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# Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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# CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

## *AN AJET EDITORIAL*

The cry for better leadership often portrays the fact that the existing leadership is wanting be it in the secular, political or Christian circles. The kind of leader that people often seek has some set standards depending on the context where such a leader exercises authority. However, two qualities stand out on the topic of Christian leadership – competence and character – the skill, ability, being and the relationship of these within the given context.

Character plays a key role in a Christian's leadership. Character, it is said, is the only quality that returns home with the mourners after a leader's funeral service. This statement points out that the 'how' of a person's leadership speaks volumes in terms of humility, integrity, purity, honesty, servant-hood, holiness of life, use of spiritual gifts and other virtues. These characteristic qualities portray a life that is truly lacking in pride and other self-seeking vices.

The lead article, *Christianizing spiritual manifestations: worldviews and spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14*, Dr. Steve Bryan writes, "Since spiritual gifts are manifestations of God's Spirit, it is commonly assumed that the way in which Christians manifest the Spirit through the practice of spiritual gifts will always be pleasing to God." Basing his discussion on the 1 Corinthians, he underscores Paul's teaching about spiritual gifts, and in the process differentiates the practice of the gifts of the Spirit from notions about spiritual manifestations which the Corinthians carried forward from their pre-Christian worldview into their Christian faith.

In the second article on '*Are Pastors Human?*' *sociological and theological reflections on ministerial identity in contemporary Africa*, the author, Gregg A. Okesson, argues against some objections on how pastors who are human are sacralised and deified in leadership ministries of the African church. The effect of this hero worship rapidly causes pastors to lose their spiritual credibility. For "the moment we distance ourselves from others, we separate our primary

powers from the community, and decrease our efficacy” (p. ). Leaders must be vulnerable to the congregants and learn from them not just minister to them. He calls on them to consider their own humanity as foundational to their ministerial calling. He rightly states that Jesus Christ provides the model for joining spiritual power with humanity. Hence all pastors need to embrace Jesus Christ’s life as the pathway for discovering their own personhood (humanity) and subsequently, their authority in a broken world. “Jesus alone is the consummate image of God” (p.37).

A biblically relevant topic today is the third article in which the author, Enock Okode, looks closely at *Theocracy in Crisis* against the backdrop of Israel’s leadership crisis when the sons of Samuel forsook the righteous requirements of the law. Okode outlines some theological and practical implications from the message of the text by discussing questions which touch on disloyalty of the people; dissatisfaction of the existing administration; opposition to the request; Yahweh’s decree for a monarchy; defectiveness of leadership; and what kingship is all about.

The next article on *The Spirit Motif in Luke 4: 14-30; Acts 1:8 and the Church Today* examines ways of continuity between the ministry of Jesus, the early church and the church today particularly with regard to the role of the Holy Spirit. The author, Dr. Joseph Koech, states that the Holy Spirit upon Jesus was unique in certain features but in some aspects the early church duplicated and is expected to continue in the church today. Jesus’ mandate has not changed and the nations still need to be set free like in the time of Jesus and the early church. Modern problems are even more severe and complex than during the New Testament times. The power of the Holy Spirit is needed even today for empowerment to proclaim God’s message and to release people from problems encompassing all dimensions of life: spiritual, psychological, social, political and physical.

# **CHRISTIANIZING SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS: WORLDVIEWS AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12-14**

Steve Bryan

## **Introduction**

When a person comes to faith, it is merely the beginning of a transformation which continues throughout their lives. A believer's life undergoes change at the moment of conversion, but this by no means implies that the believer actions and thoughts from that point forward are fully part of a thoroughly Christian worldview. It is for this reason that the New Testament urges believers not to "be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of your minds" (Rom 12:1-2). But if this is a widely acknowledged fact of the Christian life, it is often overlooked when it comes to the Spirit in the practice of spiritual gifts. Since spiritual gifts are manifestations of God's Spirit, it is commonly assumed that the way in which Christians manifest the Spirit through the practice of spiritual gifts will always be pleasing to God: whatever happens is simply what the Spirit does and who can question the Spirit? The purpose of this paper is to show that this is not the case. Rather, the New Testament indicates that our practice of spiritual gifts, like the rest of our life in the Spirit, can be influenced by the worldview which we possessed before we were converted. It is thus entirely possible that we may use the gifts of the Spirit in ways that reflect an essentially pagan worldview. In the West, people are often converted out of worldviews which have little or no experience of spiritual manifestations. However, in much of the world, especially in Africa, spiritual manifestations are often very much a part of the experience of people before they come to Christ and the understanding of these experiences may influence the way in which they think about manifestations produced by the Holy Spirit as part of their Christian experience.

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In 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses a group of believers who had experienced a remarkable outpouring of spiritual gifts. Paul comments in 1 Corinthians 1:7 that they did “not lack any spiritual gift”. Yet, as the letter makes clear, the believers continued to be influenced by the worldview from which they had been saved, most especially in their practice of spiritual gifts. In particular, Paul argues that the way in which they were practicing their spiritual gifts (as with much else in their Christian lives) was far too influenced by the way their knowledge and experience of spiritual manifestations when they were unbelievers.

At the beginning of 1 Corinthians 12 (vv. 1-2) Paul tells the Corinthians that he does not want them to be ignorant or without knowledge in regard to spiritual gifts and then immediately reminds them of the time when they were without knowledge, i.e. when they were still pagans. Paul’s presupposition is that the way the Corinthians were practicing and thinking about their spiritual gifts was, to some degree, marked by pagan ignorance. What this suggests then is that Paul’s instructions about spiritual gifts in these chapters are largely driven by his assessment that the Corinthians’ attitudes towards spiritual gifts remained too much controlled by pagan ideas about spiritual manifestations. The contrast which Paul draws between pagan and Christian notions of spiritual manifestations is one of the most crucial yet often overlooked dimensions to Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts. The burden of what Paul says to them is that *they must develop distinctly Christian ways of thinking about their experience and manifestation of the Spirit.*

I wish then to highlight a number of elements in Paul’s teaching about spiritual gifts in which the apostle seeks to Christianize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit which were being experienced by the church at Corinth. In doing so, Paul distinguishes the practice of the gifts of the Spirit from those notions about spiritual manifestations which the Corinthians brought to their new Christian faith from the pagan worldview which they had not yet fully left behind.

### **Paul, the Spirit, and the Spirits at Corinth**

**1. The fact that spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Spirit in no way exempts these gifts from misuse and distortion, especially under the influence of pre-Christian conceptions of spiritual manifestations.**

It is often assumed that because the gifts are manifestations of the Spirit they can only be understood as what the Spirit does and therefore may not be questioned. On the other hand, it is sometimes supposed that if a particular

manifestation takes an unbiblical form the manifestation must be demonic. Paul takes neither view, arguing instead that manifestations of the Holy Spirit may be subject to distortion and misuse, especially when the assumptions of a pre-Christian worldview are allowed to shape the way in which spiritual manifestations are displayed in the Christian community.

Recent scholarship on the Corinthian correspondence has highlighted the extent to which the Corinthian church remained very much under the influence of the wider culture. The fact that in one or two places Paul objects to the way in which some Corinthian Christians had attempted to stake out a Christian position vis à vis the wider culture should caution us against assuming that these Christians had made no effort to distinguish themselves from their pagan past.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless, in some cases they did so successfully (cf. 1 Cor 11:2). But there is mounting evidence that often they did not.

Much of the focus has fallen on the influence of cultural norms regarding self-presentation, leadership, patron-client relationships, social status, and power, especially in 1 Corinthians 1-6 and in 1 Corinthians 11. Other problems in the Corinthian church have also been traced to the influence of the Corinthians' pagan past, including cultural attitudes toward sexual ethics, marriage, and the giving of money.<sup>2</sup> However, relatively little attention has been given to the influence of Corinthian cultural mores on the practice of spiritual manifestations. The tendency of a previous generation of scholarship to identify various elements of the worship in the Corinthian church as overtly pagan now commands little support. But even if pagan spirits were not active in the church at Corinth, it is still possible that the Corinthians' pagan past may have influence on their understanding and practice of spiritual manifestations. Garland states that Paul "does not

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1. Note, for instance, Paul's objection to inappropriate applications of Christian freedom which had led to sexual immorality "of a kind that does not occur even among pagans" (5:1) and his objection to Christian participation in pagan feasts involving food associated with idols based on a wrong application of "knowledge" of God's oneness and the corresponding unreality of idols (8:1-14).

2. The bibliography of works which attempt to situate the Corinthian correspondence in the social setting of first century Corinth is vast. The depth of influence of the surrounding culture on the Corinthian believers generally and their pagan past particularly has been highlighted with particular clarity by Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

insinuate that they have allowed their former pagan worship to infect their Christian worship.”<sup>3</sup> But pagan ideas about worship may indeed have shaped their Christian worship. The extent of Paul’s concern about the influence of their pre-Christian experience elsewhere in Corinthians suggests that the reference to the Corinthians’ pagan past in 12:1 reflects Paul’s concern that the practice of spiritual manifestations was unduly influenced by a pagan worldview. Interpreters differ on the specific point of contrast which Paul has in mind when he reminds them of their pagan past, but “all interpreters agree that Paul stresses the inadequacy of any ‘knowledge’ about what constitutes ‘the spiritual’ if it is decisively shaped by expectations and assumptions carried over from pre-conversion days.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Paul did not regard manifestations of the Spirit as *inherently* immune from distortion and abuse. The Corinthians may not lack for any spiritual gift (1:7), but they clearly suffered from considerable immaturity in the way they were practicing the gifts. Paul begins his letter with a section of thanksgiving to God for the many spiritual gifts which were being manifest at Corinth (1:4-7), but this in no way suggests that he approved of how the Corinthians were making use of their gifts. The fundamentally corrective nature of what Paul says concerning the practice of spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12-14 renders it unlikely that Paul regards spiritual manifestations as incapable of abuse.

However, Paul’s response to distortions in the manifestation of the Spirit does not assume the influence of demonic spirits. In contemporary practice, it is sometimes assumed that if a particular spiritual manifestation is displayed in inappropriate way, the manifestation must be empowered by an evil spirit rather than the Spirit of God. But Paul does not say that the influence of their pagan past meant that the spiritual manifestations of the Corinthians were demonic. In such a circumstance, one would expect a far more vehement response. But Paul neither rejects the spiritual manifestations evident at Corinth nor seeks to exclude them from the community. Rather, he acknowledges their origin in the work of the Spirit (12:7-11) and aims to align their use more fully with the character of God and the nature of the Christian community.

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3. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 566.

4. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 913.

Paul believes that the Corinthians' manifestations of the authentic Spirit could be shaped by their pagan past. In many cases, we would do well to follow Paul's example in this regard. Some churches have responded to abuses by asserting that the activity associated with the abuses was demonic and then eliminating all practice of the gifts which were being abused. Paul does neither. He affirms the Corinthians in their reception of the gifts of the Spirit and yet sought to correct the misunderstanding which arose because they had not yet fully understood the character of the Holy Spirit. This might mean that we tell our people that we affirm their giftedness, but before we release them for public use of their gifts we want to provide them with the training they need to use their gifts effectively and biblically. 1 Corinthians 12-14 provides Paul's own attempt to provide a framework in which spiritual gifts may be practiced in a God-honoring way.

**2. Spiritual gifts are manifestations of God's grace and thus do not serve as a measure of spirituality and cannot be acquired by manipulative means.**

Efforts to determine the precise point of contrast intended by Paul in setting his discussion of spiritual manifestations over against the prior pagan spiritual experience of the Corinthians have not proved wholly convincing.<sup>5</sup> It may be that Paul intends a more general, multi-faceted contrast, and this is what the following discussion assumes. As Thiselton puts it, Paul intends the pre-Christian and Christian frameworks as "comparative frames of reference" for determining what it means to be spiritual.<sup>6</sup> One aspect of their pre-Christian experience that Paul addresses is the use of particular spiritual manifestations as a measure of status within the community. At Corinth, a division seems to have arisen between those in the community who wanted to make their more spectacular gifts a primary indication of spirituality and

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5. Gordon Fee notes that because Paul does not make explicit the specific element of the Corinthians' pagan past about which he wants to remind them, many scholars have looked elsewhere for evidence. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 577. One common approach has been to suppose that Paul intends a contrast between the ecstatic utterances of the Corinthians when they were pagans with the *glossolalia* and prophecy they now experienced as Christians. However, Christopher Forbes has demonstrated that ecstatic experience was not a universal feature of pagan religion at the time Paul wrote, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995).

6. Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 916.

status within the community.<sup>7</sup> Paul rejects the belief of some Corinthians that the same is true of Christians. Instead he argues that the capacity to produce inspired speech or some other manifestation has no necessary correlation with a person's spirituality.

The term *pneumatika* seems to have been the Corinthians' preferred way of referring to spiritual manifestations, particularly the more spectacular manifestations.<sup>8</sup> Paul, however, with one exception (14:1), prefers the term *charismata* (12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31). This is because Paul wants the Corinthians to think of the manifestations as *charismata* which issue from divine *charis*. They are gifts granted to us by God's grace. As with all experiences of God's grace, we receive what God gives us not because of who we are or what we have done or how spiritual we are. Rather, we receive God's grace despite who we are and what we have done according to God's will. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:11, "All the gifts are the work of one and the same Spirit who gives to each one just as he wills." These *charismata* which God gives are not limited to the more spectacular manifestations, which was perhaps the primary sense of the Corinthians' use of *pneumatika*. Rather, Paul gathers up a wide variety of spiritual ministries and regards them alike as graces.

We see then that one principal point of contrast between the Corinthians prior spiritual experience as pagans and their experience of the Spirit as Christians is that the Spirit-produced phenomena manifest by Christians do not elevate an individual's status or provide an indication of heightened spirituality. This idea is a very common feature of contemporary traditional religions in which a person who is able to produce spectacular spiritual

7. Recent studies of the social dynamics within the Corinthian church have highlighted status issues generally and the elevated status associated with esoteric speech in Greco-Roman society in particular. Dale Martin notes that "esoteric speech... is usually considered a high status activity *except* in western, rationalistic societies..." *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 558, cited in David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement*, Studies of the New Testament and Its World (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 177.

8. The form of the word used in 12:1 may be either neuter ("spiritual manifestations" or "spiritual gifts") or masculine ("spiritual ones"). That Paul has in mind the neuter form seems clear from the use of the neuter form in 14:1 and from his exchange of the word with his own preferred term *charismata*—a neuter form—in the ensuing discussion.

manifestations is regarded as having special contact with the spirit world and enjoys an elevated status in the community. It is also a presupposition of many Christians today, particularly in Africa, who regard those through whom particular spiritual manifestations are given as possessing special status within a community or assume that such individuals are especially spiritual. For Paul, however, the fact that spiritual manifestations originate in a sovereign act of divine grace means that the individuals who experience them must not be elevated within the community.

Closely related to Paul's point that spiritual manifestations are sovereignly given endowments of grace is the implication that manifestations of the Spirit may not be self-generated or acquired by manipulative means. Spiritual manifestations may not be produced by inducing a heightened emotional state or, in the case of gifts of inspired speech, by mimicking the forms of speech produced by others. Paul clearly believes that not every manifestation at Corinth has the approval of the Spirit. Yet it is also true that Paul just as Paul does not attribute such inappropriate manifestations to demonic activity, he also does not directly charge the Corinthian believers with faking or counterfeiting spiritual manifestations. The elevated status associated with certain spiritual gifts at Corinth, especially tongues, may well have produced pressure in this direction. However, Paul does not denounce any of the manifestations at Corinth as either false or fabricated, even when he believes they are inappropriate. Rather, he addresses the underlying beliefs in the Corinthian church which led to or created the motivation for the display of manifestations which he believed to be inconsistent with a Christian understanding of spiritual gifts. From a pastoral point of view, Paul is concerned not simply with phenomena that he judges to be inappropriate, but with the root causes of the phenomena in a worldview not yet fully shaped by the conviction that a sovereign God gives gifts because of his grace and not because he is manipulated or induced to do so.

### **3. In contrast to the localization of spiritual power among a spiritual elite within paganism, all believers have a common endowment of the Spirit.**

One of the ideas that Paul seeks to correct is that the manifestation of the Spirit was evident exclusively or even primarily through gifts of inspired speech or other similarly impressive spiritual manifestations. Some time ago I learned of a woman who was severely ill in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Her neighbors and relatives all encouraged her to go to Awassa, a city in southern Ethiopia, because there was a witch doctor there was known to be

have spiritual power, who, if presented with appropriate gifts, might be persuaded to access this power on her behalf. As in pagan religion generally, the assumption was that spiritual power was concentrated in just a few individuals who had the expertise to access the power. Similarly, at Corinth, there seem to have been some who believed that the ability to produce certain spiritual phenomena, especially tongues and prophecy, served as proof that some believers possessed the Spirit in a way that others did not: “Paul is concerned to refute those Corinthians who claim their gift of *glossolalia* is a special, perhaps unique, demonstration of spirit possession”.<sup>9</sup> He corrects this notion with the assertion that all who confess Jesus to be Lord do so by the Spirit and so have the Spirit (12:3).<sup>10</sup> Paul “wants to affirm from the start that all the members of the body of Christ are spiritual.”<sup>11</sup> He then goes on to assert not only that all had been baptized by one Spirit into one body (12:13) but also that each one of the believers had been given at least one manifestation of the Spirit (12:7).

Whether or not our churches are Pentecostal, we must strongly affirm that all believers are gifted, that all the gifts are Spirit-inspired. We have erred badly in allowing our people to continue in the belief that certain spiritual manifestations distinguish those who have the Spirit from those who do not or who have the Spirit in lesser measure. The concept of the uniquely “anointed” person is foreign to biblical Christianity, precisely because all believers have the Spirit and possess Spirit-inspired gifts. We must firmly resist the widespread assumption, for instance, that the person who has the gift of administration or of helps is somehow less spiritual than the person who has the gift of prophecy or healing. Paul rejects as pagan the idea that spiritual power is localized or concentrated among a spiritual elite.

**4. In contrast to the elevation of those who manifest spiritual power within paganism, manifestations of spiritual power among believers are to be used for the common good.**

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9. Julette M. Bassler, “1 Cor 12:3—Curse or Confession in Context,” *JBL* 101 (1982): 416.

10. Thiselton catalogues the myriad of proposals regarding the circumstance under which someone might declare that Jesus is cursed, but the primary point of 12:3 is clear: only by the agency of the Spirit is it possible to for a person to confess Jesus as Lord as an expression of one’s fundamental commitment and belief, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 916–27.

11. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 572.

As noted above, within pagan religion, those who are able to produce impressive spiritual manifestations are often given an elevated religious and social status within their community. That this idea had also come to influence the Corinthian believers is reflected in the fact that much of what Paul says in ch. 12 particularly is directed against the belief that those who possessed certain spiritual gifts constituted a spiritual clite within the church. We see this in three related arguments set forth by Paul.

*a. Though gifts differ among believers, the differences are to be understood not as indications of superior spiritual power but as necessary variations in the way each believer contributes to the common good and as vital witness to the centrality of the cross.*

This is particularly clear in Paul's use of the metaphor of the body (12:14-26). As Paul indicates, if everyone possessed the same gift there would be no body (v. 18). Thus, each part of the body, each gift plays a vital role in the healthy functioning of the body. And this is by God's design: "God arranged the parts of the body just as he wanted them to be" (v. 18). But though Paul's metaphor of the body is commonly seen as way of setting out the theme of unity in diversity, Paul seems to have something more in mind. It is not simply that the elevation of those with esteemed gifts disdains the need for all different sorts of ministry in a properly functioning community. It is also the case that the elevation of those perceived to have superior spiritual power contradicts Paul's theology of the cross according to which those who are "unimpressive," "less honorable," even "unpresentable" (12:22-23) are the ones who must be honored.<sup>12</sup>

*b. Though certain gifts are regarded as superior to others, their superiority lies not in their extraordinary character but in their relative ability to contribute to the common good (12:31; 14:5, 12).*

Paul consistently downplays the importance of speaking in tongues in the public meetings of the church because of the relative inability of tongues to bring about the edification of the community. The gift of tongues is

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12. Thiselton, building on the work of Dale Martin, demonstrates that this section accords with Paul's earlier emphasis (in 1 Corinthians 1-2) on the way that a value system ordered by a crucified Christ effects reversals of status within the Christian community, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1006-9 *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1006-9.

inferior to the other gifts because it contributes relatively little to the common good. Paul tells the Corinthians that they should seek to excel in those gifts which are particularly capable of building up the church. This is perhaps the single most important criticism that needs to be made against some of the more extreme manifestations which we see in our churches: they are wholly focused on the spiritual experience of the individual. Paul relegates spiritual manifestations or experiences which do not build up the believing community to private settings outside the community (14:28).

*c. Though inspired by the Spirit, the practice of certain spiritual gifts requires particular care in order to effect the good of others.*

The importance of ensuring that public spiritual manifestations be oriented toward the common good is reflected throughout 1 Corinthians 12-14 in a variety of ways. Perhaps most important is the fact that Paul makes 1 Corinthians 13 and its assertion of the primacy and priority of love over all the gifts of the Spirit the focal point of his discussion of the gifts. But the dominance of the concern for the good of others in Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts also generates Paul's specific instructions regarding the gifts. This concern is evident in Paul's insistence that the meetings of the church reflect a healthy diversity in the practice of gifts. No single gift should be allowed to dominate - the concern for the common good generates the restrictions on the numbers of those who prophesy or speak in tongues to two or at most three (1 Cor 14:27-29). Paul says that uninterpreted tongues cannot promote the common good, and insists that those who speak in tongues publicly must be certain that their utterances will be interpreted either by themselves or others (14:28). He also warns that uninterpreted tongues can actually bring about judgment for unbelievers who are repulsed by the unintelligibility of tongues (14:23). Paul's concern for the common good also prompts his instructions that prophecy should be practiced in such a way as to maximize its capacity to teach and encourage. (14:29-31).

All of this suggests a fundamental criterion which we should use in determining whether or not particular practices should be encouraged or discouraged: does the practice contribute to the good of the whole community. We need not tell enthusiasts that manifestations which we would regard as extreme are from the devil; we simply teach them the biblical principle that only that which contributes to the good of the whole community has a place in the public meetings of the church. Everything else is discouraged.

**5. In contrast to the uncontrolled and disorderly spiritual manifestations within paganism, believers must exercise the gifts of the Spirit in a controlled and orderly way.**

A very common assumption is that authentic manifestations of the Spirit, particularly those which involve inspired speech, are especially evident when a person is in an ecstatic state, that is, when a person is not conscious of or in control of what is happening. We have noted above the argument of Christopher Forbes that there is little basis in the Hellenistic sources for the idea that spiritual manifestations among the Corinthian believers, especially those involving inspired speech, had been shaped by ecstatic spiritual experiences in their pre-Christian past.<sup>13</sup> Though Forbes is likely correct that the inspired speech forms of early Christian prophecy do not have precise parallels in Hellenistic religions, he does not offer an explanation of the contrast Paul puts forward in 12:2 nor consider similarities which may appear from a broader comparison of phenomena arising from the influence of a spirit.

Despite the significant differences between Christian inspired speech and pagan prophecy, Paul's dual reference in 12:2 to their experience of being "led away" when they were pagans may suggest a fundamental difference in the nature of the influence they now experience as recipients of the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup> Indeed Forbes acknowledges "that the Corinthians may have held, from their pre-Christian experience, that divine inspiration was an overwhelming phenomenon, not to be resisted".<sup>15</sup> There is much then to commend Aune's contention that Paul "was in all probability referring to pagan religious experiences of possession trance." Aune thus offers this

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13. Forbes's focus falls rather narrowly on the conceptual differences between related forms of inspired speech. For instance, in relation to prophecy, he shows that in contrast to Hellenistic religions early Christian prophecy eschewed divination, was unsolicited, and was charismatic rather than institutionalized, *Prophecy*, 308.

14. Terence Paige has argued that 12:2 refers to the Corinthians previous participation in cultic parades and translates "Whenever you were led [in the processions] you were really being carried away captive." "1 Corinthians 12.2: A Pagan *Pompe?*" *JSNT* 44 (1991): 57-65. Paul's point then is then the contrast between the previous experience of being led into slavery to idolatry and their current experience of being led by the Spirit. However, this general point is rather removed from the specific problems with the practice of spiritual manifestations which Paul addresses in this section of his letter.

15. Forbes, *Prophecy*, 318.

translation of 12:2: "You know that when you were heathen, you would be seized by some power which drove you to those dumb heathen gods."<sup>16</sup> The assumption among the Corinthians seems to have been that if the person is not in control of what is happening then the manifestation must be solely under the control and direction of the Spirit, and this is an assumption which appears to have significant parallels in the understanding of spiritual manifestations within pagan religion. Aune notes, for instance, the way in which the "inspired mantics" based their authority on the behavioral phenomena associated with a trance-like state.<sup>17</sup> Spiritual manifestations in which individuals experiencing spirit-possession exhibited an absence of control or a trance-like state played a significant role in Ancient Greco-Roman pagan religion, as in many modern forms of traditional religion.

Paul, however, is concerned to distinguish Christian experience of the Spirit from these kinds of uncontrolled manifestations. For Paul, the sort of behavioral phenomena associated with at least some pagan spiritual manifestations must not serve as authentication or authorization of gifts of the Spirit. Paul develops this idea in three related points:

*a. Paul, like the NT authors generally, does not describe the Christian experience of the Spirit as possession but as a baptism (12:13).*

As the Pentecostal scholar Gordon Fee notes, the language of baptism refers to our entrance into the sphere of the Spirit's influence at the time of conversion.<sup>18</sup> The NT never describes this influence as producing in an individual a loss of conscious control. Quite the opposite: *self-control* is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit's influence (Gal 5:23).

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16. David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 257. For a review of the Greco-Roman evidence, see especially pp. 23-48. Note also the comment of L. T. Johnson who states that pagan inspiration "was possession in the strictest sense" in that the prophet "lost his own consciousness" becoming a passive instrument of the god, and could neither know nor control what he said...", "Norms for True and False Prophecy in First Corinthians," *American Benedictine* 22 (1971): 33, cited in Forbes, *Prophecy*, 28.

17. Aune, *Prophecy*, 44.

18. Fee, *Corinthians*, 603-6.

*b. Manifestations of the Spirit must be intentional since believers are responsible to ensure that they are directed toward the building up of others (14:26).*

The manifestation of the Spirit must be intentionally directed toward the building up of others (14:26). Paul repeatedly stresses that the actions of members of the body of Christ must be guided by the desire to build others up. Thus, the manifestations of the Spirit must be consciously guided by the rational desire to edify others. This kind of intentionality would not be possible with spiritual manifestations over which the individual does not have control.

*c. The regulations which Paul imposes on the gifts of prophecy and tongues presuppose that those who possess these gifts retain rational control over them.*

According to Paul, speaking in tongues does not simply happen, it is a conscious choice of the speaker. Thus, if three people have already spoken in tongues, then any others who may feel the desire to speak in tongues must consciously resist that desire (14:27). Similarly, if three people have already prophesied, then any others who want to prophesy must rationally reject that desire (14:29). Moreover, Paul says that if a revelation comes to a person while another person is prophesying, the one who is prophesying should consciously decide to stop prophesying (14:30). In no circumstance should more than one person be prophesying at a time (14:31). In this way, no one is missed “because of the self-importance or supposed ‘possession’ of a particular speaker.”<sup>19</sup> All of this presupposes, that even with gifts of inspired speech the speaker retains rational control: “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (14:32).

*d. Our manifestations of the Spirit must reflect the nature of God who gives the Spirit (14:33, 40).*

Paul bases his regulation of the gifts of inspired speech on an understanding of the character of God. God is not a God of disorder but of peace (v. 33). So the manifestations of the Spirit of this God will reflect his character of order and peace. This in no way rules out spontaneity, broad participation by many, the occurrence of the unexpected and unplanned, and

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19. Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1144.

the free-working of the Spirit. But this freedom of the Spirit will never become uncontrolled. As Richard Hayes comments, "In Paul's vision for Christian worship there is neither stiff formality nor undisciplined frenzy".<sup>20</sup> Gordon Fee adds, "The character of one's deity is reflected in the character of one's worship".<sup>21</sup>

### **Concluding Practical Remarks**

Emerging from these observations on Scripture come a series of practical reflections. First, we will do well to avoid language which polarizes or which alienates the young spiritual enthusiasts in our churches. If they, like the Corinthians, bring perspectives which are less than Christian to their practice of spiritual gifts, it is not because they have fallen under demonic influence but because they have not been taught. Similarly, though Paul clearly does regard some spiritual manifestations as inappropriate, he does not level the charge that some of the manifestations are fabricated or fake. Perhaps, he would regard a faked spiritual manifestation on much the same terms as a genuine spiritual gift practiced in a self-serving way. Both are inconsistent with the notion that spiritual manifestations are graces given by a sovereign God for the good of the community rather than phenomena induced or manipulated in a way that elevates the status of the individual within the community. Second, and related to the first, we have often failed in our responsibility to provide those who minister in our churches with the training they need to use their gifts effectively and biblically, that is, to practice their spiritual gifts within the framework of a fully Christian worldview. We must create a culture of training for ministry in our churches in which it is well and widely known that those who minister publicly do so only after they have received training in the use of their gifts. This could perhaps be tied to membership classes, and membership made a requirement for all who minister in the church.<sup>22</sup> Fourth, we must communicate to our

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20. Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 243.

21. Fee, *Corinthians*, 697.

22. Exceptions, of course, would need to be made in the case of those we invite from outside to minister within our churches. But even such people must be carefully screened, so that unbiblical or unhealthy models of ministry are not inadvertently introduced. For instance, it would do little good to discourage uninterpreted tongues within our services if we then invite evangelists to preach in our churches who speak in uninterpreted tongues.

people the criteria by which we determine what we will discourage and what we will encourage within our churches. Often extreme practices are tolerated or overlooked because we do not have clear, biblical criteria for determining pastoral practice. Three such criteria are particularly important: 1) all that happens within the public meetings of the churches must be oriented toward the common good; 2) all spiritual manifestations must occur in a way that demonstrates that the one through whom the manifestation occurs remains in rational control of the manifestation; 3) all spiritual manifestations must occur in a way that reflects the nature of God as a God of order and peace.

*keeping up with contemporary Africa . . .*

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## 'Are Pastors Human?' Sociological and Theological Reflections on Ministerial Identity in Contemporary Africa

Gregg A. Okesson

The title for this article comes from a fascinating little book I read a number of years ago.<sup>1</sup> At the time, I was wrestling with issues that dealt with the wider scope of theological anthropology; specifically, how we (as evangelicals) have allowed Jesus' humanity to assume a limited or narrowly defined role in our doctrinal development, and more so, how this has affected how we think about *our* humanity. Since then, I have reflected upon its importance for ministerial training in Africa, especially in view of some of the sociological and theological presuppositions that I believe lie implicit behind how church members think about pastors. The problem is essentially this. People view the pastor as some kind of 'super human'. Sometimes this appears through expecting the pastor to have all the biblical answers, and thus able to discern the mind of God. Alternatively, people may assume that their minister has a higher degree of sinless perfection: not encumbered by temptations that face 'ordinary' humans. Still another possibility involves where parishioners believe that the pastor should always be 'spiritual' (read, serious), and thus never laugh, play, exercise or relax. In these instances, the pastor's calling sets him or her *apart* from the people.

In the case where the pastor inevitably falls short of these standards, whether struggling to provide a relevant answer to the problem of evil, or revealing some moral imperfection such as uncontrolled anger or jealousy, the result is disastrous. The pastor quickly loses spiritual credibility and the people are deprived a role model (even though it was nothing but a 'straw man'). This may be one of the contributing factors why clergy spend so little time in any given congregation: moving from one church to another,

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<sup>1</sup> Nigel M. de S. Cameron, *Are Christians Human?: an exploration of true spirituality*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Cantilever Books, 1988).

distancing themselves from the people, and/or seeking more education. Yet, even when the pastor is particularly adept at hiding his or her weaknesses, the congregation often find it difficult (if not impossible) to relate with someone portraying such high moral ideals. A young man once shared with me some sexual struggles he was facing. When I asked if he had shared these things with his pastor, he told me, 'He wouldn't understand; he doesn't struggle with such things'. This perspective leads to incessant guilt and spiritual defeat; as well as the lack of any real mentoring in how to overcome sin, or deal with issues related to forgiveness and/or regret. The pastor stands distant from the people, not as one of them.

Before proceeding further, I am aware at this point that some would advocate elements of this spiritual distancing, arguing persuasively (as they have done with me) that clear divisions between leader and follower are essential if the pastor is going to maintain spiritual authority. People believe that distance (whether physical, social, spiritual or ontological) is necessary for effective leadership. Yet, it seems to me that the underlying presuppositions for this argument need rethinking. What is the nature of pastoral authority if distance is the primary means for upholding and maintaining its efficacy? Does this not say more about the pastor's own insecurity, or the people's need for a transcendent leader? More in line with this article, if spiritual authority demands this kind of distance, what does this mean for how we think of our own personhood?; and/or, the humanity of Christ?

This article attempts to counter some of these objections by calling pastors back to their own humanity as foundational to their ministerial 'calling'. Jesus Christ provides the model for joining spiritual power with humanity, and calls us to embrace His life as the pathway for discovering our own personhood (and subsequently, our authority in a broken world).<sup>2</sup> Hence, our humanity is not something we need to deny or overcome in order to be shepherds for the people of God, but represents the very means for accomplishing our spiritual mandate within the world.

### **Antecedents to the Problem: Sacralisation and Deification in Africa**

In order to understand the roots of the problem, it is necessary to explore some of the socio-cultural and theological antecedents that have contributed

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<sup>2</sup> Some readers are likely to see similarities with a previous article appearing in this journal, entitled 'The Image of God in Leadership', *AJET* 23:1, 2004. This article builds upon many of those earlier ruminations, but hopefully with greater clarity and building upon specific points of ecclesiastical concern.

to the quandary particular to the Church in Africa. We should at once acknowledge that the issues are likely to appear dissimilar with those found in the West, and have varying manifestations depending upon the context (urban or rural) and ecclesiastical tradition: with some churches prone to accentuate the pastor's authority and others elevating the role of the educated lay leader. I am not proposing that every church may struggle with these issues in the same ways, but merely want to identify some of the contributing factors to the elevated humanity or 'distance' often experienced between clergy and laity. Individual churches can thereby discern the ways these are (or, are not) relevant within their ecclesiastical traditions and reasons for their particular manifestation(s). I will explore the various nuances by using two interrelated but distinct concepts: sacralisation and deification.

### *Sacralisation*

There are many possible meanings to this concept. As implied by the word, an extra endowment of sacred power becomes associated with a person or thing, whether: (1) intended for a particular purpose over a specific period of time; (2) inculcated within a person as a permanent aspect of their being; or, (3) perceived as self-evident by the masses. In the case of the latter two, sacralisation elevates a person (or thing) in terms of being or essence: creating tiers of importance (or, personhood). A pastor is 'set apart' for the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and people perceive him or her as residing closer to God, and/or manifesting higher degrees of glory. A young man announces to his parents that he has been 'called' by God. He goes away to theological college, graduates, and returns to the community a new man, with heightened spiritual powers. Even his parents treat him differently. In each of these illustrations, spiritual power promotes the person in terms of their identity: making them 'extra' human.

In order to trace some of the sources of sacralisation within Africa it is necessary to begin by looking at 'traditional' understandings of the cosmos. The basic premise common to many African societies is that humans derive their essence (famously conceived by Tempels as 'life force'<sup>3</sup>) from proximity to the Creator. God gives His power to humans, which then relates to life. With these powers, humans have responsibility to care for the entire cosmos: providing harmony and integration within the whole. Nearness to God provides the source of identity, which then relates to responsibility within the cosmos. However, since human communities are commonly

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<sup>3</sup> Placides Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959).

pictured within a hierarchy, those people nearer the top (closer to God) are often perceived as having greater powers, and hence: 'more' personhood. The particular shapes and forms of this may differ from society to society, with some displaying the 'sacred Kingship' model such as the Akan of Ghana or Shillunk of Sudan;<sup>4</sup> and others the 'sacred elder' model, evidenced by the Agikuyu and Akamba of Kenya. Ruth Lucier describes the significance of the hierarchy for how leaders within these communities relate with power. She says, 'It graphically depicts that some ontological types, namely, the more highly placed ones, have increasing greater power and authority. And the apex may certainly connote the glorious, concentrated power of the High God'.<sup>5</sup> Mbiti refers to the belief held by some African societies that the leader comes directly from God, and therefore manifests such an identity to the community: carrying names such as 'child of God' or 'son of God'.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, by being a little 'nearer' to God and manifesting greater degrees of being, the leader embodies the collective identity of the people.<sup>7</sup>

To what extent do these ideas continue to inform modern church praxis? It may be impossible to tell. Traditions are never static, and require a certain amount of reinterpretation in various contexts (and over time) to maintain any relevancy. Another way of saying this is that any tradition that is not re-interpreted risks becoming antiquated and useless to a society that is itself constantly undergoing change. We can only look for instances where power relates to nearness with God, or where people perceive the leader to have greater human identity.

Kwame Bediako argues this point for understanding political practices across the continent.<sup>8</sup> He contends that any diagnosis of the modern political process in Africa should pay closer attention to the traditional antecedents of power than blaming imported Western democracies for abuse and corruption

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<sup>4</sup> See E. Evans Pritchard, 'The Divine Kingship of the Shillunk of the Nilotic Sudan', in *Social Anthropology and Other Essays* (New York: The Free Press of Glenscoe, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> Ruth M. Lucier, 'Dynamics of Hierarchy in African Thought', *Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture* 24:1 (1989), pp. 29-40: p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (London: Heinemann Press, 1969), p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> See John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence amid African Religion* (London: SCM, 1963), pp. 135ff.

<sup>8</sup> Kwame Bediako, 'Unmasking the Powers: Christianity, Authority, and Desacralization in Modern African Politics', In J. Wiffe (ed.) *Christianity and Democracy in Global Context* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1993): pp. 207-229.

associated with leadership.<sup>9</sup> He uses the Akan of Ghana as his point of departure. Traditional rulers, Bediako argues, received their authority from the ancestors, providing fluid interactions between spirit and human communities. However, this nearness to the divine may leave little room for anyone to question the leader's directives.

By thus presuming the authority of rulers to be that of ancestors, African tradition makes every challenge to political authority an attack upon the sacral authority of ancestors, on whose goodwill and favor the community's continuance and prosperity are held to depend.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, if the leader is closer (ontologically, if not in other ways) to the source of divine power, then any claim against that authority amounts to a direct attack against the spirit world, or more significantly, in contemporary societies, against God. Bediako contends that African societies have utilised 'sacralisation' as a means of stifling political opposition, or defending one-party systems of governance. African societies, he maintains, need to retain their spiritual foundations but in ways that resist the dangerous allures associated with sacralisation.<sup>11</sup>

To the extent that Lucier, Mbiti and Bediako are right, and that power relates to nearness to the divine, we must then trace this correlation to discern its contemporary relevancy within our local contexts. Beginning at the political level, many rulers in Africa utilise 'spiritual' power as a convenient tool for staking claim to political legitimacy: creating the impression that the leader (whether Presidential or other) has access to spiritual blessings. Célistin Monga says, 'In Africa, the politics of God is above all a vehicle for reconstructing reality, a means of legitimating power that stems from brute force rather than the ballot box, a way of polishing up the tarnished image of the most brutal regime'.<sup>12</sup> What Mongo describes in pejorative terms might have many different manifestations. It may occur through nearness with the ancestors: whether by associating power with prominent families that have historical ties to leadership (at the clan, tribe, or national level); or, through naming a child after a famous local leader. Even in Christian contexts,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 213.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 214.

<sup>11</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 246.

<sup>12</sup> Célistin Monga, *The Anthropology of Anger: Civil Society and Democracy in Africa*. Translated by Linda L. Flecker and Célistin Monga (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), p. 135.

continuity of leadership along family lines remains a prominent feature defining *how* leaders are chosen in ecclesiastical contexts.

One of the defining characteristics of sacralisation is that power is associated with nearness to the divine. Because African societies are frequently understood in terms of hierarchy, this means that there are select people who reside closer to God and mediate His blessings to the rest of the community (alternatively, using these same powers to abuse or manipulate others). Paul Gifford contends that African societies follow a neo-patrimonial system of authority, where power resides within a person rather than an office.<sup>13</sup> (In contradistinction with Western societies that operate on 'rational-legal' authority, where power relates to structures, not people). The 'big man' in African politics embodies power within himself, which then serves as a tap for others to receive its flow. Gifford explains,

Here lower in the hierarchy are not subordinate officials with defined powers and functions of their own, but retainers whose position depends on a leader to whom they owe allegiance. The system is held together by loyalty or kinship ties rather than by a hierarchy of administrative grades and functions.<sup>14</sup>

Neo-patrimonialism provides an underlying basis for dependency scenarios so common on the continent. This helps explain the common problems of corruption, tribalism, and political jockeying that have become ubiquitous features. Political leaders such as Mugambe fight incessantly to retain their political power despite global opposition; while others, like the late Julius Nyerere of Tanzania continued to exert significant influence even after stepping down from office (in contrast to Western states where a former President has limited influence). Power is thus an attribute of a person, which then relates to the rest of the community.

Because of fluid relationships between the 'sacred' and 'secular', state leaders often try and supplement their powers by associating with ancestors, God or nebulous spiritual forces: showing people that they have blessings from the divine. In contemporary African contexts, this usually has strong Christian manifestations. Presidential candidates will often quote Scripture verses, visit various evangelical churches, plead the case for biblical morality, and/or cosy up to prominent Christian leaders. Pentecostal churches are particularly prone to reinterpreting spiritual powers into contemporary

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst and Company, 1998), pp. 5ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

contexts. One of the leading Pentecostal Bishops in Kenya recently came to the defence of the President, quipping regarding his detractors: 'Those opposed to your leadership might not even get eternal life'.<sup>15</sup> Thus, when the Bishop utters these statements, he is doing more than making some casual moral judgement on the opposition; he is essentially creating a form of reality where political leaders participate with God's power (sometimes regardless of their faith convictions or moral standing in the community). Similar sentiments carry over to the role of pastors in the churches. Many Pentecostal churches have a singular chair atop the podium reserved for the 'man of God'. When the preacher is introduced, the entire congregation stands to their feet as the pastor approaches the pulpit, resembling what reformed congregations often do during the reading of God's Word. A leading Kenyan televangelist admonishes his congregation: 'sit at the feet of preachers' and 'don't treat them as ordinary people'. Divine power establishes the pastor above and/or distanced from others.

These comments are not intended as a sweeping polemic against Pentecostal churches; for, admittedly, their theology of the Spirit does offer some deterrent against sacralisation through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within all believers. Non-Pentecostal churches may be equally guilty of elevating the 'man of God' and/or relying upon the pastor to fulfil all duties and functions within the church, thus providing different faces to sacralisation. On one occasion, I was introduced to a pastor in a mission-founded church. I referred to him as pastor. He quickly (and adamantly) corrected me, saying, 'I am not a pastor, I am a Reverend': indicating he was 'more than just a pastor', and thus occupying a higher status (perhaps residing nearer to God).

A few other examples might demonstrate different appearances of this within contemporary society. I was talking with some members of the Kenyan Commission for Higher Education, when the Permanent Secretary of Education arrived in his vehicle. All conversations immediately stopped and the various members of the Commission literally ran to meet the vehicle and shake hands with the Secretary. For the rest of the day, they were continually jockeying to get as close to his person as possible. On another occasion, I was speaking at the Graduation Ceremonies of a nearby Bible College, along with two Members of Parliament. The various speeches over-extended into the time for my talk, and one of the MP's leaned over and apologised that he needed to leave immediately for a pressing engagement. As he stood up to

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<sup>15</sup> Mugo Njeru, *Daily Nation*, Monday, October 30, 2006.

make his departure, more than three quarters of the congregation left with him, crowding to get as close to his vehicle, and eventually disbanding altogether. Leaders use this reality to accentuate their powers; either by moving constantly from one community to another, giving brief speeches and providing omnipresence to their authority (as was the case for the former President of Kenya, Hon. Daniel Arap Moi);<sup>16</sup> or, by withholding their presence to accentuate their appeal. One of the leading Pentecostal personalities in Kenya often arrives at his church on Sunday morning in the middle of the worship service. He enters from behind a curtain, just in time for the sermon, and leaves in the same manner. The stealth of his movements contributes to his overall mystique, giving the impression that distant power carries greater association with the divine (often mirroring the transcendence of God). All of the leaders in the previous examples mix Christian language into their socio-political discourses, trying to give the impression that they stand on the side of God; or, imbibe His blessings.

These examples attempt to communicate the various 'faces' of sacralisation on the continent. Sometimes, divine power is readily observable as in the case of Pentecostal authority; other times, it has been 'secularised' or lies implicit behind what Gifford calls 'neo-patrimonialism'. In some instances, it might be more 'traditional' and relate to associations with ancestors; but in other cases, Christianity provides distinct forms through nearness with God and/or the Holy Spirit. The common characteristics associating these as types of sacralisation relate to instances where the leader: (1) displays greater proximity with the divine; (2) manifests increased power by virtue of nearness to the ancestors or God; (3) maintains heightened forms of personhood (implied or perceived by the people); or (4) embodies the identity of the people. Recently, one of the largest denominations in Kenya held their church elections. There were strongly contested battles for influential leadership posts taking place all throughout the country, from local to national levels. I asked one student to give me his appraisal on the situation; specifically, why was it so hard for someone to step down from office after he had held a certain post. His response was insightful: 'The pastor fears that he will become less of a person'. Power relates with being.

### *Deification*

While the issues related to sacralisation require an excursions into traditional African societies, the problems concerning deification have

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<sup>16</sup> See Angelique Haugerud, *The Culture and Politics in Modern Kenya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

origins in the Christian faith, with further alterations coming from the history of Western evangelicalism. The Judeo-Christian faith has long suffered tendencies to elevate humans as 'god-like', beginning from the distortion of the creaturely good offered to humans in the Garden of Eden. God entrusts humans with the wonderful gift of being image bearers within a world defined by His nature. Adam and Eve disregarded their humanity by devaluing the gift: wanting to become 'like God' rather than be the 'image of God'. In the end, by wanting to become more, they became less. This is a valuable lesson that runs through the scope of salvation history and should in and of itself be sufficient cause for pastors to beware.

These issues would reappear in subsequent generations, whether through efforts to build a tower 'that reaches to the heavens' (Gen 11:4); implicit behind Korah's opposition to Moses' spiritual authority (Num 16); or by establishing a divine-like King over the people of Israel (ultimately rejecting God's theocracy). Humans are rarely satisfied with their gift of personhood and always seem to want something 'more' or 'higher' for themselves: something less human and more like God.

With the Incarnation, God re-extends His gift of personhood into the world. The temptations experienced by Jesus show that Satan understood the threat posed from this humanity. It is noteworthy that at no point does Satan try and dissuade Jesus from revealing Himself as God, and actually encourages Him to do so: tempting Christ to take 'short cuts' around His humanity; whether satisfying hunger by changing stones into bread; publicly displaying spiritual authority over angels; or claiming sovereignty over the nations – albeit by bending the knee to spurious powers. Might we witness in these temptations a renewal of what occurred in the Garden of Eden: where Satan offers something seemingly 'greater' in exchange for that which is truly glorious: the image of God in humanity? John would later advance a similar argument by telling believers how to live in the world amidst rival powers. He says, 'This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ *came in the flesh* (italics mine) is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God' (1 Jn 4:2-3). Even in the first generation of believers, the humanity of Christ was critical for discerning truth from falsehood.

In every ensuing generation, these temptations fall afresh upon spiritual leaders. Satan is completely unoriginal. The forms and appearances may change, but the underlying deceit remains the same. Christian leaders are continually enticed to deny their own humanity over-and-against the alluring promise of being more than human, 'like God' or imbibing some special

form of deity within their person. People in Lystra believed that Paul and Barnabas were gods, based upon miracles they were performing. The missionaries' response was informative: 'Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you' (Acts 14:15).

Paul and Barnabas' rejoinder raises the question whether being 'only human' is something to be despised or celebrated. People tend to use these words when they want to communicate something sinful or lowly about humanity, and never when they want to espouse its virtues. We endure our humanity like an unwelcome visitor: acting cordial on the surface but deep down wanting it to make it go away.

This was largely the attitude of the Gnostics in the first and second centuries. They viewed all of creation as intrinsically evil, and the goal of human existence to escape or transcend the corruption of the flesh by attaining higher degrees of spiritual knowledge (gnosis). This led to a dualism between material and spiritual realms. The early church father, Irenaeus, defended Christianity against these teachings, arguing in *Against Heresies* that redemption requires a new conception of humanity. Gnostic dualism and especially the way it conceptualises the material world, Irenaeus would argue, threatens the very core of Christianity by undermining the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and thus, devaluing redemption. All tendencies to elevate humans as more than humans, or denying the material world any redemptive potential were viewed by Irenaeus as direct assaults against Christ, and hence, salvation. In one particularly moving account, he envisions God reaching out to humans through creation, wrapping them in a divine embrace through the arms of the Son and Spirit. He says,

For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy Spirit, man, and not [merely] a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a part of the man, but certainly not the man; for the perfect man consists in the comingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God.<sup>17</sup>

Irenaeus envisions humanity as glorious, yet without undermining the fundamental distinction between Creator and creation. Redemption relates to *all* aspects of humanity because of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Vinoth

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<sup>17</sup> St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, translated and annotated by Dominic J. Unger, with further revisions by John J. Dillon (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 5.6.1.

Ramachandra likewise echoes Irenaeus' sentiments, declaring: 'Our humanity is not something that comes between us and God. On the contrary, it is precisely in our humanity that we are called to be bearers of the divine glory, the means by which God is made known',<sup>18</sup>

These comments are particularly critical in light of propensities within Western evangelicalism<sup>19</sup> to elevate supernatural elements of the Christian faith (often at the expense of the natural). A historical excursus into how this came about lies outside the parameters of this article, but it may be sufficient to state that with the rise of the Enlightenment, emphasis shifted from ecclesiastical powers to a focus upon the natural world (inclusive of industrialisation, the scientific method and elevated importance given to human reason). Evangelicals reacted against many of these 'secularising' currents by over-emphasising the 'supernatural' as a defence against the 'modernistic' influences they saw taking place within their Western societies. Hence, they defended the divine origins of Scripture, emphasised Jesus' deity, and promoted the 'supernatural calling' of pastors and missionaries. Each of these reflects cardinal affirmations of evangelical doctrine, but the manner in which they promoted these supernatural elements had a secondary effect of creating wider dichotomy between the two realms, and inadvertently, some might argue, advancing the secularisation of society and leaving evangelical faith ill-equipped to integrate itself with more 'worldly' or human affairs. This represents one facet of the heritage given to the Africans by Western missions.

Early missionaries found within African rural communities a spirituality they found lacking in Western societies (even if the relationship between the sacred and secular was more nuanced than they might have perceived). The movement toward Africa was both an escape and a promise. As liberal forms of Christianity threatened certain evangelical convictions, the missionaries hoped that they could start afresh within rural Africa and correct many of the problems that had afflicted the West. Thus, they imported doctrinal characteristics to the Africans that maintained the centrality of supernatural elements of the Christian faith, and with commensurate apologetic postures for guarding the Gospel against 'modernising' or 'secularising' influences.

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<sup>18</sup> Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Recovery of Mission: Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), p. 252.

<sup>19</sup> I place myself inextricably within this tradition, and offer this critique as a way of making my own faith tradition, stronger, more integrated and with greater relevancy for contemporary needs.

This briefly defines the theological heritage of many evangelical, mission-founded churches in Africa. My point is not to question the legitimacy of this Christian heritage, to criticise the early missionaries, or to imply passivity amongst the Africans in the face of global flows of religious meaning. Missions-founded churches are undoubtedly one of the most important faces of Christianity on the continent. Their strong emphasis upon Biblical preaching, catechism, Sunday School teaching, theological education, apologetics, and evangelism represent integral affirmations of the Christian faith. What is more, even though many of the early missionaries elevated 'supernatural' aspects of evangelical teaching, this did not keep them from advancing into primary and secondary school education, medical work, and other development projects. If we critique these churches, it should not be on the basis that they neglected physical realities or were too spiritually-minded.

Despite the enduring legacy of mission-founded church, the 'supernaturalising' of the Christian faith and apologetic nature of belief have led to some tendencies described by Nigel Cameron as, 'silent distortions',<sup>20</sup> where certain aspects of doctrine receive extra weight in sermons or teachings compared with others that garner less attention. This can lead to lop-sided caricatures of Christian confession. While devoting most of their theological energies to those areas related to the greatest amount of theological opposition (mainly Bibliology and Soteriology), these churches have sometimes left other areas relatively undeveloped. This may be due in part to the fact that such areas are seemingly uncontested by Western, liberal Christianity; unrelated to apologetic concerns; or, very simply, that they perhaps appear to undermine supernatural commitments. This article does not challenge the legitimacy of apologetic belief, or supernatural affirmations of faith, only the motivations for it, and how these things orient our overall theological perspectives. In no way am I saying that *less* attention should be given to cardinal doctrines of evangelical convictions, such as Bibliology or Soteriology, only that *more* theological energies need to be given to those areas which appear less supernatural. For, it is precisely within these seemingly 'silent distortions' that we may find valuable resources for articulating and applying the Christian faith in relevant and meaningful ways. I will explore these dynamics by looking at a number of issues arising from our 'supernatural' predilections of evangelical belief.

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<sup>20</sup> Cameron, *Are Christians Human?* p. 4.

*Pastoral 'calling'*

The first of these relates what we mean (implicitly and explicitly) by 'pastoral calling'. A fuller treatment of the relationship between clergy and laity exceeds the purposes of this article, and would require an excursus through salvation history, the early church, and then show how these distinctions have appeared afresh in every generation. In his *Appeal to the German Nobility*, Martin Luther sought to clarify the relationship between clergy and laity in terms of function and status. He states, 'All Christians truly belong to the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them apart from their office'. Later, however, he highlights differences: 'All are of the spiritual estate, and all are truly priests, bishops, and popes, although they are not the same in terms of their individual work'.<sup>21</sup> Luther challenges a 'two-tier' conception of spirituality, where Roman Catholicism (and to a degree churches from many different traditions) posit ontological distinctions between clergy and laity, with priests serving as the instrumental conduits for the people's salvation.

Some could argue that various churches on the continent have created their own 'two-tier' notion of spirituality, by drawing distinctions (and distance) between 'divinely-called' pastors and 'ordinary' people (laity). The concept of 'calling' originated in the Keswick Piety movement of the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Early missionaries coming to Africa were required to give clear evidence of their 'calling' in order to be accepted by faith-based missions societies. Though never intending to communicate linkages between 'calling' and spiritual power, this has sometimes been the effect, and may be one of the inadvertent legacies passed on by missionaries to Africans; or, it may reflect how Africans have interpreted missionary teaching. In many of our contemporary contexts, pastors, by virtue of their divine appointment, are viewed as more spiritual or residing closer to God. The majority of Bible Colleges in Africa require applicants to express their 'calling' as a requirement for admission. Appellations such as 'evangelist', 'pastor', 'missionary', 'Reverend' or 'Bishop' (sometimes, even 'Apostle' or 'Prophet') all carry connotations of spiritual authority. When conflicts arise, the pastor may remind the congregation of his or her 'calling'. Alternatively,

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<sup>21</sup> *Appeal to the German Nobility* (1520).

<sup>22</sup> This was one of the points made by Steve Morad; see, *The Founding Principles of the Africa Inland Mission and their interaction with the African context in Kenya from 1895 to 1939: a study of a faith mission*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1997, p. 63.

the use of Greek or theological language may give the impression that the minister possesses special spiritual knowledge which can only be accessed by those who have been 'called'. As a theologian, I would never want to question the importance of utilising biblical languages in order to interpret the text of Scriptures, or how theological insights contribute to the formation of the 'People of God'. I merely want to raise awareness for *how* we use these tools vis-à-vis the people in our congregation. Do we employ our biblical tools in order to feed God's people, or elevate our own status? Do our theological insights contribute to the growth of people in Christ-likeness, or serve to remind people of our own value, importance, or nearness to God?

The issue at hand is not whether we should speak about 'calling', but what precisely we mean by it. Greater theological reflection should be given to *how* we use these concepts, *how* our people understand them, and *what* meanings we associate with 'pastor', 'reverend' or 'man of God'. For example, does 'calling' elevate the pastor as nearer to God; or in greater accessibility to His powers? Is distance necessary between the pastor and laity? Or, what do we mean by such gradients such as exist between 'pastors' and 'Reverends'? Is the former of less value than the latter? Furthermore, we need to probe the extent to which 'Reverends' invariably distance themselves from the people. Why do we infrequently see them visiting people in their homes, undertaking evangelism, or riding public service vehicles?

Many of these issues are compounded by 'secularising' trends that we see in our modern societies, where an educated lay person with his or her 'secular' degrees and titles increasingly asserts authority in the churches. In one church, a pastor was relegated to serving as the assistant chairman of the local church council because an elder had his PhD and was not able to abide a 'poorly trained' pastor being the chairman. When pastors experience these tensions, they sometimes resort to over-emphasising their spiritual credentials, creating greater contrasts between themselves and the people.

Theologians in Africa need to take up such issues in order to 'unpack' the meanings that we give to spiritual designations, and create ways of articulating ministerial identity so that our 'powers' are more accessible for the growth of our congregants.

### *The Deity of Christ*

Another place where this supernaturalism affects our understanding of ministerial identity is in the Person of Jesus Christ. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, enlightenment influences were affecting how some Western theologians were talking about Christ. Miracles and other aspects of

His life that appeared to resist human reason and scientific principles underwent a series of reformulations by certain 'liberal' theologians, who sought to explain, rationalise or 'demythologise' Jesus into modern sensibilities. Evangelicals mounted a counterattack against these efforts by vigorously articulating the case for Jesus' deity. It is important to add that much of this took place during the beginning of the twentieth century at the time when the early missionaries were beginning their work, thus imparting to the Africans a heritage of defending and upholding the deity of Jesus Christ.

Historically, evangelical theology maintains the importance of the dual nature of Christ. Most would cite the hypostatic union and recite key affirmations from the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) for expressing the ways that human and divine natures unite within the Person of Christ. However, differences sometimes exist between confessional declarations and implicitly held theologies. Christians may profess one thing, but demonstrate another by how they act or talk about God. The catechism of an evangelical church in Africa asks the questions, 'If Jesus Christ is the Son of God, how did He become man?' and the answer states, 'Jesus Christ the Son of God became man by receiving a truly human body, being born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit'. Yet this answer (understood by what it states and does not state) implies that Jesus was fully human in terms of His body, but not in other facets of His being; where perhaps the divine subsumed the mind, will, and emotions into itself. This belief suggests that only Jesus' body was human. The early church likewise confronted these issues, and the previous example bears striking similarity with the argument forwarded by Appolinarius, bishop of Laodicea, who taught that Jesus had a human body, but that his mind, emotions and spirit were wholly divine. The Church rejected this belief at the Council of Alexandria (362 A.D.) and Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.).

I usually ask my students how many times they have heard a sermon on Jesus' deity, and they frequently recall many instances; alternatively, I ask them when they have heard a pastor preach on Jesus' humanity, and rarely (if ever) can anyone remember such an occasion. Can it be that we devalue the importance of Jesus' humanity; or, are afraid that any reference to His personhood amounts to an indirect attack on His deity; or, just do not understand how important the Chalcedonic confession of faith is to our theological presuppositions?

One of the dangers of holding such an asymmetrical view of Christ's nature is how it affects our understanding of salvation. The question can be

asked, 'What part of humanity needs redeeming?' Does evangelism merely save our 'souls', as we sometimes imply? The danger with this conclusion is that we make salvation merely a ticket to heaven, rather than an entire transformation of God's creaturely good. The writer of Hebrews defends Jesus' humanity as it pertains to salvation, by stating: 'For this reason he had to be made like his brothers *in every way* (emphasis mine), in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people' (2:17). By overemphasising the spiritual aspects of Jesus' humanity, we may end up neglecting other features most important to the people in our churches: including their minds, bodies, physical realities, and emotions.

There is a second concern. If we understand Jesus primarily as God, and we as humans (especially pastors) endeavour to emulate Christ, then we follow a standard that is impossible to attain. We can never be God. Our only options are: (1) admit defeat, making Christ's nature inaccessible and unattainable to us on this earth; or (2) elevate our nature to divine-like status, in order to show continuity between our identity and that of Christ's (with the understanding that these things are reserved only for the 'man of God'). Christians are representatives of Christ on earth. But if this standard is deprived of its human element, we find ourselves with little option but to try to become a little 'more' like God. Nigel Cameron says it this way:

The 'supernaturalising' of Jesus has helped lead to the supernaturalising of the Christian life. Our dissatisfaction with Jesus' humanity has led to a dissatisfaction with our own, for we have moved from a superhuman image of Jesus to a superhuman image of what is both required of the Christian and possible for him.<sup>23</sup>

Humanity becomes the enemy of godliness: something that we need to overcome in order to become like Christ. This belief represents a form of neo-gnosticism that could be affecting how we think about pastors. If Jesus is the ideal, and we present Him as a superhuman, then what does this mean for ministerial identity? The result can only be incessant spiritual defeat or a masquerade in which pastors present themselves as 'more like Christ' – and hence, less like humans. In either case, humanity becomes something to be denied or overcome at any expense. This leads pastors upon an endless pursuit of being more like Christ, but where the particular characteristics amount to a virtual *coup d'e tats* of their own humanity. The sinful nature is

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<sup>23</sup> Cameron, *Are Christians Human?*, p. 15.

confused with the gift of humanity, thus bringing down both with one fell swoop.

### *The Scope of Salvation*

Let me return to an earlier point that needs a bit more clarification. I asked in the last section how our relative 'silence' regarding the humanity of Jesus Christ affects our understanding of salvation. The implication was that this kind of thinking leads to a 'ticket-like' conception of the Christian faith, where receiving Jesus Christ as Lord relates only to our 'soul' (often conceived as just a part of our overall being). Irenaeus was quite adamant on these points, holding that Jesus Christ 'recapitulates' or 'sums up' all of salvation history within Himself: becoming what we are so that we could be who He is. We do not become God, but we receive the gift of Jesus Christ. In the words of the Apostle Paul, 'we are saved through his life!' (Rom 5:10)

What does this mean for how we communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ into other people's lives? When we preach Christ for salvation, are we thinking of the entire humanity of our congregants: minds, affections, souls, relationships and bodies (amongst others)? When we do door-to-door evangelism, are we seeing these people according to the glorious and comprehensive beauty of image-bearers? Charles Malik, the former Ambassador of the United Nations spoke at the occasion of the opening of the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, USA. He raised similar issues for how Christians conceptualise the Gospel: 'The problem is not only to win souls but to save minds', he says. 'If you win the whole world and lose the mind of the world, you will soon discover you have not won the world. Indeed it may turn out that you have actually lost the world'.<sup>24</sup> Malik's comments can certainly apply to emotions, interrelationships, ethnicities, human imagination, and how we relate to our bodies. If the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is comprehensive, the affect of salvation must also be comprehensive: transforming all aspects of our being into Christ's nature. If we offer anything less to our congregants, we are cheapening salvation. This does not mean that we 'image' His sinless perfection (this side of heaven). But the gift of Jesus' humanity does come equipped with resurrection power for the purposes of growing in Christ-likeness, and thus growing in our humanity.

Finally, if we are serious about these things, and that Jesus offers an entire human life, we must allow Christ's humanity to affect aspects of our being that we typically relegate as carnal; including: affections, emotions,

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<sup>24</sup> Charles Malik, *The Two Tasks* (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1980).

play, humour and even pleasure. One of my students was serving in a town setting. He enjoyed the regular practice of jogging for physical exercise. One day, a member of the church pulled him aside and politely informed him that such activities were not suitable for his spiritual 'calling'. The implication, of course, is that pastors do spiritual things and 'ordinary' people do ordinary things. At another Bible College, students cannot play games such as football or volleyball, since they are training for the Lord's work. Pastors may feel uncomfortable laughing with community members, wearing jeans, or working in their gardens. Such activities may appear too 'secular' or 'worldly'.

These examples have the opposite affect of what they intend; rather than elevating the 'calling' of the pastor, they demean his or her personhood. The cumulative effect of these distortions is that we fail to see the glorious and eternal picture of God's pleasure for (and in) humanity. We parade around in our communities looking melancholy and glum – perhaps to show others how truly spiritual we are. This makes salvation small, confined only to 'spiritual' aspects of our being. We are unsuccessful in integrating these things into our worship of God. What is more, we abdicate our responsibility for role modelling emotions and/or laughter in front of our congregants, accentuating the perception that we are 'too spiritual', 'too distant', or worse, that people who laugh, play, or feel things deeply may not be worthy of salvation.

Of course, the reason we designate emotions, pleasures, and play 'carnal' is that we typically *only* understand them from within the ways sin distorts them in our lives. We associate pleasures with forbidden delights, believing the lie that began in the Garden of Eden that God is somehow withholding His goodness from us.

God has something better for our humanity: more wondrous, glorious – even, pleasure-filled. That which Adam and Eve rejected in Genesis, is re-offered in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. We need a new understanding of human life, inclusive of its abundance (Jn 10:10); we need a theology of life. This does not mean that sin will simply go away (this side of glory), or that we can condone our sinfulness by appealing to our humanity. In fact, I am saying just the opposite. The exalted Christ is still a man, when He appears, 'we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is' (1 Jn 3:2). Another way of saying this is as we grow in Christ-likeness, we become more real: more fully human.

## Theological Explorations into Pastoral Identity

In this final section, I want to pursue some of these former points with greater ambition, trying to untangle the various pieces of this sociological and theological morass, and propose a way forward. Firstly, I would like to reiterate that sociological and theological forces have combined within contemporary African society to advance a view of ministerial identity where it resides closer to God (or Christ) than anything possible for the laity. There are many different shapes and forms that this can take. Sometimes it is challenging to discern the particular motivations for these sacralising or deifying tendencies; whether they come from cultural, religious, or a combination of sources.

In all of these cases, nearness to God relates to increased personhood. Since power within African cosmology relates fundamentally to identity, the 'calling' of the pastor tends to come with commensurate powers, which means heightened aspects of personhood. This leads to the common perception (whether real or imagined) of pastors occupying a higher degree of spirituality by virtue of their proximity to Christ or supernatural 'calling'. Furthermore, if our evangelical doctrines of Christ's Personhood carry predispositions toward His deity, then pastoral identity may follow these 'supernaturalising' tendencies as well.

It becomes easy to see how traditions and evangelical teachings overlap, potentially intertwining with one another. We rarely receive motivation or impetus from one source; and in the case where cultural and theological resources agree, or share certain similarities, the combined force can be significant. One possible means for untangling this predicament is by strengthening our theological resources by paying closer attention to the areas that we have neglected. Specifically, by following the pathway established by Irenaeus (in the face of Gnosticism) and offering a reformulation of humanity for how we understand ministerial identity. I will endeavour to do this through the 'image of God' concept found in Genesis, and subsequently reiterated by the Apostle Paul.

### *The Image of God and Power*

The 'story' of salvation history begins with the creation of an integrative cosmos where God gives priority to humans, as His image-bearers (Gen 1:26-27), but in ways not impinging upon His sovereignty. Instead of juxtaposing God from humans, the image of God moves to reveal the divine within creation, set within discourses of power. Borrowing from the traditions of

African religion, this refers to relatedness and source of power proceeding from God, while providing the context for articulating (or, representing) these powers on the earth. Therefore, to speak of the image of God is at once to acknowledge its associations and webs of interaction. In the verses that flow from Gen 1:26-27 this becomes apparent. God blesses Adam and Eve and commands them to 'be fruitful and multiply', 'fill the earth and subdue it' and 'rule over' the creatures (v. 28). He offers the entire world as a gift (v. 29-30) and proclaims all of it 'very good'. We might speculate whether the goodness refers to the individual properties of creation (as might be understood from within a Western, context) or the cohesion and webs of interaction connecting everything together (more representative of an African cosmos). Certainly, both need affirming: God gives life and provides the means of growing in this life by connecting His image with power.

When sin enters the story, it does more than affect the individual properties of creation, but distorts the cohesion, the dignity, and most strategically, the ontological and existential representations of power within the cosmos. Humans are set against God, each other, and nature. They misappropriate the power by misrepresenting the nature of the power. In wanting to become 'like God', they become significantly less than God created them to be; scorning the gift and thus abusing the power. Domination, exploitation, sacralisation, and oppression become the common themes of power in human communities. Fear, insecurity and self-abasement follow, where humanity twists and contorts through the rejection of the gift of the image of God.

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ reveals the climax of the story of salvation history, where Christ not only embodies this image with clarity and precision, but re-extends it to humanity (2 Cor. 4:4; Col 1:15). In the new, redeemed image of God, we see more than an isolated, sterilised picture of Jesus as God; rather, we behold a real human life inclusive of all its powers. Jesus lived in dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit to 'sanctify' all of humanity, inclusive of the webs of interaction and association. *Precisely because* the 'Father had put all things under his power' (Jn 13:3) Christ was free to serve humans, by extending to them the full scope of His humanity. The life and death of Christ flow together in seamless unity, introducing 'new' powers into the world through quietness, sacrifice, love, and submission. These are not powers as we might understand evolved cultural, structural or epistemological forms of organisation, but as Miroslav Volf says, 'spaces' woven into the 'networks of power in which the truth of Christ

– which is always a truth about power – can be lived out'.<sup>25</sup> This makes little sense unless it is understood from within the redeemed image of God: re-establishing God's beauty within the world through generative power relationships. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11), allows the localised, culturally-embedded, Christ to be universalised (through time and space) in the glorified Person of Jesus Christ, and seen in its earthly form through the People of God. The Apostle Paul talks about the 'renewed image' (Col 3:10) or 'conformed likeness' (Rom 8:29) of Christ that 'will also give life' to humans (Rom 8:11). The image of God is a central motif of salvation history that enables us to connect power with life, and orient it according to God's purposes within the created world. Power, thus, is *from life* (Christ's) and it is *for life* (ours). Let me draw some implications that directly relate to ministerial identity.

### *The Image of God for Ministerial Identity*

This immediately means that all notions of gradated importance of being, whether conceived along ethnic, age, gender, socio-economic, political, or spiritual categories are nothing more than distortions of the creaturely good offered to humanity, and thus in one sense or another attacks against God's very nature. In more direct terms, if certain humans have greater 'beingness' than others, and God's image is always completely integrated as it pertains to Himself, than promotion of some persons over-and-against others brings the entire image crashing down upon itself. However, equality of being (in the image of God) does not mean sameness. If we react against elevated leadership by dragging pastors down from their exalted positions, we should not be guilty of doing so on account that all humans are the same.<sup>26</sup> Luther attempted to weave his way through these realities by differentiating between 'status' and 'function'; yet, since these issues are not easily separated within African worldviews, it may be that other resources are needed in order to contextualise the issues on the continent.

Honour and respect are important values on the continent. Children are taught from an early age to treat older people with special importance; older

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<sup>25</sup> Miroslav Volf, 'Theology, Meaning and Power', In Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg and Thomas Kucharz (eds.) *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jurgen Moltmann* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1996), pp. 98-113: pp. 109-110.

<sup>26</sup> Usually, this reaction against increased ecclesiastical authority has strong countermeasures that correspond to secularising trends, where educated laity often fills the void by nature of their 'professionalism', wealth, or business acumen.

people sit in seats on honour; dignitaries are accorded special privileges. Honour can be a very creational and growth-inspiring attribute, or, it can lead to fear, insecurity, and ontological distinctions placed between humans. Culture can never be the judge of Gospel-realities. I am aware that the issues presented in this article often appear to clash with African culture (both ethnic and ecclesiastical). Christ redeems and transforms cultures, making them more representative of true human beauty. Therefore, the task is to de-sacralise and re-humanise pastors, without destroying the healthy values of honour and respect seen everywhere on the continent.

Jesus accepted people's honour, but He also assumed the position of the slave to wash the disciples' feet (Jn 13), and later submitting to death on the cross. The Apostle Paul allowed people to give him due respect for his age, education or missionary credentials, but he also became a tent-maker, working with dead animal skins (unthinkable for Jewish people), so that he would not become too dependent upon the financial resources of the people he was called to serve. In both instances, honour is given; honour is received.

The confessional articulation of Jesus Christ in Philippians 2:5-11 provides one of the most poignant pictures of honour in the New Testament. Paul begins by stating that, *precisely because Jesus was in the very nature God* (v. 6),<sup>27</sup> He 'made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant [slave], being made in human likeness' (v.7). The passage continues to expound on the nature of this humiliation: 'becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! (v. 8) The final picture concludes honorifically with doxology that ascribes authority and praise (from every part of the created order) to Christ. Respect and honour are implicit within every part of this early prayer. Honour his given; honour is received.

The life and teachings of Jesus challenged the actions and 'way of thinking' inherent within the religious authorities of first century Judaism. He did not dismantle the system, but sought a new framework for how shepherds viewed themselves, and interacted with their people. I am merely reaffirming the same truths for today. We do not need to challenge and destroy the ecclesiastical structures of our denominations, but renew the way we think about pastoral authority, and especially as it relates to how we interact with our people. I would like to propose a paradigm where pastors (even reverends) occupy the central axis within the entire congregation – rather

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<sup>27</sup> I am indebted to my former Professor, Dr. Gerald Hawthorne, for this insight; see Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, no 43 (Waco, Tx: Word Books, 1983), p. 85.

than the apex of a hierarchy. Pastor and laity interconnect in terms of a shared humanity in God's image, interdependent gifts of the Spirit, and eternal inheritance.

One way to rescue the abuse of power is by nurturing it theologically from within creation, and attaching it exclusively with life. This is where I begin to define pastoral ministry, arguing that it must find its abode within the deep recesses of humanity. Since God became human, there are no longer hierarchies of ontology (such that we find in African cosmologies), but integrated webs of power and being. Jesus shares this fully with us, and the Holy Spirit occupies the 'spaces' between humans (much as Bonhoeffer suggests). No distances exist between people, only interconnections through the Holy Spirit. The confluence of persons (within faith communities) becomes the primary seat of ministerial leadership: amongst people, not over them; indwelling their humanity, not espousing higher planes of spirituality. This means there are still valid reasons for talking about 'calling', but instead of lifting ministers over the people they nurture others from within their shared humanities. Since 'the Word became flesh', pastors need not escape their own humanity in order to lead God's people. It is precisely from the resources of their humanity that they demonstrate ministerial authority.

The problem is not with power, but how sin corrupts the parts (identities) and the 'spaces' that exist within the created order. In order to restore the balance, more effort (not less) should be given to power, and particularly so from a theological perspective where it is rooted within life (creation), and purposed for the growth of others. The image of God in Christ brings redemption to the parts and the 'spaces'; the entities and the power relationships; the persons and the ways that they interact together. Power unites; causes growth; brings healing.

Pastors learn to look for the beauty of God's image, found within the diversity of their members (not on the basis of their socio-economic realities). Parishioners are representations of Jesus' identity on earth, not just people who occupy space on a certain pew. This means the leader must be open (vulnerable) to the followers; to learn from them not just minister to them. Congregants are not 'followers' in the managerial sense, viewed for what they *do* or *accomplish* within the overall organisation. They are glory-bearers and therefore to be treated with infinite respect. Paul expresses the interconnectedness of humans in Romans 12, where in the middle of a discourse related to the Body of Jesus Christ, he declares: 'each member belongs to all the others' (12:5). 'Belonging' is a rich African concept and one that needs re-incorporation into Christian communities (inclusive of the

pastor) for faithful imaging of God on this earth. In other words, to be the ministerial leader is not to be isolated pertaining to social, physical, or spiritual categories, but intentionally open to the 'other'. This involves admitting weakness, exposing vulnerabilities, and embracing interdependency. One of my students told me about a time when he was feeling particularly weak, perhaps due to a sickness of some kind. He stood before the congregants in order to preach, and told them to pray for his strength. At the end of the sermon, a pastor scolded him, saying, 'Don't ever tell anyone that you are weak!' This perspective assumes that weakness is a bad thing; not suitable for pastoral authority. However, it is exactly in our weaknesses that we depend upon the Holy Spirit, and reach out to others for their gifts.

Leaders integrate the members (and their powers) together 'so that the body of Christ may be built up' and 'grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ' (Eph. 4:13, 16). The pastor does not occupy the highest seat at the top of a pyramid, but the middle axis within a dynamic organism. Nearness replaces distance; immanence for transcendence; humanity for the supernatural. Power relates to life, and extends through the pastor to the broader congregation: nurturing, loving, breathing words of life into broken and brittle human fibres. As Paul tells the church in Corinth, 'For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it' (2 Cor. 10:8).

Certain elements of 'distance' between leaders and followers may continue to be a part of our cultures, insofar as they express healthy and creational aspects of honour and respect (given and received). People will not interact with the Principal of a Bible College, or Bishop of a church in the same way they treat friends or colleagues, but this should not indicate that the Principal or Bishop is more important, occupies a closer position to God, or has more personhood.

No human can have 'greater powers' within the image of God without fundamentally affecting the whole: essentially making us less than who we were created to be. Hero worship, representative leaders, charismatic personalities, and/or the 'big man' of African politics can all have the same cumulative affect of distorting humans into some aberration of creaturely good. Jesus alone is the consummate image of God; humans are the image of God 'derivatively'<sup>28</sup> as they relate to Christ and depend upon him for their

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<sup>28</sup> Ian A. McFarland, *The Divine Image: Envisioning the Invisible God* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 4.

identity and expression of personhood. We need the full resources of the Body of Christ to accomplish this. In this way, the corporate image of God participates in the life of the divine community precisely because of its many human expressions, which then, together, more faithfully 'images' God on earth.

### Conclusion

Discourses related to power have a tendency of reverting to abuse or domination on the continent, significantly affecting any natural linkages between power and humanity. Unless you happen to be among the few who are 'in power' and therefore privileged with its excesses, power tends to feel dehumanising. Leadership studies often attempt to correct these problems by harnessing the powers, or providing better structures to guard against their abuse. We have moved into an era obsessed with managerialism and professionalism on the continent, as if these are a panacea for all our problems. While possibly mitigating some of the extreme instances of domination or abuse, managerialism alone will hardly affect the underlying problems. Becoming more professional does not mean that the abuses will stop, or that we purge ourselves of misguided identity.

The other common answer is for leaders to tout 'servant leadership', which has become especially convenient within Christian circles for 'business-as-usual' under the glossy veneer of doing it for Christ. Many leaders justify their behaviour on account that they are serving others, and have been 'called' by God to this position. The honorific titles given to ecclesiastical leaders in our churches often carry little or no notions of submission, sacrifice, and dependence upon others; instead, these ascriptions have become associated with elevated, spiritualised positions. Elders want to be called pastors; pastors, reverends; and reverends, Bishops. These words which have traditionally carried strong service-oriented connotations, now seem to indicate different levels of personhood, setting ministers 'apart' (meaning higher) than others. We erect ever-new hierarchies, with pastors stumbling over one another (sometimes, painfully) to reach greater heights.

This article suggests that pastors need to return to their ministerial 'calling' by embracing their own humanity. Being 'set apart' does not mean being apart; nor does it mean that pastors are more like God and less like humans. These are distortions which have slowly worked their way into our thinking, whether from cultural or theological sources. It is through our humanity that we learn to love, weep, rejoice, laugh, and serve. The moment we distance ourselves from others, we separate our primary powers from the

community, and decrease our efficacy. The pastor's own humanity mediates the entire process, by loving, serving, submitting, rejoicing, and listening. In sharing in the weaknesses of the people, a new power enters into the community: one that carries with it the power of our crucified Lord. Yet being human does not mean that we parade our weaknesses before others in sensational ways, whether looking for pity or abdicating our responsibility for godliness. Humanity can never be an escape from Christ-likeness; instead, it represents the very pathway we must follow.

The image of God provides pastors with a solution to this problem. They do not need to escape themselves, or strain to achieve higher spiritual natures in order to minister to the people of God. Many pastors live under a multitude of pretensions. They live lives of duplicity, feeling obligated to uphold this masquerade at any expense: certainly at the cost of their credibility. In the end, however, they become less than God created them to be: sterile, inflexible, serious and sometimes painful caricatures of humanity. They often have few real friends, face loneliness on a daily basis, and live continually under the fear that someone will see through their façade. Jesus alone represents the entire people of God; He alone is the consummate image bearer. We all represent Him derivatively, and in incomplete ways. Alone, we can offer nothing but our own limited image – beautiful though it may be. Together, we grow closer to reflecting a more accurate, more comprehensive, resemblance. The pastor receives the 'calling' to stand amidst others and coordinate the powers of the people of God; to integrate them together, as it were, so that together we may 'image' the various refractions of Jesus Christ on this broken earth.

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# **THEOCRACY IN CRISIS: A Contextual Study of 1 Samuel 8:4-18 with Practical Reflection for Today**

Enock Okode

## **Introduction**

1 Samuel is a significant book in the history of Israel for it provides an elaborate account of the transition from the era of judgeship to kingship. It begins with the narrative about Eli's household and quickly moves on to Samuel, who serves as a prophet, judge and priest.<sup>1</sup> By the time we get to chapter seven, the author has already made a case that Israel is still under threat from the neighboring nations, especially the Philistines. Chapter eight begins with a note that Israel is in leadership crisis because the sons of Samuel have forsaken the righteous requirements of the law. It is against the backdrop of this crisis that the elders of Israel approach Samuel with a request to appoint a king to rule over them.

The elders' request, Samuel's reaction and the LORD's response raise several questions. Is the people's request tantamount to covenant disloyalty? Are the Israelites dissatisfied with the administration itself or with the form of administration? Why does Samuel's initial reaction indicate that he is vehemently opposed to kingship when he is presumably aware that the Torah had predicted the coming of the monarchy? Is there anything in the narrative that demonstrates that Yahweh is opposed to kingship? Or could we argue that monarchy was all along in Yahweh's decree and that this was just the right time for its realization, hence he acceded to the people's request knowing that he would later enthrone a king after his own heart?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> One could make a strong case that Samuel's most significant role in the entire narrative is the inauguration of the monarchy, particularly the anointing of David.

<sup>2</sup> We might even ask whether kingship is a compromise that Samuel initiates following the people's request and God's instruction.

Does this chapter portray the king as the representative of an ill-willed people or as God's chosen one? According to the narrative, does the leadership defect lie with the people or with Yahweh and his mediators? What is the narrator's view of kingship?

Our discussion throughout this article will seek to engage these questions. The more we read 1 Samuel 8 in its context the more we realize that although kingship is not inherently evil, the motive behind the elders' request reflects a people who are not adherent to their covenant with Yahweh.<sup>3</sup> It will become clear to us that the narrator preserves tension between the people's request and Yahweh's willingness to grant it; in fact, the tension is hardly resolved at the end of chapter fourteen. As we attempt to understand the narrator's point of view and how he presents this tension, we will begin by providing a translation of our text, then move on to the literary context and the canonical usage. In the end, we will outline a few theological and practical implications of the message of the text.

### Translation

<sup>4</sup>Then<sup>4</sup> all the elders of Israel<sup>5</sup> gathered and came to Samuel at Ramah. <sup>5</sup> And they said to him, "Behold, you<sup>6</sup> have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways<sup>7</sup>; now<sup>8</sup> appoint<sup>9</sup> for us a king to judge us<sup>10</sup> like all the

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<sup>3</sup> Barbara Green (*How Are the Mighty Fallen: A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel* [New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003], 179) rightly states, "The institution is not inevitably or essentially wrong, not unviable, though in practice it goes very badly" (p. 179).

<sup>4</sup> I take the w conjunction here as consequential. It may also be translated as "So" (see NET, NIV, REB).

<sup>5</sup> The LXX has "the men of Israel" rather than "all the elders of Israel."

<sup>6</sup> The MT has an independent personal pronoun, hT'a; , which appears unnecessary since the qal perfect 2msg verb (T'n>q;z" ) does not need an accompanying personal pronoun. But if this pronoun is emphatic, as it appears to be, then the sentence might read, "...you yourself have grown old...."

<sup>7</sup> The LXX has "in your way." Cf. 8:3.

<sup>8</sup> The adverb hT'[; may be used temporally ("now") or logically ("so then"). When used in the latter sense there is usually a waw prefixed to it. Since there is no waw here, the temporal rendering is more appropriate. See Bill T. Arnold & John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 139-140.

nations." <sup>6</sup> But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And <sup>11</sup> Samuel prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all they say to you, for <sup>12</sup> it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me <sup>13</sup> from being king over them. <sup>8</sup> Like all the deeds which they have done <sup>14</sup> since the day I brought them up from Egypt <sup>15</sup> even <sup>16</sup> to this day, and <sup>17</sup> they have forsaken me and served other gods, so they are doing to you also. <sup>9</sup> Now then, listen to their voice; however, <sup>18</sup> you shall solemnly warn <sup>19</sup> them, and show them the ways of the king <sup>20</sup> who will reign over them." <sup>10</sup> So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of

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<sup>9</sup>hm'yfi- qal imperative msg, paragogic heh, ~yf. The order is directed at Samuel. Implied in this command is the conviction that Samuel has powers to grant the request of the elders.

<sup>10</sup> Wnjep.v'l.- could also be translated as "to govern us."

<sup>11</sup> This conjunction should probably be taken as a result indicator, i.e., it was as a result of the elders' request that Samuel prayed to God. It might even be translated as "Therefore."

<sup>12</sup> yKi often indicates a relationship of cause and effect (showing a logical connection to what precedes and/or introduces a subordinate clause), but it may also be used as a demonstrative particle of emphasis, hence translated "indeed." Both renderings are possible here. See Bruce K. Waltke & M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 665.

<sup>13</sup> The sentence structure here is object-verb-subject, so that what we have literally is, "me they have rejected." The object has been fronted for emphasis. See 1 Sam 15:1 for a similar construction.

<sup>14</sup> The LXX adds "toward me" (RSV and NRSV follow the LXX). It is hard to know whether this addition is interpretive or a variant reading, but it makes sense because of the contrast at the end of the verse, i.e. "to you."

<sup>15</sup> Two manuscripts have "from the land of Egypt" rather than "from Egypt." There does not seem to be any significant difference in either of the renderings.

<sup>16</sup> Two manuscripts omit w perhaps because its absence does not alter the meaning or because it may seem unnecessary.

<sup>17</sup> Waw introduces an epexegetical clause that explains what is meant by "Like all the deeds they have done...." See Paul Jouon & T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Roma: E. P. I. B, 2008), 118J.

<sup>18</sup> This adverb, %a;, together with yKi construction accent Samuel's responsibility to warn the people without hesitancy. %a; Conveys a restrictive emphasis.

<sup>19</sup> dy[iT'- hiphil imperfect 2msg, dw[. The hiphil of this verb as well as the preceding verb emphasizes their declarative force.

<sup>20</sup> Waltke & O' Connor (p. 242) describe the use of the article and the common noun here as a situational, unique referent.

him a king. <sup>11</sup> And he said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots. <sup>12</sup> And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties,<sup>21</sup> and some to do his plowing and to reap his harvest,<sup>22</sup> and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. <sup>13</sup> And he will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakcers. <sup>14</sup> And he will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. <sup>15</sup> And he will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and his servants. <sup>16</sup> And he will take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men<sup>23</sup> and your donkeys, and use<sup>24</sup> them for his work. <sup>17</sup> And he will take a tenth of your flocks; you yourselves shall be his servants. <sup>18</sup> And on that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."<sup>25</sup>

### Exegetical Outline

The passage may be outlined as follows:

Israel Asks for a King: 1 Samuel 8:4-18

- I. The elders' audience with Samuel (vv. 4-5)
- II. Samuel's audience with the LORD (vv. 6-9)

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<sup>21</sup> The LXX has "hundreds" instead of "fifties;" Syriac has units of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. These readings may represent a different Hebrew text, but there is no persuasive reason why they should be preferred.

<sup>22</sup> Literally, the MT says, "to plow his plowing and to harvest his harvest."

<sup>23</sup> The LXX has "bouko, lia u`mw/n," "your herds" instead of "your young men." This LXX rendering makes better sense considering that the verse begins with "servants" and ends with "donkeys."

<sup>24</sup> Qumran manuscript has wf[w (3cpl) while the LXX has kai. avpodekatw,sei, "and will take a tenth of them." The MT reading makes better sense only if we supply the third pronominal suffix, hence "use them." The Qumran rendering might be an attempt to avoid this addition of suffix so that what we end up with is "they will do...." It is possible that Qumran is following the LXX but substitutes r for w (the LXX reading might have been influenced by rf[ in vv. 15 and 17). The Qumran rendering appears to make better sense.

<sup>25</sup> The LXX has "in those days" and adds an explanatory clause at the end, thus, "because ye have chosen to yourselves a king."

III. Samuel's audience with the people (vv. 10-18)

**Literary Context**

The book of 1 Samuel focuses on the conditions leading to the arrival of monarchy in Israel. It also narrates the shape that the monarchy takes, with greater emphasis on the reign of David after Samuel anoints him. The first major section of 1 Samuel (1:1-4:1a) is largely devoted to the boy Samuel who is both faithful and dedicated to Yahweh. Eli who was the priest at Shiloh was in charge of the boy Samuel as he grew up. Eli failed in some of his parental responsibilities so that his sons were accused of corruption and wickedness (2:12-25). Consequently, a man of God declared to Eli that his household would be deprived of the priesthood and that Yahweh would raise up a faithful priest (2:27-36). Thus a leadership crisis has already emerged in this first section. The second section (4:1b-7:1) is centred on the Ark of the LORD. This section, which does not mention Samuel, clearly describes the nature of the religious and political crisis that emerged between Israel and the Philistines as Samuel grew up. The capture of the Ark of the LORD intensifies the need for leadership that would ensure complete deliverance from the surrounding enemies.

The next section (7:1-17), which depicts Samuel as an effective judge over Israel, resolves the tension and crisis evident in chs. 1-6. Chs. 1-6 trace the development of a covenant crisis between Israel and Yahweh. Samuel serves as a mediator between Yahweh and Israel so that at the end of ch. 7 the covenantal relations are once again back to normal. Yahweh fights for Israel so much that the towns that had been previously captured are restored to Israel (7:14). It is further noted that there was peace between Israel and the Amorites (7:14). But this peace does not last for long. The fourth section (chs. 8-15), where our narrative belongs, deals with the demand for monarchy in Israel, which leads to the anointing of Saul as the first king of Israel. However, because of his disobedience Yahweh rejects him and appoints David as a king after his own heart (16:1).

The crisis that leads to the demand for institutional change is highlighted in ch. 8 where the elders make a radical request for a king to rule over them. There seems to be a sudden change between chs. 7 and 8. In ch. 7 we witness Samuel's effective leadership as he mediates between God and Israel; he prays to God who in turn answers and delivers Israel from the Philistines (7:9). Such a display of Yahweh's might and Samuel's effective

leadership should encourage the Israelites to have more faith in theocracy. However, ch. 8 introduces an abrupt change, which may suggest that a long time elapses between the end of ch. 7 and the beginning of ch. 8. There is a problem with theocracy<sup>26</sup> and the people that Yahweh has appointed as his representatives. The narrative moves from cultic to political corruption. The leadership perverts power and perpetuates injustice. As Walter Brueggemann puts it, ch. 8 is concerned with “how to order public power and how to guard public well-being in a community where the leadership tends to pervert that power and leadership (vv. 1-3).”<sup>27</sup> The narrative is characterized by a three-fold exchange between Samuel, the elders and Yahweh. It is pivotal for it marks the transition from the era of the judges to the monarchy.

The narrator presents Samuel in such a way that he resembles Eli. Like Eli (2:22, 32; 3:1ff.; 4:15, 18) he is old; he installed his sons as judges just as Eli had his sons serving under him as priests (1:3; 2:11-13, 22-25); and both Eli’s sons and Samuel’s sons are sinning. The difference is that the latter are perverting judicial process while the former are guilty of cultic exploitation. But unlike Eli who suffers God’s wrath because of his failure to rebuke his sons, Samuel is portrayed by the narrator as one who is above reproach hence not directly held responsible for his sons’ wickedness. In both Samuel and Eli’s cases the problem apparently lies with the leaders rather than the people. Because of Samuel’s sons’ corruption, his age and a desire to have a king like the other nations,<sup>28</sup> the elders of Israel request for a king to reign over Israel (vv. 4-5). *jpv* is used in 7:15, 17; 8:2, 3, to designate judiciary functions, but the root is also associated with military leadership (8:19).

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<sup>26</sup> Theocracy is basically a form of government that recognizes Yahweh alone as the supreme leader of Israel. Even when Yahweh is represented by a human ruler, theocracy still holds that Yahweh is still the King and that the human ruler only serves as a vassal.

<sup>27</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 61.

<sup>28</sup> Kingship was not a new concept to Israel. They were familiar with the kings of city-states in Canaan, like Adoni-bezek of Jerusalem (Judg 1:5). Gen 36:31-9 lists kings of Edom ‘before there were kings in Israel.’ See Peter R. Ackroyd, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary: The First Book of Samuel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), 72.

According to ch. 7 Samuel serves as the judge who mediates Yahweh's covenant with Israel as well as renews and maintains that relationship. Understanding the role of the judge helps the reader to grasp the magnitude of the people's request. The people see intrinsic weaknesses and dangers of theocracy; they do not want to go through the sufferings that characterize chs. 1-7. Their request amounts to "a formal petition, calling for an end to the theocratic system with its fallible mediators and its holy God."<sup>29</sup> With their desire to be like the other nations, especially in relying on a militaristic leader, the elders of Israel come perilously close to rejecting Israel's call to holiness, which Leviticus repeatedly asserts will derive, in part, from Israel's refusal to be like other nations (Lev 18:1-5).

Their request displeased Samuel (v. 6): laeWmv. ynEy[eB. rb'D"h; [r:YEW; , literally, "But the thing was evil in Samuel's eyes." This is a mild rendering; Samuel thought it was a terrible idea, an affront to God's revealed ways among them (2 Sam 11:25, 27). As D. J. McCarthy puts it, the request for a king is evil "because it is a rejection of the divinely ordained institution of the judgeship represented by Samuel."<sup>30</sup> Samuel might have considered kingship as a "substitute for the judgeship with its special theological significance and the demand for oneself what Yahweh gives."<sup>31</sup> As the mediator, Samuel takes the people's request to Yahweh in prayer.

The LORD gives a threefold answer. First, they have rejected Yahweh as their king; second, this rejection is a continuation of their disobedience and unfaithfulness which began in the days of the wilderness; and third, Yahweh tells Samuel to grant their request but also to warn them of the consequences of their choice (vv. 6-9). Yahweh's first response is meant to correct Samuel's perception of the people's demand; he should not take it primarily as a personal affront, for it is a rejection of Yahweh rather than Samuel. However, by implication, a rejection of Yahweh is also a rejection of Yahweh's representative. That is why at the end of v. 8, Yahweh states that the Israelites are rejecting Samuel. Israel's rejection of Yahweh is not occurring for the first or last time; it is an endemic problem that began in the

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<sup>29</sup> Lyle M. Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 1-12* (Sheffield, England: The Almond Press, 1985), 255.

<sup>30</sup> Dennis J. McCarthy, "The Inauguration of Monarchy in Israel" in *Interpretation* 27 (1973), 403.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.

wilderness and will still persist. Israel's sin is both covenantal and religious as the parallels in Deut 29:25ff. indicate. Yahweh emphatically commands Samuel to listen, [m;v., to the people. The fact that this qal imperative verb occurs at the beginning and end of Yahweh's response shows that Yahweh is determined to grant the request. Whether this concession is permissive, a compromise, or a resignation is not clear. Could it be that Yahweh grants their desire so that they may experience the negative consequences of their request? As we shall see later, Yahweh's response reveals the genuineness of his interaction with humanity as well as the fact that he is still sovereign even with the demand for the monarchy.

But Samuel is also instructed to ~h,B' dy[iT' d[eh'-yKi, "solemnly warn them" of the consequences of their request. The verb dw[ may be translated as "to bear witness" or "to testify." It occurs in Gen 43:3 where Judah tells his father how he had been warned not to return to Egypt without his brother. In Exod 19:21, the LORD tells Moses to warn the people of the peril of forcing themselves to see Yahweh.<sup>32</sup> In our passage it is preceded by hiphil infinitive absolute which serves to emphasize the significance and seriousness of Samuel's responsibility. The construction is a formal legal language which implies that in the future the Israelites will have no grounds to claim that they were unaware of the burdensome consequences that come with the monarchy.<sup>33</sup>

The scene then switches from Yahweh and Samuel to Samuel and the people (vv. 11-18). In what is commonly viewed as the most anti-monarchical polemic in the OT, Samuel articulates what life under kingship entails. The phrase %l,M,h; jP;v.mi, "the ways of the king" is significant. jP;v.mi normally means "justice," but it can also mean "way," "custom," or "manner."<sup>34</sup> There is probably wordplay here. The elders ask for a king to judge them (v. 5) and Samuel responds with a polemic on what justice of the king they could expect (v. 11).<sup>35</sup> jP;v.mi recurs throughout this chapter and constitutes its basic theme. The root occurs eight times (vv. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9,

<sup>32</sup> See Jer 11:7 where the same verb is used with reference to how the LORD continually warned Israel yet the people failed to obey him. Cf. 1 Ki 2:42, etc.

<sup>33</sup> See P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *The Anchor Bible: 1 Samuel* (London: Doubleday, 1980), 157.

<sup>34</sup> See G. Liedke, "jpv" in *TLOT* Vol. 3 (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1392-1399.

<sup>35</sup> Tony W. Cartledge, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 114.

11, 20). The expression may connote the conduct of the king<sup>36</sup> or the constitutional rights of the king.<sup>37</sup> Its meaning should probably be distinguished from “the rationale for kingship” in 1 Sam 10:25, which is apparently a reference to the theological basis for kingship in deuteronomistic circles (Deut 17:14-17). In this passage it most likely refers to how the king would operate as he leads the people, i.e. the way he will exercise his authority as a judge.<sup>38</sup>

The key word summarizing the way the king will reign is *xq;l'*, “to take.”<sup>39</sup> It occurs six times in this narrative (11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17), and in every occurrence its object(s) is (are) fronted for emphasis. Kings are depicted as takers both militarily and economically. Two other key verbs that are repeated in Samuel’s address are *~yf*, “to appoint” (vv. 11, 12) and *!tn*, “to give” (vv. 14, 15). What the king will take, appoint and give in order to accomplish his interest ranges from family and land to the people’s wealth. He will demand that the Israelite men join military service; their daughters will serve in his palace; he will confiscate their property, and ultimately they will become slaves (v. 17). As the Israelites bear the consequences of their choice, they will cry out but the LORD will not answer them (v. 18). The language used here is characteristic of the period of judges when the people repeatedly face oppression and cry out to Yahweh who in turn delivers them. However, when they will cry out to Yahweh because of the oppression stemming from the reign of their own kings, their cry will fall on deaf ears. Yahweh will not deliver them from the misery and suffering which they have inflicted on themselves. This is in contrast with 7:9 where Samuel cries out to Yahweh on behalf of the Israelites, and Yahweh answers and delivers Israel from the Philistines. The

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<sup>36</sup> Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 73.

<sup>37</sup> Ralph W. Klein, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Samuel*, vol. 10 (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 76. It is important to note that in this episode, it is less likely that the word means the rights of the king, i.e., the limits to be set to the powers of the king to put a check to the danger of lawlessness. The word most likely denotes the conduct of the king towards Israel. See Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *1 & 11 Samuel*, 73.

<sup>38</sup> P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., 157.

<sup>39</sup> Two other key verbs that are repeated in Samuel’s address are *~yf*, “to appoint” (vv. 11, 12) and *!tn*, “to give” (vv. 14, 15). For further discussion on *xq;l'* see H. Ladbergen Seebass, “*xq;l'*” in *TDOT* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 16-21.

thrust of Samuel's warning is that the kind of a king that the people want will create a bureaucracy that will spiritually devastate Israel.

### **Canonical Context**

When we come to the canonical context we find many preceding scriptures that suggest that kingship is not a concept that begins in 1 Samuel; rather, there is evidence that it had been part of Yahweh's plan from the inception of Israel as a nation. In Gen 17:6 (as well as 17:16 and 35:11), Yahweh promises Abraham that he would bless his seed and that "kings will come from you." Although Exod 19:6 does not explicitly talk about kingship, its traces are evident especially when the verse notes that Israel shall be to God a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps the most significant scripture that addresses kingship in the Pentateuch is Deut 17:14-20. This text envisions a monarchic Israel and warns the people against choosing as a king a foreigner who would inevitably lead them astray. Yahweh is providing controls for the future desires of the Israelites. It is evident from this passage that Yahweh "revealed his eternal plan of using kingship as the vehicle of central importance in messianic prophecy and fulfillment."<sup>41</sup> We clearly see here that Yahweh was not anti-monarchy in Israel; in fact, it was his prerogative to choose a king for Israel. What Yahweh objected was the kind of kingship that the Israelites demanded, namely, a king like the nations around them. In Samuel the Israelites fail to bring their request to God and to cry out to him as envisioned in Deut 17:14-20; they have made up their mind on the kind of king they want without letting Yahweh choose one for them.<sup>42</sup>

In Judg 8:22-23 we find the first recorded attempt by Israel to have a king rule over her. Following Gideon's victory over the Midianites, the men of Israel offer to him the hereditary leadership, but he declines to be king and says that "Yahweh will reign over you." Although Gideon rejects this offer, the demand for kingship seems to have persisted as Abimelech's narrative in Judges 9 reveals. Abimelech usurped leadership by killing his

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<sup>40</sup> See Num 24:17-19 which prophesies about a ruler who proceed from Jacob and destroy the enemies of Israel (cf. Gen 49:10). In Rev 1:6 we read that Christ "has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father" (NIV).

<sup>41</sup> Earl S. Kalland, "Deuteronomy" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 116.

<sup>42</sup> According to Deut 17 Yahweh appoints the king, and the king is accountable to him.

seventy brothers, a tragedy that elicits Jotham's parabolic rebuke. Jotham's fable (Judg 9:7-15; 1 Ki 12) ridicules the idea of the kingship and the types of men who become kings. The fable posits that kingship cannot do anything beneficial for the people. The people's desire to seek protection from the enemy is viewed as a mere myth. George F. Moore observes, "Those who made the thorn king over them put themselves in this dilemma: if they were true to him, they enjoyed his protection, which was a mockery; if they were false to him, he would be their ruin."<sup>43</sup> However, the difference between this episode and I Samuel is that while Abimelech was not divinely appointed, the elders approach Yahweh's representative to appoint a king so that kingship is something granted by Yahweh.

As we have already noted, the problem with Israel's demand for a king like the other nations is that it is a rejection of Yahweh and their unique status; their motive is toxic and detrimental. According to Israel's covenant with Yahweh they were to be a unique people different from the nations (Exod 19:4-6; 33:16; Lev 20:26; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18ff.; 32:8ff. 1 Sam 12:22; cf. Jer 2:11). But Israel now wants to be like the other nations, thus forsaking their unique status in light of their covenant with Yahweh. The divine election distinguished and elevated Israel above all the nations of the earth (Deut 4:6-8). They were to live according to the Torah and rely on the promises of the LORD (Exod 19:4-6; Deut 7:7-11). Therefore, their request is an abandonment of "that self-understanding, that vocation which prized a peculiar form of social organization."<sup>44</sup> In a sense the people have rejected both the covenant and theocracy.

Theocracy is generally agreed to have begun early in Israel's religious constitution. Ps 29:10 states that Yahweh is eternally enthroned as king among the gods. Ps 24:1-10 notes that Yahweh is king of all the earth. The sanctuary itself was established to, among other things, witness to Yahweh's kingship.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, it is apparent that despite Yahweh's kingship the social and political circumstance at the time of Samuel ineluctably heightened the need for the monarchy. Israel was facing both social and political instability due to the threat from the Philistines and the Ammonites, and the perversion of justice by the sons of Eli and Samuel. It is also evident

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<sup>43</sup> George F. Moore, *The International Critical Commentary on Judges* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), 249.

<sup>44</sup> Walter Brueggemann, 62.

<sup>45</sup> See Num 23:21; Mal 1:14; cf. 1 Sam 12:12.

that justice was generally at low ebb (cf. Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). A king was needed not only to govern the people but also to fight the surrounding enemies and secure Israel's borders. Yet this amounted to a rejection of Yahweh.

The feeling that this was a rejection of Yahweh was widespread in the prophetic tradition as confirmed by Hosea and Ezekiel. According to Hosea, Yahweh gave Israel a king in his anger (Hos 13:11). Ezekiel sees what followed after inheriting the land as blasphemy and treachery against God (Ezek 20:27ff.). The prophet maintains that Yahweh will never again yield to the demand, "Let us be like the nations" (Ezek 20:32); rather, Yahweh himself will be king over Israel (v. 33). Elsewhere, the prophet indicts the kings of Israel for exploiting the people for the benefit of only the rulers (Ezek 34:1-10).<sup>46</sup> But it is also important to note that we also see in 1 Samuel Yahweh's sentiments that favor a monarchy that will operate under theocracy (8:9, 22; 9:15-16). Samuel himself later adopts a favorable attitude towards the monarchy (ch. 12; cf. 9:15-16). The Israelites themselves are eventually won over to Yahweh's version of the monarchy following Samuel's address (10:17-27) as well as a manifestation of the spirit's power in Saul, and Yahweh's direct demonstration of power (12:16-19).<sup>47</sup> The anointing of David as a king after Yahweh's heart may also add weight to the argument that the institution of monarchy was never inherently evil.<sup>48</sup> We do not see any explicit or implicit sentiment in Scripture that Israel was never to have a human king over them. What we see are warnings against forsaking the covenant as they seek to follow the wicked ways of the neighboring nations. The prophets who come after Samuel add their voices to such warnings as they condemn injustice and urge faithfulness to the covenant.

### **Theological and Practical Reflection**

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<sup>46</sup> Solomon is known to have used Israelites as chariot commanders and as (commanders of) his horsemen (1 Ki 9:22). He allegedly had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen (1 Ki 4:26; cf. Deut 17:16). Also see 2 Sam 11:2-5 about David's seizure of Bathsheba, and 1 Kings 21 about Ahab's grabbing of Naboth's vineyard.

<sup>47</sup> Lyle Eslinger, "View Points and Point of View in 1 Sam 8-12" in *JSOT* 26 (1983), 66-7.

<sup>48</sup> Other key texts that support the view that kingship is of Yahweh are Ps 72 and 1 Chr 29:1ff.

Apart from the literary context and canonical usage we also need to address how this passage is significant both theologically and practically. On the one hand, this passage underlines humanity's continuous rebellion against God, while on the other hand, it is a demonstration that Yahweh, rather than ruling over his people with an iron fist, 'honors' human choice even as he exercises his sovereignty. Yahweh views Israel's demand for a king as a rejection of his kingship and as a trend that has persisted since the days of Exodus. Beneath this rebellion is humanity's inclination to become more than it ought to be. The Israelites are not content with the tribal leadership that Yahweh has put in place for them thus far. Like Adam and Eve in the creation account, the Israelites desire more than what the Covenant stipulates; they want to become like the nations. They are convinced that a monarchy similar to what their neighboring nations have will ensure more security and prosperity, and that it will bring more glory. In reality it will make them weaker and reduce them to a state of servitude. That is what happens when humanity opposes the plan of God that he has clearly revealed. There is no true freedom apart from abiding in the purpose of God; the more humanity moves away from the ways of God the greater the bondage it inflicts upon itself.

Related to the preceding discussion is the call to be different, set apart for Yahweh. Such was the thrust of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The Israelites were expected to abide by the Torah so that the nations would realize that Yahweh their God is holy. They were to resist any influence from the nations that could lead them away from the decrees of Yahweh. Although institutional change is not intrinsically evil, we have already observed that Israel succumbed to the tragic influence of the nations. This is an incredible illustration that faith and culture cannot be divorced. The Israelites lived among people with different religious, social and political practices.<sup>49</sup> There is no doubt that they were subject to the nations' cultural influences. By giving in to such influence, they violated the covenant. The challenge that Israel faced is not different from what the church is facing: the call to remain holy in this world of darkness demands unwavering faithfulness to the biblical teaching. There is an ever intensifying attraction and appeal to Christianity to conform to the standards of the world. Complacency that characterizes many churches today inhibits

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<sup>49</sup> John Mauchline, ed., *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Samuel* (Greenwood, S. C.: The Attic Press, 1971), 89.

inward devotion as it seeks to be politically correct and as it succumbs to the “make-me-happy” ideology. Israel’s rebellion against theocracy is not worse than Christianity when it has been dethroned by “Christianism.” The church needs to unreservedly submit to the biblical authority and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that the world may see the light of Christ. Part of this also entails embracing our identity which is articulated in 1 Pet 2:9, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

This narrative not only admonishes faithfulness to Yahweh even as it highlights humanity’s inclination to rebel against the divine authority, but it also demonstrates that Yahweh will always exercise his sovereignty even as he grants human choice. When Samuel presents the people’s request to Yahweh, instead of acting manipulatively, Yahweh accedes to their demand. This episode, however troubling it may be, reveals that God enters a genuine relationship with human beings, whereby there is no passivity or subjugation of human freedom. The fact that God grants the elders’ request does not mean that he is ambivalent and uninterested in mankind; rather, he shows interest in, watches closely over, and gets involved with humanity. Of course being omniscient he knew that Israel would demand a king to rule over them.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, he had previously revealed that Israel would one day be ruled by a king. Yet the Israelites are human beings whose response to God’s covenant is vital. In the words of R. W. L. Moberly, “How people respond to God *matters* to God, and *affects* how God responds to the people.”<sup>51</sup> This does not imply that God is ignorant of the future, but it is the genuine way of showing the value of human freedom and encouraging growth in grace. It is not the same thing as Bernhard Anderson’s comment that “God’s actions are sometimes experimental.”<sup>52</sup> An omniscient God does not need to experiment with mankind in order to know the outcome of their exercise of freedom. Since human beings are not mere robots in their interaction with God, and since God does not undermine human freedom, it was only appropriate for God to grant the people’s request while at the same time warn them of the consequences.

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<sup>50</sup> That is why he provided the controls that we see in Deut 17:14-20.

<sup>51</sup> R. W. L. Moberly, “God Is Not Human That He Should Repent” in *God in the Fray* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 115.

<sup>52</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, “When God Repents” in *BR* 12:3 (1996), 44.

But we also learn from this narrative that God is sovereign. God interacts with humanity according to the constancy of his nature, life and purposes. Israel's demand for a king cannot frustrate Yahweh's sovereign plan in any way. As he had previously promised, kings will come from Israel (cf. Gen 17:16); Israel shall be to God a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:6), and a ruler will proceed from Jacob and destroy the enemies of Israel (Num 27:17-19; cf. Gen 49:10). Ultimately, this narrative is part of God's broader plan to fulfill his promise to Israel and accomplish his purposes. That is why after the rejection of Saul, God chooses David, a man after his own heart, and from whose lineage came Christ the king of the Jews (Mt 27:11, 29, 37, 42) and the Gentiles (Acts 17:7).<sup>53</sup> Thus in his sovereignty God guided the history of Israel, leading to the inauguration of his kingdom with the coming of Christ, about whom Scripture testifies, "Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom" (Ps 45:6; cf. Heb 1:8).

### **Conclusion**

In summary, throughout this article we have sought to demonstrate that kingship was actually part of Yahweh's plan for Israel. According to Deut 17, it was the LORD's prerogative to choose a king for Israel. When the elders approached Samuel to appoint a king for them Yahweh was displeased because they did not follow the Torah. Moreover, the people's motive was purely militaristic and pragmatic. They wanted a king to lead them in battles. They also wanted to be like the other nations. They were dissatisfied with theocracy as well as the failed institution of judgeship. Thus throughout the narrative, the reader has to reckon with the fact that the elders' request amounts to disobedience to Yahweh, yet such disobedience does not demonize kingship. In the end Yahweh's sovereignty is affirmed as he leads Israel towards his desired end. He later chooses David, a king after his own heart, from whose lineage came the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

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<sup>53</sup> See Mt 5:35; 21:5; 25:34, 40; Eph 5:5; Rev 15:3.

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# **THE SPIRIT MOTIF IN LUKE 4:14-30; ACTS 1:8 AND THE CHURCH TODAY**

Joseph Koech

## **Introduction**

Luke has been termed the Gospel of the Spirit. This is seen in how he highlights the place of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus in the Gospel and in the early church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The authorship of both books has been unanimously attributed to Luke and many times treated as one two-volume work. Luke 4:14-30 is the key passage in the Gospel with regard to the ministry of Jesus. In the Acts of the Apostles (also dubbed the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit') the power of the Spirit is seen through the activities of the early church especially in preaching and in the working of miracles. Jesus gave the mandate to the disciples to carry out the work He began not through their own power but the Spirit's power (Acts 1:8). The Spirit upon Jesus was for several purposes, some unique to Him alone and others duplicated through the early church as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles. Jesus through the power of the Spirit was prophet and charismatic; proclaimer and demonstrator; and preacher and healer.

The Holy Spirit upon Jesus was first for the purpose of the fulfilment of the functions of the Messiah. Second, it was for proclamation, the working of miracles and other liberating activities. Only in the office of the Messiah is the church not able to duplicate. The Acts of the Apostles record activities of the early church that parallel some of the work Jesus did especially in the area of proclamation and miracles. Just as the Holy Spirit upon Jesus was for the purpose of liberation so was the Spirit upon the members of the early church.

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My argument in this article is that there ought to be continuity in what happened in the ministry of Jesus, which was continued in the early church and what the church is to do today. The church at present is faced with the choice of being biblical and at the same time being relevant. Jesus' mandate has not changed and the nations still need liberation like in the time of Jesus and the early church. Modern problems are even more severe and complex.

The power of the Holy Spirit is needed today if not more. The church needs the empowerment to proclaim and to liberate. Issues faced by the nations now include spiritual, psychological, social, political and physical oppression. The power of the Holy Spirit to liberate is therefore crucial.

### **Luke's Highlight on the Holy Spirit**

Luke in his Gospel highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus. Lukan redaction of his sources in the writing of Luke 4: 14-30 reveals his central concern on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus. The Septuagint (LXX) is Luke's main text from which he quotes his Old Testament references.<sup>1</sup> [1] An important aspect is the centrality of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus for the purpose of carrying out the liberation work; preach the gospel to the poor, announce deliverance to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberty to the oppressed and declaration of the Lord's jubilee (Luke 4:18-19). The scholars who insist on Lukan creativity of his text include Rudolf Bultmann, J. M. Creed, Leaney M. Dibelius, among others.<sup>2</sup>

James Shelton presumes that the presence of the Spirit in one source of Luke's narrative could have elicited his choice of the source.<sup>3</sup> Whatever

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce D. Childton, *God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987) 159ff.

<sup>2</sup> Bultmann, *The History of Synoptic Tradition*. Trans J. Marsh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), 31f; J.M. Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: the Greek Text with introduction, Notes and Indices* (London: MacMillan, 1942), 64; A.R.C. Leaney, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (Londong: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), 50ff. M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*. Trans. B. L. Woolf (New York: Scribner's 1965), 110ff.

<sup>3</sup> James Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: the Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 64.

conclusion is arrived at regarding Luke's sources, it is evident that his personal contribution is enormous. The centrality of the Spirit in the life of Jesus is so strong in Luke that he mentions the Spirit in the Gospel touching the life and ministry of Jesus. In Luke 4:14, 18-19 the writer states that the Spirit led Jesus to the wilderness for temptation and later Jesus comes out of the temptation in the power of the Spirit and proceeds to declare the Spirit's anointing upon his life. This emphasis is missing in the other synoptic Gospels (Matthew and Mark). Luke seems to have deliberately positioned references to the Spirit in the text.

A closer examination of the text shows that Luke has made personal contribution in several areas to highlight his purpose. He had made changes to the materials he used by first placing the story in the early part of the ministry of Jesus. This is unlike the other Gospels who place the story much later in the ministry of Jesus. By placing the Isaiah declaration at the start of the ministry, Luke ensures that Jesus does his work as recorded in the rest of the Gospel under the anointing of the Spirit. The preaching and the miracles that follow come by the power of the Spirit. Jesus does not enter into the ministry without the anointing of the Spirit. The Isaiah passage authenticates his ministry. Under the power of the Spirit, Jesus announces the Spirit's activity through his life. Luke does not presume that Jesus had not done any public work for his fame had already spread. It is also possible that Luke is anticipating Jesus' empowered work. Fred B. Craddock situates the pericope within the context of the section of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (4:19-9:50). This section comprises stories of Jesus' itinerary preaching around, teaching, healing, exorcism, and meeting challenges.<sup>4</sup>

The second change that Luke has brought about is the rewording of Isaiah 61:1-2. Here Luke made some changes in the message guided by his theological focus. He deviates significantly from the LXX whereas he is known to be generally faithful to the LXX in his citations of the Old Testament. This is the only place in the entire Gospel where he had made alterations. Lukan redaction is of great import in this section as it highlights the Spirit's role. Here Luke seems to be interested in the centrality of the Spirit, the prophetic activity as a result of receiving the Spirit, and the

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<sup>4</sup> Fred B. Craddock, *Luke: Interpretation* ed. James Luther Mays (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 59ff.

liberation by the Spirit. The deviation from the LXX is seen in several areas as adequately summarized by H. J. B. Combrink:

After *apestalken me* [he has sent me] in 4: 18 is omitted *iasasthat toussuntetrimmennous ten kardian* [to heal the brken hearted] (Is. 61:1); at the end of v. 18 is inserted *aposteilai tethraumenous en afesei* [to set the oppressed at liberty] from Is. 58: 6; at the beginning of v. 19 *kalesai* [to announce] of the LXX is substituted by *keruxai* [to proclaim]; and after *dekton* [acceptable] in v. 19 is omitted *kai hemeran antapodoseos* [and the day of vengeance of our Lord] (Is. 61: 2) . . . Note that 24 out of 26 words in the quotation are identical with the LXX.<sup>5</sup>

Many explanations have been given to substantiate the changes in the text. As already stated, Luke made the changes due to his theological position. He places emphasis on the idea of liberation. Luke also wanted to make clear the centrality of the Spirit especially in the work of liberation.

Luke focuses on the salvific dimension of Jesus' work. This is Luke's universalistic liberation by the Spirit. In his understanding, the anointed preaching of Jesus brings about salvation. R. P. Menzies makes an important statement on the anointing upon Jesus:

According to Luke, Jesus' pneumatic anointing, rather than the source of his unique filial relationship to God or his initiation into the new age, was the means by which Jesus was equipped to carry out his

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<sup>5</sup> H. J. B. Combrink, "The structure and significance of Luke 4:16-30," *Neotestamentica* 7 (1973): 34. The changes are significant for instance the difference between *kaleo* and *keruxai* is noteworthy: The root for *kalesai* is *kaleo* and can be translated 'to call', 'to call aloud', 'utter in a loud voice', 'to invite;', 'to call' i.e. 'to name, by name', 'to give a name to,' 'to receive the name of', 'to receive as a name' 'to give some name to one', 'call his name,' 'to be called' i.e. to bear a name or title (among men), 'to salute' one by name.' *Khrzai* (*keruzai*) is the stronger word than *kaleo* in reference to preaching and is mostly used in the NT. The root is *kerussw* (*kerusso*) and translated 'to herald' (as a public crier), especially divine truth (the gospel). It means 'preach', 'proclaim', 'publish'. See W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger and Willam White, *Vine's Complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991, c. 1996).

divinely appointed task. Thus Luke's portrayal of Jesus' pneumatic anointing, which anticipates the experience of the early church, is consistent with his prophetic pneumatology.<sup>6</sup>

When compared with his other writing (Acts), Luke's motif comes into sharp focus. The centrality of the Spirit in the life of Jesus is indisputable. The work that Jesus did was attributed to the power of the Spirit (Acts 10:38).

### **The Purpose of the Spirit in Jesus' Life**

Luke stresses the presence of the Spirit upon Jesus' life by repeating in Acts 10:38 what he had already said in Luke 4:18-19. By doing this, Luke highlights the connection between the Spirit upon Jesus and the miracles, which took place through him. The emphasis on healing resulting from the Spirit's activity is unmistakable in the twin references:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. (Acts 10:38)

Both passages highlight the empowerment of the Holy Spirit upon the life of Jesus. The Spirit in the beginning of the ministry of Jesus is to enable him to reveal and heal (word and deed). The Spirit enables him to perform miracles, to speak and teach with authority. Jesus in Luke's Gospel is anointed to take the good news to the poor while in Acts the church leaders receive the same anointing to do the work that Jesus did but also going another step beyond by taking the message and work to all nations. Luke in both the Gospel and Acts of the apostles emphasizes the work of the Spirit

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<sup>6</sup> Robert P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 177.

for ministry. Luke indicates that the gift of the Spirit is for all, male and female, young and old (Acts 2:17-18). There is also a note of universalism, which is a characteristic of Luke. The promise of the Spirit will be upon all flesh (Acts 2: 16-18, 38).

The presence of the Spirit in the life of Jesus is also highlighted in that all the major stages in his life are marked by the presence of the spirit right from his conception to his ascension. The spirit at conception is the same one who anointed him for the ministry of liberation (Luke 3:22; 4:18). The major focus in Luke is showing Jesus not merely possessing the Spirit but also, he is subject to the Spirit's leading and empowerment. The public ministry of Jesus from the time of his baptism to the time of his ascension is charged by the presence of the Holy Spirit working through his life. Jesus in his public ministry is the bearer of the spirit not for his own sake but for the sake of the people who are in need, those needing liberation; the sick, the poor and the oppressed. P. H. Alexander supports this view that Jesus expects his divine commission of preaching the good news to the poor to be effected through the power of the Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

Certain scholars have stated that the purpose of the spirit was the establishment of Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>8</sup> The argument of this paper is that the Spirit upon Jesus was mainly to enable Jesus serve as prophet as well as charismatic preacher.

### **Jesus as Prophet and Charismatic**

Luke presents Jesus as a prophet who teaches and performs miracles as well as suffering rejection. C. H. Dodd has mentioned fifteen characteristics of Jesus the prophet.<sup>9</sup> He has likened him to the Old Testament prophets in

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<sup>7</sup> P. H. Alexander, "Jesus Christ and the Spirit," in *dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* eds. Standley M. Burges and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 490.

<sup>8</sup> Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 39.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by Barrett in Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*, 94-5. Barrett summarized them: 1) Jesus spoke with authoritative note, 2) He gave most of his teaching in poetical form, 3) he seemed to have had pneumatical traits associated with prophecy such as vision and audition, 4) made prediction, 5) acted

some areas but in others, Jesus has unique characteristics. According to Arther A. Just, the twofold character of Lukan Christology is Jesus as the prophet and Jesus as the miracle worker.<sup>10</sup> The first image is that of his work as Messiah in the public ministry among the people. The second feature is his work as teacher, miracle worker as well as messianic claims leading to his rejection.

Jesus as prophet, who teaches and performs miracles, is evident in the sermon at Nazareth. As a prophet, he proclaims release (liberation message) and as a miracle worker, he performs deeds of liberation such as healing. Many see this narrative as foundational for the rest of the work of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. He quotes from Isaiah 61:1-2 outlining his ministry as preaching good news to the poor, setting captives free, giving sight to the blind, deliverance to the oppressed, and announcing the Lord's jubilee. Just elaborates:

In quoting Isaiah 61, Jesus shows that the essence of his proclamation is release: release from the bondage of sin, sickness, and Satan. This proclamation is demonstrated in the miracles that Jesus performs; they testify to the presence of God in Jesus for salvation. Miracles certainly show that Jesus is the Son of God. But at the same time, they show that present in Jesus is the freedom he announced at

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out his message e.g. the last supper, 6) supported his teaching often by referring to OT prophets, 7) like the OT prophets his eschatology was of radical ethical nature, 8) announced the rule of God, 9) in the gospels he seems to be a preacher of repentance than an ordinary teacher, 10) he received a special calling attested by pneumatic experience (like the other prophets), 11) his having divine revelation involved a close communion with, a knowledge of God, 12) like the prophets he is a representative of God, to follow his teaching is doing God's will, and so to reject him is tantamount to rejecting God, 13) has a mission to Israel like his predecessors and so whatever he does and says relate to this, 14) "the Hebrew prophets thought of themselves as not merely declaring the Word of God, but playing a part in the fulfilment of that word. . . Jesus frequently speaks as though his own ministry was in fact the critical event in history, and in particular . . . he seems to have expected from his death some momentous consequence." 15) Jesus stands in the line of succession of prophets but goes beyond them as far as his religion is concerned.

<sup>10</sup> Arther A. Just Jr. *Luke 1: 1-9: 50: Concordia Commentary*. (St. Louise: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 185.

Nazareth, as he casts out demons, heals the sick, forgives sins, and raises the dead. Wherever Jesus is, there is the miracle of God's presence in the flesh for our salvation. Thus, Jesus' teaching and miracles announce that God's salvation is present and active in his ministry to release the creation from its bondage.<sup>11</sup>

The point Just does not clearly state is the role of the Spirit in Jesus as the prophet, manifesting charismatic qualities especially the ability to perform miracles. The anointing by the Spirit enables him to carry out the work of liberation. The prophet is a man full of the Spirit and is led by the Spirit. The leading words in the text are, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to preach the good news to the poor." In order for him to proclaim, heal, cast out demons, raise the dead and perform all manner of miracles, the Spirit has to empower him. This is an important point in Lukan Christology; it cannot be separated from pneumatology.

Arther Just also brings out the idea of liberation. He uses the word 'release' to identify the work of Jesus as that of empowerment by the Spirit to release humankind from sin, sickness, and satanic forces. Referring to the Old Testament, we note that Israel had many who were regarded to the Lord's anointed. Examples include the priests (Exodus 28:41), the kings (1 Samuel 10:1) and the prophets (1 Kings 19:16) In Isaiah 45:1, Cyrus, a foreign king was termed 'the Lord's anointed.' Jesus' anointing was unique in some respects. He is called the 'Anointed One,' the 'Christ' (in Greek or 'Messiah' (in Hebrew)).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Anointing in Scripture means to authorize, or set apart, a person for a particular work or service (Is.61:1). The anointed person belong to God in a special sense. The phrases, "the Lord's anointed," "my anointed," "your anointed," or his anointed" are used of Saul (1 Sam. 26:9, 11), David (2 Sam. 22:51), and Solomon (2 Chr. 6:42). In the New Testament, all who are Christ's disciples are said to be anointed; they are God's very own, set apart and commissioned for service (2 Cor. 1:21).

Priests, kings, and prophets were anointed. Oil was poured on the head of the person being anointed (Ex. 29:7). Kings were set apart through the ritual of anointing, which was performed by a prophet who acted in God's power and authority (1 Sam. 15:1). The OT also records two instances of the anointing of a prophet (1 Kings 19:16; Is. 61:1).

Jesus is described as 'anointed' (Messiah). This description is found in the Psalms of the OT that prophesy the coming of Christ and in the preaching of the apostle Peter in the book of Acts. "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word for 'anointed' and 'Christ' comes from a Greek word.

The Isaiah passage read by Jesus was understood in prophetic terms in Judaism. The reactions by the crowd in Nazareth suggest that Jesus may have claimed to be a prophet. Stronstad states that Jesus challenged the people to accept him on the basis of being a prophet and not on the basis of being Joseph's son. When Jesus said, "no prophet is welcome in his home town", he was talking of himself as a prophet. In the light of Isaiah 61:1, especially its Targumic rendering, Jesus claims to be the anointed servant/prophet. Recognizing his claim, yet rejecting it, the crowd attempts to kill him."<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that the Targum reads, "The Spirit of prophecy from before the Lord Elohim is upon me."<sup>14</sup> This presents the thought in Judaism of the pre-Christian Palestinian era that the prophets were the anointed servants of Yahweh.<sup>15</sup>

There are four possible reasons why Jesus was rejected at Nazareth: 1) Jesus deliberately annoyed the crowd by quoting the two proverbs; 2) Jesus' presumed arrogation to himself of the prophetic title by identifying himself with the prophets Elijah and Elisha; 3) Jesus' universalistic gospel to include the Gentiles as well, and 4) Jesus' ministry in Capernaum, a town

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In the NT, anointing was frequently used in connection with healing. The Holy Spirit's activities in a believer's life are pictured in terms associated with anointing. Jesus' disciples anointed the sick (Mk 6:13), and James instructed the elders of the church to anoint the sick with oil (James 5: 14). This anointing was for healing.

Anointing in the NT also refers to the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which brings understanding (1 Jn 2:20, 27). This anointing is not only for kings, priests, and prophets; it is for everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. The anointing occurs physically with a substance such as oil, myrrh, or balsam. But this is also a spiritual anointing, as the Holy Spirit anoints a person's heart and mind with the love and truth of God. See Youngblood, Ronald R., General editor; F.F. Bruce and R. K. Harrison, Consulting Editors, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995).

<sup>13</sup> Strongstad, *The Charismatic Theology*, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Targum is the Chaldee or more specifically the Aramaic explanations of the Old Testament.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke, The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Compnay, 1981), 529-530.

predominated by foreigners.<sup>16</sup> The last three are possible reasons, which can be explained in terms of Jesus not meeting the expectation of the people in Nazareth.

The negative response ending the next section at Nazareth indicates that Jesus did not meet the expectations of the Jews (represented here by the Nazareth crowd). He identifies the recipients of God's favour as comprising not only the Jews but also the Gentiles and the outsiders. They are infuriated by this and are ready to kill him. In their reasoning, Jesus not only lets them go but also suggests that they are recipients of God's favour. The crowd is expectant for the fulfilment of the passage. Their main concern is that they are beneficiaries of the messianic message. Jesus seems to anticipate the desire of the crowd that he perform miracles among them which was one of the roles of the expected Messiah. He goes ahead to explain how the ministries of the prophets Elijah and Elisha also benefited the Gentiles. Elijah was sent to the woman at Zarephath while Elisha healed Naaman, the Syrian.

Paul J. Archtmeier suggests that Luke did not model the miracles of Jesus after those of the Old Testament. He states that Luke by designating Jesus as "prophet" does so without his identification of him as a miracle worker supposedly as a prerequisite to the prophetic identification.<sup>17</sup> Miracles were not necessary indicators of a prophetic office. However, we note that Jesus' identity with the prophets Elijah and Elisha is enhanced by referenced to the miracles they performed. The identity is also in three other areas; they were all full of the Spirit, they all ministered to foreigners, and they were all rejected by their people.

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<sup>16</sup> According to Robert Sloan, the reason for the negative response was that Jesus in his interpretation of the passage identified himself with messianic figure of Isaiah 61. To the crowd Jesus was an ordinary Jew; one of their own. The problem was not with the message but with the identity of God's messianic agent. See Robert Sloan, *The Favorable Year of the Lord: a Study of Jubiliary Theology in the Gospel of Luke*. (Austin, Texas: Schola Press, 1977), 84-85.

<sup>17</sup> Paul J. Archtmeier, "The Miracles of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch," in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* ed. Charles H. Talbert (Danville: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), 166.

Jesus' anointing by the Spirit was for charismatic ministry. In identifying himself with the prophets Elijah and Elisha, he is comparing his ministry and theirs and the beneficiaries of his ministry and theirs. It has been pointed out that His ministry seems to be modelled after those of Isaiah, Elijah and Moses. The similarity with Moses is echoed in the transfiguration event (Luke 9:35).<sup>18</sup> Paul S. Minear clarifies that in the Nazareth incident Jesus identifies himself with the mission of Isaiah the prophet as well as with the messenger predicted by Isaiah.<sup>19</sup>

The Spirit upon him enabled to proclaim the message to the poor, which was a message of release. His ministry would be to preach the good news to the poor, to heal the sick, preach deliverance to the captives, set at liberty those bruised, and the recovery of sight to the blind. It is significant that it was due to the Spirit's anointing that he was able to carry out these works. The implication is that without the Spirit's empowerment no work of liberation would be possible. Luke records Jesus' activities of preaching and healing as taking place after the Spirit came upon him.

The miracles performed by Jesus earned him the title of 'a great prophet' (Luke 7:16). Among the people some thought of him as John or Elijah because of the miracles he performed as well as the preaching he made (Luke 7:33, cf. Matthew 16:14; Mark 6:14). To the Jews one of the signs of the prophetic office was the working of miracles. When compared with the prophets Elijah and Elisha three major areas of miracles can be noted. They all controlled nature (1 Kings; 2 Kings 2:8, 14, 19ff and Luke 8:22ff). The three also raised the dead (1 Kings 17:17ff; 2 Kings 4:34f and Luke 7:14f). Another area of comparison is the food miracles (1 Kings 17:16; 2 Kings 4:3ff; 4:42f and Luke 9:12f). Elisha and Jesus both cured those with leprosy (2 Kings 5:8f and Luke 5:12f). So like Elijah and Elisha, Jesus is empowered by the Holy Spirit (2 Kings 2:9; 14-15; and Luke 4:14. and they are all rejected and end up ministering to strangers (Luke 4:24-30).

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Sloan has discussed at length the implications of Jesus as a prophet like Moses (Dt. 18:15). See Robert Bryan Sloan, *The Favorable Year of the Lord* . . . 68-73.

<sup>19</sup> Paul S. Minear, *To Heal and to Reveal: the Prophetic Vocation According to St. Luke*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 103.

One significant similarity is Jesus' transference of the Spirit upon his disciples (Acts 2:4, 33) just as the Spirit had moved from Elijah to Elisha. This indicates that the public ministry of Jesus was characterized by the activity of the Spirit. The new community, the church, had prophets as well who were moved by the Spirit though they may not be placed in the category of the Old Testament prophets in every aspect (Acts 21:10 ff).<sup>20</sup>

The sermon at Nazareth is dominated by the presence and activity of the Spirit. Luke shows that Jesus begins his public ministry under the anointing of the spirit. Jesus comes out of the temptation full of the power of the Spirit. This writer seems to be suggesting a paradigm to be followed by Jesus' disciples. Jesus, according to Luke 24:49, commanded his disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they were empowered by the Spirit (literally 'clothe with power'). The words of Gerald F. Hawthorn give a befitting summary to the Spirit in relation to Jesus and his work:

For Luke the Holy Spirit, who is to be distinguished from Jesus, is that divine power from outside of Jesus which comes down upon Jesus, which stands over him, which is at work within him and through him, which both inspires and empowers him. Jesus thus begins his mission armed with the Spirit and goes forward to accomplish that mission in the power of the Spirit.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Prophet comes from the Greek word *prophetes* which means, "One who speaks forth or openly," "a proclaimer of a divine message," denoted among the Greeks as an interpreter of the oracles of the gods. In the LXX it is the translation of the word *roeh*, "a seer"; 1 Sam. 9:9, indicating that the "prophet" was one who had immediate communication with God. It also translates the word *nabhi*, meaning "either one in whom the message from God springs forth" or "one upon whom anything is secretly communicated." Hence, in general, "the prophet" was one upon whom the Spirit of God rested, Num. 11:17-29; one, to whom and through whom God speaks, Num. 12:2; Amos 3:7, 8. In the case of the OT prophets their messages were very largely the proclamation of the divine purposes of salvation and glory to be accomplished in the future; the "prophesying" of the NT prophets was both a preaching of the divine counsels of grace already accomplished and the foretelling of the purposes of God in the future. W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger and William White, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

<sup>21</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991), 148.

Jesus did his work under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The question as to whether he resorted to his power as the Son of God on occasion or not is a complex theological subject and beyond the scope of this article. What is clear is that the Spirit's presence in his life is connected to the activities of liberation he performed in both declaration and demonstration. If it was by the power of the Spirit that he carried out his ministry then his disciples did the same work under the anointing of the Spirit paralleling Jesus' experience. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles highlights this aspect.

#### **Luke 4: 14-30 as Programmatic and Paradigmatic Functions**

The inaugural sermon at Nazareth is paradigmatic as well as programmatic. The Spirit's anointing upon Jesus is programmatic for his entire ministry. Luke is pointing out that the entire ministry of Jesus from baptism to his ascension is to be characterized by the activity of the Spirit for liberation. The ministry of Jesus is also paradigmatic in that just as the Spirit anointed him at the start of his ministry so his disciples' ministry and that of the church must also be characterized by the activity of the Spirit (Acts 1:8). Just as Jesus was charismatic, so his disciples are to be charismatic. He left behind a charismatic community empowered to liberate. Luke establishes a universal pattern in the inaugural sermon not just for the immediate disciples but also for the entire church. This then applies to the African context in particular the church.

Jesus as the Christ the Son of God cannot be likened or equated to any human being. However, from the Nazareth pericope and his ministry certain universal aspects of the life of Jesus can be noted. These aspects find continuity in his disciples and in all those called by God to serve. The continuity of miracles done by Jesus was seen in the early church. For instance, some miracles of Jesus find parallels in the ministry of Peter. This thread of continuity is seen in Peter's miracles, which paralleled those of Jesus in the healing of the sick, the lame and raising of the dead (Luke 7:22; 5:18-56; Acts 3:1-16; 9:32-35; 9:36-42).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Youngblood, Ronald R., General Editor; F. F. Bruce and R. K. Harrison, consulting Editors, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995).

The foregoing discussion has indicated that the emphasis of the passage is Jesus as prophet and charismatic. As prophet, he proclaims liberation and as charismatic he demonstrates liberation by the power of the Holy Spirit. The proclamation for liberation is emphasized by two words euaggelisasthai (preach) and khrucai ('proclaim' mentioned twice). In his preaching to the crowd in anticipation of rejection he states, "No prophet is accepted in his own town" (Luke 4:24). He likens himself to the prophets Elijah and Elisha (Luke 4:25-30). Jesus places his experience in the category of other well-known prophets of Israel.

The Qumran document 11Q M Melchizedek dated 1<sup>st</sup> century BC has an account parallel to that of Luke. The passage depicts a heavenly deliverer by the name of 'Melchizedek' who will bring judgment and set the captives free mentioned in Isaiah 61. The term 'Jubilee' is used to emphasise this freedom.

It has been suggested that the quotation from Isaiah (Is. 61:1, 2) reflects Davidic Messiah in Judaism.<sup>23</sup> D. L. Tiede presents a more plausible view pertaining to the above passage that the anointing of Jesus does not present overtones of royal-Davidic or prophetic-Mosaic images.<sup>24</sup> If such categories were the central though here then Jesus' experience would be unique and thus could not be taken as paradigmatic. The messianic images seem to be present only in relation to the baptism and temptation of Jesus and cannot be duplicated. Both the anointing he received at Jordan and the temptation he underwent are applicable only to him and no one else.

Jesus' anointing in the Jordan is a confirmation of his messianic sonship and foreshadows the servant ministry leading to the redemption of Israel. However, this is only one aspect of his mission. It is more reasonable to

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<sup>23</sup> In Judaism the predominant thought concerning the coming Messiah was that of Royal Davidic. He was expected to establish an earthly kingdom for the Israelites and would banish the enemies of Israel. He would be a political as well as a religious leader and was to bring economic prosperity in the Land of Israel. It has been suggested that the function rather than the person of the Messiah was stressed. See Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1981), 2360252, n.35.

<sup>24</sup> D. L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 46.

suppose that though the church cannot claim entire parallels with the experience of Jesus yet it can nevertheless follow his example. John Michael Penney brings out both unique as well as universal aspects of Jesus and the church, "anointing of Jesus, exemplary in many respects, is nonetheless unique in constituting him as the eschatological prophet in order to fulfil the mission of messianic servant."<sup>25</sup>

Jesus told his hearers that the passage he had just read was fulfilled in their hearing. Understanding the meaning of 'fulfil' (peplhrwtai) can shed further light on whether Jesus in ministry is a paradigm for the church or not. The passage quoted is an Old Testament text applicable to the writer in his own context. I. H. Marshall makes a comprehensive assessment of possible understanding of the word 'fulfil' as discussed below.<sup>26</sup>

1. The passage is prophetic so it refers to Jesus himself as the fulfilment meaning that his person and work is described in the prophecy. The coming of Jesus would then be an eschatological event. The word 'today' in the text means the end of time, which began at the time of Jesus and continues to the present. This points out that the era of salvation began with Jesus Christ.

2. Fulfilment refers to the time of salvation. This highlighted by the omission of the vengeance clause from the Isaiah passage read by Jesus. Salvation comprises all those actions of liberation performed by Jesus to alleviate human suffering; preached the gospel to the poor (Luke 6:20), opened blind eyes (Luke 7:21; 18:35-43). He made the lame to walk (Luke 5:17-26, cf. Acts 3:1-10; 8:7; 14:8-10), he cleansed the lepers (Luke 5:12-16; 17:11-19). Jesus also unstopped deaf hears (not mentioned in Luke but present in other synoptic gospels, cf. Mark 7:31-37; 9:25), and he brought the dead to life (Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56). It is the preaching and the performing of the mighty works that comprises the day of salvation. It is a day of liberation.

3. Jesus in person is the fulfilment of the prophecy that precisely he is the one towards whom the prophecy is pointing. The activities of setting free

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<sup>25</sup> John Michael Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 46-47.

<sup>26</sup> I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, 1970, 1988 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), 119ff.

the captives and doing other miraculous activities are inseparable from Jesus. The year of Jubilee which is the year of freedom indicating that liberation has arrived.

It is to be noted that the central concern of the message is that salvation/liberation comes through the person of Jesus Christ. The significance attached to the person of Jesus here is that of the category of prophet. In the text, Jesus classes himself with other prophets as he identifies himself with prophets Elijah and Elisha. He also uses the proverb of a prophet not being accepted in his *patris* (hometown) (Luke 4:24-27).

According to Jewish teaching, there was the idea of the eschatological prophet, for instance the constant expectation of the coming of Elijah and a prophet like Moses. Jesus' actions were identified in a typological manner with the activities of Elijah and Elisha yet he is identified not with Elijah as a person but with the new Moses.<sup>27</sup> To say that Jesus is the eschatological prophet is to purport that he is the Messiah.

In Luke 4:18f (cf. 7:19-22) Jesus is described in messianic terms and likened to Moses and the Servant of Yahweh. The Servant of Yahweh is the suffering servant who would die for his people. This is the message of Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40-66). However, this is not the only image of Jesus presented in the passage. To some degree, there exists continuity between Jesus and the disciples.

G. W. H. Lampe notes the continuity between Jesus' experience of the Spirit and that of the disciples especially as mentioned by Peter on the day of Pentecost. He explains:

Through the death and exaltation of the Messiah, the Spirit which operated in him has come to be imparted to his followers, to be bond of union between them and himself and the power by which the divine sovereignty into which he has entered is made effective among

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<sup>27</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 46-49. John the Baptist was the one identified with Elijah.

men through the preaching of the gospel in the Spirit's power and under his guidance.<sup>28</sup>

Lampe presents the idea that the risen Lord has given the Spirit to his disciples. The accomplished work of the cross is applied to human beings by the power of the Spirit.

The preceding discussion indicates that Luke treats Jesus more than just the Prophet but as the final Prophet, the Servant and Messiah. This shows the tradition, which lies behind Luke's thought regarding the ministry and person of Jesus Christ. We can then assert that the continuity between Jesus as a person and the disciples is lacking in this respect. Jesus in his redemptive work cannot be duplicated by anybody. However, the continuity is noted when it comes to the general activities wrought by Jesus through the prayer of the Holy Spirit. Jesus by comparing himself with the Prophets Elijah and Elisha indicated that he was not elevating himself beyond the reach of his disciples. It is not wrong then to see Jesus' experience as paradigmatic in certain aspects for his disciples and even for the church today.

A closer examination of the passage read by Jesus shows that utterance is prominent in it. Jesus is anointed "to preach good news to the poor," "to proclaim release to the captives," "and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Both the utterances and the activities of the prophet were significant in the identification of the role of the Spirit as liberator.

The discussion so far shows that the Nazareth narrative is both programmatic as well as paradigmatic. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit Jesus makes his kerygmatic announcement.<sup>29</sup> It is programmatic in respect to the liberation themes that will characterize Jesus' mission such as the prophetic anointing, ministry to the poor, and healing. His own people

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<sup>28</sup> G. W. H. Lampe, "The Holy Spirit in the Writings of St. Luke," in *Studies in the Gospels* ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), 159.

<sup>29</sup> Kerygmatic comes from kerygma which means "the proclamation," or "preaching," of the message of the Gospel in the New Testament church. The word is a transliteration of the Greek word that means "proclamation," "preaching," or "message" or "message preached." See Youngblood, Ronald F., General Editor; F. F. Bruce and R. K. Harrison, consulting editors, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995).

would also reject him.<sup>30</sup> E. Earle Ellis also sees this periscope in the negative light of rejection as a preview of what would happen later in the ministry of Jesus.<sup>31</sup> I propose that the incident be seen more in a positive sense. Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit and power to enable him minister liberation to those in need. The inclusion of the Gentiles in liberation is also announced though rejected by the Jews who were represented by the Nazareth congregation.

It is paradigmatic in the sense of prefiguring the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples starting from the Day of Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2: 1ff). The same Spirit that anointed Jesus for the work of ministry is the same one who descended upon the disciples to carry out the work of preaching the gospel and carry out liberation work. The same miracles of release that occurred in the ministry of Jesus were noted through his disciples. A note of universalism is seen in Luke's second volume. The promise of the Spirit is to be upon all flesh. Peter elaborated that the promise is for all including those yet to believe also (Acts 2: 39ff). The same process is to be expected today. The church could take up the pattern and expect the Spirit to operate in and through them.

### **The Church and the Holy Spirit Today**

The forgoing discussion has show that Luke presents the centrality of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus and that of the early church. The church today needs the empowerment of the Holy Spirit as depicted by Luke in his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

I have already established above that it was through the Spirit's power that Jesus and the early church confronted the issues affecting their communities. Luke presets the universal gospel of liberation through the power of the Holy Spirit. The same problems persist today and thus the church needs the same Spirit that Jesus and the early church had. Our contemporary situation seems to be more critical than the New Testament times. It is to be noted that issues that require the attention of the church

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<sup>30</sup> William H. Shepherd, *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: Georgia, 1994), 135.

<sup>31</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke: New Century Bible* (London: L. Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1974, rev ed.), 96.

include physical, psychological, sociological, economic, political, and spiritual nature. These can be effectively confronted through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The Institute for Contextual theology has proposed that the church particularly in Africa will only be effective in her mission if she has the fullness of the Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

Jesus and the early church experienced the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to carry out liberating work. The church today must set free the captives in various contexts. Modern challenges are enormous and thus the need for the power of the Holy Spirit for liberation. To play both the prophetic and charismatic roles, the church needs the inspiration and anointing of the Spirit.

Allan Anderson argues that the African Independent Churches were formed and continue to thrive particularly because they satisfy the need by Africans for a practical religion.<sup>33</sup> Anderson however argues from the perspective of similarity between the traditional African worldview and that of the Bible. My argument in this article is first from the perspective of the paradigm set by Jesus and emulated by the early church. Second is the need for liberation of humankind from oppressive situations. As already indicated the Holy Spirit upon Jesus was for declaration of the good news and deliverance of people. The early church followed suite and so could the church of today.

The prophetic role of the church is to declare the good news of the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit will enable her to speak authoritatively to the modern situations particularly touching the political and the social issues. Liberation is one of the main agendas for the church today. Liberation encompasses spiritual, psychological, social, political, economic,

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<sup>32</sup> Institute for Contextual Theology, *Speaking for ourselves* (Braamfontem: ICT, 1985), 27.

<sup>33</sup> Allan Anderson, *Moya*, 9. See also Mika Vahakangas, "Doctrinal Relationship between Protestantism and Charismatic Renewal" in *Charismatic Renewal in Africa: A Challenge for African Christianity* eds. Mika Vahakangas and Andrew A. Kyomo (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003), 66-90. Vahakangas states that traditional African worldview gives prominence to the spirit world much like the biblical attitude.

and physical concerns among others. Like Jesus and the early church, the modern church needs the power of the Spirit to be able to fulfil her mission.

### Conclusion

The centrality of the Holy Spirit in Luke's thought is unmistakable when one examines his gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. The gospel has been termed the Gospel of the Spirit. It is my contention that it should be regarded as the universal Gospel of liberation by the Holy Spirit. Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit is the main character of in the Gospel. He is anointed by the Spirit to proclaim the good news to the poor, and bring liberation to the oppressed. Liberation work is seen in the miracles and healings He performed. Though he is unique in some respects yet he is a paradigm in other areas both for the disciples and the church. The church in our contemporary situation needs the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in order to fulfil her prophetic role as well as the liberation function in all respects.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

J. Ayodeji Adewuya

*Holiness and Community in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1: Paul's Communal Holiness in the Corinthian Correspondence*

Studies in Biblical Literature, 40 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003)

Adewuya's study of 2 Corinthian 5:14-7:1 is a meticulous and judicious study of a controverted Pauline text (so controverted that some think it to be a non-Pauline, or even an anti-Pauline, interpolation). Adewuya's critical judgments about the passage are conservative – he argues that it is written by Paul and that, contrary to the opinion of many, he argues that it fits into the context in which it is found in 2 Corinthians. But the most important contributions Adewuya makes to our understanding of the passage stem from the angle of vision which he brings to his study.

First, Adewuya makes clear early on that a neglected aspect of this passage among scholars is the emphasis the text gives to the theme of holiness: “the holiness message embedded in that passage has neither been sufficiently taken into account nor adequately articulated by exegetes.” (p. 1) His antidote to that exegetical lapse is to study the text against the background of biblical holiness ideas from the Old Testament, especially from the Holiness Code in Leviticus, and in light of other uses of holiness language in Paul's writings. What he finds are verbal links to Leviticus which suggest that Paul had OT holiness ideas in mind when composing his passage, and that the passage is consistent with Paul's overall understanding of holiness/purity ideas. Most interesting, perhaps, is the tactic suggestion made by Adewuya, that his own background as a part of the holiness tradition (he is a member of the Deeper Christian Life Ministry), stemming from Wesleyanism is a factor which led him to notice this lacuna in Pauline scholarship.

On the other hand, Adewuya's holiness background does not prevent him from some gentle criticism of his ecclesial tradition. In fact a major finding of his study is that, in contrast with holiness scholarship on this text, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 speaks of holiness in communal rather than individualistic terms. It is here that Adewuya's African background has been an aid to interpretation. In other words, his holiness background and his African background have proved to be aids to reading the text, and one background has actually been balance to the other.

There are several places in the book where Adewuya mentions that he is an African. These mentions are brief and always in footnotes and so easily missed. In fact, I was rather surprised at how understated his African perspective was, since one of the 'blurbs' on the back cover (by Dr. Scott Bartchy of UCLA) had proclaimed that the study was "informed quite positively by his unique blending of African communal experiences and traditions with his thorough education in historical methods of Euro-American exegesis." In spite of the blurb I could find no section of the book devoted to Africa. Sadly the book contains no subject index and so references to Africa were not readily searchable. Neither the Introduction nor the Conclusion mentioned Africa. However, a careful reading uncovered some clues – and led to another mystery. I did manage to unearth a few mentions of Africa. For example, the bibliography contains several references to works written by and about Africa – but (mysteriously) none of the writers of these works appears in the author index. A few footnotes also mention contributions to understanding the biblical text which stem from an African perspective. In one place Adewuya mentions that the Yoruba language contains two word groups which could be translated "unbeliever" and, for him, suggests that Paul may use the term in more than one sense depending on the context (p. 103, fn 49). In another place Adewuya uses a Yoruba proverb ("a sheep that keeps company of a dog will inevitably feed on excreta") to illustrate Paul's contention that believers should not but unequally yoked with unbelievers (p. 119, fn 102). In a further place he asserts that "as an African" he finds the Pauline phrase "let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit" in 2 Corinthians 7:1 to be meaningful. For an African the whole person, both body and soul, would be involved in a person's sanctification since Africans do not see a separation between the sacred and the secular. (p.126, fn 125). These passages certainly pointed to Adewuya's African background as playing a role in his work as an exegete. There are a few other similar statement peppered throughout the book. These references did not, however, fulfill the role for his African understanding which seemed to have been promised by the back cover blurb.

The final clue (and mystery) was found at the end of one of these footnotes: "For more of African related concepts that may shed light on the understanding of 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1, see Appendix" (p.104, fn 49). Here the plot thickens – for there is no Appendix. The critic in me had a traditional-historical theory for this conundrum. It is clear that Adewuya's book started life as a doctoral dissertation. He also mentions that the scholar who wrote the blurb on the back had helped him and had read his thesis. Could it be that the original dissertation contained an Appendix which somehow did not find its way into the published version? This hypothesis also seems a plausible explanation as to why several important works on Africa and by Africans are in the bibliography, but are not referenced in the book or found in the index. The further mystery is the question of why the Appendix was removed. Was it simply that a shorter volume would require less money to publish or (a more sinister explanation) did an editor or some scholar suggest that the Appendix was extraneous to the argument of the book? Sadly, many Africans have been told to "leave Africa out" of their scholarly investigation, as if being an African would be a hindrance to so-called objective investigation. Could this have been the case with Adewuya as well? Thankfully, contrary to the work of historical critics working on ancient texts, I have access to the original source – I emailed the author. In a gracious email Dr. Adewuya dispelled my more sinister explain and assured me that an attempt to keep the cost of publishing down was the reason for dropping the Appendix. Thankfully Adewuya intends to make the information in that Appendix available through further publication in scholarly journals. Unfortunately, the book itself is a bit poorer for not having that information included.

In spite of the lack of the Appendix and a few other minor issues (there are some typographical errors which should have been cleaned up and some stylistic items which are not kept consistent) Adewuya's published dissertation is a model of good scholarship, modestly informed by the scholar's ecclesial, cultural and theological background. Adewuya does not allow his background to overwhelm and misread the text – this is no exercise in 'eisegesis' – rather he allows his social and theological location to ask some fruitful questions which may have been missed by readers without his background. Readers must hope for more from this careful and sensitive scholar.

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Eddie Gibbs

***Leadership Next: Changing Leaders  
in a Changing Culture***

Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005

ISBN 978144740925. £8.99

*Leadership Next* offers a highly contextualised treatment of leadership dynamics from amongst a rapidly changing North American context. The author is a Professor of Church Growth from the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Seminary, USA. On the surface, the topic would appear of little help to African church leaders; for, although we live within an era highlighted by profound globalisation, it would be naïve if not downright arrogant to assume that Africa's encounter with global constructs would be the same as those experienced in the West. Words such as 'modernity', 'post-modernity', or movements such as the 'emerging church' may find similar points of reference in Africa, but conditioned and re-interpreted in different ways. However, these prefaced remarks should not dismiss the relevance of this book for modern, African leaders, who, may need to skim through some of the colourful North American illustrations in order to understand the author's argument, and follow a similar methodology for evaluating leadership effectiveness in twenty-first century Africa.

Gibbs begins by redefining leadership for an era marked by rapid change, multiculturalism, globalisation, telecommunication and other characteristics of contemporary societies. He challenges the status quo, even arguing that many leaders need to 'unlearn' what they have always presumed, in order to adapt to a new, modern order. Leadership should migrate, he argues, from singular, charismatic personalities to collective responsibilities; it is about relationships that interconnect persons into communities, and which rapidly adapts to changing social conditions. Missional leaders are needed: those with a focus 'on ministry *by* the church in the world rather than ministry *in* the church that is largely confined to the existing members' (p. 26); leaders who see the viability of influencing lives through character transformation; and where the application relates to spiritual and material points of interest.

The remainder of the book largely builds upon this foundation, but with flesh given to these incipient ideas. He devotes considerable time to

exploring different values and styles associated with leadership in order to contribute to this more expansive, collective, and society-impacting understanding. Pluralism demarcates modern societies (highlighted, as well, as a feature within our churches) and thus requiring a leadership response that takes seriously differences of worldviews. Multiculturalism, global perspectives, flexibility, innovativeness and adaptability are all characteristics, he contends, of future missional leaders.

The greatest benefit of this book for African leaders pertains to his methodological approach. Leaders need to be students of their surroundings. The diversity and complexity of socio-cultural contexts further demands team approaches to leadership, where differences of style, personality and ideas are embraced for what they contribute to the whole. My primary concern, however, relates to Gibbs' tendency to offer rather simplistic dichotomies between cultural elements (modernity vs. post-modernity) or leadership styles (controlling vs. non-controlling). It may be helpful, at times, to differentiate between these elements as caricatures – in order to highlight contrasting values or leadership styles – but future leaders in Africa will need to avoid similar polarities and work for more integrative between these elements. For example, he says, “Many younger leaders with new styles of leadership appear to be at the forefront because they are not weighed down by traditional structures and expectations” (p. 83). This statement, and many others, gives the impression that traditions, hierarchies, and other vestiges of by-gone years need to be sacrificed in order to embrace newer methods. American culture has a historic tendency of swinging along a pendulum: acting and reacting against itself. African leaders should guard themselves from the same, and work for more integration.

Some of these dichotomising concerns are mitigated by the pastoral, fatherly approach he adopts through the book, where he sees his role as that of an older leader giving pieces of advice to younger leaders (under 30 years old). Gibbs' highly contextualised, deeply imaginative, and intensely passionate approach to pastoral leadership within the church, and for the world, is an impressive element of this book. It should be read from within the context from which it was written, and re-interpreted into twenty-first century Africa by leaders committed to impacting their world for Christ.

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Thomas R. Schreiner

***New Testament Theology: Magnifying  
God in Christ***

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008. 990 pages, £24.99

ISBN

In this book, Thomas R. Schreiner who is a veteran New Testament scholar serving at the Southern Baptist Seminary, describes the New Testament theology in a thematic way. The author's qualification for writing on this topic includes over twelve years as New Testament professor. He holds a doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary. As a Pauline scholar, Schreiner is also the author and editor of several books including *Romans; Interpreting the Pauline Epistles; The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law; The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance; Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives of Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, co-edited with Bruce A. Ware; *Women in the Church: A fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15; Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology, 1 and 2 Peter*, and *Jude*.

Schreiner's approach of the book is thematic and this he makes clear in the preface. He looks at the New Testament from two perspectives. The first one is that "God's purpose in all that he does is to bring honor to himself and to Jesus Christ" (p.13). This concerns the unity of redemptive history and the Kingdom of God. The New Testament takes up Old Testament descriptions and establishes that the kingdom has come although it remains unfulfilled in Jesus Christ. The second key point of view is put thus, "The centrality of God in Christ leads to abstraction if not closely related to the history of salvation, to the fulfillment of God's promises" (p.14). The focal point here is the goal of the kingdom which is the glory of God through the work of Christ and the empowering presence of the spirit. This outlook takes shape and infuses the book.

The book is divided into four chief parts which consists of 19 chapters, an epilogue, and an appendix. Part one deals with the fulfillment of God's saving promises which is already-not yet. This part is further broken down into three chapters which focus on the following themes: 'Kingdom of God

in the synoptic gospels,' 'eternal life and eschatology in John's theology,' and 'inaugurate eschatology outside the gospels.'

Part two comprises the promise of God through the saving work of the Father, Son, and Spirit. This is broken down to another ten chapters. The ten chapters covers the following ten topics respectively: 'the centrality of God in the New Testament theology,' 'the centrality of Christ in the synoptic gospels,' 'the messiah and the son of man in the gospels,' 'son of God,' 'Jesus' saving work in the Gospel,' 'Jesus' saving work in Acts,' 'the Christology of Paul,' 'the saving work of God and Christ according to Paul,' 'the Christology of Hebrews-Revelation,' and 'the Holy Spirit.'

Part three discusses ways of experiencing the promise through believing and obeying. This part is broken down into three chapters which are 'The problem of sin,' 'faith and obedience,' and 'the law and salvation history.'

Part four covers the people of the promise and the future of the promise. Their detail is broken down in three chapters, 'the people of the promise,' 'the social world of God's people,' and the last chapter covers 'the consummation of God's promises.'

It is an easy book to read due to its lucid exposition of the New Testament theology. Therefore this book can be of great value to scholars, pastors and students. In expounding the centrality of God in the New Testament theology as well as the role of the Law in salvation history – which the author does very well – the book provides a very good summary of the Old Testament theology.

The book is well informed in terms of scholarship; making it a must-have for theological libraries. The issues discussed are very relevant to pastoral concerns in the African context and the world at large where Christians live. The author's examination of the New Testament promotes a livable theology in the sense that it shows us how the redeemed are to dwell in God's world. The nature and structure of the book makes it useful for guiding bible study groups. Theologically, the book is evangelical and/or conservative as evidenced by his traditional stand on the treatment of women in the church and the home.

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