why? The following articles will provide reasons as to why the alarming rate of growth is stagnated at some points.

The lead article, *Justin Martyr and Kwame Bediako Reflections on the cultural context of Christianity*, by Wendy Elgersma Helleman discusses Justin Martyr, an early Christian author, as examined by Kwame Bediako in his study of the Cultural context of the Christian faith in Africa.

Pearls of wisdom: Pastoral counsel for ministers in training by Richard Gehman is an article based on first-hand information – the research findings of 175 interviewed graduates of Scott Theological College faithfully ministering in seven nations of Africa as pastors, teachers of Bible, church leaders, chaplains, church workers and missionaries. The article offers helpful and significant pastoral counsel in four basic categories of the ministers' life: training, relationship with God, ministry and his private life. These thoughts are a must read by all those preparing for and/or engaged in the ministry of the Word in the African continent, and even the world at large.

The New Apostolic Church (NAC) by Victor Kuligin is a relevant topic that theologians, especially in Africa must be aware of. It is said, "Christianity is exploding in the African continent" but Kuligin rightly asks, "How many believers in these Christian churches are being disciplined [let alone being regular adherents of a faithful church] or being bearers of fruit as disciples of Christ?"

After describing the historical synopsis of NAC, Kuligin, based on Scripture, analyses its key doctrinal beliefs: God, office of an apostle, sacraments, the services for departed souls, how one is saved, view of scripture, church organization and other beliefs. He emphatically concludes that NAC is not simply another church or denomination but is in fact a cult . . . to be avoided. Among other reasons given for this conclusion is that "the salvation of mankind

is entrusted to the [NAC's] apostles, for apart from their work, a person cannot be saved (p.78). This statement sounds a warning to many who may easily be trapped into the snare of this cult.

Launching Church-Strengthening Movements in Africa, is quite an interesting article. Based on a case study of the Baptist Union of South Africa, the author, Timothy Cantrell, gives good and timely suggestions to the unique challenges that have accompanied the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa. In his exploration, Cantrell states that while the numerical growth and expansion of Christianity in the African continent is a cause to rejoice, there is also cause for caution. The reason for this caution is that alongside the stunning expansion of Christianity, there are unique challenges, which make its future uncertain, for example, nominalism (as a result of weak leadership and shallow discipleship), syncretism and false teaching and lack of reflection among others. These critical issues compel the author to rightly state that we need "to launch church-strengthening movements in Africa that will exalt Christ and bless the nations for generations to come" (p.79).

An Apology – In AJET issue 23.1 2004 we published an excellent article by Rev Dr. Timothy Palmer entitled, *Byang Kato: A theological Reappraisal*. We want to extend our apologies to the author and to you, our readers, for an oversight omission of some words of the text on p.6 of the journal. Please insert the enclosed sheet in your copy of the said journal for the sense of the article to be maintained. The article was received by Email and those words were lost during transmission and formatting session. Unfortunately, none of our proof readers captured the error.

Justin Martyr and Kwame Bediako Reflections on the Cultural Context of Christianity

Wendy Elgersma Helleman

The emergence of a massive Christian presence in Africa through the modern missionary movement from the Western churches constitutes one of the most spectacular success-stories in the history of the expansion of Christianity through twenty centuries.¹

Africa is today a world leader in the expansion of Christianity. Missionary efforts of the past century enjoyed only slim rewards at first, but eventually whole villages and tribes came to Christ. The church has continued to multiply, and its growth is now the envy of many parts of the world where Christianity still suffers from the onslaught of secularization. Such growth has not occurred without incisive critique. In his *Theology and Identity*, the noted Ghanaian Christian scholar, Kwame Bediako, has taken on the challenge of contemporary African theologians who accent the negatives in missionary motivation for coming to Africa as the 'dark continent', bringing the light of civilization along with the light of the gospel.

Bediako's work was first written about twenty years ago, but issues of imperialism and Westernism as aspects of the spread of Christianity in Africa are still with us. The present article focuses on Justin Martyr, one of the early

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¹ K. Bediako *Theology and Identity*, 250-51.

Christian authors examined by Bediako in his study of the cultural context in which the faith has come to expression in Africa.²

Christianity and Culture

The issue of Christianity and culture has received considerable attention since the seminal work of H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, which has achieved the stature of a classic, translated into numerous languages. Niebuhr proposed a number of models: Christ in opposition/ perfecting/ transforming/ having an equal/ or parallel status in relationship to culture. For each he provided clear historical examples, promoting the model of Christ *transforming* or restoring culture to what it was meant to be. When we turn to Bediako we find that he acknowledges the approach of Niebuhr, but his interest in the issue of Christ and culture arises from a set of questions which are somewhat different. His work is specifically directed toward clarifying "how the abiding Gospel of Jesus Christ related to the inescapable issues and questions which arise from the Christian's *cultural* existence in the world" (Bediako xi).

The question is challenging enough as such. Bediako's particular historical approach adds significantly to that challenge, since his thesis seeks to establish parallels between four second century Christian thinkers: Tatian, Tertullian, Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, and four contemporary African theologians: Bolaji Idowu of Nigeria, John Mbiti of Kenya, Mulago gwa Cikala Musharhamina of Congo (Zaire) and Byang Kato of Nigeria. From his discussion of these African theologians we note that Bediako's interest is focused on the relationship between traditional African religion, culture and worldviews and the acceptance of Christianity. In the transitional chapter, "Christianity as 'Civilisation'" Bediako quotes historians and anthropologists who recognized the Eurocentric approach of the earliest missionaries, characterizing Africa as a backward continent, its people savage and primitive (227-234). As a result, early Christian mission efforts were bedevilled with Western-looking paternalism and cultural imperialism.

² This paper is contributed in honour of Professor G.O.M. Tasié of the University of Jos, Nigeria, who has devoted much effort to the issue of contextualization of Christianity.

Conversion and Cultural Discontinuity

Implications for early Christian congregations were serious, for they learned to identify with the missionaries, and thus looked down on their own culture as backward, ignorant, and generally inferior. Christians took their conversion as a radical departure, both from traditional African religions and from traditional culture. The theological problems resulting from the correlation between Western civilisation and Christian religion as it entered Africa were only signalled in later years, when African Christians began to realize that they had been cut off from their own past, denied their own history and a legitimate continuity with their respective African ethnic identities (237). Bediako recognizes that few missionaries had attempted to look for cultural or religious precedents in African thought and religion, as a preparatory and transitional step toward conversion to Christianity, as points of contact between these 'backward' ways and the religion of Europe and the West. The result was a crisis of identity, accompanying a radical discontinuity in the cultural context of Christian converts.

With independence and the end of the colonial era, the pendulum inevitably swung in the opposite direction, also on the identification of the Christian church with its Western roots. In an attempt to re-appropriate African traditions, pre-Christian African religion received a great deal of attention. African independent churches arising at this time integrated features of traditional religion, especially dancing, use of drums and polygamy.³ In this connection Bediako bemoans the absence in early African Christianity of a figure like Paul who could preach a universal Christ as the great fulfilment of the deepest aspirations of all nations.⁴ He agrees with Andrew Walls that even within African culture it would not have been unreasonable to recognize and utilize such a preparation for the acceptance of Christ (245-48). As a cultural bridge, this would have assured the newly emerging Christianity a much better sense of identity, and freedom from cultural ties with a foreign culture.

³ These are the more superficial aspects; there was also outright rejection of the Christian faith. Bediako alerts us to Okot p'Bitek, the non-Christian African representing a modern Celsus; his critique of Christianity has not yet been answered with a full theological response (438-39).

⁴ He points to Acts 13.26ff.; 14.15ff; 17.22ff.,

Analogies from Greco-Roman 2nd century and 20th century Africa

Bediako's point is raised specifically in terms of his study of modern African theologians, but is clinched as he turns to earlier periods of Christianity which exemplify such a cultural bridge to the faith. He realizes that the specific contexts are not interchangeable. Nor are the issues formulated in the same terms (427). His interest focuses on analogies for issues of cultural continuity, and the incarnation of the faith in African life. Although Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, unlike Tatian and Tertullian, are typically interpreted as having a more positive appraisal of their context, Bediako considers all four 2nd Century authors as examples in communicating the faith within a context where they share its socio-cultural heritage.⁵ All four recognize the 'barbarian' character of the gospel, yet affirm fidelity to Scripture, reject the Hellenising solution of Marcionites and Gnostics, and recognize *cultural continuity* (429). This is important for Bediako's conclusion that "positive evaluation of the pre-Christian tradition, and an attempt to derive insights from it for the declaration of Christian convictions, need not imply a theological syncretism" (431).

On Justin Martyr and Clement, more specifically, Bediako recognizes that they accepted the pre-incarnate Word at work also in non-Christian traditions; the pre-Christian tradition also responds to the reality of the Transcendent, and is therefore sensitive to truth and falsehood (436). On this matter Bediako recognizes analogies with the positions of Idowu, Mbiti and Mulago, who affirm an African identity, rejecting discontinuity between African Christian experience and its pre-Christian heritage. The strength of such an approach lies in the answer it provides to derogatory *Eurocentric* criticism of African culture and African traditional religion. There is one major drawback, however, and Bediako is honest enough to admit that it tends to ignore some real difficulties of the pre-Christian past, the elements which really did need purging.

Justin Martyr

Such a bird's-eye overview of Bediako's position gives a necessary prelude to a more specific examination of the place of Justin Martyr within the general argument. Among the 2nd Century fathers cited, Justin takes a special place.

⁵ According to Bediako the important factors separating Tatian and Tertullian from Justin and Clement are aspects of temperament, education, and background, not a variant perception of culture (428).

While Tertullian and Tatian are known for an oppositionist stance, Justin is recognized as more accommodating to contemporary Greco-Roman culture. Such an evaluation has not been unanimous, as Bediako himself recognizes from the varying approaches of Harnack, Andresen, Holte and Chadwick. As we turn to Justin Martyr, we hope to use our analysis to test the general analogies proposed by Bediako's overall argument.

Bediako correctly signals the important role of Justin's views on philosophy and faith in his apologetics for the 'universal mission of the church', though he realizes that the common over-evaluation of Justin's positive assessment of pagan philosophy has led to some distortion (138). While agreeing with Chadwick that Justin feels no need to mitigate beliefs to meet criticism from philosophy (141), Bediako does challenge Chadwick's evaluation of Justin's 'programme for harmony and cooperation between faith and reason' (141). He recognizes that Justin, himself a Gentile, never 'tires of pointing to the non-racial, universal character of Christian allegiance' (139), and claims that Justin had only one source of truth: the gospel as the 'only safe and profitable philosophy' (141-142). If there is common ground between the Christian and the philosopher, it is in devotion to something more important than life itself. Socrates' willingness to die for his beliefs played a significant role in Justin's exceptional admiration for him (143-44). If Socrates said anything true and admirable it was because the Christian Saviour had actively vindicated truth among men. Limitations in the apprehension of truth were due to demonic powers always intent on deception (145).

Christ, the Pre-existing Logos

Bediako takes some care in elaborating the pre-Christian work of Christ, for this point is crucial to his thesis on bridges within a culture mediating reception of the gospel. Specifically, how can we understand Paul's affirmation that God has not left himself without a witness (Romans 1.18-20)? This Bediako recognizes as the urgent 'contextual' question, leading right into the question of how God had provided a witness of himself in the Hellenistic past (146). The answer is: Christ, the divine *logos spermatikos* (seminal Word) sowing seeds of truth in human minds. He understands the 'seminal Word' not in terms of logical, or theological formulation on Trinitarian and Christological positions, but as a simple description of how Christ functions, in practice, among human beings (147).

Christ was active first in creation. His incarnation meant a continued active role which is fully appreciated only by Christians, who know him as the 'whole *logos*', even though every race 'partakes' of him and accordingly has 'partial' knowledge. In this sense Socrates or Heraclitus knew the truth partially, and in knowing the truth also knew Christ, who is the truth (149-150). Partial knowing is evident from inconsistencies in their views, but what they did know was based on direct inner working of the Word (151-152). Justin claimed that those who were living according to the truth, and willing to confront falsehood, even at the expense of their lives, may be regarded as companions of Christ, even if they were regarded as 'atheists' (as Christians of his own time, 156). So Bediako concludes that Justin was not Hellenising Christianity, but rather that he was Christianising the Hellenistic traditions (159)!

Bediako's Justin Martyr as 'Bridge' Figure .

It is clear that Bediako is keen on presenting Justin as a 'bridge' figure, providing the case for Christianity as the fulfilment of the universal hopes of mankind. We can agree on such a role, for in his apologetical strategy we recognize Justin constructing bridges between Christianity and culture, Romans and barbarians, philosophers and believers. Justin was a Samaritan, and thus a Gentile convert to Christianity; he was also a philosopher who continued wearing the philosopher's cloak after his conversion. In his writings we find him engaged in vigorous debate with Jews, Gnostics, Platonists and pagans.⁶ As might be expected, philosophical issues provide an important focus in that engagement. And as Bediako acknowledges, philosophical aspects have attracted much scholarly attention in recent decades, particularly following on Harnack's interest in Justin as key to the Hellenization of Christianity.⁷

⁶ A convenient translation of Justin's works can be found in M. Dods et al., *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library (ANCL)*, vol. 1, Edinburgh, 1867. For a more contemporary, complete translation, see Thos. B. Falls, *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, New York: Christian Heritage, 1948. For a new translation of the Apologies, see L. W. Barnard, *St. Justin Martyr, The First and Second Apologies*, Ancient Christian Writers series 56, New York: Paulist Press, 1997.

⁷ The critical role of Adolf Harnack's portrayal of Justin Martyr for scholarly work on second century Christian fathers has been noted in the article of Ch. Nahm, "The Debate on the 'Platonism' of Justin Martyr" *Second Century* 9 (1992) 129-52, particularly 131-2. For a balanced historical perspective on the question of 'Harnack and Hellenization' see Robert C. Crouse, "The Hellenization of Christianity: A Historiographical Study" *The Canadian Journal of Theology* 8 (1962) 22-33. I have dealt with the question at some

Chadwick may be taken as representative among recent authors who pursue the position laid out by Harnack.⁸ Such an approach has elicited a reaction, and Holte is outstanding among those who accept Justin as a sincere Christian, not simply accommodating his faith to the cultural environment, but actively defending the faith while appealing for understanding and recognition of the truth.⁹

Justin's discussion of Christ as *Logos* is an important part of that appeal. This is not the occasion for an extensive examination of Justin's use of the term *logos*, with all the difficulties of determining which of its varied meanings: mind, reason, expression, word, etc., are to be chosen in any specific context.¹⁰ But even a brief analysis of Justin's presentation of Christ as 'whole logos', while individuals have a 'partial apprehension', or 'seed of *logos*' will demonstrate that *knowledge* (in part or in full) is the real issue. According to Justin, Christ became incarnate as the whole rational principle (*logos*), and can be known as the full revelation of the Father. By grace Christians participate fully in the *logos*, and have full and true knowledge of the Father. Those who know the *logos* in part have at least a share in the *logos* (even if that is characterized by

length in the epilogue of my *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*, Lanham: University Press of America, 1994: 429-511.

⁸ See H. Chadwick's chapter on Justin Martyr in A. H. Armstrong ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge: University Press, 1967:158-167, especially 161; also H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966: 10-11. He refers to Justin's *Apol.* 2. 8, 10, and 13 for the admirable views of Stoics or Platonists, which are due to their sharing in the 'seminal logos' i.e. the divine reason sowing seeds of truth in all men.

⁹ See the 1958 article of the Scandinavian Ragnar Holte "Logos Spermatikos", Christianity and Ancient Philosophy according to St. Justin's Apologies" *Studia Theologica* 12 (1958) 109-168 on this reaction. Holte (112-3, and 143-45) has accented passages to argue that a Christian as sincere as Justin could not have gone that far in accepting the cultural and intellectual environment.

¹⁰ The significant passages are *Apol.* 2.8 ; *Apol.* 2.10; *Apol.* 2.13. The contentious statement is clearly articulated in *Apol.* 2. 8, "We know that those who follow Stoic doctrines, because they were honourable at least in their ethical teaching, as were also the poets in some respects, due to the seed (*sperma*) of reason (*logos*) implanted in the entire race of mankind, were hated and put to death." For a summary of earlier discussion of *logos* see L. W. Barnard, "Justin Martyr in Recent Study" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 22 (1969) 152-64, especially 156-161. I have written more extensively on this topic in my article, "Justin Martyr and the *Logos*: an Apologetical Strategy" *Philosophia Reformata* 67.2 (2002):128-147.

contradictions), for the seed implanted in them is an *imitation* of the *logos* as such.

Justin's use of the term *logos* overlaps with that of Middle Platonists and Stoics, and we can also recognize something of Philo's use of the term in Justin's writings. But the attempt of source critical studies to reduce Justin to any particular school misses the point, for his apologetical strategy demanded that he use terms well known to a general ('educated') audience. We can support those (like Eric Osborn) who argue that Justin's apologetical strategy to affirm Christians as 'reasonable' people depends above all on using terminology which is *already familiar on a broad spectrum*.¹¹ The fact that the term was not univocal in ancient philosophical schools allowed him a flexibility in reaching various groups, who would each read the term according to their own philosophical preconceptions.

On this basis we support Bediako in rejecting both major approaches on Justin's acceptance of ancient culture (Chadwick and Holte). That of Chadwick accents the Stoic background, emphasizing the similarity of part and whole, as in the Stoic analogy of microcosmic and macrocosmic *logos* (particularly its materialistic form). Holte, on the other hand, has accented the Platonic view of the 'part' as much weaker, and subordinate to the whole, a view certainly supported by the final sentence of *Apol.* 2.13.8, where Justin equates the seed with an 'imitation', quite unlike the 'participation' which is given by grace. Both approaches encounter considerable difficulties when examined in terms of Justin's defence of Christianity. Chadwick leans toward presenting the *logos* in an ontological fashion, as constituent of the human (or cosmic) structural make-up. But this implies an elimination of the underlying reasons for apologetics. If Chadwick is right, and the *logos* provides the basis for a natural theology in which all men (as birthright) have access to revealed truth, we end up by ultimately erasing the difference between Justin and the Stoics, although the latter might have a more 'materialistic' understanding of 'seeds of truth'. On the other hand, if Holte is right about an unbridgeable chasm between Christians and non-Christians, what basis would there be for Justin in seeking to win

¹¹ Eric F. Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr, 1973:14, "... Justin says much which is not new. Most of it is chosen because it is not new. Justin uses common ground when speaking to Romans and to Jews. He starts from things which they have already said and uses their premises to show the truth of the gospel. Source criticism can provide little more than a beginning."

opponents over to the truth? Without some common ground, how could he argue that Greeks had just as great a desire for the Saviour as the Jews? After all, Justin is also confident that those who condemn and persecute Christians are without excuse; they could and should have known better, he claims.¹² So we agree neither with Chadwick on an ontological identity of truth known by Christians and pagans alike, nor with Holte for whom there is no basis for a bridge between the knowledge of (pre-Christian) pagans and Christians.

Christ as Hope of All the Nations

We can certainly support Bediako also on Justin's appeal to the universal Christ. But the reasons for such an appeal need further investigation. A close look at the context of his apologetic work shows us that Justin was greatly concerned about persecution of Christians in this period. From his epithet 'Martyr' we know that Justin himself suffered the consequences as witness to his faith ending in death. Justin addressed his apology to the devout (*pious*) Emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) and his (philosophically-minded) sons.¹³ From the beginning he appealed to their goodwill, but made no secret of his desire to correct their perception of Christians, who were popularly regarded as impious atheists, criminals and madmen. On the contrary, he claims boldly that they are reasonable people.¹⁴ Knowing the true nature of the Christian faith, these rulers should also know that accusations on which Christians are dragged into the courts have no factual basis.¹⁵ Claiming to be devout and just, the

¹² *Apol.* 1. 3.

¹³ Justin begins the first *Apology* by referring to the full names of the Emperor and his sons, "To the Emperor Titus Aelius Adrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Caesar, to his son Verissimus the philosopher, to Lucius the philosopher, by birth the son of Caesar and by adoption son of Pius, and admirer of learning..." (Falls tr.), *Apol.* 1. 1. This Justin follows up in *Apol.* 1. 2 by saying that pious men and philosophers should cherish only what is true, and a lover of truth must always choose the right, even at the expense of his own life. Cf. 1. 8 and 2. 2.

¹⁴ *Apol.* 1. 13; the opponents instead, are unreasonable, for they are motivated by gossip and rumour, allowing their emotions to overrule reason: *Apol.* 1. 3, 5: "... you do not investigate the charges made against us. Instead, led by unreasonable passion and at the instigation of wicked demons, you punish us inconsiderately without trial." (Falls tr.) Cf. *Apol.* 1.12.

¹⁵ These *Apologies* were addressed boldly to the emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD) and the Roman Senate. But public prosecution was in turn fueled by accusations originating in various sectors of society; in many of the *Acts of the Martyrs*, from

emperor should be prepared to correct his impressions about beliefs and practices of Christians, and to make a thorough, fair and balanced examination of accusations against them.¹⁶ From this perspective we begin to see the importance of Justin's appeal to the universal character of the *logos*. Justin's argument that non-Christian philosophers like Socrates, Heraclitus or Musonius had access to true knowledge about God (only hindered by deceptive intentions of demonic powers), allows him to conclude that inasmuch as the emperor and his sons claim a philosophic knowledge, they are without excuse. Access to truth was never denied them.

We can compare the way that Justin addresses the Roman emperors with an appeal to a partial, but nonetheless valid insight into truth about God in the address of John Calvin (1509-1564) to the king of France, given in the preface to the *Institutes*. Calvin similarly appeals to a general awareness of divinity, or '*divinitatis sensus*' and the seed of religion, '*semen religionis*'.¹⁷ While our world and human society has been distorted by sin, such seeds of religion are not eroded. This does not mean that they can be identified ontologically as part of our human make-up. Rather, they are like the 'image of God' in man. An identification of this religious core, or 'image', with some aspect of the human make-up (like human rationality) is problematic, and the long Christian tradition which identified that 'image' with reason is now largely superseded. What both Calvin and Justin are referring to, rather, is a basic human accountability before

Polycarp to Cyprian, we hear of Jews taking a direct or more indirect role in such cases. Heretical groups of Christians, Marcionites and other Gnostic groups did not make things easier, for they managed to evade persecution.

¹⁶ "As far as we (Christians) are concerned, we believe that no evil can befall us unless we be convicted as criminals or be proved to be sinful persons. You indeed may be able to kill us, but you cannot harm us." *Apology* 1.2 (Falls tr.).

¹⁷ *Institutes* I.iii.1: "There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty." *Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (2 vols.) vol. I, J.T. McNeil (ed.), F.L. Battles (tr.), Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960: 43. Cf. iv.1, "Experience teaches that the seed of religion has been divinely planted in all men. ... But to my statement that some erroneously slip into superstition, I do not mean thereby that their ingenuousness should free them from blame (op.cit. 47)." Also Calvin's prefatory address to King Francis I of France, asking him to curb the anger of those disturbing the peace, and filling his ears with false reports (in the above volume, 9ff.).

God, resting on his revelation of Himself in creation. And it was just as important for Calvin to maintain this as it was for Justin, for Calvin once again lived in a period in which Christians were being persecuted, particularly if their strand of Christianity did not coincide with that of the ruler. Calvin too called the ruler to account. With Justin he appealed to the revelation of God given in creation as the basis for his claim that the persecutors were without excuse.

Justin's initial appeal to the goodwill of Roman rulers shows him to be a clever bridge-builder. In an environment in which Christians were regarded as madmen, Justin made every effort to show that they had good reason for their views and practice.¹⁸ Whether in everyday life or in worship, they were reasonable and their views credible. To convince the state not to persecute Christians he made a special point of indicating areas of agreement with Christian thought, between Biblical stories and Christian theological motifs on the one hand, and those of Greeks and Romans on the other.¹⁹ The implication is obvious: if Christian accounts can be shown to be analogous to teachings of Greek poets and philosophers, why are Christians so unjustly hated and pursued, when the former are not? If Greek myths speak of a virgin birth, of the sufferings of the sons of Zeus - and the religious systems which promote such stories are *respected*, why then should Christians be *persecuted*?

Conclusions and a Constructive Alternative

We have examined three major aspects of Bediako's study of Justin as a 'bridge-building' figure: the issue of faith and philosophy, the importance of 'Christ as pre-existing *logos*', and Christ as the hope of all the nations. It should be clear that we can agree with Bediako on the significance of Justin as a trailblazer in positing the universal significance of Christ, as desired of all nations. Similarly we can agree with him on his rejection of approaches which regard Justin as either Hellenising, or isolating himself from his culture. From the perspective of an apologetic strategy it is important to recognize bridges of understanding within a culture, points of contact between the gospel and the

¹⁸ *Apol.* 1. 7, 13.

¹⁹ *Apol.* 1. 20-24; for Justin's more all-embracing explanation of analogy in the myths compared to Biblical accounts see *Apol.* 1. 54-56 where he speaks of demons distorting the truth to deceive and lead many astray. In *Apol.* 2. 4 he explains that fallen angels have sown war, murder and adulteries; poets or mythologists have wrongly attributed these to the gods.

conceptual framework or worldview already operative. Where, then, do we part company? Bediako has failed to note a crucial aspect of Justin's argument for Christ as seminal *logos*, namely the existential context of persecution. Universal and pre-Christian knowledge of God is not primarily significant for Justin for establishing a more positive approach to the Greco-Roman cultural heritage, but to indicate that those who persecute Christians are without excuse, even if they have not personally been exposed to the gospel: access to truth was never denied. And this is not just a small point of difference in an approach to Justin's apologetics. It has wider implications for the analogies drawn between the second century of the Roman Empire and 20th Century Africa, and brings up a number of questions which are interesting even if they cannot be developed fully at this time.

While later 20th Century African theologians from Idowu to Kato developed their work within a context characterized only minimally by persecution, we know that those who were brave enough to respond to the call of the gospel in the initial stages of missionary work were almost without exception subject to ridicule and persecution; they became the outcasts of their respective communities. Bediako and modern African scholars have not accented this aspect of the initial acceptance of the gospel in Africa. They are far more concerned with the presentation of the gospel in terms of a 'cultural superiority' which finally eroded their own culture, their identity, and undermined cultural continuity from the pre-Christian period. Yet it is clear that such cultural upheaval could only occur when more than just a handful of people in any community accepted Christianity. Thus the important question is, what exactly happened, culturally, when whole communities accepted the gospel.

An examination of such change must certainly recognize the complicating factor of British colonial rule within Nigerian culture of this period. With British rule came a variety of other dislocations, changes in traditional roles of emirs and chiefs, introduction of roads and new methods of communication, new laws, and new technology, to name a few. These changes made a considerable impact on Nigerian society and culture. So we need to ask whether the respective roles of the colonial government and of the missionaries have been discerned with sufficient care. Sometimes missionaries benefited from the colonial presence, and at times colonial rulers benefited from mission work, as in the role of Mary of Calabar; but this was by no means universally true. Missionaries were explicitly excluded from Northern Nigeria, and for the pre-independence era the

colonial government in Nigeria has been accused of favouring Muslim rulers at the expense of nascent Christian tribal regions of the south.

A second issue that deserves attention is the role of a Marxist critique of culture, and more particularly its verdict on religion within a culture. Within the context of the Cold War as it extended to Africa, Marxist rhetoric was only too ready to emphasize the Westernizing and imperialistic aspects of the introduction of Christianity by missionaries. Too often missionaries have been accused of using education or medicine to 'lure' people away from African traditional ethnic religion. We need to ask whether this is really borne out by the facts? Did they intentionally regard African traditional communities as backward, barbarian and primitive? Or were they more concerned to condemn the cruelty of traditional gods who demanded human sacrifice? And to preach the kingdom of God by demonstrating its power for healing and changing people, doing this constructively through the means at their disposal, especially new developments in medicine? Although it is difficult to retrace missionary motivation, we can go back to their own writings, their letters; we will probably find that for the most part they reflected attitudes common in their time. Bediako recognizes that missionaries brought their European or Western civilisation with them, as an integral part of their presentation of the gospel. If we do not argue with him on that point as such, we do wish to point out that missionaries shared the Western civilisation of the colonial rulers, and the 'Western' character of Christianity as it was introduced needs to be re-examined in that context. Today Marxists have been joined by Islamists in denouncing the presence of Christianity as a 'Western' religion, and thus not appropriate to Africa. The best response to this charge is a re-examination of Christianity at its roots, which would include Africa right from the beginning. Bediako's presentation of Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria among the early Christians does not stress this aspect of their work.

In this connection we must raise a further question about the nature of the culture which received the gospel. In African traditional culture, religion was closely integrated with all other facets of culture, especially political and family life, agriculture and medicine. This is an aspect of cultural change that cannot be ignored. It meant that the introduction of a new religion was no small matter, and would lead inevitably to change in many other facets of society. This may well explain the very slow rate of conversion in the early years. It certainly contributed to the problematic situation of early Christian converts, who could

no longer be integrated within their home context; as a result they identified themselves far more with the missionaries, and by extension, with the culture of those missionaries. We thus suggest that the 'opposition' between Christ and culture, as reflected by early converts, can be explained (at least in part) by the specific phase of conversion to Christianity within a community, and is related to the ratio of Christians to non-Christians.

Bediako reflects the legitimate concerns of contemporary theologians who wish that early African Christianity had done more to seek points of contact within traditional religion, with its own worldview and understanding of God. This assumes an understanding of the role of religion that ties in closely with Niebuhr's favourite model, that of Christ *transforming* culture. According to this model Christianity neither ignores or destroys a culture but seeks to change it, to reform and restore it to what it should be, as a healthy, positive environment for human life and society. To mention but one example showing that missionaries were not totally oblivious to the need of impacting the culture from within, we should examine the process of translating the Scriptures into languages of emerging congregations. This task demanded careful discernment, not just with respect to language as it was used, but also traditional concepts and their implications.

In conclusion we briefly propose an alternative scenario. Is it not possible that rejection of African culture among early converts, and failure to give a positive evaluation of one's own culture in terms of a bridge for the conversion to Christianity, reflects the actual rejection that occurs when individual members of a tribe -upon conversion to Christianity - are no longer welcome within their own family and social group? As they experience rejection, they in turn typically go even further in separating themselves, and repudiating the values which once tied them, turning rather to those whose advice and insight they have used for a new sense of community. As a larger proportion of a community turns to Christ the dynamics change. With the passage of time, when a tribe is more Christianized, the older gods lose the threat they once posed. The next generation, which has not personally experienced the older gods and practices of traditional religion at first hand, can revisit the past from a safe distance, and recognize what has been lost in terms of culture, along with the change in religion. The sting of that initial rejection is no longer operative. This is the generation reflected in contemporary African theology. It has gained self-

confidence in its new identity, and from that perspective seeks to rebuild bridges to the past, re-establishing cultural continuity.

In the southern parts of Nigeria today conversion to Christianity does not usually lead to persecution. But in areas where Islam is strong, such conversion is far more likely to result in the kind of persecution experienced by earlier converts within their respective tribes and communities. From this perspective Justin Martyr's advice is still useful. In his bridge-building activity Justin made an effective appeal to Socrates, not as a well-known philosopher, but as a pagan who was devoted to a cause more important than life itself. The intention was not simply to point to good qualities to be found in a culture even though it is pagan. Justin wanted to call that culture to account in its resistance to the gospel, especially when such resistance meant persecution which condemned Christians to death.

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PEARLS OF WISDOM: PASTORAL COUNSEL FOR MINISTERS IN TRAINING

Richard J. Gehman

Introduction

In these following comments you will find *pearls of wisdom* from 175 graduates of Scott Theological College in Kenya. After 36 years of ministry in Kenya, we felt compelled to visit as many of our graduates as we could before retiring. These Scott graduates are serving faithfully in seven nations of Africa as pastors, teachers of Bible, church leaders, chaplains, church workers and missionaries. We engaged them in extensive interviews. The last question discussed was this: "What spiritual wisdom, insight or advice have you gained from your years of experience which you would like to share with students in a theological College or Bible School to help them mature and become what God wants them to be." Their answer to this one question is found here.

For ten years we had led TAG research teams in Kenya, composed of pastors and Bible School teachers, exploring and researching issues that face the churches. This was a ministry of the Theological Advisory Group (TAG). The underlying assumption was that wisdom in Africa is to be found in people, seldom in library books. In order to research marriage in Africa, for example, we could not turn primarily to books but to people with experience and wisdom.

During those exciting years of working with these experienced ministers of the gospel, I was always amazed at the wisdom that was found when all their comments were compiled together. No one had full insight but everyone had a contribution. When compiled together, their thoughts represented something significant and useful for the Church of Jesus Christ in Africa.

Following are the few thoughts from each of the 175 Scott graduates, collated and categorized in a manner to provide counsel and advice for every servant of God who is preparing for or engaged in the ministry of the gospel in Africa.

Dr. Richard Gehman was an AIM missionary in Africa for thirty-six years. While he served in various capacities, most of those years he taught at Scott Theological College, where he has been until his retirement in 2002. Dr. Gehman earned his Doctor of Missiology degree from Fuller Theological Seminary, USA.

As a parent and teacher, how often I had wished for the ability to take the understanding and insight that God had given me through experience and learning and implant it in the mind and heart of my child or student. If only we could do that! How many children would be spared from the disastrous consequences of poor decisions! How many ministerial disasters would be averted! How many spiritual causalities would be prevented! If only!! But the sad truth is that we cannot do that.

The responsibility rests on each person to exercise humility and a teachable heart to ponder this advice and embrace it. Here we present what experienced men and women of God have learned through the exacting school of experience. This is their counsel to you. We believe that what they say is true. Take it, chew it and eat it. Let these *pearls of wisdom* guide you in your days of preparation for ministry and years of service.

Remember what the Word of God teaches:

"Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers..." Prov. 16:20

"Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise."
Prov. 19:20

"Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser stil..." Prov. 9:9

"The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice."
Prov. 12:15

"Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel." Prov. 27:9

Outline

The pastoral counsel of these graduates in ministry has been collated in four basic categories. Not only are the individual *pearls of wisdom* helpful; their emphases are significant. It is instructive to see where the bulk of their advice is found. Wherever you see the most extensive comments, you will find the weightiest advice that springs from their deep experience in the ministry.

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THE MINISTER IN TRAINING

The Call to Ministry is Essential

“Ministry is a call. That must be established very clearly. This calling must come from God himself to that individual. Once that call is there, then God can lead. There are a lot of problems, frustrations and disappointments in ministry. For example, when I came out of College I thought I would be employed by the church with a salary. But this was not the case. If I had no call, I would have left. Another Sudanese friend went to College but could not finish. He had no call and went to a different profession. He is also involved in heavy drinking. It is sad to say that drinking ended his life prematurely. This ministry is a ministry and one must be called. This entails perseverance and wisdom. God will meet our needs and wants. He will give the desires of our hearts. My advice, if you are not called, it will be rough. Frustrations can come even from fellow Christians. But over time I have purposed that come what may, God has called me. It is a privilege to serve God. It is also a responsibility. It is upon that calling that I am going to persevere; I will endure hard times.” (Missionary)

“I can say, to know that I am called and to know that my Lord is always close to me – this has kept me going. That is the secret. Being called is basic. He called and he will provide what is needed.” (Church Leader)

“Where God sends, he gives the grace and strength to endure the hardship one might find. All spiritual resources are at our disposal when we are in God’s will. God will not abandon his sent ones.” (Pastor)

“When one is trained in College, he should have a vision. I don’t like the idea of a student about to graduate who doesn’t know what he should do. I don’t believe God takes you through four years of College and you don’t know what your calling is.” (Pastor)

“It is not easy to fulfill the call. You need patience, perseverance, knowledge of the Word of God. You need to know how to preach, how to interpret the Scripture, how to encourage people in the ministry.” (Church Worker)

“About the call, you must be very sure of the purpose for which God has called you so as not to waste time. You might beat about the bush and spend half of your life without doing the right thing. It may be good, but not the right thing.” (Pastor)

“One needs to be clear of one’s call. While some Christians are called to politics, this is not the calling of the church. There was a strong wind in the African Church for some to become involved in politics. But they are casualties today. When you align with a party, you cannot speak to other parties.” (Pastor)

“One must remain conscious of your calling all along. With my little experience, I see many seeking further education. It is a form of escape from realities of the church. You go to teach in higher schools but you cannot face the reality of the local church. If change is to take place in the church, you must not lose your conviction of the call. It is so difficult to change the system. They don’t want change.” (Pastor)

“One must keep his calling because there are so many pressures. For example, going to school, then doing something else; there are so many pressures to distract one from his calling. One must keep his eyes on his calling from God. This has helped me a lot. If it were not for that, I would be somewhere else today.” (Pastor)

Focus on God

“Focus your attention on God. ‘Cursed is the person who relies on men.’ (Jer. 17). If I focus on people, they let me down. If everyone abandons me, I will not have a guilty conscience because I am serving the Lord.” (Pastor)

“Seek the Lord, seek his kingdom first. Read God’s Word, pray. Be a man of God.” (Teacher)

“Remind them of God’s mercy. God is a merciful God. We are what we are because of God’s mercy. Because of God’s mercy on us, this will make us to see people we serve in a different way. ‘If God would regard iniquity, we could not stand before God.’ I am what I am because of God’s mercy. That affects my attitude towards God and others. Why should I boast if I am what I am and if I have what I have because of God’s mercy?” (Teacher)

“Above everything else, draw near to the Lord. Paul determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ. This is first.” (Teacher)

“I would encourage them all to look upon the Lord, to trust in him in all things. Just focus on the Lord because he is able even in hardships, problems – he leads them. Be faithful to your calling.” (Church Worker)

“One spectacular lesson: Never, never lean on people! Lean on Jesus. I could have fallen if I had leaned on people because people change but Jesus does not. I’ve never argued, ‘People say’; but I announce, ‘The Bible says.’ The

Bible overrules people. God gives strength and wisdom to deal with big Goliath like problems.” (Pastor)

“The Lord who called me knows me and works with me. And I will live with him forever. Like Jeremiah, God knew me in my mother’s womb. When he sends me to minister, he knows. We will live with him eternally. If I concentrate on the ministry, he will make me prosper. But the way of the wicked people will perish... God knows. He leads me and knows the date when he will call me home.” (Pastor)

“God is faithful. They should be faithful to God and to themselves. God will not leave them. As I remember my pilgrimage – the problems on the way – but God is faithful.” (Teacher)

Devote Yourself to Prayer and the Word

“Begin developing a relationship with the Lord in the early stages, not later when problems arise.” (Church Leader)

“If I were to go back to College, I would give priority to my personal devotions. One thing that keeps you going in ministry is your devotional life. If you graduate with a ‘C’ average but with a devotional life, you will shine.” (Pastor)

“Much of what we learned in College was only an opener to vast resources of practical experiences. That is, College only provided guidelines, but in the field, where the rubber meets the road, it depends on spiritual depth to handle problems. If you have no time to deepen your spiritual life at College, out in the field, no one encourages you, people expect miracles from you.” (Pastor)

“Develop a prayer life. This is very important. Get prayer partners and devotional materials.” (Pastor)

“There are four important things to be a successful Christian: (1) Prayer; (2) Prayer; (3) Prayer; (4) Reading God’s Word. Great men of God testify that they are always in prayer and always reading the Word of God. We should not forget this but mention it to people in the church.” (Teacher)

“I have learned to rely on the Lord in prayer. Prayer is a major thing. Without prayer, all is in vain.” (Pastor).

“It is good to be prayerful. Don’t just rely on what you know. You should be ready for everything.” (Church Worker).

“Let them be men of prayer. Prayer accomplishes much. When problems come, let them pray.” (Pastor)

“They should not forget the devotional life. This is very important; having time with God.” (Teacher)

“Develop the devotional life. If it were not for my daily devotions of meditating on the Word of God, I would not have persevered. Every morning I read the Bible or the Daily Devotional Guide.” (Church Worker)

“Reading the Bible and being prayerful – those are most important. This goes along with a devoted life.” (Teacher)

“Stick to the Word of the Lord and all the paths it teaches. Cultivate the habit of talking to the Lord with others and by yourself.” (Teacher)

“What I’ve learned is that the best child of God is the one closest to God. That means there is need for constant reading of the Word of God and prayer and seeking him. I found out that wisdom is not in books. It is from God. If you lack wisdom, ask God. I don’t belittle books. I buy books all the time. Most of my money is spent on good books. God the Holy Spirit uses books. But being close to God and reading the Word of God, that is it.” (Missionary)

Study Diligently in Bible College

Work hard in classes: “First of all, they should take their work seriously. Because I believe that if I wasn’t trained, I would have failed. I thank God for College and the training I received there. If I were not trained, I would not be in the ministry because of the problems in the church.” (Pastor)

“Commitment to studies! You are there for a future ministry so you should be committed to studies.” (Teacher)

“Take things they learn at College seriously.” (Teacher)

“Laziness! Every student should be encouraged *not* to be lazy. The opposite should be encouraged. They should be able to arrange a schedule to finish their work. I determined to do work on time. As a mother, a wife – yet I determined to finish my work. Wisdom – they should know how to arrange their work to do it on time. Some students complain a lot. They have the idea, if this is not changed, I won’t do it. I compare students in the schools I attended. A few students urged the class to complain to a teacher that the work was too much. Yet the teacher with many demands and assignments is appreciated. Afterwards you have mastered the subject with hard work.” (Teacher)

“I would advise students that they should use the four years at College to the maximum in every aspect. When students at College, they should be prepared to work with people in church, to train them, rather than working alone.” (Chaplain)

“Encourage them to train and be prepared in all situations to face challenges. Do your best in your studies. Don’t waste any minute in College. Study properly.” (Pastor)

“Students should take advantage of the opportunity they have at College. It is not an opportunity that you will always get to sit and learn. Don’t let time be wasted.” (Pastor)

“One must be serious in school. The things you learn in school are very important. Students need to work hard. The things I learned in school are helping me.” (Pastor)

“Students should be serious with their work at College. They will never recover one hour that they have lost. If they fail to do the readings, they will fail. They must take seriously the golden opportunity of study. In ministry, there are no libraries. Take notes seriously, do well and they will not regret it. If they joke and fool around, they will lose their golden opportunity of study.” (Pastor)

“When writing papers, you should research well and put your heart into it. That shapes your understanding of the ministry. It is not a paper for the teacher. I saw this – ‘last minute people.’ You need to do your best so that you can benefit later from what is written.” (Pastor)

“One needs training. Study hard when in College to prove yourselves good stewards of God’s work.” (Church Worker)

“We should not be naïve and fail to study. I’ve seen pastors with a library of only the Bible and a hymn book. We need to avoid sin and study thoroughly. Moses was highly educated and God used him to write a lot of the Old Testament. Also Paul – highly educated and he wrote much of the New Testament. After the disciples trained and got skills from Jesus, they needed the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We need to explore books and become scholars.” (Teacher)

Learn from many sources: Books: “Read as much as you can in College. It will help you in the future.” (Pastor)

“In College there are so many good books, but little time to read. Students should be encouraged to read books at College that are not found elsewhere.” (Pastor)

Every class: “There will be some things in the curriculum that look unimportant. For example, typing, I pleaded with the teacher to be excused from typing because I did not see its value. But today I type my own documents

without paying a typist. Those courses that look useless are useful. I regret that I did not work hard on the last section of Greek – it is very sad. I was not happy with the course on Curriculum Development and did not want to take it but with that course I can now develop my own Bible studies.” (Pastor)

“They should not take anything they are learning for granted. Everything they get, they should note down, for it will help them in the field. Anything in class, outside of class, put down in writing for it will help them.” (Pastor)

Listening: “I’ve learned that listening is important. The best students listen carefully. Some look out the window. Even more important than listening, aim to get the best from what you are taught. It is good to listen and to get the best, that which will help you as a Christian and in the Christian ministry.” (Teacher)

Mentors: “Learn as much as they can from their mentors now. Learn from their experiences now – use their own failures in examinations as lessons for the future. Their problems now should be seen as opportunities for ministry in the future.” (Teacher)

“You need to be patient to gain experience to learn something new. Don’t assume you know everything. Through patience, learn from every area – from teachers, fellow workers – be ready to learn new things.” (Church Leader)

Principles for application: “Don’t go to College with the mentality of being shown how to do it. When you graduate, it is not done that way. Then you will have no chance to improve. Students face the risk at College of being spoon fed. Pastors need to initiate ministries without being told how to do it beforehand. They need initiative and creativity.” (Pastor)

“They should be concerned about their lives, and not simply about their ministry. In every course, think how this relates to them as persons, not merely to the ministry. For example: ‘How does this apply to me as a father?’” (Teacher)

Ever Learning: “They should be people who desire to discover things – in College and outside. They should always be a student.” (Pastor)

Develop Skills for Inter-Personal Relationships

“I would like to encourage them to benefit from the wealth of interpersonal relationships that is so rich in a theological setting. If they cannot solve conflicts between themselves at College, they should not expect to do better out in the church or elsewhere. The challenge is greater there.” (Church Worker)

“They need to have co-operation in College. Friendships should be cultivated in College. They need to sharpen one another. This extends after graduation. If they are not co-operative in College, they will not co-operate in the Church when they serve together in the same DCC. Not being friendly at College continues after graduation.” (Teacher)

“Pray to the Lord for wisdom to interact with people at all levels – spiritually, educationally, culturally, age wise etc. Relationships are major at varied levels.” (Church Leader)

“If you want to be encouraged, you need to encourage others. We all need encouragement. It is reciprocal.” (Church Leader)

Avoid a Complaining Attitude

“Students complain about little things – the food is not cooked as they wish. I encourage our students to pray for the cooks and talk with them to see how they can help them, instead of complaining. To be understanding in whatever situation they are in. Because these same things they complain about will face them in the ministry. I would encourage them to learn from the mistakes of teachers and students. This will help them to face problems in the ministry. The problems outside will be greater than in school. Therefore, they should learn from the mistakes of others.” (Teacher)

“Students like to complain – too much work. In my years of study, those who complain never last in the church. They develop problems instead of solutions.” (Teacher)

“In College we complained that those in ministry do this and this. We expected a lot from those in ministry. They need to be careful what they say in College. They should not accuse others. They should wait and be careful.” (Church Worker)

Recognise the Importance of Field Education

“First, they need to take Field Education very seriously. That is very important. The things they do in Field Education are exactly what they will find in the ministry. They should take their courses and Field Education seriously.” (Teacher)

“What we learn is not useful if we do not put it into practice. For example, reading books on counseling is of little value unless practiced. They should begin to think of problem solving now. The world is full of problems, for example, famine and the church. How can I solve that problem? We need to think in a rounded way. The spiritual affects the physical. Jesus Christ went

about preaching and teaching and healing. He integrated the practical with teaching.” (Teacher)

“Students at College should consider ministry in the church as true ministry and not simply wait until after graduation. This is not merely school work but ministry.” (Teacher)

“Students need to minister now in churches where they are sent as if they were in the ministry. They need to be faithful now, because wherever they go, it makes an impact where they serve, even if they are first year students. Students need to be careful how they serve in churches or homes, because it doesn’t change much after graduation. A successful person now in churches while being a student at College will be successful after graduation.” (Teacher)

THE MINISTER AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

In Ministry, Devote Yourself to Prayer and the Word

“When people come from Bible College they think they have the answers. It is very easy to neglect the devotional life. When this happens, you are unfit to serve. Relationship with God is top priority.” (Pastor)

“If you want to succeed in ministry, spend a lot of time to know the Lord, rather than preparing something for the congregation. You walk with the Lord first, then you will have something to share. It will be deep and profound, something heart to heart, something the Lord has taught you.” (Teacher)

“They should learn to have a good devotional life. That will keep them going. In College you can keep going with chapel and Bible lessons in class. You are kept in a safe and caring atmosphere. But in the church you must have a devotional life. The devotional life has kept me going. No member prays for you but asks the pastor to pray for them.” (Church Worker)

“Before you react to complaints and criticism, you need to go before God and take time to pray. This is how I succeeded in the children’s home and being a pastor. The chairman of the District Church Council was always after me. I sought the Lord.” (Church Leader)

“They must keep up with their walk with the Lord, their personal walk in holiness, reading the Bible and applying it for personal benefit, not just for the pulpit, and spending time in prayer. When faced with problems, always seek God’s face in prayer.” (Church Leader)

“One must have times to seek the Lord throughout the year. There must be periods of time to strengthen your faith.” (Church Leader)

“I would say that we have a very big weapon in prayer. We need to schedule special time for devotions and prayer. It is a big weapon.” (Pastor)

“You need to be a man of prayer. We are in a fight.” (Teacher)

“Importance of prayer! Prayer has kept me when things are difficult. God has sustained me.” (Pastor)

“Of absolute importance is to be a man of prayer. Have a number of your members pray for you daily. Be a person of the Word.” (Pastor)

“Prayer – there will be times you feel alone, left out. Only with prayer and fellowship with God can you survive.” (Pastor)

“We need to be men of prayer and close to God and his Word; also reading Christian literature. Christian literature has been a great help to me. Some people are afraid of coming to the pastor to encourage him and correct him and help him. You encourage them to come but they don’t. Reading Scripture and Christian literature, God corrects me through that. They were as my pastor. They correct us. I like reading.” (Pastor)

“I keep working on my prayer life and communion with the Lord. That kept me going – my devotional life. Reading the Bible brings insight and wisdom.” (Missionary)

“Depending on the Word of God makes you sharp in dealing with problems in the church. They will face issues but they should not fear. Use the Word of God and a little wisdom.” (Pastor)

“Be a life time Bible student of the Word of God. If it were not for this, I would have forsaken the ministry. Some College graduates have left the ministry but I thank the Lord that the more problems I had the more I desired the Lord. I know what people go through and I want to be a testimony to them. The Lord also gave me discipline. By 3:00 A.M. every day I am ‘connected.’ I used not to be prayerful. It has helped my family. My family stood by me.” (Teacher)

Trust in God

“Foremost, you go into ministry serving God directly. You need to trust him in all you do in daily needs and work, because things will be hard. The main thing is to trust the Lord. That is the foremost thing I would say.” (Missionary)

“I’ve learned to trust God in every situation. No matter how dark it is, God is in control. God has seen me through difficult situations. The more I’ve been in ministry and face challenges, I think I can do it. I am not scared as I used to

be. God will see me through every situation. Keep on plodding on. I know God is there to lift me and to carry me through.” (Chaplain)

“God is true to his promises in the Bible. I’ve seen this over the years. One promise given us is: ‘I will be with you.’ In school it is easy to believe. But in ministry you face problems. You need to cling to these promises. Depend on the leading of the Spirit because without this you become bankrupt in what you do.” (Church Leader)

“I’ve come to believe that biblical faith is real as exemplified in Abraham. Faith remains the key to Christian ministry and life. When everything is done – our studies and we know many things – we must ask who Jesus is and see the importance of faith. Abraham was like us. He failed a few times but he truly walked with God.” (Teacher)

“When students go out, there is no one to turn to. Classroom work has ended; one must have faith that God will meet your needs. This does not come automatically. This involves the Word of God, prayer, worship, obedience and surrender.” (Church Leader)

“Trust in God in all circumstances because as I said, there will be times of trials, lack of help, but God is always faithful. He will see his people through. People outside to whom we minister, they are not looking for what we have in mind. They are not looking for what we know, but they are looking to see if whether what we say we know has impacted our lives. They learn more from our lives than from what we say.” (Pastor)

“They should trust upon the Lord in everything they do.” (Pastor)

“They should not depend on an organization but entirely depend on God.” (Teacher)

“Don’t look to people but to God as the supplier of every need. People leave you, forget you, but God does not.” (Pastor)

“I’ve learned to trust God in my day to day life. Many people may not like what you are doing. You may loose friends as a result. Life in the ministry is a sacrificial life because you must sacrifice in many areas.” (Teacher)

“In everything, trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding.” (Teacher)

“Trust in God always and not in men. That is the best thing to learn.” (Teacher)

“One thing I would tell the students – your faith affects your theology. Theology at the end of the day is an attempt to understand who you believe in

and to articulate your faith so that it makes sense to you and others. Therefore, you cannot play with your faith, for your theology is a product of your faith. The teaching of Scripture is determinative. But your faith is affected by your context. You live your faith in this context; expressing your faith is not something you can compromise. It is my faith as understood from the point of my experience.” (Teacher)

Serve God with All Humility

Be humble: “What I learned from the attitude of our Lord is humility. This calling to ministry, if humility is not there, you will fail. This does not mean you don’t explain your convictions but you state your convictions under God. You don’t force people or manipulate them.” (Church Leader)

“You need to be humble. Theological training can lead to pride unknowingly. You know theology, Greek and then you look down on others. College students need to realize this.” (Teacher)

“One other thing! Don’t try to show that you know everything and that others know nothing. Try always to listen to other people’s opinions. Show humility.” (Church Leader)

“We should be conscious of our attitude toward people. There is a feeling that people from College are proud. How can we remove this attitude from people? This attitude is always there. Their feeling is that we are a threat. We need to find ways of overcoming this attitude from our co-workers. My suggestion is that we must be as humble as possible. For example, the way you say something, the way you talk shows that you feel you know it. This is not good. The way you make a suggestion should not be authoritative; instead, say, ‘May I suggest...’ Be wise in how you pass your information to others.” (Teacher)

“One needs to be humble, regardless of the challenges; people will see you as a threat. It is not good to retaliate. Let God be the one to retaliate.” (Teacher)

“When you are humble, you honour others. When you honour them, they will respect you. If you fail to respect others, they will not respect you.” (Pastor)

“Be an example of not proving you are really educated. People at College don’t understand this. Humility is not telling people that you are well educated. People want to see what you have without you telling them. People need help but don’t want to know about your education. When you help them they say you are really educated. My mother and grandmother don’t need to know that I am

educated, but they need my help. To brag that you went to College spoils your reputation.” (Church Worker)

“After graduation, the paper they get is not enough until subjected to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They should not feel that they are educated enough and the way will be smooth. They must come down – some with the B.Th. feel they are educated. But they must come down to minister to the people at their level.” (Pastor)

“They should be prepared to start with humble beginnings. If they are sent to a small church, they should accept this. They should not feel that they must go to a large church. In an established church there is a bed rock of problems. It is good to start with humble beginnings till God says that this is the right time for a larger church. Humility! Be humble enough to let the Lord lead them.” (Pastor)

“Humility is a tool that will keep you warm in spirit. You will lead properly. You become effective when you humble yourself. The Bible teaches us to be humble and God will lift you in time. Therefore, humility is a tool for ministry.” (Pastor)

“Learn from the old people. It is easy to have a ‘know it all’ attitude. Students should know that older people also have good ideas.” (Teacher)

“Humbling yourself is first before the Lord and then before church leaders. The elders pay you 500/sh. monthly. If you don’t humble yourself before them, you will quit. Most young men when they experience problems don’t think that the Lord knows about them. They must know that the Lord allows this problem. They give up quickly; they rebel or resist the leadership. They need to humble themselves and pray.” (Pastor)

Knowledge is vain without humility: “Humility! Those who go to Bible School have head knowledge. But in practical areas, they need to learn from the church leaders. They should not be proud. Knowledge is vain without humility.” (Teacher)

“Humility! Throughout my years of ministry, I’ve learned that it pays to be humble. You may have Greek, Hebrew and Theology and you find that the elders have very little. You want to display your knowledge. It doesn’t work. Go down where they are. You grow together. Let them discuss your knowledge; don’t display it.” (Chaplain)

“Don’t think that you know it all. Be willing to learn from a Sunday School child. Be humble.” (Pastor)

“They should not be a ‘know it all’ person. There are some in the field who never went to a Bible School but they have helped people and they have long experience.” (Chaplain)

“As they come out of College, let them not assume that they know more than the elders who served in the field. Let them associate with the pastor who has been in the field for a long time. Let them humble themselves before the Lord and seek the mind of God.” (Pastor)

“One thing I’ve learned: we never know everything no matter how much we learn.” (Teacher)

Self-confidence is a threat to humility: “The Bible teaches, ‘God has not given us a spirit of timidity.’ But self confidence can bring problems. When we become self confident and put the Lord aside, we can make mistakes. When we fail, we go back to the Lord. It is not good to rely on oneself but to rely on God. I’ve learned this from experience.” (Teacher)

See all people as God sees them: “See people as God sees them. We are all equal in the eyes of God. I’ve had the privilege of being pastor in the scum of the slums as well as the cream of society with managers, big shots (some have 4-5 cars and carpet that you cannot afford in your whole life). But when you get down to the spiritual needs, you find their spiritual needs are the same. I don’t see their cars or bare feet. I know they are sinners and they need Jesus Christ. They should not be cowed by what people possess.” (Chaplain)

Avoid false humility: “Avoid false humility. ‘Here is \$10.00,’ someone says. ‘I have enough,’ you reply, when actually you have nothing.” (Pastor)

“When you find yourself going wrong, it is always best to admit your mistakes. It does not help to refuse to admit. It is better to be humble yourself and admit.” (Teacher)

Humble yourself before the leaders: “As pastors who graduate, we need to humble ourselves before God and our leaders; without humbling ourselves before leaders, they will not accept us. They will feel we are seeking their positions. Even with low pay and hard situations, respect of leaders will help us to be effective.” (Teacher)

“Pastors should accept the structure of the church. Young people are not submissive to the Councils.” (Church Leader)

“Obedience! Elders and evangelists are placed there by God. When they assign you to do something, you should obey. For example, teaching in Sunday School or washing the guests’ feet. When elders tell you something, you should do it. You need to do little things.” (Teacher)

Never seek for positions of power: “I’ve seen people struggle to get into positions, especially in the Church. This struggle for positions! Most of them are not humble people. I would love to see people in the ministry who humble themselves. Then God will lift them up. They should be humble and not fight for positions.” (Teacher)

“Students should humble themselves before the Lord and should not see anything beyond the local church where they are assigned to serve. They should see the local church – and not beyond that. I mean, they should not see a chair somewhere – of the District Church Council or Bible College or a Committee or to become the Bishop. We are not called to serve committees but the church. Today’s church is faced by a variety of challenges. For example, changes in politics are leading the church to conform more to what is happening in the world of politics. If the church leaders are not careful, it is easy for the church leaders to use political tactics to retain their position in the church. God should choose you. I’ve seen this is a problem. If a pastor uses such tactics, he may not qualify to be God’s chosen leader, one that is used by God. For example, I passed through College and I am not teaching Bible College. If you ask me, which of the two should be given priority, the church or Bible College, I would tell you the church. It is not bad to teach, but the church should be given the priority – not the office. If I am elected to be Bishop, let it come. But your mind should not be there. I will serve in that capacity if chosen, but I will not covet it. We are shifting our priorities from the church to some other things.” (Pastor)

Be a servant leader

“Simply, be a servant leader. Our experiences are different but if we are servants in our different circumstances, we will come out with lessons that are appropriate.” (Church Leader)

“To sum up my outlook and sense of calling, if I would advise younger pastors, it is the aspect of servant leadership. I would tell them, you are called to serve the interests of others. Paul taught that we should not look on our own interests but on the interests of others. When we serve the interests of Jesus Christ, it will be seen in serving the interests of others, rather than serving our own interests and gaining materially. When I reported to College, I carried my heavy metal box. I called from town and asked to be picked up and was told to

wait. Two teachers came to pick me up. One picked up my box. I least expected that. That was a very remarkable thing I will never forget. So in addition to all the spiritual teaching, that made a very big impact on my life.” (Missionary)

Cultivate Godly Virtues

“As much as studies with academic knowledge are important, there is no substitute for godly character. Godliness is foremost. I believe with all my heart that what I have is important. *Who* I am is more important, that is, character. There is a tendency to think that the more degrees I have, the better I am. The *Being* part is the key. Down the road, aim at being what God wants you to be. It doesn’t matter whether things are going well. The core is character – *Being*.” (Teacher)

“The bottom line is not your degree that will count but your personal walk with Christ; your personal walk with God. Christian growth and maturity – spiritual growth – is not about books. People don’t want to hear about books. They want to learn from you. Even those without degrees but with a personal walk with Jesus Christ, they make greater impact on the church than those with degrees but with a shallow walk with Christ. Your personal walk with Christ is what people want to hear and see.” (Pastor)

“A combination of drawing near to God and study puts them on a cutting edge. In ministry we only stand if our character is above reproach. Tell them – have a philosophy of ministry as in the Bible. Jesus Christ said, ‘My meat is to do the will of God.’ Paul said, ‘For me to live is Christ.’ Everyone should have a purpose statement.” (Teacher)

“Be above reproach, as much as possible. If there are scandals of church money, be clean. For example, when used clothes or food are given in the church for a particular need, make sure it goes there.” (Pastor)

“Let them know that people don’t respect you for what you know but for what you are. There is no need to get an ‘A’ in class if you don’t integrate that with life. There is nothing good learned in school that is not good in life. People divorce what they learn with what they are. This dichotomy should be destroyed. Ministry is who you are.” (Pastor)

“As ministers of God, we must be the first people to practice what we say.” (Teacher)

“One thing I’d like to say to the young people: They should have the fruit of the Spirit, especially patience, gentleness, faithfulness and self control; because in the church there are many problems. In the past people feared God, respected

and admired the ministers of the Word. But in these days people do not care so much about the Word of God. They don't have such regard for ministers. People mind their own business. They think of getting money and educating their children. They think of amassing wealth – getting many plots to build houses and rent. People are very worldly minded.” (Pastor)

“A major one! Be yourself. What you are in the house is what you are in church and the councils. There is a temptation to be different with your wife in home and in the pulpit when preaching. When my children see me preaching, they see the same daddy, without pretence or piety. Just because we are in church, we should not pretend to be pious.” (Pastor)

Be faithful: “No matter what happens, be faithful to the Lord. If you are tempted to steal, to take advantage of the people, just be faithful and God will supply. Just hold on.” (Chaplain)

“I've learned to be faithful in my work and to be committed.” (Church Worker)

“In the ministry, though people may not recognise you, be faithful and God in his own time will do something for you.” (Church Leader)

“There are so many rapid changes. In the midst of change, it is important to remember that Jesus Christ never changes. His promises do not change. We should not change for the sake of change. We must ask: ‘what would Jesus do?’” (Teacher)

Be loving: “We should be people of love. We instruct people to do this or that. But we have a problem of communicating this in love. You may have many good ideas and visions, but you cannot do it without other people. So you must not offend them. One should be flexible to accomplish your goals.” (Teacher)

“One must love the people you work with. Unbelievers are looking for love from us Christians.” (Pastor)

“Hatred is a vice. God's people should do away with hatred. Unless we want to be punished by God, we must not hate. Envy and hatred go together. For example, someone has a nice suit. They say malicious things about him. *Majini* are associated with anyone who succeeds.” (Church Leader)

Be patient: “Before they enter the ministry, prepare for action. The ministry is not easy with human strength, but with God we can make it. Ministry needs patience. I've learned that the fruit of the spirit is patience.” (Teacher)

“Tolerance and patience! Those are two basic ingredients. You meet people of all kinds. Sometimes you are tempted to shout. Those two issues – tolerance and patience with church members and leaders! People are different to work with. As pastor you give assignments, resolutions are passed in the councils but they are never done. Years go by and they still are not done.” (Pastor)

“Let them be quick to learn what people speak, but slow to speak. They should learn to be quiet. They need to learn to digest what they say. ‘An empty tin makes the loudest noise.’” (Pastor)

“There is need for patience and humility, because if you want things to happen quickly you will be discouraged, because people may not understand the ideas you come up with and cannot accept them.” (Pastor)

“Lots of patience is needed. Do not expect instant results for they won’t last.” (Pastor)

“Changes must be slow. They need to be wise and change slowly.” (Pastor)

“First thing, they have the best knowledge, but they should use it patiently. People will not listen to them straight away. They should first build relationships and confidence.” (Pastor)

“What you learn in class is completely different from what you learn in the field. In the field you get a horse and must teach a wild horse to be tame. You encounter different kinds of people. Sometimes it takes awhile to make decisions. You must be patient. That fire is in you; that is good, but you need to be patient and leave the results to God instead of manufacturing results.” (Pastor)

“Something else I experienced. We should be prepared in our understanding. We will not find it easy to begin the ministry. Frustrations are there. We need to be patient. It is easy to run away. We need patience in the early months of ministry. You don’t know where to begin.” (Teacher)

“They need to be patient. For example, last Saturday I waited two hours for a service where I was invited to speak. But it had been cancelled and no one told me. Patience is necessary.” (Teacher)

“The other thing we need is to be patient. When I came from College, it was wonderful. I had studied theology. But it took time to be accepted in the ministry. It takes patience.” (Pastor)

“Patience is very important. ‘There is no hurry in Africa.’ That is also true in the church.” (Teacher)

“The big thing is patience. The pastor needs this: to smile when there are problems. One should see God in every problem. Longsuffering! Every successful minister needs this.” (Teacher)

“You cannot see things happen overnight. You see how things fall short of the great ideas you learned. Changes take time. We get into trouble when we leave College. Not that we are puffed up, but we know well. But we cannot do it. Change comes slowly.” (Teacher)

“They should be patient. They should not be eager for posts or positions in the church. Rome was not built in a day. In time God will give positions they want.” (Pastor)

“Finally, they should have lots of patience. Just to wait and wait and wait.” (Church Worker)

Be holy: “I challenge people when I am clean and not when I am dirty like they are.” (Pastor)

“They should be willing to be crushed, melted and molded by God. Let God mold them.” (Teacher)

Be forgiving: “Forgiveness – sometimes you will be really hurt from persecution, from brothers, even from elders or church members. You must learn to forgive and forget.” (Pastor)

Be forgiven: “About the past – there are things in the past that have bad effects on your ministry. Then you should pray over it; for example, bitterness or a broken relationship in the past. This can hinder the Holy Spirit from working. Or your parents may be opposed to you becoming a pastor. They committed you to other things. You need to pray about this so that you are not haunted, so that you are released. Or you may have been named after a certain forefather who was a magician and you were expected to follow in that way of life. If idol worship was there, you must pray over this so that your ministry will not be hindered.” (Pastor)

Be content: Learn to be content. Godliness with contentment is great gain. The Lord has promised not to leave them.” (Teacher)

Persevere in Your Calling for God is Faithful

“We need to persevere. There are painful things to the ministry, slander and rejection, but we need to look to God and keep on going.” (Pastor)

“In the ministry, we need perseverance because of the challenges of many kinds. Perseverance and trust in God are the keys.” (Church Worker)

“I’ve learned that if I am called by God, there is no quitting. Regardless of what comes my way – slander, suffering, discouragement, and unhappiness – I must not quit. One must not be distracted from my focus which is on Jesus Christ. I must keep on going. This is not easy. To be a Christian – the name is a very nice word – but to live it is not easy. I must live the name I have. I must be serious with what I profess. Sin must remain sin as God names it. I must be straight forward ambassador of Christ in my thinking and speaking.” (Teacher)

“It is good to be devoted to the Lord’s work regardless of circumstances. God will always be with you and even open other doors where you can serve the Lord. For example, when people hated Jesus, he withdrew and went to other people for ministry. It is still the same today.” (Teacher)

“One thing is to challenge students to stand firm in faith against the challenges of the day. Like, in these days, one-hundred years after the church was founded in Kenya, support of pastors is very low. When there is no promise of salary, can they stand strong?” (Missionary)

“When difficulties come, they should not run away from them, even conflicts. For conflicts can bring people together.” (Teacher)

“Perseverance and seeking counsel go together. If I had been hasty, you would have heard that I was no longer in the ministry. We graduated from College with a lot of knowledge. But we must persevere with leaders who lack this knowledge.” (Pastor)

“By persevering in what God has called you to do, even if the going gets tough. Stay there.” (Pastor)

“There is always a tendency to quit. You run all over the world. It is good to persevere in God’s calling. Be steady. Don’t give up. Pursue it. God can bless you wherever you are. You don’t need to be a preacher in a big church. He can bless you in whatever place you are, even in the slums.” (Pastor)

“No one should look at the ministry as a means of achieving their human desires. Those who look at the ministry in this way will jump here and there. They will not see fruit. How has God used them? We need to stay, be there and take our time.” (Pastor)

“Let them go into the field, not afraid of what they will eat. God is faithful. They should not doubt God. They have chosen a noble job. It is the highest calling one can receive. If I would start all over again, I would be a pastor again. I want to assure them, that God is faithful. My wife and I can testify to this. We have never gone hungry.” (Church Leader)

“Years of training in College are sweet years of knowledge expansion, but success in the ministry will depend on one’s love and commitment to the Lord. There will come difficult times when you would need a high degree of patience, prayer and wisdom at least for the Lord to clear the cloud and bring the awaited answer. A minister should just remember that when he falters or staggers in the midst of crisis, the whole church too follows the same pattern. So one must love and be committed to the Lord. To me, I have no other key to success in ministry apart from this.” (Pastor)

“Be sensitive to the Lord’s leading. I say, what is your calling? When someone moves from place to place, I ask: ‘Did the Lord call you to all those places?’” (Church Leader)

“The call to the ministry is good. Let them not be afraid of the call to the ministry. For example, Jeremiah was afraid, he felt too young. God promised to put His words in Jeremiah’s mouth. The call is good and they should not give up.” (Church Worker)

“Church work requires the whole self. It is not lip service. You must work for the church wholly. If you serve in the church and your mind is on something else, maybe further study after one year, there is a lot you will miss. You will never learn. Go to work for three years in the church after College graduation so you know what the church needs are, so you know what God’s will is. You might become a professional student rather than a servant. It is not education that I need. Have I exhausted what I have learned? Students should not rush to further studies but go back to their home churches before more study.” (Pastor)

THE MINISTER IN MINISTRY

Know the Unique Calling for Your Life

“First, from personal experience, let God use you the way he desires, let God make you to be what he wants, not what you want. We are so diverse in our thinking and ability and God prepares us and fits us for the ministry. Let God use the abilities you have without copying others. We are all unique.” (Teacher)

“More and more I realize that we must retain our uniqueness and we must not try to become like others.” (Pastor)

“Be yourself and let the Holy Spirit continue to mold you. You cannot be like others. Be like Christ. You cannot be a Billy Graham.” (Church Leader)

“When you are in the ministry, you compare yourself with others. But God has a different programme for each. Most of my fellow students already have their Master’s Degree.” (Teacher)

“One should be able to discern the gifts and develop them, and to know where they fit into the ministry. Not all fit behind the pulpit.” (Pastor)

Enter the Ministry Wisely

Recognise the difference between the classroom and church experience:

“First, when they get out, they should be aware that practical ministry is different from paper work. Life inside College is different from the outside world.” (Chaplain)

“Being in the field is so different from being in College. Experience is the best teacher.” (Pastor)

“I’ve learned that theological training alone cannot make one an efficient pastor. We must integrate theological training with daily activities. We cannot come from College and feel that we will make effective ministers.” (Pastor)

“I suggest that after school what you expect is not what you get. You expect a smooth life but it ends up being rough.” (Pastor)

“When one is at College, he may have dreams. But things in the field are quite different. We should put ourselves at the Lord’s disposal. You must give yourself to the Lord completely, trusting him fully.” (Pastor)

“True, we are generally prepared for ministry with given skills. But one thing we need is the application of the skills. We may not find conducive situations; we must adjust to the situation. We cannot use these principles directly. There is the question of knowing how to adjust to the setting where the Lord sends us; that is very important. We can be frustrated if we cannot apply our knowledge directly. For example, when I returned back home, the question of planning arose; how to pass this knowledge, how to help them to do this. You cannot go straight and tell them to do #1 and #2. You need to educate them to plan in the home and in the ministry.” (Teacher)

“One crucial thing: never bank on your papers for a fruitful ministry. Never say that this degree or diploma is what I have. Degrees are not the issue, because if one brags about theological education, one will not get anywhere. What matters most is to tell the lay people the simple truth about God and demonstrate this in your life. Classroom and Field are two different things. Yes, it is good to be learned. But experience also is important.” (Chaplain)

“I would advise that when you graduate you feel inadequate. Some things you meet in church which you did not learn in the classroom but in time you become an expert in them. For example, I’ve learned to deal with people of different ages. As a result of interacting with people, I learned to solve problems, like marriage problems; also, to experience how to approach different people. For example, all the elders are older than me. But I’ve learned to deal with them. This cannot be learned in the classroom but through experience.” (Pastor)

“While I was there at College, we thought that when we would graduate, all things would be the same in the church as in College. We never knew that in service there were problems. Students must prepare themselves to meet problems they will face in the service. They must be patient.” (Pastor)

Be committed to the church: “I believe that first and foremost the church needs leaders. It needs leaders who have the church at heart. Many come from the Bible Schools and do not have the church at heart. Students should evaluate why they desire to be a pastor. One must have a passion for the church.” (Pastor)

Introduce changes slowly: “When they join the ministry, they need to be very slow to speak but quick to listen. One must not be quick to condemn. Elders say: ‘We always did it this way. We saw you grow up. Don’t correct us.’” (Pastor)

“College students should come down when they go out. They should not think they know a lot. Just observe. When you come down, you win the confidence of people. Then you can use the knowledge that you have.” (Teacher)

“When you leave College, sit and listen. Be slow in acting and making decision. Learn from others. Some may not look spiritual but they have experience. Learn from them. Arrogance and pride are dangerous.” (Pastor)

“It is very important to build a consensus among your church leadership and congregation. Many times we waste a lot of time squabbling over trivia at the expense of God’s work. We are in the business of Christ’s Kingdom and it is necessary to avoid controversy where possible.” (Pastor)

“Don’t rush to issues. In the ministry, many issues come up, many burning problems. They desire comments or decisions right away. Don’t rush. Take your time. Apply wisdom. You need to be wise in ministry and depend on God.” (Chaplain)

“Especially for pastors, begin just as a good listener and do not be quick to reply and say what you think. It is said of one pastor who was slandered that he said nothing. You need to be patient. ‘Be quick to hear and slow to speak.’ Practically, it works!” (Church Worker)

“When you leave school, you leave with lots of theory that is not practical. You try to apply the theories, but you become discouraged when you find that your ideas are not bought by the people. It takes time. You need a lot of patience. You need perseverance in selling good ideas.” (Pastor)

“We learn a lot in school. We think we can pour it out and bring change immediately. But change comes slowly.” (Pastor)

“‘Learn before you teach.’ To be effective in the ministry, you must learn from people first. Why do people accept me as an elder? If you root him out, there must be a reason. He may take half of the people with him.” (Pastor)

“It is good to have training and good to have plans of what to do after graduation. But don’t be rigid when you try to apply what you learned at College. The field is completely different. What you want to do does not happen automatically. To convince people is most difficult. Be ready to change in order to work well with people. Be wise! You think that you know how to use or apply your knowledge. This may take more time to apply.” (Church Worker)

Seek divine guidance: “We need to wait upon God. In everything we do, in every change we want to make, we must wait on God in prayer. Quick decisions can be disastrous.” (Pastor)

“The knowledge I got from College was excellent but I needed the Spirit of God to guide me to make right decisions. Without the leading of the Holy Spirit, I would give dry messages.” (Teacher)

“Most important – be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in every situation. If anything arises, and you are in fellowship with God, you will not make blunders as many do.” (Church Worker)

“This is important for a Christian leader: to identify the problem that exists in his community, to see God’s wisdom to work on it. If he fails to identify the problem, he will not be relevant. The leader must seek wisdom to identify the problem and come up with a solution.” (Teacher)

Anticipate the problems in the field: “The comforts of a Bible College are not very realistic when you come to the real world and meet the real situation. Life can be tough.” (Chaplain)

“Students must know that they will definitely experience problems in ministry. There is no leader in the Bible without problems. God uses leaders who are wounded. These difficult experiences prepare one for ministry. When going through difficult times, you must have a bigger picture, have a godly perspective. It may be painful. But one must wait and pray and seek counsel – this has really helped in my ministry.” (Church Leader)

“At College, you have uncertainty about the future after graduation. It would be good if students would prepare themselves for anything. Life in the church is not what they think it is. Since life changes, they should learn that what they need more is to serve God and that means serving mankind as God’s vessel.” (Pastor)

“One thing I learned at College that is not practical outside. College students expect a lot, like positions, honour, money, food, *matatu* fares. They feel life should be easy. But in the field it is not that way. The reason is not because God is not in control, but because this is part of the nurturing process. The hardships in ministry nurture you if you take them positively.” (Pastor)

“In class you do things theoretically and it looks like it is automatic. But in reality it is not easy.” (Chaplain)

“When they graduate, they should be prepared mentally to face challenges.” (Church Worker)

“Whenever graduates are appointed, they do well. One graduate was given too much work. He almost went out of his mind. The doctor told him to rest. This is a warning. College students are good but in the end it will drain you. The much work will affect your personal study, you become tired and there is no time for personal development.” (Pastor)

“When people come to Bible School they have high hopes, that life will be very smooth after graduation. They do not learn until after graduation. It would be helpful if those in the field could come and teach students what to expect.” (Teacher)

“When I first came out of College, I thought that working in a church would be a wonderful experience because you are working with Christians and there is no way you cannot work well with them. But I found trials and opposition – not very much from non-Christians but from the Body of Christ, some in leadership. So I would advise the students to prepare for that so they will not be surprised.” (Pastor)

“Not all pastors are there for you. Some will propose you to do something else; probably because of problems and discouragements they have faced in the ministry. Competition is an issue. They don’t want them to compete. For example, in our church district only one other pastor and I have degrees. Others have a diploma.” (Teacher)

“There are a lot of hardships in our church, especially in our day. It calls us to rely on the Lord.” (Teacher)

“One thing! Accept that field work is not easy. Students blame leaders in the classroom, but they must accept the fact that it is difficult to serve in the church. Be prepared to face problems in the field.” (Church Leader)

“It is not easy to build a ministry. It requires everything. Things are not the way you see it in College. Our dreams are shattered and blown away. Our friends are no longer with us. We are all alone struggling. We must be prayerful. We should be praying in the College, not to mess up after College. Prepare seriously for ministry after College. The real paper or degree is in the field; it is practical.” (Pastor)

“It is easy to go through College and learn theory, but in the field you are faced with things not learned. You need to ask God for discernment to deal with situations, such as when you do counselling.” (Chaplain)

Respond to people wisely: “Genesis 12:3 is a verse which always encourages me. God called Abraham and he obeyed the Lord. Verse 3 gives all I need. ‘I will bless those who bless you.’ ‘Don’t fight for yourself because God will fight for you.’ God will represent me in the Council, even when a witch doctor scratches himself hidden under a bed when cursing me. God blesses from which ever place you are. Just give yourself to God and he will bless you.” (Pastor)

“If wrongly treated, it is better to let the Lord vindicate you if they refuse to accept your testimony. Speak the truth but don’t force it. Jesus Christ taught by conviction and not by force.” (Teacher)

“A servant of the Lord should give up his rights rather than prove that he or she is right. For example, going to church without a head scarf; trying to refuse, showing you are right. We need to relinquish our rights. People argue over things that are not important.” (Teacher)

“In light of the difficulties and problems, I endeavoured to respond to problems positively; trying not to justify myself but just committing it to the Lord. I found joy. I could have accused people but I kept it to myself and

prayed. After it was over, I did not care if people looked at me fearfully. I continued with the ministry. I am amazed that I did not do things in the worldly way of retaliating. I credit this to the Lord.” (Missionary)

“Another lesson I just discovered which came as a result of prayer. When Saul was made king, some did not respect him but he did not fight with them. (At the end of his life he became proud and boasted.) I wanted to do just the opposite. In my first place of ministry I would argue with people on issues. I should have kept quiet if I had been wiser. I would advise College students to be cautious in the beginning. They need to go to the ministry to learn first. They should not argue and insist on their own way.” (Chaplain)

“Teach before you discipline. If you discipline a person and he does not know, he becomes an enemy. If you teach a whole congregation the truth, they will help in the discipline.” (Pastor)

“Do not be afraid of titles, such as professor of physics, because they do not know the Bible.” (Chaplain)

Respect others: “Respect one another in the ministry. There are graduates from different Bible Schools, Institutes and Colleges. College graduates tend to be proud. Respect others. During the holidays they will meet pastors, graduates from other institutions, because they are servants working in the same garden (*shamba*).” (Pastor)

“We should highly respect one another. We are not competitors but should recognize that we compliment one another. We are yoke fellows.” (Teacher)

“Respect those who deserve respect, those in authority.” (Pastor)

“It is easy to judge others out there in the churches. After graduation it is easy to become like them. Students need to find out why pastors and church leaders out there are doing what they do and then avoid that because those pastors and church leaders today were once in school and criticized those out there and now they do the same things.” (Teacher)

Identify with people: “What I have seen and learned, once you go out, you need to identify with the people you minister to. If I minister to the Turkana and they are still naked – I must go as one who is trained with Greek and Hebrew, but I need to listen to their struggles and eat their food, so that they see me identify with the people. You need to be at the level of the people you minister to. Know that these people are suffering and seek to meet their needs. This does not mean giving food but at least giving spiritual food. If you have nothing to offer, they go away. To minister in such an area, how will I do it?”

Ask people, ask the elders, what has been going on, instead of just giving what you have. You need to learn from the people. When people are willing to do this, people will teach you and love you.” (Church Leader)

“I worked with people to get to know them in their homes, getting close to people. I find people opening up to me and being able to minister to them.” (Missionary)

Be prepared for work: “Hard work! God blesses you proportionately according to your work. Compare a faithful farmer in the writings of Paul. The Lord repays those who serve faithfully.” (Teacher)

“Utilise opportunities that show up. Don’t neglect or procrastinate.” (Teacher)

“Once you do something, you must engage with the whole heart. It may be your only time to do so.” (Teacher)

“You must do your share and if others fail, you must fill the gap.” (Teacher)

“One thing I am working out. I give my very best, consistently, every time I do something. People work hard when an exam is given so they can pass it, or when a sermon is preached with people watching. But later, what comes out does not match when the circumstances are different. If we strive to do our best, I am sure we will succeed in ministry. God calls us to do this. This encompasses several things: study of Scripture, spending time with the family, in office working, organising a seminar.” (Missionary)

“Be prepared to work. We are in Africa. There may be no roads or vehicles.” (Pastor)

“Like Paul, when one graduates one must learn to earn his living. Paul worked. I am not saying you should not be committed to ministry. But a pastor comes out, he finds members who walk long distances, yet he organizes a *harambee* to buy a car. But people have always walked long distances.” (Teacher)

“This is the fourth month of not being paid. Land is given to teachers. I spend hard work to dig, but it all dried up. I did not get a spoon of food. We struggle. I teach so many courses. Teachers are leaving. Next term I expect more courses. To have my own time to do my own things is by grace. I am devoted to teach and am invited to preach. My first priority is teaching. I am given new courses and must prepare over night. I have no notes. And I struggle to get food and am called to preach but have no means of transport – must walk. If I say ‘no,’ they accuse me and blame the College. To plan for our lives

is hard. We don't have a place to erect a house. I cannot plan. I walk, dig by hand, we are not lazy. So we say, God be glorified. We don't know our future. If we are not patient, we can run away. But we say, 'God is good.'" (Pastor)

"Success in College does not mean success in ministry. Even if you succeeded in one thing yesterday, this does not ensure success for the future. Face each day with fear and trembling. Avoid getting used to the ministry." (Teacher)

Train others to do the work of the ministry: "I've learned that it is so rewarding to equip people to do something, instead of doing everything myself. Don't get trapped in the busy syndrome. I got into the same problem. I was so busy but not producing. I went around putting out fires, but after I left the fire broke out again. I asked, 'What am I doing?' I decided to let people do it. I only counseled and preached. I was influenced by the book, *Becoming Unbusy*. The author extolled the virtue of reproducing yourself in others. I feel very happy with pastors who do a marvelous job." (Church Leader)

"They should not fail to recognize that each member of the church has some potential in helping the church to grow. Therefore, they need to train them through seminars, to become great evangelists, preachers etc." (Teacher)

"God has gifted us differently. Each person in the church has a gift. We need to identify and develop it. No pastor can do the ministry on his own. In the church where I pastored we had six Bible studies, nineteen prayer fellowships and two classes of BEE (Biblical Education by Extension). They all continued after I left because I had trained others so that everything would continue. I preached twice per month, invited one guest to preach per month and once per month a layman preached. I trained elders to preach and visit during our monthly seminars for elders." (Teacher)

Recognise your own limitations: "When I left College I thought I knew everything. But I faced life and realized that I knew almost nothing. I learned that I needed to trust God for everything." (Teacher)

"When students come out of College, they think they know everything. But when you come into the church you feel you know almost nothing. People do not want to see your knowledge. They know you have a degree. They want what you can give them. You must stoop down and reach all ages and even the unlearned. That is why I always go back to that verse in Proverbs 3:5,6. That has helped me." (Chaplain)

"When they graduate, they should not feel that they are learned, that they are theologians, that they have gotten everything. But what I've learned is to

rely on the Lord completely for him to use me. You can use what you have gained to reach other people. But if you graduate and say, 'I've been to this school,' this will not help you. People don't accept us because of knowledge we have acquired but they learn more from what they see in our lives, the way we talk to them and reach them. Then they will come to us for help. It is practical Christian living that is important and not what you know." (Church Leader)

"As much as experience is important, your experience belongs to that time alone. Many have killed the church by saying that they have been in the ministry long, but don't realize they need a new experience." (Teacher)

Be practical: "In the church outside College, they don't need all this theology. They read the practical Jesus in you. Let students read. This is important. It will help you. For example, I never took Sunday School seriously at College. Then I had to teach Sunday School teachers in church. But people are not interested in theology. Can you tell us how to avoid stealing, fornication etc.? They want practical Jesus in you; the day-to-day problems of our people. Tell us in simple language what Jesus can do to help me in my life." (Pastor)

"Education is good but communication should be at a very low level. Need to come down. Don't overwhelm people with what you have acquired in the classroom." (Church Leader)

Be wise: "Wisdom and discernment! Once out in the ministry we need to be discerning. The people we meet, our co-workers may not have the vision as we have. We need discernment to know how best to sell our vision to them. One can put across good ideas in a poor way and it is rejected." (Church Worker)

"Act discerningly. Be careful of the gifts people give you because they may be a trap. They may want to buy you. I'm very careful when I receive gifts." (Pastor)

"One must learn for yourself. At College you learn many things. If you come to the village with a B.Th., you will not fit. But you must come with knowledge to help. Leave the degree for yourself and go with knowledge. For example, Greek helps you get knowledge, but leave Greek." (Pastor)

"Learn to use the Bible well to determine what you should die for in the ministry and what you should not die for." (Teacher)

"In church issues, take care not to take sides in church politics." (Church Leader)

"Caution: let pastors not be friends of politicians. The pastor is for God's kingdom but politicians want pastors for their own gain." (Church Leader)

“The main thing: College gives you the *How* to, not the *What* to. *What* is different in each context. Students are taught *How* to preach, lead, and develop theology. Be born in the situation. See how you can integrate your skills into your context. See your vision, how to bring people from one point to another.” (Pastor)

“Deal with controversial matters; don’t repress or ignore them. For example, should ladies preach? Which political party to be a member? What of the polygamist man in church, witchcraft, leadership wrangles, church discipline? Don’t ignore them but deal with them biblically, ethically and morally.” (Pastor)

“One should seek help and counsel of other people; especially young pastors should seek counsel of the older ones. This can help them a lot.” (Church Leader)

“They should not depend on the members because they may turn you down. This will lead you to move from one church to another.” (Pastor)

“I’ve taken the principle of Abraham when his workers were fighting with Laban. He moved to a different location to avoid conflicts. I see more people suffer in conflict and they waste their energy. Not to run away but God says at times, it is time to move on.” (Chaplain)

Develop Skills of Inter-Personal Relationships

“Ministry is people. It is not money or certificate or degree. Those coming to ministry need to know that they are dealing with people – some are sinful and selfish. Until we know how to deal with people in their context, we cannot succeed.” (Church Leader)

“One thing, first of all, they must be people oriented, especially to be involved with people. This means understanding and loving people, being concerned with people. If they are not concerned, if they do not listen to people, their ministry will fail. You cannot rush; you must be a good listener. Think of how they feel, feel with them.” (Teacher)

“I’d advise them to learn to appreciate people. This is very important. Not just people who do good to them. We can offer words of encouragement for them. Thank God for the group or team of people with whom they work. Appreciation of people! Wherever they go, they will be with people. People matter to God, not computers or cell phones.” (Teacher)

“They must be ready to cope with other servants in the ministry. They must fit in with others and have good relationships. If they look down on older

pastors and don't respect them, they are in trouble. They must respect them and have fellowship with them." (Pastor)

"Whenever you serve in a set up, try to work with people. Try to understand them and accept them even with their problems. Reason together with them and life will continue." (Church Worker)

"The relationships with other people are important. At College people related well. All are learned. Outside, you work with learned and unlearned. A very big gap! I am ready to fill the gap. Pastors or anyone in the office as leaders must fill the gap." (Pastor)

Develop Good Relationships with the Elders

Recognise the experience of the elders: "In ministry, there are two things: knowledge and experience. If one is not careful, we will claim knowledge: 'I've learned everything.' To avoid a clash with those with experience, we need to integrate the two." (Teacher)

"One major thing! Though they have head knowledge learned at College, the elders in the church have been in the ministry for a long time. These elders can help them become capable pastors in the future. Those elders have potential." (Teacher)

"Old people in the church, though not educated, have been leaders for generations past. One should acknowledge what has been done. We have no leadership vacuum. We must not forget they have been there. We need to learn what they know in order to lead them to know new things." (Pastor)

"For a student in school, he has a lot to do with the Bible and theoretical things. In church the elders have lots of experience. For success, there must be a balance between lessons learned from the experience of elders and the theoretical lessons learned in the classroom. We need each other. I have much to offer the elders and the elders do too. We must appreciate what they have. We have this attitude: 'I have everything. I will show them.' But with this attitude, you will not accomplish anything." (Pastor)

"One College student when he graduated said this: 'No untrained person will stand in the pulpit with me.' That one factor brought him down in the ministry. Those untrained elders were caring for the church when he was in College. Our education only helps us use our gifts properly. We should not allow our education to overshadow our gifts." (Chaplain)

Respect the elders: “They should respect church elders. They often get out and fail to respect church elders. When they rebuke elders, they should do it gently and with love.” (Chaplain)

“Elders (*wazee*) are very good. At College everyone spoke of elders (*wazee*) of how difficult they are. But elders (*wazee*) are very good. You must work together with them. If you work with them, they will help you. You need to respect them. Students should be ready to listen to them.” (Church Worker)

“Appreciate what has been done. You may find many problems, but if you find the local church with people, that is everything. Even if things are bad, don’t be critical. Thank God for what has been done, even if it is not all it should be. I’ve learned to appreciate, appreciate, appreciate! How can you do that? Depend on the Lord, pray, read his Word and God helps you to appreciate on your own. Depend on the Lord, pray, praise God for what he has done.” (Teacher)

“Everyone requires respect. Recognise the members and their work. Respect what they are doing. When you are in church, if you don’t speak positive things to church members, and if you quarrel with people, they will say, ‘We don’t want him.’ He may be a good preacher, but if he does not respect them, they will not want him. The same thing applies to leadership. You need to honour their contribution. Show that they are doing something in that Council and they will respect you.” (Pastor)

“Respect those who deserve respect, those in authority.” (Pastor)

“During graduation, I hear an elder or board member comment that College graduates should not think that the lay people do not understand things too. College graduates should not think they know all and the elders know nothing. Elders also have wisdom and experience. Elders should be viewed with positive attitudes.” (Pastor)

“Be willing to be led by the church leaders. Respect those in authority. Ask God to direct them in their vision for you.” (Pastor)

Work with the Elders: “When you go to a ministry, be sure you are working with elders. If you work alone, you fail. If you work with elders, you succeed.” (Pastor)

“Learning cannot be ignored. We need that. Many elders may not have that learning but they do have experience. Elders from experience know when people hurt and how to scratch them where they itch. Pastors must utilise the experience of the elders. The only way College graduates can succeed is in

putting together their knowledge they gained at College with the experience of the elders. I've seen pastors who understand this; they incorporate experience and wisdom of the elders and they succeed. College graduates who learn from experience in church, do much better than those who go on from school to school. Zachaeus was high up in the tree and Jesus said to him, 'Come down.' Some people are trained so high, they need to come down. He is an Mzee in the church for forty years. He knows people so well. If the pastor comes down to where people are, he can help them." (Teacher)

"In the ministry, identify God fearing elders with whom you can share your problems and pray together." (Church Leader)

"The way the Africa Inland Church is structured, the elders have a lot of say. Once they graduate, they should be humble. Don't be change agents immediately. Don't rush; with humility work with the system and change comes from within." (Pastor)

Learn from the elders: "You must learn from your elders. There are those elders in the church who are very influential in the Church Council. You must identify them and then every time you want an idea passed by the Council, talk to them in private in advance and convince them. This may seem like manipulation but it is not! Such people like to be consulted and since you are doing the necessary projects for the kingdom and you will not bribe him, it is worth the effort. It works wonders." (Pastor)

"They need to listen to the elders, and not look down on them as if they were nothing." (Pastor)

"I learned that to have knowledge is one thing, but to reach people with it, is different. This requires interacting with the culture, with people and how to relate and apply what you have learned." (Chaplain)

"'Let them read the signs of the times,' I advised some in College. Up until last year this one College graduate is unemployed. I told them in College: 'Don't underestimate the elders. Study them, follow them, and study the signs of the times.' But some did not listen and are not employed up to this moment. I emphasised this in College." (Church Leader)

Be patient with elders: "Those who work with the Church need to be patient when working with elders." (Pastor)

"After College I felt I should change the system. I saw many things going wrong. But I realized that you cannot change things over night. It takes time to be accepted into the system before you can bring change. Therefore, when you look out there, you see a bow legged person in the field. Don't use a hammer to

straighten it; apply oil (oil softens the stiff joints). A hammer is a direct attack and breaks. Oil is tactful. You help the person and help him straighten up. ‘Do not sharply rebuke an elder.’” (Pastor)

“In dealing with church elders – when they find irresponsible, annoying church elders – let them begin by teaching them the Word of God. When these elders are not co-operative, teach the Word. Caution! Let the pastor be fair to all church elders. Let the pastor visit all church elders and not be a pastor of one or two church elders.” (Church Leader)

“We are not in the ministry to fight. We meet very old elders (*wazee*). Some are very arrogant. At least we should understand them and their age. We should understand that they did not have opportunity to study as we have. If we want to bring them to our level of understanding, it will not happen.” (Pastor)

THE MINISTER AND HIS PRIVATE LIFE

Care for Your Family

“You must keep fellowship with your family first, then your church second. You need to help your family grow in the Lord. When you are right with the family you do well in the church. Create an atmosphere in the home that is good so that you can do well in the church.” (Pastor)

“Commitment to the family has more impact in the church than words. Actions speak louder than words.” (Teacher)

“An important issue is the family. God deals with us as families. Our relationship with our family determines our effectiveness in ministry. Take seriously family relationships.” (Pastor)

“I’ve learned a lot through family fellowship and sharing that helps in church ministry. The church wants to see how you conduct your family. They want to see how you relate to your family.” (Pastor)

“It is necessary to have family commitment. The family is being attacked today. One needs to demonstrate a Christian life in the family.” (Church Leader)

“Have commitment to your family. This means you eat well, you seal off possible failures because you are a model to others.” (Pastor)

“It is important to take care of your family. Develop your family. When you are in trouble, your family provides the cushion. Love your wife, be good to her, and develop real fellowship with her and your children. When all people reject you, your family is your refuge. Get them involved in ministry.” (Chaplain)

“Approach the ministry holistically – balance your family, ministry and life. Face the ministry as a human being and not as a spirit. Some people pretend they come from heaven.” (Teacher)

“The unmarried should pray for a supportive wife. When your marriage collapses, the ministry collapses. If the wife does not understand the meaning of ministry, there will be trouble. Young men need to be advised.” (Teacher)

“Plan leisure, to relax and rejuvenate.” (Pastor)

Always Continue Learning

“We did get a good education at College but you can’t go with the idea that you know it all. You must go out to learn. You fail if you rest on your College education. Be happy. But there is more to learn out there. Learn how to apply knowledge in a humble way. Put it into practice. Implement it so people can benefit.” (Teacher)

“We are not yet done. We need to strive to grow; we need an open mind. At College, one becomes full of knowledge, but one needs to continue learning.” (Teacher)

“Learning is a process. It doesn’t end with graduation. In every situation, we should use them as mentoring situations. At school, learning does not stop. Much learning continues afterwards.” (Pastor)

Learn from books: “I’ve learned that when they leave College, they should continue reading. Reading should be a tradition. By private studies you can keep abreast. Every time we are getting new problems, so we need to read newspapers and books. Otherwise, we will be outdated.” (Pastor)

“They need to keep reading books. When students leave school they need to update themselves by reading. They should keep up with things happening in the world – politically, socially, etc.” (Pastor)

“I’ve learned that we need to keep reading. What we get in College is excellent. But we need to keep going back to those notes, for example, to see about counseling.” (Pastor)

“The greatest wisdom is not far from books. Be a reader of books. It has helped me to grow and sharpen my skills. It is not enough to finish school and then stop reading.” (Teacher).

Learn from experience: “They should be ready to get into the school of experience, the school of God. Books are not enough. At graduation they should not feel they know it all. Let them keep studying. Don’t bring their files when they go home.” (Teacher)

“Most ideas you have when you leave College are very shallow; they are developed afterwards. For example, a story is told of a man out of College who wrote a book: *Ten Commandments for Parents*. When he got a child, he revised the book and called it, *Ten Suggestions for Parents*. After his children became teenagers, he revised the book and called it, *Ten Possible Ideas for Parents*. What I’ve learned at College, the foundations remain; but you must grow. The key thing is growth. When you leave training you feel you know everything.” (Chaplain)

“Do not walk out of College with a degree and assume you know it. It is one thing to be in the classroom and another to be in the ministry. The time you go to ministry, that is the time you begin to learn.” (Church Leader)

“The five qualities of success I mentioned (patience, humility, teach-ability, self control and faithfulness) will never be learned in the classroom. There is no course on humility or on patience. You learn that in ministry with your interaction with people. In College you learn theory; but when in charge of a local church, that is when someone brings a problem and you need patience, humility, self control and faithfulness.” (Pastor)

“Youth jump here and there. They desire to quit. It is part of God’s training. Pain is part of God’s training. The best training in my life has been in tears and pain. I’ve learned to forgive others, to guard against hurting others by what I say or do because it was done to me. ‘Help me not to hurt them as I was hurt,’ I pray. I’ve been the chairman of a Branch Church Council, the Vice Chairman of a District Church Council, but no one has accused me of hurting him.” (Pastor)

“Many things are learned in the field or through personal spiritual growth. You grow through experiences.” (Pastor)

“In school you learn head knowledge. When you go outside, that is where school starts. You meet problems that you never learned about in class. You must seek the Lord for his guidance and help. When they go to the ministry, let them not feel that ‘I know it, I can make it.’ Rather, let them surrender to the Lord.” (Chaplain)

Learn from others: “They should understand that they will not learn everything in College. They will be green. But give yourself to the ministry. Allow yourself to learn, be willing to listen to others. They will teach you, how to do it. Therefore, they need to be humble and to listen to others.” (Pastor)

“There is nothing greater than to have a heart to learn: to learn the truth and obey it. Always have a desire to learn from God. Keep on learning. This

has helped me. Learning from others! Listen to other godly men and women. Read books. Sit with people and listen to what they are discussing.” (Teacher)

“If you are used to the classroom and library – when you graduate you need to forget the classroom and learn from people. There is a wealth of knowledge in people.” (Church Leader)

“Another thing, knowledge comes from people whom God created. We learn from each other. They should not despise the young or the old. You need elders who are fully experienced. Failure to recognize them and get their wisdom lands you into trouble.” (Pastor)

“When you graduate from College, you need to go and be willing to learn from those in the field and work with them. It is a healthy way of looking at it, rather than trying to turn things around because that leads to resistance.” (Teacher)

“One should be willing to listen to anyone in the congregation. The person may be a child, youth, woman, man, elder or deacon. You should give time to everyone who comes. Listen critically. Never put off anyone. Instead of putting off – you may think it is garbage – but that person may have a point. Listen to everyone. Prayerfully ask God to help you give wise advice. Every one needs attention and desires to be listened to.” (Chaplain)

Learn from current events: “It is good to keep oneself informed on current affairs and the leadership the world is offering. We should also become lifelong learners. Being a graduate of a prestigious College or University will not make a difference if we remain dormant academically. We should allow our faith to inform our learning everyday.” (Pastor)

Guard Yourself Against the Love of Money

“Don’t go into the ministry for money. The ministry is a calling, a vocation of service.” (Pastor)

“We need to beware of the love of money. Lust to get more money! In Bible College students need to face this problem. It is threatening the Church. Contentment is necessary. Pray for it. I may not have things but I have Jesus and that is enough.” (Pastor)

“Watch materialism. Godliness with contentment is great gain. If God gives more, you open your hands and give thanks.” (Pastor)

“If they are looking for payment, if they went to Bible School for payment in the church, they have been misled. There is very little money in local churches. Some churches in town or elsewhere are able to pay better. But

usually, generally, the payment is very low. They need to trust God to meet their needs. Otherwise, the church will be left without pastors.” (Pastor)

“One big thing! What Paul said to Timothy. People think godliness is a means of getting gain. One might serve in a place where the salary is not enough. I have learned never to complain; by doing that I have seen the faithfulness of God. It is true; with food and clothing we should be content. I was thinking that with food and clothing – then adding school fees. Therefore, we don’t need to grumble. It does not help. Instead, grumbling weakens one’s faith.” (Church Leader)

“One must be single minded. See Matthew 6:33. This is what the Lord says, ‘Seek first...’ That is what I decided. I must be faithful in doing what God wants me to do and God will add the rest. I have not looked for greener pastures. One man said, ‘If God calls me, God will provide a Toyota car, money to run it, and a house to live in.’ But he was not successful. He is not in the ministry today. Money does not make one successful. For those preaching the prosperity gospel, one must appear successful by wearing a smart suit.” (Teacher)

“It requires much wisdom. I have been asked by two schools to be chaplains. The pay is Kshs.15,000 I am not yet on the pay roll of the Church District. Perhaps in January I will receive Kshs.5,000 monthly.” (Pastor)

“A pastor should keep off of money. Suspicion is there. Money can bring problems, especially if people use money in different ways and the pastor changes it so that it seems right to him. Those who use it wrongly question the pastor in using it wrongly. A pastor should not decide about money by himself. He invites trouble that way. It needs to be decided by the committee.” (Pastor)

“Be above reproach, as much as possible. If there are scandals of church money, be clean. For example, when used clothes or food are given in the church for a particular need, make sure it goes there.” (Pastor)

“Be careful not to be influenced by evil things in the field. You can be influenced by them. For example, when you become a District Church Chairman and you receive the Christmas collection with instructions to take this to a certain office – then an elder suggests that you help divide it. You’ve been compromised.” (Pastor)

“I’ve prayed to God, while lacking support; sometimes without support to buy food, especially when teaching the pastor’s course. I taught without any support. I told them I am working to serve the Lord, and not men.” (Church Leader)

“Be prepared to serve with remuneration or not and rescue the perishing. This may not be taken kindly. They may be forced to serve with little but God always pays in his time.” (Pastor)

“It is asking and receiving. Putting five children through High School is no joke. But the Lord provided. Sincere friends helped me.” (Pastor)

“Don’t expect to be rich over night. Many crave for riches. This should not be the desire of pastors. If one desires to work faithfully for the Lord, he should not expect material gain. You need to be content. Many pastors are spoiled by expecting much from the ministry. They end up being unfaithful by mishandling funds.” (Pastor)

“Don’t fight for your rights, for what you know is yours. For example, an increment of your salary, living in a better house. Just be faithful to the Lord. Be transparent. In time God provides. It doesn’t pay to fight for yourself. You share with the elders the needs of the ministry. Feel free to share that, such as your need for transportation to visit people in the city.” (Chaplain)

“In our denomination the future depends on young people, but we don’t see young educated men serving in the churches. They eat and run. They go to other denominations or to schools to teach. Most educated graduates run away from the rural areas, perhaps it is because of low income in rural areas. Perhaps it is because they feel church leaders and leaders of the church are hard. But running away does not help the church. I feel that when people learn, they must focus on serving in the church. When students study away from home, they need to come back to help in the local church. Learned students/pastors can help by giving/preparing sermons for the lesser trained pastors. In our church we have learned people but they are not helping the church. When people get learned, they differ with each other – some follow Paul, others Peter. They need to unite to help the church. They need to learn to live with whatever the church provides. They run away because of money. They need to trust the Lord to provide in his own time and way.” (Church Leader)

Guard Yourself Against Immorality

“In the church, for single pastors like in my situation, young people going out of College need to be very cautious. Some women are every tricky. They may take you into adultery and vices. There was a situation – God helped me. A lady wanted to come to my house. ‘What is your problem?’ I asked. It is a very slippery situation for single pastors.” (Pastor)

“Have some principles, for example, ethical, moral and spiritual principles. I have made it my principle; I do not visit a lady alone. I refuse. I don’t become a member of a party because you hurt others who don’t belong. Explain your stand in love. Have courage to rebuke in love.” (Pastor)

“When they go to ministry, take care of relations with the opposite sex. Many women try to trick you, especially when counseling. Do not counsel in closed places. We have lost many pastors because of women. This is very important.” (Church Leader)

“When doing counseling and visitation, one must not go alone. Take an elder or your wife or another. This is true in the city and rural area. This protects you from the devil’s attacks. Even if one is devoted, he must be careful. One must be careful of women and money. Those two things are very dangerous.” (Teacher)

“Watch the devil’s traps. The devil uses pride and women to trap you.” (Pastor)

“Some people outside are ready to destroy pastors. Ladies are there. Unless you guard your heart you can fall into sin. Some rich man gives you Kshs.2,000, then later another Kshs.1,000 and you only receive Kshs.500 per month. You must be very careful with such items.” (Pastor)

“They should not forget that there are those who would not like to see them succeed in the ministry, through discouragement, being gossiped about. Some in the ministry will see that you do not succeed, especially if you are young and unmarried. They see you walking on the road with a young lady...” (Teacher)

CÔNCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS

“Don’t hurry. The work will not be finished. The work is still there. It belongs to you. That is my strongest point.

Listen; be yourself.

Learn; shut up. Don’t open your mouth in the beginning. Don’t suggest to people in the beginning what to do.

Maintain a very, very close, intimate walk with Christ. If you do that, no one can accuse you.

Don’t show off.

Let your life speak, not your words.” (Pastor)

“Surely, they will fail if they don’t remain faithful to God, depending on God’s guidance of the Holy Spirit.

They should be transparent in the use of church funds.

They should live what they preach.

They should be willing to serve anywhere. They should listen to the voice of God and not to people.” (Chaplain)

keeping up with contemporary Africa . . .

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THE NEW APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Victor Kuligin

Christianity is exploding on the African continent. Some reports have put the number of new Christians every day at between 20,000 and 50,000. By all counts, Christianity has clearly become the majority religion in sub-Saharan Africa.

But such raw numbers can be very misleading. How many of these new believers are being discipled? How many regularly attend church? If we checked back in five years, how many would still consider themselves to be Christians, or how many would bear fruit as disciples of Christ? These are hard questions to answer.¹

One imported church which has enjoyed great growth on the African continent is the New Apostolic Church (NAC). With over ten and a half million members worldwide in over 72,000 congregations, the NAC is a church to be reckoned with. Nearly three-fourths of its membership is in Africa, making it one of the largest single denominations in the entire continent.² The NAC is a European product that has found strong roots in Africa with nearly sixteen times more members in Africa than in Europe.

From the surface, the NAC appears to be just another Protestant denomination, but a deeper investigation yields some disturbing theology and practices in this church. We will take a look at the NAC's doctrines after we provide a brief historical sketch of its origins.

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¹ For instance, *Operation World* reports that Namibia is 92% Christian. However, recent studies done by the Southern Baptists put the number of born-again believers around 10% of the population.

² Most of the information attained in this article comes from the NAC's official websites. For the demographics just stated, refer to <http://www.nak.org/news/20040128-d.html>. This site is in German.

NAC Historical Synopsis

The NAC formed in a very unique manner, so says its official history, *History of the New Apostolic Church*.³ England, Scotland and Germany all contributed to the founding of this denomination. Scotland is the best place to begin our overview. In 1826, a small Bible study and prayer group began to pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit as exhibited in New Testament times. They were convinced of the immanent return of Jesus and prayed for an outpouring of the Spirit like that at Pentecost. They were also praying for revival in the Anglican church.

James Grubb began to prophesy in the Spirit (p. 14), and a woman, Mary Campbell, who had tuberculosis and was near death, began to speak in tongues. James MacDonald, moved by the Spirit, wrote a letter to Campbell telling her that the Lord would heal her and to get up, which she miraculously did. Similar events like prophesying, tongues speaking, visions, and gifts of healing, were also experienced in England around the same time. It was believed that this was the fulfillment of Joel 2: 28-29: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." The *History* reports many such events.⁴

Under the leadership of Edward Irving, the first congregation in London was formed around 1830, and it is for this reason that they were nicknamed "Irvingites." Irving ultimately was kicked out of his Church of Scotland for the events of a charismatic nature that occurred in his church. In another part of the country, William Caird became pastor of a church in Albury which "became the centre of the work of God. Here stood the chapel of the Apostles, here the twelve Apostles lived, and in this chapel each Sunday one of the Apostles celebrated Holy Communion" (p. 24). Along with a church of Congregationalists in Bishopsgate, and an Irish Anglican church in Southwark,

³ The following historical material comes from this publication. There is very little central information on the NAC and one is usually forced to look at individual church websites to accumulate information about the church. The following website provides links to various NAC sites around the world: <http://www.nak.org/text/12-gb.html>.

⁴ We should note that these events took place in a country not accustomed to such charismatic activity, and several decades before the explosion on the world scene of the Pentecostal movement. Given the latter, such events do not seem as strange to us today as they would have in the early nineteenth century.

Albury became one of the three main churches of this “Apostolic” movement. At about the same time, a Catholic priest Johann Lutz, experienced similar “revival” in his parish. It is this interdenominational aspect of the movement which the NAC leadership point to as proof that it was a genuine revival from God.

A key event during this time was a prophecy by Henry Drummond who called John Bate Cardale to be an Apostle. Irving was consulted and he encouraged Cardale to accept this “revelation.” As more such events occurred, the organization that resulted grew to a visible form and became known as the Catholic Apostolic Church (not to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church). The church was comprised of people from a variety of denominations and is considered one of the forerunners to the Pentecostal movement.

By 1833 five Apostles had been called in England and by 1835 there were seven congregations in the area of London. On 14 July 1835, the last of the twelve Apostles was called.⁵ This was considered to be God’s will and it was believed that the Lord would come again before any of these Apostles died. By 1860, though, only six of the Apostles still lived, and in Germany a Prophet of the church there called two more Apostles. The church in Albury did not agree with this ordination and subsequently excommunicated the German church, yielding the Restored Apostolic Mission Church. Many such splits occurred in the Apostolic movement such that today there are over twenty churches that can find their roots in this movement.⁶

Jumping ahead, in 1897 Friedrich Krebs gained enough support to declare the recently deceased Friedrich Swartz the “Chief Apostle.” Another split occurred over this matter, and the New Apostolic Church eventually formed from the followers of Krebs and some other congregations. In 1907 the name New Apostolic Congregation was used for these new churches, and in 1930 the name was changed to New Apostolic Church.

It should be noted that the NAC gives a very pretty picture of its roots, consistently referring to them as the “will of God.” What actually happened around 1830 is tough to discern, but it seems clear that in a generation or two, many saw this movement as a chance to gain power. In his succinct pamphlet

⁵ The Apostolic movement moved to America in 1834 and France in 1835.

⁶ The largest of the split-offs occurred in South Africa and became the Old Apostolic Church, with about six million members in Southern Africa according to 1992 statistics.

Inside the New Apostolic Church, ex-NAC member Stephen Langtry shows that in many key districts in the twentieth century, much of the leadership and hence power of the church has been handed down through certain families (pp. 20-21). The Chief Apostle, so Langtry reports, made over \$1.2 million Rand in 1995.⁷

Key Doctrinal Beliefs of the NAC

One has to understand that the NAC is not like a Reformed denomination or some such group that spends countless hours producing literature that clearly expounds its theological positions. In fact, it is extremely difficult to obtain NAC literature if you are not a member of the church. Most of the following information, then, comes from a few publications from the NAC (the aforementioned *History, Questions and Answers concerning the New Apostolic Faith*⁸, *Our Family, House Rules and Creed*, and *House Rules*), from an extensive interview I had with the Bishop of the NAC in Namibia, and from their numerous websites. We will begin with their view of God.

Doctrine of God: The NAC seems to be very orthodox in this regard. For example: “God is a spiritual, eternal, infinite, triune, perfect and completely independent being. He is the Creator of all earthly and heavenly realms” (#16, *Questions*). There seems to be nothing wrong with their doctrine of God, which would appear reasonable given that the NAC originated from a number of Protestant denominations.

In the section, “Who is Jesus Christ?” (#102, p. 39), it says this: “Jesus is the only begotten eternal Son of God, and the promised Redeemer. Jesus is God and man embodied in one person (see also #115 where it states that Jesus was God and man united). This is clearly orthodox, but is it really what the church teaches? If we dig further, there are some disturbing things discovered concerning their view of Jesus. In my interview with the Namibian Bishop, he

⁷ Stephen Langtry, *Inside the New Apostolic Church* (Claremont, South Africa: Forum Project, 1999). At the exchange rate at the time, \$1.2 million Rand was roughly equivalent to US\$330,000. Langtry has also written about the NAC in an article in *Today Magazine*, “Calling up the Dead,” June-July 1999, 24-27.

⁸ This publication is the closest thing we have to a “systematic theology” of the NAC, and we will rely heavily on it. However, the NAC intends to replace this publication with a new, more thorough catechism, “The New Apostolic Faith.” Per e-mail correspondence with the head of Media relations for the NAC, Peter Johannning, this will not be completed until 2008/2009. “The important message here is that the Church will abolish the book “Questions and Answers” in favour of the new fundamental principles” (<http://www.nak.org/news/20040603-73-gb.html>).

said that the Son was created by the Father and viewed the creation account in Genesis as sort of spiritual metaphor. In other words, on the fourth day God created the sun, moon and stars, and the Bishop likened this to God creating the Son (sun), the Apostles (moon) who reflect the light of the Son, and the children of God (stars). This view is confirmed in Langtry's account (p. 45): "In the outline for Confirmation Class Lesson 5 (p11) and Lesson 24 (p57) the New Apostolic Church says, 'Jesus the light of the World, was created by God before the sun and the moon.'"⁹

To complicate matters, #104 of *Questions* states that Jesus was born of the virgin, a "real human being" (p. 40). So in one place we see it confirmed that Jesus is truly God, but in another place we see that Jesus is viewed as a creature. So which is it?

Could this possibly be a typical characteristic of a cult commonly referred to as "double talk?" In other words, in their official literature the NAC maintains a Trinitarian view of God's nature, but in more private teaching they teach something different? It is difficult to determine at this point what is the official position.

Consulting the ten creeds of the NAC does not help us much either. The first three creeds are just a restatement of the Apostles' Creed, with the remaining seven more closely associated with the NAC.¹⁰

What complicates matters even further is that the NAC prides itself on having ministers with no formal theological training! "Following the example of the Early church all the ministries of the New Apostolic Church are laymen in the sense that they have neither studied theology nor been trained at any theological college" (p. 6, *House Rules and Creed*). As the Bishop of Namibia told me, with a sense of pride, they would rather "rely on the leading of God's Spirit."¹¹ This may sound very spiritual, but we do not have to think very long about it before we realize how much confusion can result from such a practice. It may be one reason why confusion seems to exist as to the nature of Jesus and God.

⁹ On the same page, Langtry also references an educational video circulated by the NAC South Africa (South Western Region) entitled "Vineyard Workers' Seminar" which teaches that Jesus was created on the first day of creation.

¹⁰ Their creeds can be found here: <http://www.nak.org/text/11-gb.html>.

¹¹ This the NAC officially refers to as "timely impulses of the Holy Spirit." See <http://www.nak.org/1e/1e-gb-0105.html>.

The Office of Apostle: There could be another explanation for the lack of theological training of the leadership, and that may be found in the strong authoritarianism found in the position of Chief Apostle of the NAC.

It is the belief of the NAC that the true church of Jesus cannot exist apart from the Apostles to whom Jesus gave his authority. Often it is likened to someone having a key to a door. You cannot go through the door unless someone unlocks it, and the Apostles have been entrusted with the keys to God's Kingdom. In fact, much like the Roman Catholic Church justifies the office of Pope, so does the NAC justify the modern office of Chief Apostle by appealing to Matthew 16:18.

However, the NAC has a different sort of "twist" on it. Unlike the RCC which believes there has been a continual apostolic succession since Peter, the NAC says that the office of Apostle died out with the death of the Apostle John. They cite reasons like persecution of the church and great traveling distances in the Roman Empire, which made it impossible for John to appoint a successor (#187 and #188 of *Questions*). To make matters worse, not until the Apostolic movement in the 1830s were there *any* Apostles (they refer to this as the "dead period").

This is no small point, since the NAC believes that without an Apostle, there can be no true church of Jesus and hence no possibility of salvation. So for nearly 1800 years of the history of mankind post-Christ, there has been no salvation possible. "However, since they lacked the Apostle ministry, they could not perform the work of salvation" (#191 of *Questions*; 'they' refers to churches that existed after John's death).

A look at the ten creeds of the NAC also bears this out. As we already noted, the first three are simply a restatement of the Apostles' Creed. Articles 4 and 5 deal with the office of Apostle, the next three with the sacraments (in which the apostles also play a prominent role), article 9 with the second coming of Jesus, and the last dealing with submission to secular authorities.

The strong impression one gets from these ten creeds is how important the Chief Apostle and lesser apostles are, and how minimal seems to be the role of Jesus. Put another way, what is striking is what these creeds do not say. For example, they say nothing of the death of Jesus as a vicarious, substitutionary

atonement,¹² and although the Apostles' Creed is a well-loved document of Christianity, it is inadequate for establishing the deity of Jesus. Nothing is said about the authority of God's Word (in fact, nothing is said about the Bible, period), yet much is said about the authority of the office of apostle. For example, from the Creed we learn that:

- All rule and authority in the church come only through the apostles,
- Only they have the power to forgive sins,
- Only they have the power to confirm the gift of the Holy Spirit, and
- Only they have the power to appoint all other church officers.

The other NAC literature bears this out when it discusses the role of Apostle. Consider these statements:

- "Obedience of faith is the subordination of the human will to the will of God, which for the New Apostolic Christian is manifested in the Apostles' doctrine" (#303 of *Questions*).
- "The Apostle is, by the will of God, the deputy of Jesus Christ in His Church, who - filled with the Holy Spirit and the will of Jesus to save mankind - is entitled to reconcile men with God through the power of Jesus and in His name" (#163, see also #164).
- The Lord's congregation, his church, will be "perfected by the activity of the Apostles" (#166).
- Peter is called the "visible head upon earth" of Jesus' church. "The position of Apostle Peter is equal to that of the present Chief Apostle" (#180).
- "The Chief Apostle, as the visible head of the Church, is the highest authority in all matters." He is "the Lord's representative on earth" (#226).
- And from the New Apostolic Creed, item 4: "I believe that the Lord

¹² Article 7 speaks of the "once brought eternally valid sacrifice and the bitter suffering and death of Christ." It is difficult to understand precisely what the NAC believes in this statement, simply because there is nothing stated in the Creed about man's sinfulness and the need for atonement. However, what is clearly stated is that, regardless of what the sacrifice of Christ did, its benefits can only be received through the Chief Apostle. Another striking omission in the Creed is the "how" of salvation, as there is nothing said in the Creed about justification by faith. Of course, one could argue that the office of apostle stands in this position, which only bolsters the impression that the NAC is more about the Chief Apostle than about Jesus Christ.

Jesus rules His Church through living Apostles until His return, and that He has sent and still sends His Apostles with the commission to teach, to forgive sins in His name, and to baptise with water and the Holy Spirit" (#299).

Also, from Langtry's pamphlet come these statements:

- "... there is only One whom we can thank - our great God and His Son, Jesus Christ! Them we see in the flesh in our beloved Chief Apostle, the one who leads us" (p. 16).
- "No one on earth is comparable to the Chief Apostle who alone has the key to save. To him the power, authority and gifts have been granted from God to redeem" (p. 18).
- "The present-day Saviour (speaking about the Chief Apostle) is therefore the firm foundation of our faith. He is the hub of the entire work of salvation, in this world as well as in the beyond, and there is no substitute" (p. 18).
- "The New Apostolic Church is a fellowship of souls, who, fully comprehending their heavenly calling, allow themselves to be led by the Apostles of Christ, because through them alone do they receive the virtues of Christ and therewith the righteousness which is valid before God" (p. 22).¹³

As can be seen, the role of apostle and especially Chief Apostle cannot be over-estimated. He has the power and authority to lead, as the *only* representative of Jesus on earth, and he has the authority to forgive sins and hence save. In short, his word is law.

This makes things all the more interesting when we realize that on any given Sunday, *all* the NAC congregations in the world hear the same message, and that message is prepared by the Chief Apostle. This serves to remove the notion that the Word of God stands as the primary authority of the NAC, and bolsters the impression that the Chief Apostle and he alone embodies all authority in the church.¹⁴

¹³ Langtry has gleaned the above quotations from various NAC materials including sermons and letters from the apostles.

¹⁴ "There is no manuscript, and nothing is read out to the congregation. As preparation for all Divine Services, there is only a brief letter, the so-called "Word of Life" published by the church administration, which contains the text to be read out from the Holy

The NAC is the only church of Jesus Christ on this earth (#216). This makes perfectly good sense when one considers that a true church of Jesus can only exist where there are Apostles, and the NAC is the only one that has the true Apostles.¹⁵

The Sacraments: At the heart of the NAC are the sacraments of the church, for through them salvation is granted by the Apostles. They can be characterized in the following manner:

- | | | |
|--------------|---|--------------------------|
| Baptism | - | washes away original sin |
| Communion | - | takes away recurrent sin |
| Holy Sealing | - | gives the Holy Spirit |

Baptism is the first sacrament that a person in the NAC receives, as the NAC practices infant baptism. It is called “the essential prerequisite for receiving the Holy Ghost” (#254). Baptism is only valid when ratified by the church (#265), and baptisms in other denominations are not valid (#267).¹⁶

Communion cancels all sins committed after baptism. The church holds communion weekly, and absolution of sins occurs before the partaking of the elements. “The absolution is the announcement of grace, while Holy Communion is the confirmation of the fact that all debts have been cancelled” (#275).¹⁷

Scriptures accompanied by some additional thoughts - the church ministers commissioned to conduct a Divine Service put their trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to provide the words that will be spoken. In the Bible we read that the Lord Jesus said to his disciples, “Take ye no thought what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.” The priests of the New Apostolic Church still rely on this age-old word today” (<http://www.nak.org/text/3-gb.html>).

¹⁵ The “dead period” from the time of the death of John to the present Apostolic ministry also serves to cleverly undercut any authority of the Roman Catholic Church, which by rights should have the apostolic authority, given the logic of the NAC. However, by severing the apostolic succession of previous centuries, and then restarting it again with the founding of the NAC, the NAC puts itself in the place of the RCC.

¹⁶ The NAC also has confirmation, although it is not considered a sacrament. It is normally done after age fourteen, when a baptized member confirms his commitment to God (#296).

¹⁷ “Holy Communion preserves the eternal life of the soul, offering it the security of remaining in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer (cf. John 6:51-58)” (<http://www.nak.org/text/4-gb.html>).

Lastly is the sacrament of *Holy Sealing*. Also called baptism with the Holy Spirit, Holy Sealing is considered the “most important part of rebirth” (#281) and can only be administered by the Chief Apostle or Apostles by the laying on of hands (#289). In this sacrament, a person receives the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

These sacraments form the core of NAC soteriology. A story will help clarify how important the sacraments are. Consider two men, one who had never taken communion, and the other who just did on Sunday. Come Monday morning, both men are killed in a car accident. According to the NAC, the first man’s soul was very dirty because he had never had his sins wiped away through communion. However, the other man’s soul was very clean, since he only had the sins remaining that he had committed between partaking of communion and his death. So what exactly happens to these two men? Their individual situations are dealt with in the following NAC ritual.

The “Services for Departed Souls”: One of the most interesting aspects of the NAC is its view that dead people can still be saved through the intercession of the living, and it may be the chief reason why the NAC has been so well received in Africa. This is done through the “Services for Departed Souls,” held three times per year in every district. In the Service, two members act as “vessels” who then partake of the three sacraments, baptism, communion, and Holy Sealing. A “departed soul” is able to come and participate in these sacraments, thus securing salvation for itself. In the example earlier about the two men killed in a car accident, in both cases the men would need to come to such a Service in order to have their sins cleansed. Even the man who had just had communion the day before would have to come. Also at these meetings it is not uncommon for people to have “visions” where they can actually see the departed souls coming to the Service.

The NAC justifies these beliefs through a number of ways. First, it argues that this is precisely what Jesus did during the time between his death and resurrection. He went into the “realm of the dead” and preached the Gospel there (#143) and therefore, “From the example of Jesus we conclude that after His departure into eternity, His Apostles and servants were to continue the work which He had commenced” (#145).

¹⁸ “It is the basis for a complete renewal of the inner man” (<http://www.nak.org/text/4-gb.html>).

Another argument comes from Paul's statement about "baptizing for the dead" found in 1 Corinthians 15:29. This is admittedly a difficult verse to understand, but does it warrant an entire doctrine built from it? Further, a favorite example used to support salvation for the dead is found in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. In it, the rich man asks for a drop of water on his tongue, signifying baptism, so say the NAC.

In #253 of *Questions* it says this: "From the intimate connections of circumstances of both the dead and the living at all times, we know that we can intercede on their behalf before God (2 Maccabees 12: 39-46 [Apocrypha]; Luke 14: 12-14; cf. Revelation 6: 9-11), so that they too may be saved."¹⁹ This statement serves as an excellent example of the NAC usage of Scripture. Here are the two New Testament passages they use for support:

"Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14: 12-14)

"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth, and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed." (Rev. 6: 9-11)

Do any of these verses support the notion that the living can "intercede on [the behalf of the dead] before God?" Much of NAC doctrine is built on this sort of biblical interpretation and usage.

¹⁹ As we will note later, the NAC recognizes fourteen Apocryphal books in its canon of Scripture. However, a more interesting matter to note now is, why does the NAC recognize the 27 New Testament books currently in the canon? As church history records, the final 27 books were not agreed upon until 397 at the Council of Carthage, nearly three centuries after the last Apostle died. In other words, the NAC uncritically adopts the same 27 books that the church chose during the "dead period" when no living apostle was there to give the church life.

A fair criticism of the NAC on this Service is the question: Why only offer it three times per year? If this is truly the way the dead can be saved, why not do it all the time, even constantly? Is God not interested in saving all people? (which is another argument used by the NAC for justification of the Service).

How Is a Person Saved?: “Through the grace of Jesus Christ man can achieve God’s righteousness” (#90). This sounds orthodox, but is it the entire story? *Questions* #140 and #141 address the issue of why Jesus had to die, and again, the answers are very good: Jesus had to die to offer himself as a “fully valid sacrifice.” “He created the means of grace which render a perfect reconciliation between man and God possible.”

But we have also seen how important the Apostle’s role in all of this is. The NAC makes a large distinction between the “law of the letter” and the “law of the Spirit,” and it is the latter that is important. This we are told was the point of the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus taught us that “Those, however, who honestly endeavored to achieve the good pleasure of God would be saved” (#122). So where do we find this “law of the Spirit?”

Incredibly, we find it in the teaching of the modern-day Apostles. “We shall readily accept the law of the Spirit of Christ in the doctrine of the Apostles, the messengers in His stead” (#94). So now we have come full circle: Jesus died so that salvation would be made *possible*, then he entrusted this salvation to his Apostles who in turn have the authority to give it to whomever they see fit. When I asked the Bishop how a person is saved, he told me that by leading “a clean life” and following the law of love a person was saved, coupled with participation in the sacraments. Also recall that only the Apostles have the authority to lay on hands and thus confer the Holy Spirit, and of course, a person is not saved until that person has the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, a person is saved in the NAC through a combination of living a good life and partaking of the sacraments of the NAC, both in full submission to the authority of the Chief Apostle. In this way, “man can achieve God’s righteousness.” Also keep in mind that this means that salvation is only possible for the roughly 10 million members of the NAC, whereas the rest of humanity will perish.²⁰

²⁰ We should also note that much is “said” in what is not said in the NAC statements. There is nothing mentioned about salvation as a gift from God apart from man’s works, as Paul so often emphasizes in his epistles. Put another way, the righteousness that the NAC envisions is an infused righteousness (“man can achieve God’s righteousness”) and

View of Scripture: The NAC Bible includes the Old and New Testaments, as well as fourteen of the Apocryphal books. The Bible is God's Word; however, it must be properly interpreted. This can only be done by the "Chief Apostles and the Apostles united with him" (#8, *Questions*).

It is not so much that the NAC does not have a good view of biblical authority, it is instead how they come to the teachings that they profess that is the problem. The hermeneutic of the NAC leadership is shoddy at best. Consider, for example, their use of the phrases "former rain" and "latter rain" from Hosea 6:3 and Joel 2:23, respectively. Instead of taking them in their immediate context, the NAC spiritualizes these terms and labels the revivals in the 1830s the "latter rain."

We have already noted they allegorize the creation account of Genesis, but consider this example. They claim the Parable of the Wedding Feast dealt with Noah (the first servants), Jesus and the Apostles (the second servants in the parable), and the "latter rain" or NAC (the third servants). Students of Scripture know, though, that this is a terribly poor hermeneutic, violating the simple rule, "it cannot mean now what it did not mean then." In other words, that Jesus was teaching first century hearers a parable which talked about a church that would form 1800 years later just does not make sense.

Another example is how the NAC gets to its beliefs concerning salvation for the dead, something we have already discussed above, in its interpretation of the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, and its misuse of other passages of Scripture.²¹

Further, is Scripture really the ultimate authority for the NAC, or is it the teaching of the Chief Apostle? Consider the early history of the Apostolic

not an imputed or alien righteousness as traditionally understood by Protestantism. Their understanding of the sacrament of communion also bears this out: "By taking it in faith, one assimilates the nature of Jesus Christ and receives new strength. The preceding remission of sins helps the confessing sinner to overcome his faults and weaknesses" (<http://www.nak.org/text/4-gb.html>).

²¹ Even in their understanding of the sacraments, the NAC seems to force Scripture into its preconceived agenda. "Sacraments are holy acts. In the Holy Scriptures, among other things, you will read "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" (cf. 1. John 5:8). In accordance with this sequence, the New Apostolic Church, therefore, knows three sacraments: Holy Sealing, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion" (<http://www.nak.org/text/4-gb.html>).

movement, which was characterized by visions and revelations. There is a real sense that the NAC has worked backwards and, instead of allowing the Scripture to teach them, has gone to the Scripture to look for substantiation for their preconceived beliefs.

Church Organization: The NAC is present in every country but about ten, so they claim. The Chief Apostle has always been German speaking and currently is a Swiss man, Richard Fehr.²² The organization then follows the hierarchy of District Apostle, Apostle, Bishop, District Elder, Rector (the leader of each congregation), and then under him, Evangelist, Shepherd, Priest, and Deacon (see #223 and #224 of *Questions*). These are also called collectively the 'Administration Brothers'. The NAC gives the biblical mandate for these "ministries," but also notes that the ministry of Prophet was canceled in the middle of the twentieth century because it was no longer necessary, providing this cryptic comment: "The ministries which are not mentioned in the Bible became necessary because of the rapid growth of the congregations" (#225). We have to ask, then, is the NAC organization truly biblical?²³

"The Apostles are the immediate helpers of the Chief Apostle, who takes first place in their circle. As bearers of the ministry which administers the Holy Spirit, they form, together with the Chief Apostle, the fellowship which offers, by Christ's commission, salvation and redemption to mankind and conveys the eternal life out of Christ. For this purpose they were chosen, equipped and ordained" (#229). "The Administration Brothers are called to effect [sic] the salvation of mankind" (#241).

Miscellaneous Beliefs: One controversial belief of the NAC is that Jesus was born with inherited sin, like any other human being. This the Bishop told me plainly. This inherited sin, though, was erased when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Jesus is, therefore, the first to be reborn by the Holy Spirit (Bishop: "the first reborn soul on earth since Adam"), and they believe he then lived a sinless life. Langtry also notes that Irving was excommunicated from his church for teaching that Jesus had a sinful nature (p. 47).

²² "Since 1988, the Chief Apostle of the New Apostolic Church has been Richard Fehr. He leads the church from its head offices in Zurich, Switzerland. Richard Fehr is a Swiss national and the seventh Chief Apostle since the foundation of the Church. His position can be compared to the one Peter had 2,000 years ago in the circle of the Apostles" (<http://www.nak.org/text/6-gb.html#1>).

²³ The following website also covers the structure and organization of the NAC: <http://www.nak.org/news/20030125-27-gb.html>.

Tithing is extremely important in the NAC, and although they make it a point in their literature to say that it is entirely voluntary, one gets the sense that it really is not. In fact, the Bishop mentioned that if a person does not tithe everything he has (money, time, etc.) he is not living a proper life and could put his soul in jeopardy. It is no wonder, then, that the NAC is a very rich church, building new churches all with cash and no loans, and is able to pay exorbitant salaries to its top leaders.

The NAC also has a history of false prophecies concerning the Second Coming of Jesus. Langtry reports that dates set for Christ's return include 1835, 1838, 1842, 1845, 1855, 1866, and 1877. One prediction in the middle of the twentieth century, by the then Chief Apostle Bischoff, caused a large rift in the church when that prophecy did not come true either (pp. 11-12). Such errors are all the more dangerous when one considers that the NAC teaches that the Chief Apostle is *the* representative of Christ on earth.²⁴

Is the NAC a Cult?

A key point of contention between traditional Christianity and the NAC must fall along the matter of the office of Apostle. Is the NAC correct in its contention that the office of Apostle as it exists in its church today is the same office that was instituted by Christ in the New Testament? Further, does the New Testament support the notion that this office was to continue even after the New Testament times were completed?

A key consideration in all of this is what happened in the early church when Judas Iscariot was to be replaced as an apostle. The criteria for his replacement is found in Acts 1: 21-22: a person who had been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry to his ascension into heaven. There is no mention in the rest of the New Testament of apostles ever being appointed. Paul also fit this qualification in a way because he had seen Jesus Christ post-resurrection (1 Cor. 9:1). It should also be noted that in Ephesians 2:20, Paul tells us that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and a foundation implies

²⁴ The NAC holds strongly to the view that its members should obey the temporal authorities (Creed #10), but this has gotten them into some hot water in the latter half of the twentieth century. The NAC was clearly a supporter of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and has also fallen under criticism for its previous support of the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Certainly, churches can make mistakes, but this church claims to be the *only* representative of Jesus Christ on the planet. Such mistakes as these cause us to look with great suspicion at their claims.

something laid down once, upon which something is built. In short, one could rightly criticize the NAC for its view that their modern-day Apostles have the same status and authority as those of the first century.

It is this unbiblical view of the office of Apostle that ultimately yields the authoritarianism found in the NAC. As we have seen, a person cannot have his sins forgiven or receive the Holy Spirit apart from the Apostle. Today, there are roughly 270 NAC Apostles, and the salvation of all of mankind is entrusted to these men, for apart from their work, a person cannot be saved.

Other criticism of the NAC:

1. Their view of the nature of Jesus Christ, particularly as it relates to his deity, is suspect.
2. There exists a “works righteousness” in the NAC and the atoning death of Jesus is compromised with their teaching that believers work out their own righteousness.
3. Their general approach to Scripture and how they formulate doctrine is suspect.
4. Does the New Testament truly teach that a person can only receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands of an Apostle? (see Acts 4:31, and the conversion of Cornelius, Acts 10).
5. The notion that for roughly 1800 years God did not allow anybody to be saved is highly questionable.
6. They claim to be the only church of Jesus to the exclusion of all other churches, and this “exclusivism” is a classic characteristic of a cult.
7. Their history of false prophecies concerning the Second Coming of Jesus is disconcerting.

From the above, we can conclude that the NAC is not simply another church or denomination but is in fact a cult. From their view of God and the nature of Christ, to their authoritarian leadership and its ability to distribute salvation, the NAC is a church that should be avoided. It is not proclaiming the Gospel, yet it claims that it is the sole vessel through which salvation from God is given today.

The NAC & Africa

Why has the NAC experienced such strong growth in Africa? Two possible reasons should be considered. The first is the NAC’s commitment to the souls of the dead. One of the classic difficulties facing Christianity in Africa is what to do with the dead. Many syncretistic movements in Africa have attempted to

address this problem by combining elements of Christianity with traditional African beliefs concerning ancestor veneration and mediation. The NAC is appealing to many Africans who are concerned about their dead relatives who died before hearing the Gospel. Involvement with these dead ancestors is a common reality in Africa, and may be one reason why the church has exploded in membership on the continent, as opposed to continents such as North America and Europe where it has only experienced modest success.

The second is authoritarian leadership. John Mbiti's well-known comment that Christianity in Africa is "a mile wide and a quarter-inch deep," when coupled with the realization that biblical education of church leaders and pastors is the priority need for the Church in Africa today, yields a picture of the Church in Africa as immature and biblically needy. People are pouring into the churches and growth is dramatic in all corners of sub-Saharan Africa, yet the paucity of adequately trained pastors and church leaders is appalling. The NAC capitalizes on this general ignorance of Scripture by spoon feeding its form of doctrine to the masses. Church members are not encouraged to think for themselves, let alone church leaders who are expected to be "led by the Spirit" to the exclusion of solid biblical training and education. As has already been noted, being led by the Spirit in NAC-speak really means to submit to the authority and teaching of the Chief Apostle.

Whereas often we find ourselves concentrating on the "classic" cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, neither of these compare to the NAC in terms of membership numbers and influence on the continent. In the next decade, the membership of the NAC will approach ten million Africans. Teaching concerning this cult should play a more prominent role in the education of evangelical church leaders and pastors, and subsequently of evangelical believers continent-wide.

CONTRIBUTORS INVITED FOR *AJET*

The Editorial Committee for *AJET* (a journal that facilitates theological reflection and research by evangelicals on theological issues throughout the continent of Africa) welcomes articles by evangelical scholars for publication. Such articles will be screened based on the following criteria:

Theology: Since *AJET* publishes theological reflection based on the authority of Scripture articles submitted for publication should reflect an evangelical perspective.

Relevance: Articles should be relevant to the African Christian Church today. Topics may deal with a range of issues, including theology, African church history, practical theology, theological reflection on problems in the church due to traditional African culture or contemporary society, theological and Christian education in the African context and other similar topics.

Scholarship: Articles should reflect serious scholarship based on library or field research. Bibliographic references should preferably be no less than ten. The English composition should be accurate and readable, without the need for extensive editing.

Format: Articles should be typewritten, double-spaced with bibliographic information (of every book used) at the end of the paper. Footnotes or Endnotes should be properly given, following guidelines of scholarly publications.

Biographic Information Requested: Authors should include a brief biographic sketch of their present vocational work, together with the last degree obtained and name of the institution from which the degree was obtained.

LAUNCHING CHURCH- STRENGTHENING MOVEMENTS IN AFRICA

Tim Cantrell

It has been called the “surprise story” of modern missions—the emergence of ‘Christian Africa’ (Bediako, 2000:3-4). In the last century, Christianity in Africa has seen the fastest numerical growth of any continent ever in church history. Down in South Africa, we in the Baptist Union (of Southern Africa, BUSA) have enjoyed a taste of this rapid church growth. But such expansion also brings unique challenges. In this article, I would like to explore these challenges, first on a wider scale and then zooming in on the BUSA, followed by some biblical solutions. *We must take a hard look at three critical issues that should compel us to launch church-strengthening movements in Africa that will exalt Christ and bless the nations for generations to come.*

I. Our Need

Exciting Growth

From a continent in 1875 that numbered its Christians in tens of thousands (Hildebrandt, 1996:ix), to a continent with about 8 million professing Christians in 1900 (10% of the population), Africa now has close to 400 million who profess Christ (48.4% of the population, and 60% of sub-Saharan Africa) (Jenkins, 2002:3; Johnstone, 2001:19-21)¹. Estimates are that at least 4,000 new professions of faith are made every day in Africa, and that this is now the most ‘Christian’ continent in the world (Bediako, 2000:3; O’Donovan, 2000:1). Nearly one in every five professing Christians in the world is an African (Johnstone, 2001:2,19).

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¹ Out of these, 118 million are Catholic and 116 million are evangelicals, with 125 million claiming to be charismatic or Pentecostal (some evangelicals, others not) (Johnstone, 2001:19-21). 78 million professing Christians are in African Independent churches, which are especially prominent in South Africa (particularly the Zion Christian Church) where they comprise 36% of the total Christian population, i.e., 15 million (Kombo, 2001:173)!

In his book, *The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins (2002) states that the heart of global Christianity will not be in Europe or North America, but in Africa. He says, "in 50 or 100 years, Christianity will be defined according to its relationship with that [African] culture" (cited in *CH*, 2003:2). The August 2003 issue of *Christian History* "tells the story of sub-Saharan Africa's 'Christian explosion' in the twentieth century—a century that brought Africa from the periphery to the center of the Christian world, largely through the efforts of native African evangelists" (Armstrong, 2003). The inside cover declares, "The rapidity of Africa's twentieth-century 'baptism' was stunning. There's no better place to see the future of the global church" (*CH*, 2003:2).

Obvious Concerns

Surely this is a cause for rejoicing, for Christ is being proclaimed and the gospel is spreading (Php. 1:18). But there is also cause for caution. Understandably, gospel advances aren't always tidy and they take place through feeble, imperfect human instruments and often under adverse conditions. Much patience and trust in the Holy Spirit is required in the face of slow progress. Yet this does not erase some serious concerns about the way the gospel is advancing in Africa. If Africa represents "the future of the global church," it is an uncertain future.

African theologian Tienou (1998:6) states: "The evangelical dilemma in Africa can best be described as proclamation without reflection. One observer put it this way, 'Africa has the fastest growing church in the world: it may also have the fastest declining church!' Numerical growth far outpaces spiritual depth and maturity in African Christianity". Tienou (2001:162) goes on to say, "I consider the deepening and the nourishing of the faith of those who identify themselves as Christians [in Africa] to be of the utmost urgency". Van der Walt (1994:109) likewise warns, "A fat, but powerless Christendom – that is the danger facing us when Christianity grows as rapidly as it is doing at present on the African continent"². Many are now observing that Christianity is shifting southward and becoming increasingly non-Western (Maluleke, 2000:x; Jenkins, 2002:2). But Africa will also miss the opportunity to set the pace and the example unless her churches are better established in the faith.

Anyone doubting the shallowness of Christendom in Africa need only look at the moral and political chaos in countries where the vast majority of the population has claimed the name of Christ for years (Johnstone, 1998:114; TAG, 1999:52). Probably the most graphic depictions of this nominalism are the horrific genocide in supposedly "80% Christian" Rwanda and the brutal

² As Schwartz notes (1993), after more than 30 years of observing the African church, "There is a rather significant amount written on the lack of depth of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa."

bloodshed in the supposedly “96 % Christian” Democratic Republic of the Congo (Johnstone, 2001:19; Winter & Fraser, 1999b:366). Ott (2004) points out,

...the matter of church health in rapidly growing movements has not been adequately addressed. The classic church growth movement was more concerned with numbers than quality. Events such as the genocide among “Christian” tribes in Rwanda, the rampant nominalism and syncretism in Christian churches, are well known problems. ... Rwanda is one example of very superficial Christianity having horrific consequences. Another example is the astonishing growth of AICs (African Independent Churches) and various independent movements that are for the most part quite heterodox, but attracting huge numbers of followers, many from established churches.

Many today view the phenomenal growth of African Independent Churches as promising (e.g., Jenkins, 2002:68-69; Anderson, 2000), but others have exposed the widespread syncretism and false teaching (e.g., De Visser, 2001). As for nominalism, Brierly’s extensive study (Siaki, 2002:47) reports that only 49% of all those in Africa who claim Christianity actually hold membership in a local church. Another study reveals that in Kenya, “80% claim to be ‘Christian’, but only 12% are actually involved in a local fellowship” (Winter, 1999a:368). It is reported that in South Africa, out of the 30 million who claim Christianity, only 6 million regularly attend church (Siaki, 2002:46).

Africa is not unique in this dilemma of breadth without depth. While the Western church declines rapidly, many of the churches planted in the ‘mission fields’ remain unestablished in the faith (Reed, 2000:73; Johnstone, 2001:13-14)³. Reed (In preface to Hesselgrave, 2000a:9) warns:

...A growing number of us who were involved in attempting to reshape the missionary enterprise at the end of the twentieth century realize that something is drastically wrong with the contemporary Western paradigm of missions. We see entire movements of churches with an appalling lack of leaders. Almost all of these movements are on course for producing but a nominal fourth generation. Some argue that this downturn is inevitable, yet many of us believe that the biblical ideal suggests that the fourth generation of churches should be the strongest generation to date. With the coming postmodern global village, these churches must be sufficiently strong to realize the potential of fostering a

³ Cf. Eller & Grossman’s (2003:300-310) extensive study of the nominalism in Guatemala after more than a century of mission. They show how the churches began to think that more church planting could replace church maturing. Note also Ott’s (2004) comment, “The rapidly growing house church movement in China is also known to be very susceptible to false teaching. Personal interviews with various persons who minister there confirm this over and over.”

worldwide expansion of the gospel such as has not been seen since the early church.

Possible Causes

Ott (2004) attributes this nominalism in Africa mainly to “weak leadership and shallow discipleship”⁴. When professing Christians quickly revert to pagan behaviour in times of trouble, the gospel is only a veneer and has not penetrated deeply enough to transform their worldview. Van der Walt’s (2002:16) diagnosis is penetrating:

Because the Gospel was not brought as a new, total, encompassing worldview, which has to take the place of an equally encompassing traditional worldview, the deepest core of African culture remained untouched. Christian faith only influenced and changed the outer layers of African culture such as, for example, customs and behaviour. For this reason it often led to superficial Christianity – totally at variance with the nature of the Christian faith, which is a total, all-embracing religion, influencing the whole of life from a reborn heart – in the same way that a heart pumps life-giving blood to every part of the body.

The average African convert did not experience the Gospel as adequate for his whole life, and especially not when it came to the most complex issues of life. For that reason we discover all over Africa today that Christians, in times of existential need and crisis, as in danger, illness and death, revert to their traditional faith and view of life. The Gospel has no impact in those areas where it really matters!

Solutions Offered

One major solution to the instability of African churches is to develop trained pastors, since the majority of churches are still without one (both in Africa and worldwide) (Buys, 2002a)⁵. But training such pastors becomes difficult when there are few local churches mature enough to raise up qualified candidates and to apprentice them and model for them what biblical principles look like in practice. Rare is the seminary or college that can offer what a strong local church can in terms of integrated (theory, practice, and supervision) training. Studies also show that graduates who return to unstable churches often face such inertia that they never effectively implement change (Stamoolis, 2001:489).

Any diagnosis of these unestablished churches must go *beyond* the obvious need for leaders. Mission groups must not only ask, ‘*After* a church is planted,

⁴ Cf. other observers concerned about this nominalism in the African church: many of Johnstone’s descriptions of African countries in *Operation World* (2001) describe the severe extent of nominalism and the dangerous consequences (e.g., Botswana, 2001:118); Tienou (2001:154-162); Buys (2000:16); Winter & Fraser (1999:368); Armstrong (2003).

⁵ Van Horn (2004) says that in Africa, “Up to 90% of the pastors in any given country have never received even one day of training.”

then what?' More must start asking, 'How should a church be planted and nurtured to maturity *until* qualified local elders are entrusted with leadership?' (Patterson, 1999:595-605). The lack of qualified pastors in churches is often only a *symptom* of the root problem: deficient church planting. In fact, a multitude of problems in the African church and society can largely be traced back to the planting of weak, ineffective churches. Just supplying more pastors or more churches is not the most effective solution, and it could even increase the problem.

But once the core problem of church health is addressed, many other symptoms will recede. *Better churches* produce better people, better marriages, better parents, better employees and employers, and better societies. The need for stronger churches in Africa is the 'longest pole in the tent,' the one issue which affects every other issue, the one solution upon which all other solutions will depend.

A Case Study - BUSA

One African denomination that is facing many of these challenges is the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA). The BUSA has seen both rapid growth and need for depth. In BUSA, we are seeking to find solutions to strengthen churches, so that we can also pave the way for other African denominations that face similar challenges. Time and again I have witnessed the instability of African churches in our work at Christ Seminary in Polokwane. Over the past six years, I have visited many young (mostly black, BUSA) churches and have seen firsthand their dire needs for nurture. I have also spent hundreds of hours in discussion with the leaders of these young churches and have heard of the challenges they face because they were not well established.

Since 1990, BUSA claims that 413 new churches have been started (Rae, 2003), which has more than doubled the size of the denomination (Robbins, 2003:157; Rae, 1999:164). Adding up other BUSA statements yield smaller, but still significant figures: 376 or 335 new churches (since 1990) (BUSA Handbooks, 2002 & 2003a; Rae, 2001:7). The BUSA president for 2002-2003 has said, "A new BUSA church is planted every thirteen days" (Coertze, 2003). A recent ecumenical publication on mission in post-apartheid South Africa highlights the BUSA as an example of effective church planting (Kritzinger, 2002:58; Robbins, 2003:157). In order to deserve such praise, the BUSA's proof must not be in just the numbers but in *the quality of the churches being planted*. Since these new churches represent over half of the BUSA, the health of these churches has serious bearing on the overall health and direction of the denomination.

The BUSA has acknowledged the lack of depth in many of its new churches, and has begun giving attention to nurturing them. For nine years, the BUSA had

a General Secretary whose main burden was for more church planting (expressed by mottos such as “95 [new churches] by 1995” and “201 by 2001”; Rae, 2003; Rae, 1999), which had been underemphasized in previous years. But the current BUSA General Secretary, Rev. Scheepers, has brought a timely vision for strengthening these churches. This has been signalled by his thrust, called “Equip 2005”, which has generated helpful training manuals for the churches, along with workshops for the church planters (BUSA Handbook, 2002:210). Furthermore, this year Rev. Scheepers is launching “Impact 2010”, with a slogan calling us to “reach *and* disciple,” to “plant *and* to nurture” churches. The head of BUSA missions, Dr. Eric Robbins, also wrote, “Following the phenomenal growth of BUSA in recent years there is obviously a great need for discipleship, teaching, and consolidation of the work” (2003:157). Rev. Scheepers has also said that he thinks the BUSA needs an entirely “new model” for quality church planting (2004). At Christ Baptist Church where I minister and where many churches have been planted or assisted over the past fifteen years, we too feel this critical need to strengthen weak church plants and improve church planting.

My Research

It was because of these concerns in the BUSA and in our ministry up in the Limpopo Province that I embarked on doctoral research to see how we could improve the situation. I surveyed the leaders of about 250 of the churches planted since 1990. Eighty-three of these surveys were returned. I combined this with many interviews of area coordinators and key church planters. If I had the space, I could mention many of the highlights and strengths in these zealous young churches. But in line with the purpose of this article, let me list some of the chief concerns that surfaced in this research:

- Over a third of these churches is being pastored by ‘remote control’. In other words, their pastor does not stay locally with their church, but either travels there on Sundays/weekends or only goes two Sundays or less per month.
- Less than half of these pastors believe that preaching verse-by-verse through God’s Word is the best regular food for their flock. Over half said they’d rather choose what to preach along more subjective guidelines or just preach evangelistically.
- Less than one-third of these younger churches acknowledged any link with a mother church.
- Over half say their giving/tithing has shown no increase in the past two years (and what they are getting is tiny in most cases).
- Only one-third of these pastors said he was sure that the majority of his members have a good grasp of the gospel.
- These churches have been in existence for an average of nine years, yet the average increase of adult members over those nine years is only eleven new members in total (They started at an average size of 20 and are now at an

average size of 31 members). This would suggest that they are averaging about 1 new member added each year (about a 5% growth rate).

- The combined opinion of the area coordinators and numerous other key church planters and leaders is that *only 20-25% of these churches have become healthy or mature, responsible churches* (even though these churches are an average of 9 years old by now). These same observers also estimated that *just over half* of these churches still do not have a capable pastor or leader who has received or is receiving some kind of adequate training (even if it is non-formal).
- Most of us who have spent much time in some of the new BUSA church plants in the Limpopo Province have often noticed certain patterns: the tent evangelism draws many more decisions than real, lasting disciples, and it tends to attract mostly women, youth, and children (which surely does *not* form a good backbone for starting a church); there is weak or shallow teaching of the Word; there is a lack of good leadership, and a severe lack of men and of whole families; there is a strong charismatic influence and reliance on emotion over truth; these churches are often crippled by a dependency mentality (waiting for outside funding) and a lack of real *responsible ownership* for the ministries and the mission of the church.

This brings to my mind the rebuke given by one contemporary missiologist (Reed, 1992:138, 143): “One of the great indictments of colonial [and modern] missions is its consistent failure to establish associations of independent, thriving, and reproducing churches, filled with real leaders, able to think theologically in their own culture”. An African proverb says, “You can never abandon your own born child.” Yet I fear that too often this is exactly what we do in our church planting.

Yes, obviously there are *many* other socio-economic and cultural factors that have contributed to the instability of these churches. But most of those factors are out of our control; and, they cannot be blamed for *all* the problems in these churches. So it is more helpful and more hopeful to focus on what *we can* do to improve the stability of these churches.

II. Our Responsibility

Biblical Principles

In conjunction with my field research, I did in-depth exegetical research in Acts and Paul’s epistles to determine the biblical keys to building mature churches. It was a rich and rewarding study, and much was gleaned!⁶ What I

⁶ For the full biblical research and all of the principles that I gleaned from Acts & Paul’s epistles, see my doctoral thesis entitled, *Building mature churches: a biblical basis and*

repeatedly found was that strengthening churches was central to all of Paul's labours in missions and church planting. We find the Greek word *steridzo* (to "stabilise, establish, or strengthen") used four times in Acts (14:21-23; 15:41; 16:5; 18:23) and six times in Paul's epistles (Rom. 1:11; 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:2,13; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3) to describe his efforts in nurturing young flocks. For Paul, *ensuring that young churches were well-established was a key to the very advance of the gospel and fulfilment of the Great Commission.*

Reed (2001:17) writes:

One of Paul's highest priorities was establishing the young churches he had founded. He would even leave wide-open doors for the gospel if one of his churches was in serious trouble (e.g., 2 Cor. 2:12-14, he left the open door to Troas because of his burden for Corinth). ...For the gospel to progress with any stability, with any kind of depth, with any kind of foundation, these churches had to be flourishing and a base for the progress of the gospel.

For Paul, the activity of "preaching the gospel" equally included *both* the evangelistic campaigns *and* the nurturing of new converts in healthy churches. In Romans 15:19 Paul makes a stunning claim to have "fully preached the gospel" across a region of almost 2,000 kilometres. The only reasonable explanation for this is that Paul is claiming, "that the message had been...proclaimed widely enough and planted firmly enough to assure that the name of Christ would soon be heard throughout its borders" (Moo, 1996:896, incl. qt. from Knox). Bowers (1993:909-610) then concludes:

A distinguishing dimension of the Pauline mission is that it found its fullest sense of completion neither in an evangelistic preaching tour nor in individual conversions but *only in the presence of firmly established churches.* ...What lies, in effect, within the compass of Paul's familiar formula 'proclaiming the gospel' is, I suggest, not simply an initial preaching mission but the full sequence of activities *resulting in settled churches.* ...He was not only proclaiming and converting; he was also founding communities (emphasis mine).

O'Brien (1995:42) reiterates this crucial principle:

From his *practice* of residential missions (at Corinth and Ephesus) and nurture of churches (1 Thess. 2:10-12), from his *priorities* (1 Thess. 2:17-3:13; 2 Cor. 2:12-13; 10:13-16), and from his *description of his assignment* (Col. 1:24-2:7; Rom. 1:1-15; 15:14-16) in relation to admonition and teaching believers to bring them to full maturity in Christ, it is clear that the *nurture of emerging churches* is

understood by Paul to be an integral feature of his missionary task (emphasis his).

Reed (1991:9) punctuates this point, emphasizing Paul's plan to always establish a "beachhead of Christians" who could "go...and have an impact on their own community."

He knew that he had to stick with that plan, that the churches needed to be central. He also knew that if he kept going further and further out with the gospel and he did not have strong established churches, his whole base would be eroded. If his base was eroded, the gospel would not progress and ultimately he would have to take the gospel to them again. And, he would not have the additional help and reinforcement or the models that were needed (emphasis his).

God makes it crystal clear in His Word that we must do God's business in God's way, leaving the results and the growth rates in His hands. In the eyes of Christ, our Master-Builder, there is only one way to plant and build churches:

But each man must be careful how he builds... Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss...(1 Cor. 3:10, 12-15).

Some Cautions

We must beware of a paternalistic or relativistic attitude that says, 'Well, that weak little church is better than what they had before, or better than the other bad churches in that village.' Or, 'As long as a few are saved, it's all worth it.' Or, 'This is normal, you usually only get a few good churches out of the lot.' Nowhere in Scripture do you find that shotgun approach of 'plant many, get a few good ones'.

We also must not be deceived into thinking that just because we *don't see much* damage, there hasn't been any harm done and we can just hurry on ahead to new works. A crack in a house's foundation usually doesn't surface for a while; but once it does, it can mean big trouble. Here's what's at stake if weak churches are not well-planted and strengthened. These are some of the long-term consequences:

- If these churches are not well-planted, it can *dishonour the name of Christ* in the community through false conversions and unstable churches filled with sin, conflict, and immaturity (cf. Col. 4; Titus 2).
- By not developing good leaders, we leave the *door wide open to false teaching* to corrupt the church and lead many astray. (Some of the Zionist churches appear to be prime examples of shallow church planting.)

- Hasty evangelism can *harden people* to the gospel through either giving them false assurance based on walking an aisle, or leaving them disillusioned by a false conversion.
- By not planting these churches firmly, we only create *more work for the mother churches* down the line when they have to go back and sort out the mess, resolve conflicts, and un-teach so much error, etc.... (This is time that could be spent advancing the gospel and planting new churches, if the job had been done right the first time.)
- If these churches are not well-planted, we set a *poor example for the daughter churches* who will then turn and follow this model by planting their own (granddaughter) churches in a hasty, ineffective way. So the cancer of mediocrity and instability (and often nominalism) spreads and worsens with each new generation.
- If we are not building quality churches, here is perhaps the most severe consequence: According to 1 Corinthians 3, one day *Christ will test the quality* (not quantity) of our work, and we will have to answer to Him.

Let's not forget that the Golden Rule also applies to church planting. In other words, plant the kind of church for others that you would want them to plant for you.

Who would want to hire an architect or builder who admits that out of his last fifty buildings, only five of them have collapsed within the first two years after they were built? Yet those kinds of statistics are commonly accepted among church planters. One wonders why this kind of hit-and-miss approach to church planting has become so acceptable among many today? Think of how affectionately and earnestly Paul laboured for the maturity of *each* church he was involved with. Surely he would see such neglect of infant churches as synonymous with *child abandonment*, an awful practice in the ancient world and in heathen cultures that was outlawed long ago. As another African proverb says, "Only a foolish woman throws away her own baby."

Maybe we in the BUSA should, instead, start saying, 'Since 1990 we've started 350-400 churches/ fellowships and we are *still planting* them until they can truly grow and flourish on their own!' The hour has come for launching an all-out, wholehearted effort at strengthening these young churches until they are well-led, mature, reproducing churches that exalt Christ.

III. Our Strategy

The key to developing this urgently needed church-strengthening movement in the BUSA (or anywhere) is to *equip churches and church planters to pursue a more biblical pattern of church planting and to depart only when the job is done*. This could unfold in three phases:

A. A logical place to start would be to identify and develop potential hub churches in each area, churches that can serve as a vibrant Antioch (cf. Acts 11-14) for the region. When there is not a strong, or potentially strong, mother church in an area that has weak church plants, every effort must be made (even if it means a few years of cross-cultural mission) to establish a strong indigenous church there as a hub. There is *no substitute* for strong churches. No seminaries, no conferences, *nothing* can replace the biblical role and the long-term impact of a model, Antioch kind of church in each area!

B. Next, the established, stronger churches must teach and model for the younger mother churches and their church planters the *clear biblical pattern for church planting*. When we study Acts & Paul's epistles, we find that the three main stages of effective church planting are laid out for us (Acts 11-14, 15-18):

1. Paul *evangelised & gathered* new converts.



2. He *established* them in the faith.



3. He *entrusted leadership* into the hands of qualified and capable local leadership.

The missiologist Van Rheenen (1996a) confirms this pattern:

Developing a strong movement of God in a new city or ethnic area requires the accomplishment of three essential missiological tasks. First, initial evangelism must lead to *planting new churches*.

Second, *Christians must be nurtured to maturity* within these churches. Third, *leaders must be trained* to evangelize and plant other churches, pastor and shepherd the community of believers, and train still other leaders. ... While other mission tasks may amplify these three central tasks, a strong movement of God cannot come into being without their accomplishment (emphasis his).

C. Finally, we must unpack for churches and church planters each of these three biblical stages and ensure that these are being followed first in the mother churches, and then in the branch churches. For example, in evangelising we must teach churches to evangelise more strategically (intentionally). It seems that many of the churches in the rural, black African areas have started off on the wrong foot and laid a weak foundation by an evangelism that mostly targets women, youth, and children. I know this is tough because of the migrant worker situation, but in most cases *there are still men there*.

One of our lecturers at Christ Seminary is Andrew Isaiaho from Kenya. Andrew joined us after fifteen years of pastoral and church planting experience in the African context. God used Andrew to effectively plant a healthy church in a

poor, semi-slum area outside of Nairobi, Kenya. He began in 1994 with a mid-week men's evangelistic Bible study for the first six months. Only after a core group of men were converted and being disciplined, then the men were urged to invite their families to come along for Sunday services. Now, after a few years of hard work, Andrew has left behind him a strong church led by a mature group of five biblically qualified elders and a growing flock of over forty members. While planting this church, Andrew was bivocational, carrying a full-time job during the day so that he could provide for his family and not have to burden the young church plant.

Conclusion

Over the past year of my research and my discussions with many others in the BUSA, this vision keeps ringing in my ears: *In order for the gospel to steadily advance through the BUSA (or anywhere in Africa), mother churches must take responsibility for strengthening younger churches until they are well-led, mature, reproducing churches.*

Evangelism and church planting must never stop. Expansion and multiplication must never stop. But, if we want it to honour Christ and bring lasting results, it must be *married to a church-strengthening movement!* And biblically, there should be no divorce: church planting and *church strengthening* should be one flesh. What God has joined together, let no man separate.

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they do not fit one's preconceptions regarding normativity (56-57). While these arguments have been standards of the scientific method, the authors of *BHI* begin to question these quickly becoming reified "truths." There is no reason, they claim, for a contemporaneous interpretation to more closely portray truth than one written much later. At the same time, they do not necessarily give in to the assumptions of non-literacy or the necessity of oral tradition and speak positively about Mosaic authorship. They also see the ideological "rule" as overly presumptuous. They argue that we are obligated to give ideological texts (for there are no other kinds) just as much credence as supposedly mute artifacts. After all, they both must be interpreted and neither precisely portrays the world of events. Finally, grounding truth on what is common human experience is an unfair starting point. It is both impossible to determine what is "common human experience" and even more so to argue that it is unlikely that things will diverge from that experience. The moon landing was certainly different, but most will agree that it actually happened. In presenting these three arguments, they in no way ignore the insights and benefits of archaeology, sociology, anthropology, etc; but rather, they use these throughout the book while continuing to give credence to the testimony of the biblical authors as well.

This entire first section is intent on showing the false presuppositions which are brought to a study of history. The authors reject the Positivistic notions of Davies, Thompson, Lemche and others who seek to find a "bruta facta" history through more or less objective archaeological methods. Archaeology is not scientific if by that we mean that it requires no interpretation. Perhaps a good summary of this first section is found on page 74 where the authors say, "we do not require 'positive grounds' for taking the biblical testimony about Israel's past seriously. We require positive grounds, rather, for *not* doing so." They close this portion with a chapter on narrativity and questions regarding fiction in the Bible. In many ways it is a summary of Long's *The Art of Biblical History* and is a call towards a more modern literary criticism—one that takes the text seriously as literature. Its portrait language is helpful pedagogically, but like Long's previous work, it still leaves me with no real answer as to what the biblical text is actually for.

The next section simply walks through the Biblical history from the Patriarchs to the exile. Bright worked his way through the different archaeological ages, antedating the history given in the Bible, but these authors choose to begin with Abraham making the book's parameters those of the canon and not those of history in general. This being said, it is quite strange that they

completely ignore the primeval history. Some discussion is certainly warranted as to why they assume Abraham and Moses are worthy of historical comments but Noah is not. In dealing with the Patriarchal history they cite little new evidence outside the biblical text. Bright himself longed for the information he knew would be found in the Ebla texts, but Provan, Long, and Longman choose not to deal with it. Nevertheless, they do continue to make arguments based on the Nuzi and Mari materials. They seem to prefer the 15th century traditional dating for the exodus and conquest (Bright preferred 13th cent), but they are not dogmatic on this saying only further archaeological evidence will decide whether this is anything more than a plausible guess (132). As for how Israel got to the land, they are content to see the general reliability of the biblical text but allow for not only a violent conquest but also a peaceful immigration and a peasant uprising from within (chapter 7). This is much in line with Bright's (2nd ed.) acceptance of Mendenhall's view although our authors seem more concerned to mix the three views than did Bright. Most helpful in these early sections were the portions on the structure of certain Biblical books; a segment entirely lacking in Bright's *History*.

Their concern with the text itself is also very evident in the monarchy/exile chapters. Chronicles is defended as useful in establishing the past (195-196), but it is used seldom in this book. They are willing, however, to discuss the Chronicler's comments regarding alleged contradictions such as the reason for the demise of Saul's kingship (213-214) and the debate regarding Goliath's killer (222-225). The alleged antimonarchical sections found predominantly in Samuel should rather be seen as commentary on anti-covenantal sentiments heard in Israel's request for a king (210). And while the book of Samuel is indeed a defense of David, this in no way calls for distrust of the stories (237). The large numbers in the Solomon story are literary hyperbole for theological purposes (251). The authors believe in an actual exile (ethnic continuity of those exiled and those who returned as well as a privileging of the returnees over those who remained in the land) over against a simple deportation (284-285). Their book concludes with the closing of the OT canon.

While the first section of this book yields little new content here for those who know these three authors,¹ those that are new to the subject will find this

¹ For Provan see *Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writings on the History of Israel*. Regent College Publishers, 1998; "The End of (Israel's) History? K. W. Whitelam's *The Invention of Ancient Israel: A Review Article*," *JSS* 42 (1997): 283-300.

summary well-suited to their needs and very readable. At the same time, this section packs so much information in a small place that it is worthy reading even for experts in the field. The history itself is first rate and is able to summarize major controversies quickly and cogently. It is not as detailed as Bright's, but many professors will find this an appealing quality for their student's required reading list. Overall, its greatest benefit will be to those in the classroom. It will be especially appealing to those looking for a reasonable defense against minimalist attacks. Every chapter presents a powerful shield by giving rational answers to why we may trust the testimony of the biblical authors. This may quickly become the seminary and Bible college's required history text and, despite minor limitations, it is up to the task.

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For Long see "How Reliable are Biblical Reports? Repeating Lester Grabbe's Comparative Experiment," *VT* 52 (2002): 367-384; *The Art of Biblical History*. Leicester, England: Apollos, 1994; *Israel's Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography*. Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1999; *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of 'Biblical Israel.'* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. For Longman see *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987; *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan 1994; *Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

Sidney Greidanus

***Preaching Christ from the Old Testament:
A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method.***

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Africa, while flourishing when it comes to skilled rhetoricians, is sadly lacking in competent preachers. Yes, there is a difference between good speakers and good preachers. During a years worth of African chapel and worship services, I have heard only a handful of sermons from the Old Testament. In those few sermons, only one mentioned the name of Christ. Africa is certainly not alone in this inadequacy. Many preachers tend to preach sermons that call their congregation to lead better lives. It seems that far too many of these great orators equate ethical instruction with preaching. In fact, most "preachers" are not preaching at all—at least not according to the Bible's definition.

Sidney Greidanus is the homiletics professor at Calvin Theological Seminary and has published many books. His most well known text is *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* and it was selected as the journal *Preaching's* 1990 Book of the Year. Greidanus spent five months in South Africa doing research for this book as well as much time in Europe and North America. In so doing he has blessed the church with a new challenge to preachers. He calls them to preach Christ every time they take the pulpit. Why only one topic every week? Because it is the one topic of which every passage in the Bible points. Greidanus' book, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* combines homiletics and hermeneutics. While every seminary in the world teaches the art and science of preaching and interpreting, it seems that the preachers in the church have trouble connecting the two when it comes to the pulpit.

Greidanus is helpful in many ways, but his two most significant impacts are in his ability to inspire preachers to truly preach and the skilled organization of his more than worthy content. As an example of this first great benefit, he discourages what he calls "pairing," that is, preaching an OT text and a NT text together. (43) He is certainly right in suggesting that this causes problems. Foremost among the difficulties is that we are forced to read the OT text through only one (possibly ill-chosen) NT text. Rather, throughout the book, he encourages the preacher to preach the OT texts in their context (exegesis) and interpret them by using the more recent revelation of the *entire* NT (hermeneutics).

Greidanus redemptive-historical interpretation may not be unique, but the organization makes this book unparalleled and therefore immensely valuable. In fact, you can limit yourself to reading only the titles and subtitles within each chapter and still walk away with a new desire and ability to preach Christ from the OT. The book has 8 chapters, but they can easily be categorized into four even sections of 2 chapters each. He begins his first section by establishing the need for Christocentric preaching from the OT (chapters 1-2) and I am sure that he will convince even the most adamant doubter of this need. His next section is a concise history of preaching Christ from the apostolic fathers to the modern day (chapters 3-4). It surveys many of the key players in hermeneutics and certainly most of the key moves. When I say that it is concise, I do not mean to imply that it is short or inadequate—in fact, it is over 100 pages and is one of the finest summaries I have seen. The most helpful part of the book shows his biblical-theological “method” for finding Christ (chapters 5-6). He suggests 6 (or 7 in chapter 6) methods for finding Christ: Redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, New Testament references, and contrast. It is in these sections that he deals with the most controversial issues and I was immensely glad that he did not skirt these questions. For instance he has much to say regarding the difference between typology and allegory. He discusses the difference between theocentric and Christocentric reading. He even wrestles with “Big picture” questions like whether the OT is a sub-Christian text or not. His final section is the practical section of the book (chapters 7-8). Here he includes ten steps for preparing a sermon and follows this up with five extended examples from the Old Testament. While the organization was the most appealing thing to me, I must also mention its extreme readability. A first year college student could easily navigate this book and gain much from it.

His historical redemptive method was pedagogically very helpful for me, but there were some things that I did have to question. Most of my questions were minor. For instance he discusses the way (or method) of NT references in order to find Christ, but I felt this seemed to fit more in a basic exegesis textbook than it did in a hermeneutics book. To argue that we should cross-reference into the NT seemed a bit elementary considering the great insights of the book. To be fair, he does say this is more for confirmation reasons than anything else (269).

While I always found his main points to be quite helpful, I often found his examples not as well suited to his main point. Granted this was because of minor theological differences between us. For example, his understanding of imprecations as opposed to NT teaching (272) is quite controversial. Considering the host of curses found in the NT, I found his use of this example quite unconvincing. However, I was pleased to see that he did give a nod to the alternative view (275)

which I have argued for in some depth in a recent article. So, provided you understand his theological stance, the example does what he intended—it illustrates a distinction between the Old and New Testament. At another time, he suggests a contrast between God’s command to annihilate certain Canaanites as part of the ban and Christ’s commands in the NT. However, it is not that we are to refrain from Holy War today, but that our war is different. While he uses this as an example to preach by way of contrast, I tend to move in a more thematic direction.

Another hesitation with the way of contrast is one I share with many of his examples. I often felt that his examples were too limited. The pericope he chose often ended before the main point of the text. For instance, in preaching from Ecclesiastes he focused on the meaninglessness of everything in 12:8 and contrasted this with Christ’s defeating death in I Corinthians 15 (276). He did not mention the contrast that comes just a few verses later within the context of Ecclesiastes. It seems that preaching the first half of Ecclesiastes 12 with a quick jump to the NT contrast is unwarranted and even exegetically lacking. He emphasizes progressive revelation but neglects the larger immediate context. Of course, I recognize the limitations of the medium and that examples are for illustrative purposes only. I am sure if Greidanus was preaching this text, he would tie in the many positive statements found in Ecclesiastes with his Christo-centric conclusions.

His sections on typology were extremely helpful; although, I thought his many qualifications for using typology took away from his later ability to use this in almost any circumstance. If we allow for typological interpretations by way of the anointed offices of prophet, priest or king (258-259), we are practically unlimited in our connections. For instance, any time someone prays in the OT, we have a prophetic role being enacted and this ties us directly to our great prophet. Any time a sacrifice or a battle takes place we see the roles of priests and kings and can therefore make the connection to our great priest and king. Even when these things are done wrongly, we can simply point to the better Anointed One who will not fail like those in the Old Testament. While Greidanus may not want to refer to these negative examples as types of Christ (260), they still point to Christ as the one who will fulfill these offices perfectly. Maybe he would feel more comfortable placing these situations into the way of contrast, but they are typological contrasts nonetheless.

The above hesitations are undoubtedly minor and my final one may prove to be so as well. As already hinted at, there seemed to be some exegetical/hermeneutical confusion throughout the book. While I agree that the NT is not a textbook on biblical hermeneutics (189), I question Greidanus’ attachment to “rules” of hermeneutics. If different generations of Christians practiced different “rules” of

interpretation, why are we so convinced that the historico-grammatical method is supreme? I found Greidanus far too dependant on Longenecker's view of only using that Apostles methods when they follow historico-grammatical exegesis (190-191). While Longenecker has greatly enhanced my own understanding on this issue, I continue to wonder why we are discouraged from using the apostle's "methods." We often laugh at the allegorical interpretations of Origen and the Alexandrian school. Greidanus buttresses this feeling saying that to use allegorical interpretation on historical narrative is to "make a genre mistake and to read alien ideas into the text"(88) and he later says quite plainly, "allegorical interpretation...is to be rejected" (236). If Paul was correct that Sarah and Hagar are covenants and that Hagar does stand for Mt. Sinai and that her heirs are slaves, who are we to say that this is inappropriate? Did the apostles have an endowed privilege to treat the OT unfairly? Is it possible that we can indeed do what the apostles did? May it be the case that the goal of the NT apostles was sufficient and method is simply not as important as we think it is? Greidanus' subtitle "A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method" does stress the current state of hermeneutics but what I question is whether our current state is the correct one. Even Greidanus suggests a typological method and most will agree that this is not grammatico-historical in approach. I have not for a moment considered throwing out the grammatico-historical method and I would dismiss any scholar who suggested such a thing. Still, I think that Greidanus, along with most modern Evangelicals, simply gives it too much preeminence.¹

Despite the few trivial cautions, I am very excited about this book and wish that I could have had the privilege of introducing it to African scholars five years ago when it was published. Both its subject matter and its heuristic organization make it a must read for seminary and Bible college students as well as for those who are already veteran pastors. While I have seldom read a book that did not prompt theological question and controversy, I hope that my few minor interrogations here will not dissuade one from reading this book. I can truthfully say that I have seldom read a book in which I find so little to disagree with. The author is a great theologian and I recommend this work unreservedly. It is time for the African pastor to commit along with the apostle Paul to preaching Christ and Him crucified.

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¹ For a helpful discussion on this see Dan G. McCartney's "The New Testament's Use of the Old Testament," in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic* (ed. Harvie Conn; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), p. 101-116.

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