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Gregory Crofford, PhD, editor

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## Contents

Foreword.....	4
“BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY” TOWARD AN AFRICAN HOLINESS CHURCH.....	5
Gift Mtukwa	
THE CHURCH: THE SPIRITUAL HOPE AGAINST ADDICTION.....	23
Samantha Chambo	
ENDURE HARDSHIP: SUFFERING IN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.....	33
Geoffrey Gertzen and Pelham Lessing	
THE ISSUE OF SPIRITUAL POWER IN AFRICAN TRADITION AND WORLDVIEW, AND HOW THE CHURCH COULD RESPOND .....	49
Joseph Kiso Masika	
LET THEM CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH: DIVINE HEALING AND THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE IN SOUTH AFRICA .....	61
Gregory Crofford and Mashangu Maluleka	
Our Contributors .....	73

## Foreword

We are pleased to present for the reader's enrichment this second volume of the *Africa Journal of Wesleyan Theology*. Pastoral practitioners on the African continent face a dizzying array of doctrines. In addition to the excellent reflections on the doctrine of holiness, writers tackle four other topics around which there has been much confusion. Careful attention to Scripture as well as practical applications to local church ministry will be a source of both enlightenment and encouragement to laity and clergy who are keen to anchor the church against the contrary winds of our time (Ephesians 4:14). With the publication of each annual installment of the AJWT, the previous year's volume will be made available digitally. Online, visit the Wesleyan-Holiness Digital Library at WHDL.org to access the archive of past volumes available for free PDF download. May the Triune God use these papers to banish sin and fear and to fill you with perfect love, as together we build the Kingdom.

Gregory Crofford, PhD, editor, AJWT

This journal of pastoral theology targets those serving in the African context and regions of the Global South that have significant cultural convergence with Africa. It features writers who resonate with the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition of Christianity, and combines sound scholarship with insights from the practice of ministry.

**Send articles for consideration to the editor at: [gcrofford@anu.ac.ke](mailto:gcrofford@anu.ac.ke)**

"BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY":  
TOWARD AN AFRICAN HOLINESS CHURCH

by  
**Gift Mtukwa**

The Church of the Nazarene is a holiness church. The denomination is part of the family of holiness churches that were founded as a result of the holiness movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>1</sup> This paper examines the doctrine of holiness in the Church of the Nazarene in Africa. The historical influences of the American church on the African understanding of holiness will be sketched. We will give an overview of the biblical holiness message and then discuss the scenario in Africa in regard to holiness, presenting information gathered from church members across the continent, factors behind the lack of understanding will be analysed, and some solutions will be offered to the problem. The paper will also present some African problems and how holiness is the solution to these and other problems.

**Introduction and definition of holiness**

Stephen Barton defined holiness as something that "... has to do...with the fundamental character of the reality we call God, the One who graces us with His presence and enables us to share His life as gift and grace"<sup>2</sup> First and foremost, holiness has to do with God, not humanity; people are holy as we relate with a holy God. The holy God requires a holy people to serve him. That is important to God and it is important to the Church of the Nazarene.<sup>3</sup> The critical objectives of the Church of the Nazarene as stated in the *Manual* are "holy Christian fellowship, the conversion of sinners, the entire sanctification of believers, their up-building in holiness, and the simplicity and spiritual power manifest in the primitive New Testament Church, together with the preaching of the gospel to every creature."<sup>4</sup>

The church then, is the holy people of God. In this sense, the church can be said to be holy, since she is constituted by the holy people who relate with a

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<sup>1</sup> Dean G. Blevins, ed., *Church of the Nazarene Manual 2009-13* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2010), 14.

<sup>2</sup> "Introduction" in Stephen C. Barton, ed., *Holiness: Past and Present* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), xvi.

<sup>3</sup> The core values of the Church of the Nazarene are: We are a Christian people, a holiness people, and a missional people. The mission of the Church of the Nazarene is to make Christ-like disciples in the nations. See *Christian, Holiness, Missional* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, n.d.), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Manual, 2009-13, 5.

holy God. It important to consider what Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, said concerning the holiness of people who make up the church:

A human being is holy not because he or she triumphs by will-power over chaos and guilt and leads a flawless life, but because that life shows the victory of God's faithfulness *in the midst* of disorder and imperfection. The church is holy...not because it is a gathering of the good and the well behaved, but because it speaks of the triumph of grace in the coming together of strangers and sinners who, miraculously, trust one another enough to join in common repentance and common praise...Humanly speaking, holiness is always like this: God's endurance in the middle of our refusal of him, his capacity to meet every refusal with the gift of himself.<sup>5</sup>

Contrary to what is believed in popular press, that to be human is to err, holiness makes humanity fully human, in the words of Barton, "To attend to holiness, therefore, is to attend to a matter that lies at the very heart of what it means to be and become fully human."<sup>6</sup> Holiness then is not something foreign to humanity, but an intrinsic part of what it means to be human. Without holiness, we are pseudo-human.

### **The status of holiness in the Church today**

In research done by the Barna group entitled *Holiness Baffles Most Americans*, the report stated that "Overall, three out of every four adults (73%) believe that it is possible for someone to become holy, regardless of their past. Only half of the adult population (50%), however, says that they know someone they consider to be holy, and that's more than twice as many who consider themselves to be holy (21%)."<sup>7</sup> Concerning born again Christians, the report stated:

The views of born again Christians are not much different from the national averages. Among born again adults, three-quarters (76%) say it is possible for a person to become holy, regardless of their past. Slightly more than half of the born again group (55%) say they know someone who they would

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<sup>5</sup> Rowan Williams, *Open to Judgment: Sermon and Address* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1994), 136.

<sup>6</sup> Barton, "Introduction," xvii.

<sup>7</sup> Barna Report, "Holiness Baffles Most Americans," February 20, 2006, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/162-the-concept-of-holiness-baffles-most-americans> (accessed January 22, 2012).

describe as holy. And roughly three out of ten born agains (29%) say they are holy, which is marginally more than the national norm.<sup>8</sup>

Two factors disqualify this report for the purposes of this paper. First of all, it was done in America, not in Africa. Secondly, it is not a research based on the holiness churches alone but the church in general. Notwithstanding, the report is instructive on many fronts. After over 100 years of holiness churches in existence, we have not convinced the world we have the message—namely the holiness message— that men and women can become holy and live holy lives.

The situation was also very well-articulated by Barton, who observed: "...the language and practices of holiness have atrophied under the impact of modernity and secularization...many people shy away from attention to holiness for fear of the moralizing rebuke implied in the tag, 'holier than thou.'" <sup>9</sup> This can be said in the holiness circles as well. One simply needs to present themselves as less than holy, so we often hear words like "I am just human" or "to be human is to err." Such phrases demonstrate that the unholy is more acceptable in our society than the holy.

Perhaps the greatest evidence of lack of articulation of the holiness message is what Alex Deasley called "the *increasing* unholiness in the church and world."<sup>10</sup> Keith Drury observed the same thing in his presidential address to the Christian Holiness Partnership in 1994, noting: "Spiritual shallowness is rampant. The river is a mile wide and an inch deep. Sin among believers is commonplace, dismissed as 'only human.' Christians—evangelicals—boldly advertise on bumper stickers: 'I'm not perfect—just forgiven.' What was once an eroding morality in the world is now an eroding morality in the church."<sup>11</sup> This situation is compounded by the fact that Christians seem just as likely to divorce their spouses, cheat on their tax returns, and even give a bribe as non-Christians. Is there anything that makes Christians different from the world around them?

Coming closer home, Diane Leclerc, in *Discovering Christian Holiness*, reporting of the work of the Wesleyan Holiness Study project, discussed the realization that all the theologians and ecclesiastical leaders (in the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project) made, namely, that there is "the *lack* of articulation of holiness. The concern was not about holiness being preached this way or

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<sup>8</sup> Barna Report

<sup>9</sup> Barton, "Introduction," xvi.

<sup>10</sup> Alex R. G. Deasley, "Biblical hermeneutics and the Wesleyan message of holiness," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33, no. 2 (September 1, 1998), 130-144; ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed August 4, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Keith Drury, "The Holiness Movement Is Dead," in *The Holiness Digest* (Winter 1994), 15.

that way, but whether it was being preached at all.”<sup>12</sup> She also mentioned the result of the Study Project published as “Holiness Manifesto” in 2008, especially the introduction by the project leader Kevin Mannoia, who concluded: “In the process of trying to find the magic method for growing healthy vibrant churches, our people have...fallen prey to a generic Christianity that results in congregations that are indistinguishable from the culture around them. Churches need a clear compelling message that will replace the ‘holy grail’ of methods as the focus of our mission. Our message is our mission!”<sup>13</sup>

Leclerc mentioned her own realization in her class on the doctrine of holiness and entire sanctification, that most if not all of her students had not heard the message of holiness, most of them coming from the Church of the Nazarene. Two of fifty students had some grasp of the concept of holiness. This to her proved the hypothesis of the Wesleyan Holiness Study project, that:

... the message of holiness is not being communicated or, at least, not being communicated effectively. I have a theory why. I believe we have a whole generation of pastors who were deeply affected by a time in the history of the Wesleyan- Holiness tradition when the idea of perfectionism, rather than vital piety, dominated.<sup>14</sup>

She says this happened post-World War II, when society reflected a desire for stability and “normality.” There was great emphasis, especially in the Protestant church, on morality, decency, and conformity. Holiness denominations tended to emphasize “rules” more than the vitality of the life of holiness. Then the 1960s the world underwent a dramatic shift.<sup>15</sup>

This is very significant for our discussion, because it is after World War II when most African countries received the Church of the Nazarene and other Holiness Churches.<sup>16</sup> The holiness churches were experiencing a crisis when the message of holiness was introduced in Africa. Many older Nazarenes in Africa recall days when holiness was defined by what one could or could not do. The kind of worship that was acceptable in holiness churches was also very much legalistic. Leclerc noted that “...there has been a rising sensitivity to the theological colonialism that has transpired through the decades. In some

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<sup>12</sup> Diane Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness: The Heart of Wesleyan Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2010), 15.

<sup>13</sup> Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 16.

<sup>16</sup> The holiness Churches were already in Africa prior to WWII, but the majority of African countries – including Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – received the Church of the Nazarene after the 1950s.



cases an Americanized articulation of the Holiness message was imposed on non-American cultures..."<sup>17</sup>

Due to the fact that many of the emerging pastors in America did not want to preach this kind of perfectionism, the result was that "...the pendulum seems to have swung from legalism to pessimism about victory over sin. Many of my students believe that sin is inevitable, pervasive, and enduring in a Christian's life. Sadly, they seem to be unaware of a different way to live,"<sup>18</sup> Leclerc lamented.

Keith Drury, in his controversial article, *The Holiness Movement is Dead*, noted:

We have a holiness heritage. We have holiness denominations. We have holiness organizations. We have holiness doctrines. We even have holiness colleges, but we no longer have a holiness movement. I, for one, lament the death of the holiness movement. But pretending we are alive as a movement will not make it so. In fact, it may be the greatest barrier to the emergence of a new holiness movement.<sup>19</sup>

This is an important realization for those in the holiness tradition to come to terms with reality. This will help us to take stock and know where we are and where we need to be. We can still recover what we have lost. After lamenting the death of the holiness movement, Drury proceeded to outline the reason why the holiness movement has died. These include seeking to be respectable, plunging into the evangelical mainstream, failure to convince the younger generation, failure to make holiness the main issue, loss of the lay people, overreacting to the abuses of the past, adopting church growth thinking without theological thinking, and failure to notice when the battle line moved.<sup>20</sup>

### **Holiness in the Church of the Nazarene in Africa**

The Church of the Nazarene is a global church, which began in North America and as such the mother church is very influential to the rest of the churches across the globe. What happens in America finds its way to the rest of world considered to be mission areas. Most missionaries in the Church of the Nazarene to Africa have been Americans. Most books used in theological schools are written and published in America. What the African church has learned about holiness, she has learned from the American Holiness

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<sup>17</sup> Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Keith Drury, "The Holiness Movement is Dead," Presidential Address Presented to the Christian Holiness Association, 1994; available online: <http://www.drurywriting.com/keith/dead.footnoted.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Drury, "The Holiness Movement is Dead," 1-6.

Movement. What ails the American church, sooner or later will be felt in the African church. All that Keith Drury says about the American Holiness Movement can be said about the African Church by extension.

The current situation in the Church of the Nazarene in Africa is that a bracket statement cannot be made on whether the holiness message is being disseminated. This certainly varies from region to region, country to country, district to district and even from local church to local church. A district superintendent from Uganda has said: "...some pastors don't understand the (holiness) message..." An ordained leader from Kenya has also remarked: "...the challenge we have is pastors from other denominations. We (Church of the Nazarene) take pastors from other churches and they come as pastors before they become members. These pastors continue as before." The result is a generic evangelical Christianity as opposed to a distinctly holiness church.

The issue of importing pastors from other churches was also cited as the problem behind the lack of preaching of holiness in Uganda. As a result, "We are now grooming our own pastors from within. We are now not rushing in opening churches, but training pastors before we appoint them as pastors."<sup>21</sup> The results are starting to be seen as "People now see the differences between other churches and us. In a recent training for pastors including those from other churches, a pastor from another denomination was very excited about the holiness message and decided to join the church of the Nazarene."

Once individuals express a desire to become pastors with the Church of the Nazarene, the next step is training. One has to join either an extension school or a Bible college or a university for this kind of training. Even those who come theologically trained from other churches and institutions outside the Church of the Nazarene have to take the approved ordination track. This happens under normal circumstances; however, there are times when the normal process is not followed, where some become pastors before they are trained and then they get training on the job. Sometimes a four-year training has taken fifteen years to complete. These pastors have to preach "something" on a Sunday morning. The situation is worse where the church is growing exponentially; schools are not able to cope with the higher demand for pastors.

Personally, I have asked my students in a doctrine of holiness class, to interview clergy from another denomination, clergy from a Nazarene local church and a layperson from the Church of the Nazarene. In these interviews, it is clear that there is a considerable difference between clergy from other churches and those from the Church of the Nazarene in terms of their

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with a church leader in Uganda, with the anonymity of the church leaders intentionally guarded.

understanding and whether or not they preach holiness.<sup>22</sup> However, 40% of the laypeople interviewed over a period of five years by different individuals, seem to indicate that they don't fully understand the message of holiness. When asked how often they hear the message of holiness preached, again 35% say rarely, and 65% hear it often. On the question whether they consider themselves holy, over 60% of respondents did not consider themselves holy.<sup>23</sup> One interviewee had this to say concerning why preachers shy away from addressing holiness:

It is once in a while, because holiness is one of the topics that doesn't pull crowds, those who have itching ears choose what they want to be taught. Many people believe holiness is a concept that only God has attained. When holiness is preached, the congregation views it as a judgment on those who want to live in the pleasure of sin.

The other factor that has to be probed is the effectiveness of theological training received by candidates for ordination. Personally, I participate in the credentials board where approval for preachers' licenses and ordinations are done. One of the questions we ask is whether a candidate has experienced entire sanctification and whether they preach holiness. There are indeed candidates who have a good grasp of the biblical message of holiness. However, some candidates do not understand the basic message of holiness and entire sanctification. When some having gone through our education system still do not understand the holiness message, hard questions have to be asked.

One of the reasons that can be attributed to lack of articulation of the holiness message is the fact that there is confusion among pastors and theologians on what constitutes the holiness message. Controversies such as should the image of God (holiness being the renewal into the image of God) be understood as relational or substantial? Is it crisis or process?<sup>24</sup> Could it be that this confusion is passed on in theological classes, particularly the doctrine of holiness class that is a must for all candidates pursuing ordination in the

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<sup>22</sup> Even though one ordained minister's response to the question whether one can be entirely sanctified was, "I doubt if one can be entirely sanctified. It is a debatable issue."

<sup>23</sup> Some people apparently do not want to present themselves as holier than thou, so they would rather say they do not consider themselves holy.

<sup>24</sup> Mark R. Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology: the Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene: 1905 to 2004* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2004), 168. See also Bongani Dlamini, "An Analysis of the Differing Views of Sanctification (Crisis and Process) in Swaziland Church of the Nazarene," M.A. thesis, Africa Nazarene University Nairobi, Kenya, 2010. This thesis describes the situation in Swaziland pertaining to this debate.

Church of the Nazarene? If a Bachelors graduate<sup>25</sup> demonstrates this confusion, how about those in diploma and certificate levels who form the majority of our pastors? A proper understanding of the biblical message of holiness being crucial for an articulation of holiness, we now turn our attention to the Biblical witness.

### **The holiness message –biblical witness**

The Bible is consistent in its teaching regarding holiness. In the Old Testament, God created a people who are in his image. Sin distorted that image and God reached out to humanity with his grace. Man became even more corrupt and God remembered Noah (who was blameless) when he destroyed the rest of creation. Noah's descendant Abraham was chosen by God and received a promise of a great nation. The rest of the Old Testament story is a story of God and Israel, the children of Abraham and the making of a holy nation that was supposed to be a blessing to the nations.

The frequency of the word holy (*qodesh*) – 850 times in the Old Testament – has been noted.<sup>26</sup> This word basically means "...the essential nature of that which belongs to the sphere of the sacred and which is thus distinct from the common or profane."<sup>27</sup> In Leviticus 10:10, God said to Aaron: "You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (ESV). Rudolf Otto in *The Idea of the Holy* addressed what he called the *numinous*, the Latin word for holy, noting that "holy" refers to the *mysterium tremendum*. In other words, God's holiness is a tremendous mystery and our approach to it is one of fear and attraction.<sup>28</sup>

Israel as a nation entered a covenant with YHWH that "...defines the holy as a relationship in which the will of God is done. Here holiness and righteousness are wed. Even in the Old Testament, understanding holiness as proper relation to God in no way renders the holy void of moral and ethical content."<sup>29</sup> The covenant in which Israel entered had stipulations, meaning God and Israel had obligations to each other. For Israel, the stipulations were in the form of the law given by Moses, and her faithfulness to the covenant was demonstrated by keeping the law. As a holy people, Israel had to live a

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<sup>25</sup> One candidate (who had completed a B.A. in Theology in one of our schools) did not understand what holiness and entire sanctification is, and he proceeded to point to the confusion that exists among those who teach the doctrine of holiness.

<sup>26</sup> Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas E. McComiskey, "Qodesh," 786-789, in *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament* (ed. R. Laird Harris: Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 787.

<sup>28</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford, 1926).

<sup>29</sup> David Thompson, "Old Testament Bases of the Wesleyan Message," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 10 (1975), 39.

markedly different way from her neighbors. According to John Barton, “Torah’ is a system by which to live the whole of life in the presence of God, rather than a set of detailed regulations to cover every individual situation in which a moral ruling might be called for....Torah...in this sense ethics is not so much a system of obligations as a way of communion with God.”<sup>30</sup>

The *cultus* was also an important part of the Israelites’ life. According to McComiskey, “The *cultus* effected the holiness of those who participated in it.”<sup>31</sup> Those who participated in the *cultus* had to be holy and serious consequences befell anyone who approached God in an unworthy manner. The Day of Atonement was devoted to the cleansing of people from sin, which “a holy God could not condone.”<sup>32</sup> McComiskey proceeded to note that “Various aspects of the *cultus* were denominated holy by virtue of their being conceived of as belonging to the realm of the sacred and were not to be treated as common.”<sup>33</sup> Holiness was not limited to those who participated in the *cultus* only, but all Israel was to be holy. YHWH would say, “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, you shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2, ESV).

The prophets in Israel called people to a holy lifestyle that many had abandoned. In the prophetic writings, there is a realization that law is not going “to provide the requisite motivation to fulfil the love command that lies at its heart.”<sup>34</sup> Consequently, the prophets began to speak of an age when the Spirit will be lavished on all flesh. The prophet Joel declared: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit” (Joel 2:28-29, ESV).

The purpose of the Spirit is of course to empower the people of God to live out the life God requires of his people. The prophet Ezekiel proclaimed:

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

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<sup>30</sup> John Barton, “Approaches to Ethics in the Old Testament.” in John Rogerson, ed., *Beginning Old Testament Survey* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 130.

<sup>31</sup> McComiskey, “Qodesh,” 788.

<sup>32</sup> McComiskey, “Qodesh,” 788.

<sup>33</sup> McComiskey, “Qodesh,” 788.

<sup>34</sup> William M. Greathouse, *Wholeness in Christ: Towards a Biblical Theology of Holiness* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1998), 59.

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules (Ezekiel 36:25-27, ESV).

It is clear that God was going to deal with the problem of sin once and for all. Humans sin because of a deeper problem. The Jewish Rabbis in the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple period saw this deeper problem as the evil impulse and the good desires (*yetzer ha-ra/ yetzer ha-tov*) respectively.<sup>35</sup> This idea was further developed by New Testament writers, especially the apostle Paul and James.

In the New Testament, God continued with the task of creating a holy people. All New Testament writers were under the conviction that the last days are here, what the prophets saw has now been fulfilled in Christ. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, declared that he came not to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfil it. The blessed people in the Sermon on the Mount are certainly the holy people of God who have a pure heart, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, whose righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees.<sup>36</sup>

Kent Brower, referring to Matthew, 5:20 observed: "Taken from its historical and literary context, this pericope appears to suggest that Jesus considers all the Torah to be binding on all the new people of God...The kind of holiness Jesus is demanding of His disciples is ever more strict and rigorous than adherence to a legal code"<sup>37</sup> Yet it is also important to note that "Jesus' Torah intensification implies that mere compliance with the Torah is not adequate because that does not really reflect the intentions of the Lawgiver."<sup>38</sup> The Matthean Jesus calls his disciples to perfection. The context of this command is love for enemies. The people of God are to be perfect as their heavenly father who does good to those who hate him. According to Brower, to be perfect, "...is to have that perfect love, that single-minded devotion to God and love of neighbour that is the summation and fulfilment of God's great commands to us."<sup>39</sup>

Mark's gospel centres on the identity of Jesus. In the first verse, Mark declares that his gospel is the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Kent Brower noted the significance of the phrase 'The Holy One of God' in Mark 1:24. From this, he concluded that Jesus is the holy one of God in their (the disciples') midst. Disciples are called to be with Jesus, and consequently discipleship is a call to

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<sup>35</sup> W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1962), 21.

<sup>36</sup> Kent Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2005), 111-116.

<sup>37</sup> Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels*, 116.

<sup>38</sup> Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels*, 121-122.

<sup>39</sup> Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels*, 125.

holiness.<sup>40</sup> The idea of the incarnation is central in John, “the Word became flesh.”<sup>41</sup> Jesus became human so that we might become like God. In addition, in the gospel of John, the idea of mutual indwelling is critical for our understanding of holiness. The Father is in the Son, and the disciples are in the Son who is in the Father.<sup>42</sup>

The Lucan (Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles) writings pick up the idea of the Spirit that the prophets spoke about. Jesus was conceived by the Spirit and conducted his ministry empowered by the Spirit. The disciples were told to wait until the Spirit from on high filled them. It is quite evident in Luke’s writings that the age of the Spirit had dawned.<sup>43</sup> In Brower’s words, “Jesus is the prime example of the work of the Spirit in a human being.”<sup>44</sup> The above summary demonstrates that the gospels are an excellent resource for holiness teaching and preaching.

Paul in his writings refers to Christians in his churches as saints in Christ Jesus. (eg. Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2). Pauline writings are full of descriptions of what the holy people of God look like. Paul’s understanding of holiness was grounded in his understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed (Rom. 1:17). N.T Wright understood the righteousness of God to be “...the covenant faithfulness of God.”<sup>45</sup> On the part of the people of God then, it is their response to the faithfulness of the Holy God. In Paul’s thought, all are sinners, (Rom 3:23) who are in need of sanctification. (1 Thess.5:23). The holy people of God are to be in the Spirit and not in the flesh. (Rom. 8:4-5).

The rest of the New Testament continues with the call to holiness. In Peter, the people of God are to live their lives in such a way that those who would accuse them have nothing to do so with. Peter also calls the people of God to be holy just as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). They are also to be a holy priesthood.<sup>46</sup> This call culminates in Revelation where the church is presented as bride without blemish.

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<sup>40</sup> Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels*, 87-88.

<sup>41</sup> Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 69.

<sup>42</sup> Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels*, 65.

<sup>43</sup> Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels*, 43-60.

<sup>44</sup> Brower, *Holiness in the Gospels*, 43.

<sup>45</sup> N.T Wright, “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” in David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson, eds., *Pauline Theology, Vol III Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Augsburg, 1994), 34.

<sup>46</sup> Space does not allow to mention the books of Hebrews, James, the Johannine letters, and Jude, all of which have significant teaching on holiness.

The preceding discussion has shown that the Bible is indeed a book about a holy God who longs to create a holy people, yet this people chose to be unholy. God chose to call a holy people into existence. Properly understood, the Bible in its fullness has a sustained holiness message. Those who preach from it do not need to go to specific texts to preach holiness, but any text from the Bible can be read as a holiness text. If those who preach the Bible can think like that, then every Sunday sermon can be a holiness sermon. In the words of Barry Callen, "The biblical narrative, from its Genesis beginning to its Revelation ending, is about holiness granted, holiness lost, and holiness recovered."<sup>47</sup>

### **Toward an African holiness church**

If holiness is to be understood, then the theological institutions in Africa have to do their job properly. The faculty members need to be people who understand the holiness message and are well trained in biblical interpretation. When properly read, the Bible will reveal that – in the words of Barry Callen – "holiness is for *all who believe* in the biblical God made known through Jesus Christ and who are willing to be part of what God intends, the redemption of this present world."<sup>48</sup>

All pastors who are trained in our theological institutions ought to be thoroughly equipped to preach holiness. Other than preparing pastors adequately, the selection of these pastors ought to be done properly. This is where the local church and pastor come in. Those who end up as pastors come from the local church. These individuals need to be holy men and women of God. They must be living holy lives and desiring to see others do the same.

Even those who come from other denominations, they too pass through the local church. They must go through the membership class and complete the ordination track before they become pastors. The district superintendent must give strict supervision to the ministries of these pastors. We should not wait until the pastor's report at the end of the year to inquire whether holiness was preached. Continuing education classes ought to be provided that focus on helping pastors better understand, teach, and preach the holiness message. Holiness seminars, conferences and summits should be held regularly to promote holiness.

In Africa, we must do a good job of translating the word "holiness" and its cognates in appropriate cultural equivalents. This has to be done by local leaders, theologians, and district superintendents in each particular cultural

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<sup>47</sup> Barry Callen, "The Context: Past and Present," in Kevin W. Mannoia and Donald A. D. Thorsen, eds., *The Holiness Manifesto* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008), Kindle Version, location 87.

<sup>48</sup> Barry Callen, *The Context: Past and Present*, Kindle Version, location 80.



context. We realize that Africa is diverse, and generalizations cannot be made about the vast continent. Those categories that do not communicate anything in the local languages should not be used. Here we are talking about contextualization of holiness.<sup>49</sup> What should a holiness individual, church, or institution look like in an African context? It might not look the same way as it does in other contexts.

If contextualization does not happen, we may end up with what Mildred Bangs Wynkoop called "the credibility gap...a vast and disturbing dualism between idea and life, between profession and practice...The ultimate result is rejection of the Christian message as itself unrealistic and unbelievable if not actually false."<sup>50</sup> If our language is not exact, too much or too little could be claimed for what holiness can and cannot do. However, as we contextualize holiness, we must not give up the non-negotiables, namely, love for God and love for neighbor, and full salvation from sin.

Bible studies in the local church ought to help the individual Christian and the community evaluate their lives in light of the biblical injunctions. The lay people need to be in the forefront in championing the holiness message. Pastors need to spend time with key leaders helping them to understand the holiness message. Bible colleges can create classes on holiness for the lay people in leadership, Sunday school teachers and board members, aimed at helping each to have a better grasp of the holiness message.

The African church needs to be encouraged. With all the problems confronting the continent today, this is the time to be Wesleyan and armed with the holiness message. Africa has many problems ranging from corruption, HIV and AIDS, polygamy, early marriages, Female Genital Mutilation and many others. All these issues are a result of sin and holiness is the solution to the sin problem. As has been said in one holiness conference, on the East Africa Field of the Church of the Nazarene in Nairobi, Kenya, "Holiness: Africa's hope".<sup>51</sup> We are in agreement with Thomas B. Dozeman who says, "holiness

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<sup>49</sup> For a treatment of this subject, see Gift Mtukwa, "African Holiness: Translating Holiness into Authentically African Language and Living" in Josh Broward and Thomas Jay Oord, eds., *Renovating Holiness* (Nampa: SacraSage Press, 2015), 64-68.

<sup>50</sup> Mildred Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1973), 39-40.

<sup>51</sup> Gregory Crofford has suggested: "Our hope is not holiness but Jesus. Our hope is not a what, but a Who." See "Is holiness our hope, or is Jesus? Reflections on a subtle idolatry" [cited February 12, 2015], online: <http://gregorycrofford.com/2015/02/07/is-holiness-our-hope-or-is-jesus-reflections-on-a-subtle-idolatry/>. However, Michael Lodahl observed: "Holiness is 'God showing up' among frail creatures of dust, and feeble as frail, then holiness is that human who is Emmanuel, 'God with us'...Matthew's emphasis is promised presence, the very presence of God. Holiness happens, happens as God is present with us." See Michael E. Lodahl, "Spirit/Shekhinah/Sakina: 'No Holiness but Social Holiness,'" *Wesleyan Theological*

critically evaluates all piety, all politics and all social economics."<sup>52</sup> Africa needs the optimism of grace that is so central to the Wesleyan message of holiness, to be convinced that men and women can be set free from sin and be sanctified through and through in the language of Paul the Apostle.

If holiness is properly understood, it cannot remain in the pulpit alone. Holiness preaching must lead to holy lifestyles. Taking for instance the issue of HIV and AIDS, which has ravaged the African continent, the pandemic is a result of unholy lifestyles. There is no doubt that most infections in African are sexually transmitted. Either people have premarital, or extramarital affairs, which put them at risk of contracting the virus that causes AIDS. At times it is cultural practices<sup>53</sup> that put people at risk, especially communities keep promoting practices like wife inheritance. <sup>54</sup> The practice of marriage from a biblical perspective—one man, one woman—will ensure that the disease does not spread. The Bible has a lot to say about sexual purity which is packaged together with sanctification in 1 Thessalonians 4.<sup>55</sup>

A lot of suffering experienced by Africans is caused by poor governance.<sup>56</sup> The holy people of God ought not to be comfortable with the way things are. Like

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*Journal* 49, no. 1 (March 2014), 37-38. Therefore, the phrase, "Holiness: Africa's Hope," is legitimate, since holiness is the result of being with the holy God.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas B. Dozeman, "Holiness and Ethics," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (March 1, 2014), 32. It is important to note that Dozeman is critical of Wesley's statement since he sees holiness in the same way as the authors of Deuteronomy and Priestly literature. Bozeman cautioned: "The danger of embracing Wesley's definition of social holiness in isolation is that it does not underscore the separate nature of holiness as the 'otherness' of the deity." 34. Concerning holiness, he asserts that it is "pre-moral. Its power resides with the sacred...*cultic holiness precedes and empowers social holiness.*" 34. (emphasis mine).

<sup>53</sup> G.K. Ateka observed concerning the Masai of East Africa: "In East Africa, Masai men who were circumcised at the same time share everything, including their wives. All that is required is for the visiting comrade to put his spear outside the targeted hut to announce his presence and he is entitled to the same conjugal rights as the husband." G.K. Ateka, "Factors in HIV/AIDS Transmission in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Bulletin Of The World Health Organization* 79, no. 12 (2001), 1168.

<sup>54</sup> We do understand that such a practice like wife inheritance was meant to ensure that a widow is properly taken care of, in terms of their physical needs and emotional needs. The church should not only discourage people from practicing it, but ensure that they provide economic opportunities for widows, so that they do not become destitute. As for emotional needs the church needs to pursue remarriage as a solution.

<sup>55</sup> "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God" (NIV).

<sup>56</sup> P. Chabal, "The Quest for Good Government and Development in Africa: Is NEPAD the Answer?" *International Affairs* 78, no. 3 (July 2002): 447. Chebal asserts: "Democracy

the prophets in the Old Testament, African Nazarenes (and Christians at large) must stand up for the poor and oppressed in their communities. They must hold those in political office accountable to their own election manifestos. This is consistent with what John Wesley did when he wrote his *Thoughts on Slavery* and encouraged those who were fighting it like William Wilberforce to forge on with the fight.<sup>57</sup>

We can with John Wesley say that: “there is no religion, but social religion; no holiness but social holiness.”<sup>58</sup> Sadly, there has not been much of this side of the Wesleyan activism in the Church of the Nazarene in Africa. We have become more comfortable with compassionate ministries, taking care of the victims of suffering rather than confronting those who cause suffering.<sup>59</sup> This is consistent with Wesley’s mantra on why God raised up the people called Methodists, “To reform the nation; particularly the church...and to spread scriptural holiness across the land.” It is intriguing that the phrase “to reform the nation” comes first and “spread scriptural holiness” comes second. Of course, the two go hand in hand. Nazarenes in Africa need to rise up and reform the nations where God has placed them, as they spread scriptural holiness.

If holiness is going to make an impact in the African continent, it must be well understood by those who teach and preach it. Holiness must not be limited to a few so called “holiness texts.” We ought to operate with a “hermeneutic of holiness.”<sup>60</sup> This is not to say that we see holiness in scripture where there is

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should reduce the scope for conflict and make good government more likely. In turn, good government should bring about the political stability, the institutional consolidation and the operation of the rule of law that are universally seen as the necessary framework for investment. Greater investment should facilitate economic growth. Growth provides the foundation for development.” 447-48.

<sup>57</sup>An electronic version of *Thoughts on Slavery* may be accessed at: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wesley/wesley.html>.

<sup>58</sup> John Wesley and Charles Wesley, “Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems,” 2.5, in list of Poetical Works, vol. 14 of the *The Works of John Wesley. Third Edition Complete and Unabridged* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 321. Thomas Dozeman commented on this citation from Wesley: “The economics of holiness reflected in this quotation embraces more the ancient meaning of ‘economy’ (*oikos*) as ‘household’ since Wesley was seeking to counter an individualistic and private form of solitary Christian religion.” Thomas B. Dozeman, “Holiness and Ethics,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (March 2014), 19.

<sup>59</sup> Renewed interest in human trafficking by the Church of the Nazarene is a step in the right direction.

<sup>60</sup> See Adam H. Becker, “Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient Jewish and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 149–51, doi:10.1353/sho.2013.0021. See also Chris E. Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation: Vocation, Holiness, and Scripture* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press,

none, but that we seek to understand God's overall desire for humanity and read scripture from that perspective. The African church ought to not only preach holiness but teach it. To do so, we ought to adapt John Wesley's face to face groups<sup>61</sup> as a tool for teaching what God requires for every man and woman—namely to be holy as he is holy.

## **Conclusion**

The Church of the Nazarene in Africa, together with other holiness churches can rise up and offer a lasting solution to Africa's problems by introducing all who care to hear, the liberating message of holiness. Holiness is indeed the full gospel. God does not want us to settle for anything less than salvation from not only acts of sin but inbred sin that makes us live unholy lives. Every home and local church can become – in the words of Eugenio Duarte <sup>62</sup> – a nursery of holiness champions.

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2015) and Alex R G. Deasley, "Biblical Hermeneutics and the Wesleyan Message of Holiness," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33, no. 2 (September 1, 1998): 130–44.

<sup>61</sup> John Wesley devised a program for spiritual formation that involved the use of societies, class meetings, bands, penitent group and select group for leaders. These groups ensured that each and every person had an opportunity to learn the gospel and apply it in their own lives. The most thorough treatment of the topic from the viewpoint of discipleship in the local church is D. Michael Henderson, *John's Wesley's Class Meetings: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, Illinois: Francis Asbury Press, 1997).

<sup>62</sup> Former Regional Director (Africa Region, Church of the Nazarene) and currently serving as one of six General Superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene

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# THE CHURCH: THE SPIRITUAL HOPE AGAINST ADDICTION

by

**Samantha Chambo**

## **Introduction**

The scourge of substance abuse is ravaging South Africa, according to the National Drug Master Plan 2006-2011<sup>1</sup>. Statistics show that drug consumption in South Africa is twice the world norm and 15% of South Africa's population has a drug problem, and most drug rehabilitation centers have a success rate of less than 3%.<sup>2</sup> "Substance abuse is a major contributor to crime, poverty, and reduced productivity, unemployment, dysfunctional family life, political instability, the escalation of chronic diseases such as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and tuberculosis (TB), injury and premature death"<sup>3</sup>.

The Church is not exempt from this problem. Apart from the fact that many lost souls suffering from addictions wander into churches for help, many professing Christians also suffer under the tyranny of addictions and addictive behavior. It is a sad fact that most churches are not prepared to offer effective help to people with this particular need.

## **Understanding addictions**

Merriam Webster's dictionary defines "addict" (v) as "to devote or surrender (oneself) to something habitually or obsessively e.g. addicted to gambling"<sup>4</sup> and "addiction" (n) as "compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance (as heroin, nicotine, or alcohol) characterized by tolerance and by well-defined physiological symptoms upon withdrawal broadly: persistent compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful"<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of this essay, I will define addictions as a compulsive need for habit-forming substances, relationships, behaviors, or activities known by the person to be harmful, sinful, and an impediment to spiritual growth and holiness.

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<sup>1</sup> Department: Social Development Republic of South Africa, *National Drug Master Plan 2006-2011* [cited November 1, 2014], online: <http://www.dsd.gov.za/cda/dmdocuments/2006%20to%202011Master%20Plan.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Addiction Action Campaign, *Substance use and abuse in South Africa* [cited November 1, 2014], online: <http://www.pmg.org.za/report/20111108-department-central-drug-authority-cda-substance-abuse-strategy-summit>.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Social Development Republic of South Africa, "National Drug Master Plan 2006-2011" [cited October 28, 2014], online: <http://www.dsd.gov.za/cda/dmdocuments/2006%20to%202011Master%20Plan.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> See "addict," in I. Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

<sup>5</sup> See "addiction," in I. Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc.), 2003.

According to leading studies on the areas of addictions, any form of addictive behavior either serves as a stimulant or a represent, a source to create pleasure or a means to escape pain. Society is plagued with all manner of difficulties and evils that can cause depression. This depression or untreated psychological pain can lead to addictive behavior. These people, suffering from nervous disorders, depression, or other mental trauma find that they can escape their pain by abusing substances, food, or just general addiction like gambling, or sexual addictions.

Oliver J. Morgan, in his article, "Addiction and Spiritual Context," traces the history of addiction treatment across the centuries and calls for "a more holistic and yet fully empirical model of investigation in addiction studies."<sup>6</sup> According to Morgan, prior to World War 1, chronic drunkenness and drug addiction were viewed as moral weakness or personal defects and were generally treated with condemnation and ostracism. It was only after World War I that openness to a different perspective emerged. These shifts lead to progression in addictive studies to classifying it as a disease or a behavioral disorder and therefore a field that needed scientific attention. This was followed by a family systems theory where different familial dynamics were studied as causes and treatment for addictive behavior. Finally, a recovery paradigm emerged where the attention was placed on the recovery process. This was a result of the success of recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, hereafter referred to as AA. A recent development in addiction treatment is that of Harm Reduction. This is based on the philosophy that the addict will only recover when they are ready to do so. Harm Reduction workers aim to reduce the negative effects of addictive behavior by providing shelter, and sometimes even clean needles to users, without the precondition of abstinence. This model evolved from the reality that so many addicts go through numerous recovery programs but always relapse back to their addictive behavior.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Bible and addiction**

The Word of God is not silent on the issue of addiction. Specific addictions such as alcoholism, gluttony, and lustful behavior are dealt with; however, God also give guidelines in Scripture that can be applied to the whole spectrum of addiction.

There are many cases of drunkenness in the Old Testament. Among the better-known cases of drunkenness are Noah (Gen. 9:21), Lot (Gen. 19:33), and Nabal (1 Sam. 25:36).<sup>8</sup> The Bible's strong counsel against drunkenness (Prov. 20:1; 23:20–21, 29–35; Isa. 28:1, 7–8; Hab. 2:15–16; Gal. 5:16, 21; Eph. 5:18) is clear indication that illegal narcotics, which adversely affect the mind and body to an even greater degree than does alcohol, should be stringently avoided. Like alcohol abuse, drug abuse

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<sup>6</sup> Oliver J. Morgan, "Addiction and Spirituality in Context," in *Addiction and Spirituality, A Multidisciplinary Approach* (St. Louis, Missouri, Chalice Press, 1999), 11.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher D. Ringwald, "The Soul of Recovery: Uncovering the Spiritual Dimension in Treatment of Addiction," in *Addiction and Spirituality A Multidisciplinary Approach* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1999), 162.

<sup>8</sup> J. Cathey, "Drunkenness," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 444.



destroys one's ability to live a reasonable life (Isa. 5:11-12).<sup>9</sup> Proverbs emphasizes the destruction that drunkenness can bring to self and society (Prov. 20:1; 23:20-21, 29-35).

New Testament scriptural directives against mood altering substances and practices include Paul's instruction to make sure we are not enslaved by anything (1 Cor. 6:12) and Peter's instruction to be sober minded and alert (1 Peter 1:13). The Bible teaches that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit and that we should honor God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Most compelling is Christ's response to the enslaved. He freed those possessed by demons and showed compassion to the Samaritan woman who manifested a behavior that may be classified as sexual addiction (John 4:1-26). Christ also reached out to Zacchaeus, who was given to greed and corruption (Luke 19:1-10). As a matter of fact, he boldly declared that he came for these poor individuals. Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:10). This is the mission of Christ to this broken world

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free (Luke 4:18).

This is of utmost importance because most addicts have an obscured or erroneous view of God's grace as a result of their internal pain. Stepping into recovery means stepping into the possibility that there is a God of love that is willing to accept and restore in spite of the destruction caused as a result of addiction. An acceptance of God's grace is a prerequisite for any person seeking recovery from addiction. It is only as a result of prevenient grace that the sinner has the possibility to choose to accept God's healing, deliverance, and restoration.

### **Family and addiction**

The family unit and how it functions is one of the most common causes of addictive behavior. According to Katherine Degenhardt, this problem is most commonly present in "family systems that create and perpetuate dysfunction and dependency, (where) members do not talk openly and honestly with one another. Emotions and feelings are stifled and basic human needs are not met."<sup>10</sup> Basic human needs mentioned are deducted from to Erickson's stages of human development<sup>11</sup> and include the need to be loved, belong, a sense of identity, acceptance, security, and the need to connect with God. She goes on to explain that one family member that is prone to addictive behavior can affect the whole family unit and force family members to take on survival roles that help them cope with the stress at home. These addictive behaviors are not limited to substance or chemical abuse but cover a broad spectrum, including overeating, overspending, gambling, pornography, overwork, physical abuse and other things people do to escape from their reality. This can result

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<sup>9</sup> P. H. Wright, "Drugs," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Holman Bible Publishers 2003), 443.

<sup>10</sup> Katherine Degenhardt, *Breaking Family Addictions*, (Nashville, Seed Publishers, 1997), 54.

<sup>11</sup> Degenhardt, *Family Addictions*, 22

in a vicious circle of addiction being passed on from generation to generation either through a genetic predisposition to addiction or through learned behavior.

Earnie Larsen also highlighted the familial aspects of recovery in his article "Recovery is Learning to Love." He works from the premise that people indulge in addictive behavior to medicate pain caused by love denied. Children learn early in life to meet this basic need for love according to the circumstances in their families. "Where these rules [to get what we need from life] represent self-defeating values and behaviors...there will be a lack of development of the foundation for the ability for sharing in intimate relationships. Not the want for them, but the ability to participate."<sup>12</sup>

Recovery would then include finding healing for childhood wounds, learning to meet unmet basic needs, and unlearning destructive coping skills for more constructive ones. Degenhardt advised that a holistic approach should be taken that ministers to the spiritual, physical, social, mental, and emotional aspects of the person, with the spiritual as central to recovery. He continued: "Your spiritual beliefs direct and guide you physical, mental, emotional and social parts. Your spiritual values determine how you take care of your body, what you chose to feed your mind, how you deal with feelings, and types of relationships you form."<sup>13</sup>

### **Spirituality of addiction**

The success of 12 Step groups as well as Harm Reduction programs is based on an emphasis on spirituality, mutual support, and fellowship. In the 12 Step program it includes the group guidelines that governed their meetings. Oliver Morgan observed: "The notion that some "spiritual" element is involved in both addiction and recovery has been the consistent witness of AA and other Twelve Step programs. It also runs like a golden thread through the clinical observation and writings of a number of addiction researchers over the years."<sup>14</sup>

Human addiction is a profoundly spiritual issue, although it does incorporate mental, emotional, and physiological aspects. Psychological and physiological treatment can arrest the problem and will result in a lifestyle where relapse is prevented by following strict program rules. However, true deliverance and healing can only take place when the spiritual aspect is addressed as fundamental.

Spirituality in this context refers to the relationship between human beings and God. Twelve step programs acknowledge this need for divine intervention in the first three steps of AA. The addict needs to acknowledge that they are not God, that they are powerless over their addiction, and that a Higher Power – as understood by the addict – can restore them to sanity. The next step is then to make a decision to turn their wills and lives over to this Higher Power. These steps are very insightful, because self-interest and self-will is one of the major causes for continued addiction and relapse. According to Dennis Kinlaw, self-interest is the essence of sin and even those

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<sup>12</sup> Earnie Larson, "The Spirituality of Recovery: Recovery is Learning to love," in *Addiction and Spirituality A Multidisciplinary Approach*, (St. Louis, Missouri, Chalice Press, 1999), 159.

<sup>13</sup> Degenhardt, *Family Addictions*, 32.

<sup>14</sup> Morgan, *Addiction and Spiritual context*, 11.

who have become Christians are not completely free from it.<sup>15</sup> Healing and restoration comes when addicts are willing to make a total surrender to God, trusting the Lord for their healing and restoration.

### **Best treatment options**

Finding help for individuals and families affected by addiction can be difficult. Human beings are all unique and success of treatment may vary as a result of the makeup of individuals and family units.

General forms of treatment include outpatient treatment, where patients live at home and attend meetings, with consultations on a regular basis. It also includes inpatient treatment, where patients are hospitalized. Mainly because their health has reached a critical low point, the patient in a danger to him/herself or others or cannot care for the person in question. Residential treatment is available for patients who choose to live in an environment free from drugs that provides all the means to healing and deliverance. Residential treatment can be costly unless it is offered by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or is sponsored by government.

Collins et al., have provided guidelines to use when choosing treatment: It must cater for the spiritual as well and the medical needs of the patient: "The best programs appreciate that substance abuse is a spiritual as well as a medical sickness."<sup>16</sup> There must be 1) a commitment to a provide a environment that is totally free from the preferred substance, 2) the relationship with God is addressed as fundamental, 3) strong medical staff, 4) a commitment to education concerning the specific addiction, 5) group and family therapy, 6) Psychiatric-psychological assessment and treatment, 7) the provision for recreation, exercise, relaxation training and leisure activities and 8) a strong commitment to aftercare.<sup>17</sup>

Most churches are aware of the gravity of the addiction problem but feel overwhelmed by its vastness. Some churches have opened recovery groups but find the healing process to be slow and sometimes almost non-existent. Certain aspects of our African culture impede the effectiveness of recovery groups.

The African sense of kinship can sometimes impede addicts to talk about their family situations in fear of dishonoring or shaming the family, especially the elders. There is a saying in Africa that one does not speak evil about those already departed. Unfortunately, true healing does require digging in the past to discover the root of the problem. Most recovery groups are based on a requirement to share openly and honestly about struggles.

### **The church's response to addiction**

#### *1. Become sensitized to the problem*

News broadcast are filled with reports of the increase in drug trafficking and drug consumption in South Africa. Reports about domestic violence and other crimes

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<sup>15</sup> Dennis Kinlaw, *The Mind of Christ*, (Indiana, Francis Asbury Press, 1998), 23.

<sup>16</sup> Gary R. Collins, ed., *Counseling for Substance Abuse and Addiction: A How to Approach* (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1987), 138.

<sup>17</sup> Collins, *Substance Abuse and Addiction*, 138-142.

committed by addicts are common. The website, Christian Drug Support, observed: "According to SAPS figures, 60 percent of crimes nationally were related to substance abuse. The perpetrators of these crimes are either under the influence of substances, or trying to secure money for their next fix."<sup>18</sup> Being so overexposed to the problem can lead to a church that is desensitized to it. The church needs to return to the heart of God concerning those suffering and bound by addiction and sin. "When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). We are the physical embodiment of Christ to the world, but first we need to have the heart of Christ to the lost.

## *2. Pray*

The church needs to pray for repentance in the nations, prayer for the redemption and deliverance for those affected by addictions. "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14)

Pray for direction from God on how the church can be useful and effective to combat the problem. Pray for God to raise up people that will be committed to this ministry. Continually bring names of those affected before God and trust the Lord to operate.

## *3. Evaluate existing attitudes towards addictions.*

The church can only make a difference if she displays a loving attitude that does not judge and condemn. Addicts already suffer under self-condemnation and therefore need an environment that will accept them unconditionally. We should manifest the heart of God towards those suffering from addiction: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17).

## *4. Realize that this ministry has to be holistic to be effective.*

As mentioned before, addiction is a complicated condition that affects the mind, body, soul and spirit of the person. It is therefore of the utmost importance for the church to minister to all of the above aspects.

The church does not have all the resources and personnel needed, but it can create networks with other ministries and departments that can offer much needed assistance. The local hospital or clinic, non-governmental organizations, 12 step groups in the community, recreational institutions, and sports clubs can all be invaluable resources for recovery ministry.

## *5. Use assets already found in the congregation.*

Evaluate human and other resources within the congregation. Most congregations are made up of professionals that can be invaluable to the ministry. Doctors, lawyers, psychologists, nurses, counselors, and employers can all offer some contribution to a recovery ministry in a local church. Some addicts have criminal records that impede

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<sup>18</sup> "Addiction statistics," in "SA Statistics" [cited October 20, 2014], online: <http://christiandrugsupport.wordpress.com>.

them from getting employed, some are destitute and a strong congregation working together can offer hope.

Church buildings are another source of assistance that can add value, not only to the congregation, but with its doors open to the wider community, many more people can find healing. The church can be used for regular recovery meetings and other twelve-step groups can also make use of the facility.

#### *6. Don't underestimate the means of grace.*

Wesleyans refer to the sacraments and worship activities as means of grace. This means that God uses these things to bring his grace, liberation, and healing to his people. Worshiping together, partaking in the Lord's Supper, listening to the word of God, and giving and participating in acts of service are all means that can lead to great spiritual liberation. Twelve steps groups place a major emphasis on service; this is emphasized in the twelfth step of AA "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principals in all our affairs."<sup>19</sup>

#### *7. Advocacy*

The local church can be a place where the surrounding community can find education concerning real problems in their lives. This includes dangers and solutions to the addiction in society. The effects that substance abuse has on community can be minimized when churches use opportunities to visit schools in the surrounding area to warn and to help vulnerable young people.

There is also a need to speak out against community structures, legal systems, corruption, drug trafficking, and all related ills. The church is the voice of Christ in the community. We are the salt and the light of the world (Matt 5:14) and sometimes this means speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves.

#### *8. Commitment to aftercare*

Is addiction a disease or a sin? There are various views concerning this and belief determines the amount of aftercare given to addicts. Concerning alcoholism, Gary Collins stated: "Alcoholism is a progressive addiction that engulfs its victim psychologically and physically, but alcoholism also is a moral condition for which the drinker is at least partially responsible. It is both simplistic and extreme to conclude that alcoholism is only a disease or only a black –and-white case of sin."<sup>20</sup> Accepting that the addiction is a lifelong disease necessitates a plan to give continued support to those who have recovered. Those who advocate that it is a sin that needs to be repented of will advise addicts to confess their sin, believe that God has delivered them, and proceed to a fruitful, holy life.

Collins' suggestion of a middle route seems more realistic, and allows for spiritual as well as physiological and psychological healing. This implies that the Church has to

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<sup>19</sup> Stephen Aterburn & David Stoop, *The Life Recovery Devotional* (Illinois, Tyndale House Publishers, 1991).

<sup>20</sup> Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 659.

continue offering support to abstinent addicts by providing the same resources given since the beginning of the recovery journey.

### **Conclusion**

Addiction is a very destructive reality facing the church today. The church cannot afford to give a half-hearted response. Effective solutions will demand total commitment from the church. The good news is that Christ goes ahead of the church to demolish strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4) of addiction and to bring liberation to his people.

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ENDURE HARDSHIP:  
SUFFERING IN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH OF GOD  
by

**Geoffrey Gertzen and Pelham Lessing**

**Introduction**

Western society regards suffering as an extreme evil to be avoided at all costs. A debate rages today over the right to assisted suicide for adults and even children in many Western nations.<sup>1</sup> This debate is centered on the right for the individual to end their own suffering should they so desire. The Western worldview has within it the idea that suffering should not be and is never profitable. It aspires to remove suffering and avoid it, seeing little if any benefit in suffering at all. Nevertheless, this modern debate is not unique to the West. Rather, it is deeply a part of the human condition. The human desire for power, ease, and comfort is resident within the fallen human heart.<sup>2</sup> This view can permeate a Christian worldview and influence the church. Christianity often subtly starts to take on the characteristics of its surrounding society. Preachers may present a sub-biblical, comfort-driven exegesis that influences both their own expectations of the Christian life as well as that of the church of God.

This paper aims to explore the place of suffering in the New Testament scriptures. It seeks to explore how suffering permeates the plan of God, the character of God, and the call of God to discipleship. It strives to better understand what the apostle Paul meant when he called Timothy to endure hardship like a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:3).

**Jesus, the Christ**

The earliest Christians spoke of a man. Their significant news was of the arrival of the man Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>3</sup> The apostle Peter in his first public declaration (Acts 2:22) spoke of Jesus the man, who was accredited by God to them. But their proclamation was not simply a pronouncement regarding the birth and life of Jesus; instead, they spoke of him as the Christ (Mark 8:29, Acts 2:36). Their pronouncement was a declaration of his humanity as well as his Messiahship. They declared Jesus to be the anointed king of the world (Phil.

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte McDonald-Gibson, "Belgium extends Euthanasia Law to Kids" [cited June 12, 2014]. Online: <http://time.com/7565/belgium-euthanasia-law-children-assisted-suicide>.

<sup>2</sup> See examples of this in the grumbling of the Israelites in Exodus 15f; Solomon's 13 year commitment to his own palace in 1 Kings 7:1; the disciples' assumptions of power and wealth in Luke 6:17f, Luke 22:24 and the reminders to embrace suffering in 2 Timothy.

<sup>3</sup> David P. Secombe, *The King of God's Kingdom* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2002), xviii.

2:9, Col. 3:18). They spoke of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel - as the one who sits on the throne of David (Acts 2:36). They declared him to be the Lord, the sovereign ruler of heaven and earth to whom every knee would bow and every tongue confess (Php. 2:10). Their declaration, spoke of him not simply as a human man but as the very Son of God (Matt. 16:16, John 1:1; 11:27). The early church proclaimed Jesus to be in the form of God (Php. 2:6) - to be that which truly and completely expressed the being of God.<sup>4</sup> They spoke of Jesus as the radiance of the glory of God and the heir of all things (Heb. 1:3). They proclaimed him to be the pre-existent Logos and the origin of all things (John 1:1).<sup>5</sup> They declared him to be the creator and sustainer of the universe (John 1:3, Heb. 1:3). The apostle Paul in writing to the Colossian church affirmed (Col. 1:18):

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.<sup>6</sup>

The early Christian church declared Jesus to be the author and agent of life (John 1:4). They declared him to be the fulfilment and culmination of the plans and promises of God (2 Cor. 1:20). They declared him to be the goal and end of all things (Heb. 1:1).<sup>7</sup> In addition, they declared that this Jesus is the present, sovereign ruler of the world – seated at the right hand of God himself (Acts 2:33, Eph. 1:20; Heb. 8:1; 1 Pet. 3:22).

### **Jesus, Crucified and Risen**

The declaration of Jesus by the early church was, however, not simply of him as Lord and king. It also contained another essential element. Central to their proclamation was the shocking and counter-cultural news that Jesus the Messiah was a crucified and suffering servant. This revolutionary announcement was prefigured in the prophets (Isa. 52-53) and announced by Jesus himself. He taught his disciples repeatedly (Matt. 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-33; 9:30; 10:32, 33) that he had come to suffer, be mocked, be rejected and killed. It was unpopular news that they did not initially want to appropriate. Mark's gospel contains three separate occasions where Jesus teaches his disciples that he is the king who must suffer and die.<sup>8</sup> On these occasions, they see only dimly (Mark 8:32), they fail to listen (Mark 9:7) and instead

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<sup>4</sup> Peter T. O' Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (NIGTC) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans: 1991), 210.

<sup>5</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England: IVP: 1991), 111.

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom* (Homebush West, NSW: Lancer: 1981), 87.

<sup>8</sup> Tim Chester, *The Ordinary Hero* (Nottingham, England: IVP: 2009), 93-99.

they seek personal prestige and glory (Mark 10:37). The lesson is hard learned, but when it is understood, it becomes integral and central to the early church's proclamation.

### **Peter**

The apostle Peter spoke repeatedly of Jesus as the crucified one. His declaration of Jesus the Messiah was centered on the news that Jesus was the crucified Messiah who rose again to life. As Peter spoke at Pentecost, he spoke of Jesus crucified (Acts 2:23). He spoke of this dead Jesus who was then raised again to life by God (Acts 2:24). When Peter spoke to the crowd assembled at the healing of the beggar, he spoke of Jesus, the author of life, killed and then raised (Acts 3:15).

The apostle Peter summarized the content of his message in his first epistle when he said: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24).

### **Paul**

The Pauline witness was also centered on Jesus as crucified Messiah, raised to life (Acts 13:48, 17:31; 26:23). The Pauline message was founded on his own personal experience as he met the crucified and risen Jesus on the Damascus Road (Acts 9). This meeting transformed his life and defined his message. Paul's message was the crucified Christ (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; Gal 6:14).<sup>9</sup> The apostle reminded the Corinthians of the essence of the gospel he preached and by which they were saved when he insisted: "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared..." (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

As the apostle came to the end of his life, he summarized the essence of his message, when he urged his charge Timothy: "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel" (2 Timothy 2:8).

Dunn summarized Pauline theology as centered on the cross and resurrection of Jesus, observing: "There can be no doubt as to where the centre of gravity of Paul's theology is to be found. It lies in the death and resurrection of Jesus."<sup>10</sup> Gorman echoed this, noting:

"Cruciformity is the all-encompassing, integrating narrative reality of Paul's life and thought, expressed and experienced in every dimension

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<sup>9</sup> Graham Stanton. Paul's Gospel. In James DG Dunn (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2003), 177.

<sup>10</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans: 1998), 208.

of his being...Cruciformity is, in sum what Paul is all about, and what the communities of the Messiah that he founded and/or nurtured were also all about..."<sup>11</sup>

The Christian message is fundamentally of Jesus the man, the Messiah king, crucified and raised. The Christian message is cruciform<sup>12</sup> or crucicentric.<sup>13</sup> Kung concurred: "The distinguishing feature of Christianity as opposed to the ancient world religions and the modern humanisms...is quite literally...'this Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ *crucified*.'"<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Lloyd-Jones affirmed: "The preaching of the cross, the preaching of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is the very heart and centre of the Christian gospel and the Christian message."<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, this message of a crucified Messiah king is a fundamentally counter-cultural declaration. Crucifixion was first century Rome's pervasive and sinister instrument of power and control.<sup>16</sup> To be crucified was to experience the most brutal and humiliating method of execution designed by humanity. Crucifixion was a terrifying, disgusting, horrifying, and shamefully delayed death, which resulted in the maximum possible pain for the victim.<sup>17</sup> It was to be shamed and tortured as a criminal and as an enemy of the state.<sup>18</sup> To be crucified in the Jewish mind was to be cursed and rejected by God (Deut. 21:23). It was inherently absurd and offensive to declare that God's Son could have been nailed to a cross. It was a stumbling block and foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23). It was in the ancient world a ludicrous idea to make a political criminal and his cross the central element of your declaration, the focus of human devotion and the model for life in the world.<sup>19</sup> But despite the horror and offense of the cross, the church has always regarded Christ crucified as the central element of its declaration.

The question that needs to be considered at this point is: why was the cross central to the church's proclamation? Why does the church "cling to the old

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<sup>11</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans: 2001), 371; emphasis in original.

<sup>12</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 2

<sup>13</sup> Derek Tidball, *The Message of the Cross* (BST) (Leicester, England: IVP: 2001), 24.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday: 1976), 409-410.

<sup>15</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Cross* (Eastborne: Kingsway, 1986), 18.

<sup>16</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Glenn M. Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross* (Bartlesville, Oklahoma: Living Sacrifice Books, 2004), 137.

<sup>18</sup> Stott. *The Cross of Christ*, 20.

<sup>19</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 5

rugged cross” and insist on its centrality despite its horror, shame and offense?<sup>20</sup> Why has the central declaration of the church over the centuries remained “Jesus the Christ, crucified and risen”? Two major answers present themselves in answer to this question, and to these this examination now turns.

### **The cross displays the character and plan of God**

The church has declared Jesus crucified and risen because the cross displays the character and plan of God.<sup>21</sup> The message of Christianity is the message of a God who continues to love a rebellious and sinful world (John 3:16). It is the message of a God who remains consistently committed to an adulterous and wayward wife (Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1). It is the message of a God who is lavish in mercy, steadfast in love and whose patience is long and enduring so that he is consistently concerned for the welfare of humanity. In the actions of the cross, God is revealed as a God who loves humankind and this love is displayed in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10) by what God was willing to suffer for humanity.<sup>22</sup> His love was not motivated by humanity’s prior love for him but flows from his *suffering embracing character*.

The apostle John celebrates: “This is love: not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

The cross reveals God to be gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. God is portrayed as “A God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty” (Exodus 34:6).

But God is not only a God of love and grace. God of is also absolutely holy and pure. His love and holiness cannot be separated. God’s holiness is central to his being. He alone is God. He is utterly perfect and pure. God’s wrath arises from his eternal self-consistency and the abhorrence of evil that is his nature. The cross shows God’s revulsion of all that opposes his glory and his holiness.<sup>23</sup>

The holiness and love of God meet perfectly in the person and work of Jesus on the cross. The cross displays to the world the character of God. He is a God willing to embrace the humiliation of the incarnation (Php. 2:7). He is a God who, as a result of his love, is willing to bear the consequences of human

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<sup>20</sup> Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 18

<sup>22</sup> Millard J. Erickson *Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1998), 318.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1982), 68-69.

wickedness. He is a God willing to suffer immense pain, the pain of that mysterious separation when Jesus cried out, "My God My God why have you forsaken me?" And so Chester claimed: "The fullest revelation of God is not in power and glory, but in the foolishness, shame and weakness of the cross."<sup>24</sup> The church has always declared Jesus crucified and risen because it understood the cross to display the character of God.

### **The cross is a paradigm for discipleship**

A second reason that the preaching of the cross is central to the Christian message is that it provides a paradigm for the Christian life and a model for Christian leadership. Jesus repeatedly warned his disciples that the Son of Man must suffer and die, and he then taught them that to follow him is to do likewise. Mark records the words of Christ: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). These words are echoed in the Lukan account with the important addition of the word "daily" (Luke 9:23).

Normal discipleship is shown to be cruciform.<sup>25</sup> Jesus issues a summons when he declares that attachment to him and his kingdom involves a willingness to suffer and die; it involves a daily and constant attitude of denial to self and personal ambition, even to the point of personal pain and martyrdom.<sup>26</sup> To follow Christ requires a willingness to face rejection and death. It means death to the world and a separation from its values and lifestyle (Romans 6). It requires a basic shift of orientation and agenda towards a life of suffering death.<sup>27</sup> Discipleship is a heartfelt attitude and not simply an intellectual assent. To follow Christ is to die. Bonhoeffer famously said:

The cross is laid on every Christian...since this happens at the beginning of the Christian life, the cross can never be merely a tragic ending to an otherwise happy religious life. When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die...every command of Jesus is a call to die...<sup>28</sup>

Gorman concurred: "Crucifixion with Christ is not a supplement to faith; it is the essence of faith."<sup>29</sup>

The early church's declaration was cross-shaped because the cross defines the pattern and paradigm for the disciple of Jesus. The follower of Jesus is called

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<sup>24</sup> Chester, *The Ordinary Hero*, 96.

<sup>25</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 214-267.

<sup>26</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC) (Exeter: Paternoster: 1978), 371-372.

<sup>27</sup> Darrell L. Bock *Luke* (NIVAC) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 265.

<sup>28</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM, 1948), 73.

<sup>29</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 139.

to imitate his master in suffering and death<sup>30</sup> both as an initial experience and as an ongoing reality.<sup>31</sup>

1 Peter 2:19-21 teaches: "For this is a gracious thing, when mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly...to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an *example*, so that you might follow in his steps."

The word "daily" that is added in the Lukan gospel augments and clarifies what this death is to comprise. Normal discipleship is a *living* death. It is a life given over in daily and constant death. This daily cross-bearing involves love (John 13:34, Rom. 12:9, 1 Cor. 13, 1 John 2:10, 4:7), sacrifice (Rom. 12:17-20, 2 Cor. 8:1f, Heb 13:1,2), submission (Rom. 13, Eph. 5:21, Phil. 2:3, Col. 3:18f, 1 Peter 2:13f), self-denial (Matt. 16:24, Luke 9:23, Rom. 12:3,9; 1 Cor. 12:7, Heb. 13:3), service (Mark 10:44, John 13:14,15, Rom 1:1, 7:4, 1 Cor. 7:22, Gal. 1:10, 1 Peter 2:16) and suffering.<sup>32</sup>

These different components of a cross-bearing life express an attitude to discipleship and an altered expectation of what is regarded as normal for the Christian life. It is the radical and fundamental altering of a life's orientation from self towards God and the consequent love for others. It is a fundamental shift from self-centeredness, self-righteousness and self-service towards embracing God-centeredness, real community and radical love.<sup>33</sup>

This paper does not seek to examine all of these aspects that comprise a cross-shaped life. Instead, it seeks only to examine and explore the unique place of suffering in the life and expectations of the disciple of Christ and in the leaders of God's church.

### **Cross-shaped suffering**

The Bible reveals that the cross-shaped life is soaked in suffering and followed by glory.<sup>34</sup> The New Testament speaks often of suffering and is unembarrassed and unapologetic about suffering in the life of the disciple.<sup>35</sup> Penner noted: "Suffering is not foreign to the purposes and person of God but

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<sup>30</sup> Chester, *The Ordinary Hero*, 49.

<sup>31</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 139.

<sup>32</sup> Chester, *The Ordinary Hero*, 50.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 52

<sup>34</sup> Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 322.

<sup>35</sup> For the sake of brevity, this paper concentrates on the gospels as well as the writings of Paul and Peter. The theme of suffering is also prevalent in other parts of the New Testament. See for example Hebrews 10:32f, James 1:3 as well as Revelation 2:3; 2:9, 10; 3:8.

rather...it is a central theme (in the life of the disciple)."<sup>36</sup> In contrast to the human desire for happiness and prosperity, the New Testament witness is that the disciple of Jesus is to expect suffering, embrace it and even regard it as a privilege on the road of discipleship.

## **Jesus**

Jesus taught his followers that suffering was actually blessing when he taught: "Blessed are those who are persecuted...blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account" (Matt. 5:10-12).

In Mark 10:30, Jesus further connected blessing and suffering. As Peter declared to Jesus that they had left everything to follow him, Jesus replied that blessing will follow a life committed to him as well as persecutions.

At another time Jesus warned his disciples of suffering because of their allegiance to him:

Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues...brother will deliver brother over to death...you will be hated by all for my name's sake...when they persecute you in one town, flee to the next (Matt 10:16-23).

In the upper room, Jesus further warned his disciples that "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

## **Paul**

Suffering was written into the call of the apostle Paul.<sup>37</sup> When the Lord commanded Ananias to go and heal Saul, he spoke of how much Paul would suffer for him (Acts 9:16). Paul saw his life and ministry as sharing and participating in the sufferings of Christ (Phil. 3:10, 2 Cor. 1:5, 4:10) and even completing the sufferings of Christ (Col 1:24). The apostle's call was inextricably linked to suffering for Christ.<sup>38</sup>

The apostle Paul considered suffering to be a mark of the genuineness of his apostolic ministry. He repeatedly lists his sufferings as evidence of his genuineness (Gal. 6:17; 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 11:23f; Phil. 1:30; 2 Tim 1:11f). Astonishingly, the apostle boasted of his sufferings (2 Cor. 11:30, 12:10), rejoiced in them (Rom. 5:3, Col. 1:24) and even appears to have embraced suffering (Phil 1:19f) and courted it, entering into situations where

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<sup>36</sup> Penner, *In the Shadow of the Cross*, 116.

<sup>37</sup> Chester, *The Ordinary Hero*, 52.

<sup>38</sup> Scott J. Hafemann, "Suffering," in Hawthorne G.F. Hawthorne and R.P. Martin RP (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1993), 919.



he must have anticipated suffering would be the outcome (Acts 14-23). He regarded his sufferings as temporary and insignificant (2 Cor 4:17) and soon to be replaced by reward: "For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17).

The apostle regarded his sufferings as an extension of the ministry of God in Christ (2 Cor. 1:5, Col. 1:24) and his sufferings as revealing the reality of the cross and resurrection as well as being a paradigm for his life (Phil. 1:21, 3:10). The apostle viewed the wisdom and power of God made known in the cross to now be further revealed in his sufferings (1 Cor. 1:2).<sup>39</sup>

The apostle extrapolated this expectation of suffering into the life of the disciple of Christ and especially into those trusted with the leadership of the people of God. He taught and warned that suffering is a normal and integral part of the Christian experience. It is the common lot of all Christians.<sup>40</sup> Christians will share the suffering that is part of life in a fallen and cursed world (Genesis 3), but the disciple of Christ is also called to embrace additional suffering and perhaps even seek suffering as part of their inclusion in the kingdom of God. Their response to suffering is to embrace God's use of it for their own personal Christ-like maturity and sanctification (Rom. 8:28, Col. 1:24-29) as well as to embrace suffering as a form of witness to the world.

This expectation of suffering is built into the call to leadership in the Christian church. It culminated in Paul's thought in his second letter to Timothy. Four times during his short, final letter, he called Timothy his charge to embrace suffering and endure it. In 2 Timothy 1:8 he encouraged him: "Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us..." Likewise, in 2 Timothy 2:3 he instructed: "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." Further, in 2 Timothy 3:12 he warned: "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Finally, in 2 Timothy 4:5 he exhorted: "As for you, always be sober minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry."

So strong is the theme of suffering in 2 Timothy that Mounce<sup>41</sup> suggested that this theme is woven throughout the epistle and that it ties the entire letter together. Gorman<sup>42</sup> suggested that in 2 Timothy, suffering becomes almost the principal sign of the Christian and that 2 Timothy is a call to imitate the

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<sup>39</sup> Hafemann *Suffering*, 920.

<sup>40</sup> George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans: 1992), 388.

<sup>41</sup> William D. Mounce *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC) (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson: 2000), 474.

<sup>42</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 549.

apostle as pastor, teacher and suffering martyr. Suffering is written large in the pages of the Pauline expectation for the Christian. The pastoral minister experiences the sufferings of being a Christian but must also be willing to embrace hardship and persecution in the discharge of his duties.<sup>43</sup> The Apostle Paul was not ashamed to suffer (2 Tim. 1:12, 2:9, 3:11). His life was a constant litany of suffering (2 Cor. 11:21-12:10) and he called Timothy to be willing to share in that same suffering as a good soldier, too. In 2 Timothy, some of the Apostle's ministerial colleagues were no longer willing to embrace suffering and instead had deserted him (2 Tim. 1:15), but the true minister is called to embrace suffering for Christ.

## Peter

The expectation of suffering in the Christian experience was also interwoven into the writings of the apostle Peter. Peter's first epistle was soaked with an expectation of suffering which he called 'all kinds of trials' (1 Pet 1:6 NIV). Suffering was the central issue of the letter but this was not suffering for sin. Rather, this was the unjust suffering of the innocent Christian for Christ.<sup>44</sup> Peter saw an inevitable suffering for the Christian of verbal abuse, slander, malice and other forms of persecution simply because of living for Christ. Peter called his readers not to be surprised by suffering but rather to expect it and emulate the example of Christ in it (1 Peter 2:21; 4:1). Christians are called to embrace suffering and even consider it as a source of joy realising that the destiny of Christ is also the destiny of his followers.<sup>45</sup> In 1 Peter 4:12-16, he instructed:

Beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share in Christ's sufferings...let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God.

The exhortation to suffer applies not only to the follower of Christ but also to the leaders of the church. Clowney observed: "For Peter, sharing in ministry means sharing in suffering: suffering now and glory to come...If all Christians partake of Christ's suffering and glory, how much more must the shepherds of his flock do so."<sup>46</sup>

This exhortation to the leaders of the church to embrace suffering was clear in Peter's final charge to his 'fellow elders' where he declared that he was not

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<sup>43</sup> John MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 33.

<sup>44</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (NIGTC) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 30-36.

<sup>45</sup> Karen H. Jobes *1 Peter* (BECNT) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2005), 45.

<sup>46</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* (BST) (Leicester, England: IVP, 1988), 198.

only a witness to Christ's sufferings but also a participant or sharer in those sufferings. In 1 Peter 5:1-3 he directed his readers:

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

The term "witness of the sufferings" is not simply a reference to Peter being an eyewitness to some of the events of Christ's death but is a declaration to be one who proclaims what he has seen and also participates in the consequences of that proclamation.<sup>47</sup> He called the undershepherds in the church to also testify to the sufferings of Christ and to take their share in them as well when he assured them:

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 5:10).<sup>48</sup>

### **Suffering in the leadership of the church of God**

From this brief survey of the biblical texts, it is immediately apparent that the early church had a deep experience of suffering. Suffering was seen as a normal and an expected part of the life of the disciple of Christ. And this suffering was not the suffering that is the reality of human existence after the Fall. This is not the suffering that is normal to all humans as a result of our rejection of the rule of God nor is this the suffering that has come as a result of the subsequent curse that God has placed upon creation (Gen 3). Neither is this the suffering of the people of God that is interconnected with their disobedience to the words and actions of God (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). This is that new and significant dimension of suffering that was added by the teaching and example of Jesus. This is the suffering embraced by the Son of God in the incarnation and crucifixion. This is that suffering which emanates from the character of God, flows from the love of God and is an integral part of the plan of God. This suffering is shown to be an essential part of the life of the disciple of Christ. It is the suffering that comes from attaching oneself to the suffering God. Bonhoeffer summarised this when he affirmed: "Suffering, then, is the badge of the true Christian. The disciple is not above his master..."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 176-177; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 302.

<sup>48</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP: 1991), 161.

<sup>49</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 74.

This suffering is essential to the maturity of the disciple of Christ (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:3). It is fundamental to the advancement of the kingdom of God. It is an indispensable component of the plan of God, it is to be rejoiced in and it is a deep privilege to be embraced by the disciple of Christ. Bonhoeffer reminded us: "No greater glory could he have granted to his own, no higher privilege can the Christian enjoy, than to suffer 'for Christ.'"<sup>50</sup>

This suffering is to especially be embraced by the leadership of the church of God (2 Tim. 1:8, 2:3, 3:12, 4:5). It needs to be an attitude and expectation held by those who exercise pastoral ministry. It stands in direct opposition to the anthropocentric, suffering- exempt teaching of the "Word of Faith" movement that is characteristic in many parts of Christianity today.<sup>51</sup> This expectation of suffering needs to be deeply understood and included in the worldview and ministry expectations of those who embark upon the task of pastoral ministry. Suffering needs to be affirmed as normal in the lives of the leaders of the church of God and taught to those embarking on a lifetime of ministry. This cross-shaped expectation will help pastors as they embark upon the often complicated and painful task of pastoral ministry. If pastoral workers have a sense of entitlement and an expectation that life should be easy and prosperous, then this will undermine their work for the gospel. Fernando concurred:

I think one of the most serious theological blind spots in the western church is a defective understanding of suffering. There seems to be a lot of reflection on how to avoid suffering and on what to do when we hurt. We have a lot of teaching about escape from and therapy for suffering, but there is inadequate teaching about the theology of suffering. Christians are not taught why they should expect suffering as followers of Christ and why suffering is so important for healthy growth as a Christian.<sup>52</sup>

The church languishes and declines when her members and her leaders are not willing to embrace suffering. And the character of God is not accurately shown to the world when his church seeks comfort and power rather than suffering and service.

In the Roman Catholic rite of Ordination, the priest to be ordained lies prostrate on the floor of the cathedral, face down, arms outstretched in the form of a cross in order to remind those present that ministry requires death

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<sup>50</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 188.

<sup>51</sup> Russell A. Morris and Dan T. Liroy, "A Historical and Theological Framework for Understanding Word of Faith Theology," in *Conspectus*, 13 (Johannesburg: SATS, 2012), 74.

<sup>52</sup> Ajith Fernando, *The Call to Joy and Pain* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway: 2007), 51.

and suffering.<sup>53</sup> The apostle Paul in his final letter to Timothy emphasises that suffering is to be expected and endured in the task of ministry. This charge from the apostle echoed Jesus own teaching that suffering is an integral component of the Christian life and Christian ministry. The cross stands as the symbol of discipleship. It stands as the symbol of leadership.

The ongoing training of pastors needs to include training on suffering in order to offset the false teaching in the world. It needs to emphasise an understanding of suffering as an integral component of Christian discipleship for all, as well as an integral component of ministry. In the Western world where material comfort is seen as a right, Christianity subtly starts to take on the characteristics of its society. It forgets that to be a Christian is not normal, nor safe, but rather foolish and dangerous. John Piper underscored the point: "At the center of Christianity and the center of the pastoral life is the dishonourable, foolish gruesome and utterly glorious reality of the tortured God-Man Jesus Christ..."<sup>54</sup>

When the Scriptures are taught, preachers need to take care not to present a sub-biblical, Western-value driven exegesis that de-emphasises the place of suffering. Leaders need to be challenged not to be emotionally fragile but resolute in enduring hardship. They need to be encouraged to be willing to embrace the Pauline call to Timothy to remember the sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of the apostle (2 Tim. 2:9). Leaders need to embrace the normalness of suffering in the life of the Christian. They must be encouraged to face persecution and scorn (2 Tim. 3:12); to expect it; to examine it and to endure it. They must be challenged not to soften the message of the gospel in the face of opposition.<sup>55</sup> Carmichael described the attitude that should be prevalent in the Christian leader when she insisted:

Let us not be surprised when we have to face difficulties. When the wind blows hard on a tree, the roots stretch and grow the stronger, let it be so with us. Let us not be weaklings, yielding to every wind that blows, but strong in spirit to resist.<sup>56</sup>

The cross stands in the center of the plan of God. It is the symbol of the kingdom of God, it reveals the character of God and it contains within it the call of God to discipleship. In its pain, suffering, and defeat, it paradoxically contains its victory. The plan of God stands in stark contrast to the desires of the human heart. The human desire for power, ease, and comfort resident

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<sup>53</sup> William H. Willimon Pastor (Nashville Tennessee: Abingdon Press: 2002), 288.

<sup>54</sup> John Piper, *Brothers, we are not Professionals* (Ross-Shire, England: Mentor: 2003), ix-xi.

<sup>55</sup> John MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically*, 32.

<sup>56</sup> Amy Carmichael, *Edges of his Ways* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC: 2011), 30.

within our hearts and reinforced by a society committed to these values surreptitiously robs the church of its power and witness.

Pastors need to be reminded, taught, and constantly encouraged to embrace the call of Jesus to deny themselves, to take up their cross and to follow him (Matt 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23). Ministers need to be reminded that this is not simply to embrace a small inconvenience or discomfort but to model themselves on the Apostle Paul and fill up in themselves the sufferings of Christ (Col. 1:24). Ministers need to remember that hardship is normal and they need to be encouraged to endure it (2 Tim. 1:8, 2:3, 3:12, 4:5) as did their saviour and Lord.

As Charles Simeon came to the end of his life, his friend Joseph Gurney asked him how he had endured in ministry under immense suffering and provocation. Simeon replied:

My dear brother, we must not mind a little suffering for Christ's sake. When I am getting through a hedge, if my head and shoulders are safely through, I can bear the pricking of my legs. Let us rejoice in the remembrance that our holy Head has surmounted all His suffering and triumphed over death. Let us follow Him patiently; we shall soon be partakers of His victory.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Handley C.G. Moule, *Charles Simeon* (London: IVP: 1948), 155f.

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# THE ISSUE OF SPIRITUAL POWER IN AFRICAN TRADITION AND WORLDVIEW, AND HOW THE CHURCH COULD RESPOND

by

**Joseph Kiso Masika**

## **Introduction**

This essay is an exploration of how African Christians view the spiritual world and its impact on their lives, and of the issues that arise from this worldview. It will discuss traditional African beliefs regarding spirits, and how those beliefs have been transferred to Christianity, as is most evident in African Indigenous Churches. The essay will then investigate what the Bible says about spirits and how Christians are to relate to them, in order to discover how this can help Africans to have a healthy and Christ-centred approach to the matter.

## **The traditional worldview**

Spiritual beings have historically occupied a significant and detailed role in African philosophy. While Africans have believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, or Creator, which is usually equated with God, this being was thought to be distant from the people, and various spirits had much more immediate effects on the lives of individuals and communities.<sup>1</sup> How they are perceived varies; John Mbiti notes that they occupy the "ontological mode of existence between God and man,"<sup>2</sup> but while they may be responsible for healing, blessing, and protecting the community, they may also torment the living through possession, calamities, and curses.<sup>3</sup> They are often associated with natural phenomena and objects, and their supposed activity in the world has been used as an explanation for the inexplicable events of life. Mbiti argues that – while beliefs in spirits vary in detail from one community to another – this idea of spirits interacting with the physical world and affecting human life is foundational to all of them.<sup>4</sup>

Some spirits are believed to have been created as such by God; others are the spirits of humans who have died. Mbiti divides these into the categories of "spirits" and "living-dead." "Spirits" are ancestors who are no longer remembered by their communities. Their names have been forgotten, so they have lost their individuality and are no longer considered human. While they

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<sup>1</sup> Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1975), 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (2nd ed., Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1989), 74.

<sup>3</sup> Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 36-37.

<sup>4</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions*, 75-76.

are more powerful than humans, they can also be controlled and manipulated by humans who know the right methods of doing so. Thus, people both fear the spirits and seek to control them for their own ends.<sup>5</sup>

Ancestral spirits are known to sometimes possess members of their community, often for the purpose of communicating a message. They normally choose the same few people to possess repeatedly, and while messages may be guidance or promises of prosperity for the community, the person possessed is often tormented by the spirit, and may experience seizures or the compulsion to perform dangerous acts, including suicide.<sup>6</sup>

Another acknowledged dark side to the spirit world is that of magic and witchcraft. Practitioners (often called sorcerers) are universally regarded as evil, bringing harm to others by invoking spirits to act against them through curses.<sup>7</sup> Such people may, if found out, be killed by their community - but they may also be too powerful for anyone to oppose them, and therefore induce great fear among the population.

In the face of malignant spirits and sorcerers, the traditional healer has an important role to play. He or she is thought to be capable of divining the cause of misfortune to an individual or a community, and of prescribing a cure. Such misfortunes range from natural disasters, illness, poverty, and premature death, to loss of work, loss of community status, or supernatural events that oppress a person or a location. In short, any kind of negative experience may be ascribed to a spiritual cause.<sup>8</sup> Healers have a range of cures at their disposal, including herbs, amulets and charms, which take many forms, but if these cures fail, they are likely to recommend sacrificing to the ancestral spirits, since they are the guardians of the family or community and therefore responsible for protecting it from harm. If they fail in this, they must be persuaded to step in and restore harmony.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, some traditional healers specialise in exorcism. Ridding a person of an evil spirit usually involves music, especially drums. The possessed person dances until he or she drops from exhaustion; this activity either placates or expels the spirit.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions*, 78.

<sup>6</sup> Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 36-37.

<sup>7</sup> Yusufu Turaki, *Foundations of African Traditional Religion and Worldview* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers Limited, 2006), 100.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin C. Ray, *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, and Community* (2nd ed., New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000), 72-73.

<sup>9</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Tradition of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 48-50.

<sup>10</sup> Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 37.

It is therefore clear that, for the traditional African, the world is only comprehensible in light of the activities of various spirits, whether good or evil. It should be noted that, in general, spirits are thought to be capable of both good and evil deeds, like humans. Since the Supreme Being has created all of them, and they are in communication with him, these deeds are seen as part of the divine plan, whatever their nature.<sup>11</sup> The Africans' aim is to maintain harmony in life by keeping all life forces, both natural and supernatural, in balance.

### **Beliefs in African Independent Churches (AICs)**

The theological and preaching concerns of AICs often differ significantly from those of mainstream denominations, and their approach to the spiritual realm is one reason for this. While many Africans have converted to Christianity, in many instances, their worldview remains the same, and it is this worldview that AICs often theologially justify. Yusufu Turaki remarks that "independent churches exhibit a marked continuity between the pre-Christian religious and cultural heritage and Christianity."<sup>12</sup> That is why this essay is investigating them, as they represent the most obvious attempt to engage with spiritual issues from a Christian standpoint.

AICs often emphasise the ability of the church to provide healing, deliverance from evil spirits, economic empowerment, and prophecies that explain why people may not be experiencing the prosperity and well-being which they hope for. Mosy Madugba, a Nigerian pastor, has published a book which promises to deliver people from barrenness, premature death, ancestral curses, lack of prosperity or social status, natural disasters and even bad governance, through the breaking of spiritual bonds, which he calls "foundations."<sup>13</sup> This list agrees exactly with the one given above to describe the issues which traditional African religion ascribes to precisely the same cause. Even his use of the term "foundations" is reminiscent of the African practice of sacrificing an animal at the start of the construction of a building, and the common assumption that misfortune may be spiritual punishment for a person's past actions.<sup>14</sup> Such ideas are common in AICs; in general, any misfortune is ascribed to evil spirits, spiritual bonds, curses, individual sin, lack of faith, or a combination of these.

AICs also often ascribe special power or "anointing" to their head pastor or to the building itself. Many preachers claim that God is speaking directly through

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<sup>11</sup> Magesa, *African Religion*, 46-47.

<sup>12</sup> Turaki, *Foundations*, 99.

<sup>13</sup> Mosy U. Madugba, *Dealing with Evil Foundations* (Port Harcourt: Spiritual Life Outreach Publications, 2003), 76-78, 85, 86 & 89.

<sup>14</sup> Turaki, *Foundations*, 93.

them, with a special “word” for the listeners. Some claim the power to discern when a sorcerer is opposing them, to repel curses, and to cast curses against their enemies.<sup>15</sup> Such claims endue them with the combined abilities of traditional healers, sorcerers, and mediums, and produce a combination of fear, awe, and hope in their followers.<sup>16</sup> Their buildings become viewed as sacred places, where God is present in more power than elsewhere; this is similar to traditional belief in sacred groves or locations (e.g., Mount Kenya).

It is impossible, within the confines of this essay, to conduct an in-depth critique of the theology of AICs in this regard. However, one or two points will be noted, as they are relevant to the third section, which seeks a biblical answer to these important questions.

Firstly, it should be noted that the AICs seek to address a deeply felt need in their congregations. According to the traditional worldview, humans need to perform an eternal balancing act in order to keep life-forces in harmony and themselves in well-being. They are thus engaged in an ongoing battle against evil spirits. Their view in this regard is confirmed by their experience of modern Africa, where the majority of people suffer from disease, poverty, war, bad governance, and lack of opportunity. The AICs attract attention and adherence because they acknowledge the reality of this battle.

However, there are some problems with how they address it. The majority of AIC pastors, in preaching, assume that the traditional African worldview is correct and is in accordance with the worldview of the Bible. Therefore, in their biblical interpretation, they assume that the Old Testament’s view of ancestors, blessings, curses, sacred places, spirits, and God, is identical to their own.<sup>17</sup> Not only is this incorrect, but it also results in them drawing most of their theological assumptions from the Old Testament, while paying little regard to the New Testament.

This means that Jesus receives very little attention. His death and resurrection are often referred to only in connection with the power they are believed to have released for people to be liberated from ancestral curses or other above-listed concerns. Similarly, his teachings are generally interpreted in a way that presupposes the correctness of traditional African beliefs.<sup>18</sup> This is worrying, since Christians believe that Jesus is the full and final revelation of God. He is the Living Word (John 1:14), and, as such must be the standard by which we

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<sup>15</sup> Cephas N. Omenyo, "Man Of God Prophecy Unto Me: The Prophetic Phenomenon in African Christianity" in *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2011), 35.

<sup>16</sup> Theological Advisory Group, *The Holy Spirit And The Church In Africa Today* (Kijabe: Kijabe Printing Press, 1984), 322-323.

<sup>17</sup> Madugba, *Evil Foundations*, 15, 34-35, 56, 78 & 92-94.

<sup>18</sup> Madugba, *Evil Foundations*, 31-33, 41, 113.

interpret the written Word, the Bible. We cannot simply use him to justify our pre-existing worldview. Paul urged the church in Rome to be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2). This suggests that not only the members' actions, but also their way of thinking, needed to change in order to conform to Christ.

The inadequacy of the AICs' theology in this regard is evident in the fact that their exercise of power is often un-Christlike and keeps their members in a permanent position of subjection to their churches. In order to receive empowerment and freedom in daily life, followers must accept everything the preacher says, seek the "anointed" church building and leaders when they need something, and give financially to the church in order to receive what they ask for. This is no different to the spiritual system in which the African operated before the coming of the gospel.<sup>19</sup> The next section will explore how the Bible, particularly the New Testament, views the spiritual world and the believer's relationship to it.

### **Biblical perspectives**

The God who the Bible presents to us, particularly in its revelation of Christ, is unlike any other god in the world. We should note that the actions and beliefs of both Jesus and the early church were offensive to many Jews, who refused to accept that Christ was the Jewish Messiah because he did not resemble their expectations (John 9:35-41, 10:19-39, 18:29-38; Acts 7, 22:1-22). Therefore, we cannot expect God to completely resemble African traditional conceptions of him, even though there are some similarities. If we wish to know what God is really like, we must look to Christ, and from there to the rest of the Bible, for our answers.

The Bible teaches that God is the source of all power, and that power wielded by any creature, whether physical or spiritual, remains under the authority of God. This is evident in the story of Job, where God grants Satan the ability to afflict Job (Job 2:6). Later, when God reveals himself to Job in answer to his questions, he describes how he controls the most fearsome creatures in all creation, including Leviathan, the dreaded mythical chaos monster.<sup>20</sup> This view of God as ultimate source of power is similar to the traditional African view that the powers of the spirits, for good or ill, are ultimately derived from God.<sup>21</sup> However, there is a difference in that, while the God of the African worldview seemingly condones harmful and evil spiritual activity, as a way in which to maintain harmony in the universe, the God of the Bible does not. "God is light and in him there is no darkness at all," says 1 John 1:5. Similarly, James 1:17 assures us that God is the source of good and perfect gifts, who

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<sup>19</sup> Omenyo, "Man Of God," 35.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Rowold, "Leviathan and Job in Job 41:2-3" in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (1986), 105-106.

<sup>21</sup> Magesa, *African Religion*, 46-47.

"does not change like shifting shadows." African Christians, therefore, need not fear that God's mood will shift and that they will experience calamity as a result. Because God is light, he also does not allow evil to run rampant in the world. Traditional Africans rarely had recourse to the Supreme Being; instead, they relied on being able to appease the spirits nearest to the living world. The Christian relationship to God is different: because God has power over all other spiritual forces (as demonstrated in his victory over the Egyptian gods in Exodus 7:14-12:32 and over Dagon, the Philistine god, in 1 Sam 5:1-4, 7), Christians are able to speak directly to God and have him act on their behalf. They need never think that they must battle evil of any kind without the direct intervention of God.

The relationship between God and humanity is based on the accomplishments of Christ in his death and resurrection. Although humanity was estranged from God, and fell prey to all kinds of evil, God took it upon himself to solve the problem by coming to live among us, dying for us, and being raised again to life, thus securing salvation from evil for all believers. This proves that God's love is the primary motivation for his relationship with humanity. "God proves his love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.... While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (Romans 5:8, 10). Paul further emphasises that God's love is the power that liberates us: "In all these things, we are more than conquerors *through him who loved us*. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels... nor powers... nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:37-39, italics added). Not only are we reconciled with God, but nothing in creation can destroy our relationship with him. Therefore, whatever a Christian suffers, whether poverty, illness, or spiritual oppression, he or she should never think that God has ceased to love him or her. God is present with us in suffering, even when our own personal sin has caused the suffering - provided we are repentant. His love is what enables us to overcome evil.

### **The nature of the battle**

This essay would like to suggest two New Testament passages that describe the nature of spiritual warfare in light of Christ's death and resurrection. They could, perhaps, become the source of hermeneutical lenses that could interpret Scripture faithfully for the African believer regarding spiritual forces.

The first is Galatians 3:13-14: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' - in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." This deals directly with the African fear of curses which come as a result of ancestral spirits, actions of sorcerers, or past behaviour of family members - many AICs, for example, argue that a family legacy of adherence to African

Traditional Religions, or even a person's name, inherited from that tradition, can carry spiritual evil across generations and "curse" an unwitting believer today.<sup>22</sup>

The "curse" described in Galatians is related to law. Ardel Caneday argues that Paul's justification for claiming Christ's victory over this curse is based on the fact that Christ has announced a new standard by which righteousness and unrighteousness are judged - acceptance or rejection of salvation through his death.<sup>23</sup> While it seems that Paul primarily had Jewish law in mind, it seems reasonable to argue that Christ, as the final standard of righteousness, has also replaced any human system of law that defines the moral norms of culture. In fact, Brigitte Kahl suggests that Paul's arguments in Galatians regarding freedom from 'the law' refers to the Roman law as much as the Jewish one, since Roman law enshrined Roman culture, or worldview, and Christians behaved differently to the customs of both.<sup>24</sup> Christ has therefore brought about a new situation in the world, in which people can be redeemed from the evil and suffering inherent in their previous belief systems.<sup>25</sup> The African Christian is therefore free from the curses of sorcerers and spirits as well as from the consequences of their ancestors' behaviour. No one can curse them anymore, since Christ has once and for all neutralised the power of evil against those who trust in him.

The second passage which may be helpful for our discussion is Colossians 2:8-23. This is a lengthy passage which deals with Christ's death and resurrection in relation to spirits and authorities: "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ" (Col 2:8). The author then explains that, in nailing human sin to the cross, Christ "disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it" (2:15).

This epistle was written to a church surrounded and buffeted by varying pagan ideologies and philosophies.<sup>26</sup> Scholars are divided over the exact meanings

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew Engelke, "Past Pentecostalism: Notes on Rupture, Realignment, and Everyday Life in Pentecostal and African Independent Churches" in *Africa*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (2010), 177.

<sup>23</sup> Ardel Caneday, "Redeemed From the Curse of the Law' - The Use of Deut. 21:22-23 in Gal 3:13" in *Trinity Journal*, Vol. 10 (1989), 189.

<sup>24</sup> Brigitte Kahl, "Reading Galatians And Empire At The Great Altar Of Pergamon" in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* Volume 59, Number 3 (2005), 31.

<sup>25</sup> David Brondos, "The Cross and the Curse: Galatians 3:13 and Paul's Doctrine of Redemption" in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Vol. 81 (2001), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Holly Diane Hayes, "Between Text and Sermon: Colossians 2:6-19" in *Interpretation*, Vol 49, No. 3 (1995), 285-286.

of references to angels and spirits, but they are clearly spiritual beings, whether they are good or evil.<sup>27</sup> H. Wayne House argues that both Jewish and Greek converts were fascinated by angels, as they had a prominent role in both religious traditions. The believers are warned against paying too much attention to them, and the passage makes it clear that every imaginable spiritual force in the universe is now subject to Christ because of his victory at the cross.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, the paradigm within which an African Christian should interact with the world is that of the love of Christ, who is truly Lord of all. We who are in Christ acknowledge no authority other than him. This is made clear in the rest of this passage, which challenges the church to live in the reality of Christ's victory: "Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and the worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking.... If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?" (Col 2:18, 20).

This is the challenge which all believers everywhere seek to respond to. Both our ways of thinking and our lifestyles must reflect the new status quo which Christ has brought into being. The victory of Christ on the cross means that the thought of any evil spirit being able to harm Christians is simply impossible. Christ publically displayed their impotence and removed the illusion of their power forever. However, it is also true that the whole world is not yet as it will be when the fullness of salvation is realised at the eschaton. Christ's triumph over evil does not mean that Christians will never suffer poverty, illness or grief. However, it means that we are not subject to the powers which cause suffering. We do not need to appease them, for we know that God is in control of all things and will not allow us to be destroyed (2 Cor. 4:8-10). Nevertheless, the church as a community is also called to enact a foretaste of how life will be when suffering is finally removed. This is in line with Colossians' challenge regarding lifestyle, and brings us to our final point.

### **Authority and Responsibility in the Church**

The presence of the Holy Spirit dwells in the church - in each believer and in the community as a whole. Therefore, with regard to defeating the forms of evil that we are enabled to overcome in this life, authority and responsibility to do so rests within the body of believers. Since the Holy Spirit comes to all believers, and does not single pastors out for an especially "large" portion of spiritual power, authority to cast out demons, break curses, and pray for

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<sup>27</sup> Brian J. Walsh, "Late/Post Modernity and Idolatry: A Contextual Reading of Colossians 2:8-3:4" in *Ex Auditu*, Vol. 15 (1999), 8.

<sup>28</sup> H. Wayne House, "The Doctrine of Christ in Colossians," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June (1992), 190-191.



healing belongs to every Christian (Acts 2:1-4). In some cases, a group of Christians ministering together may prove more effective than one acting alone, but the main point is that the Holy Spirit is the one who does the work, not the Christians. We are simply blessed children, chosen by God to bear his Spirit and guaranteed of his love and power to protect us and deliver others from bondage.

However, the church does not only deliver people through direct intervention with evil spirits. The modern African suffers evil in many forms, including economic and political injustice. The gospel does not promise instant liberation from poverty and oppression in this age, since it recognises the scope of evil and the fact that the liberation of one person economically, particularly in a capitalist system, will not mean liberation for others - in fact, it may bring about increased exploitation!<sup>29</sup> However, the church has a responsibility to be Christlike, and this means being concerned for the welfare of others (Gal 6:2; Acts 2:44-45). If it has members who are poor, hungry, homeless, unemployed or uneducated, it must seek to provide for those needs wherever possible. In this way, the church defies the systemic injustice that condemns people to misery, by providing an alternative way of living which actively shows love to the other. This is only possible within a community that loves one another, works together, and is actively involved in the lives of believers and unbelievers within its local area. Such activity gives people true hope, and demonstrates the love of God, which, as we have seen above, is the power by which he has liberated all creation.

## **Conclusion**

We have seen that Africans have historically believed in and sought to appease spirits which often do them harm or cause them trouble. We have also seen that the God of the Bible is a loving God who maintains absolute control of all powers in the universe. In coming to earth and dying on the cross, Christ has once and for all defeated every evil force in the universe. Nothing is able to do lasting damage to Christians, or to separate them in any way from God's love, which liberates us. We have specifically noted that the power of curses has been removed from believers of all cultural backgrounds, and that the "elemental spirits of the universe," which include those who plague the African people, have been disarmed, condemned, and declared impotent. The church is called to an understanding of and love for God which is reflected in its behaviour and teaching. The Holy Spirit's presence is with us to enable us to defeat evil where we find it. This includes ministries that drive out demons, but also ministries that combat the evils of material poverty and despair.

It should be noted that the biblical exegesis in this paper is necessarily limited. Its suggestions should not be viewed as final, but simply as part of a

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<sup>29</sup> Rodney Clapp, "Myopia of the Market" in *Christian Century*, January 11 (2012), 45.

conversation that should ensue between African biblical scholars, pastors and theologians regarding biblical teachings about spirits and their application to the current African context.

African Christians, like all other Christians, have been granted a victory that they did not win, but which is both effective and eternal. No further ritual or sacrifice is needed to remove the power of evil from their lives. They are called to live in this victory, being free from fear and having authority to liberate others, as well as a responsibility to demonstrate in all possible ways the love which has redeemed the universe. For those Africans suffering the effects of evil, permanent freedom is possible to all who believe, simply by trusting in Christ and his power. This is truly good news, to be proclaimed to all Africa, and, indeed, the rest of the world.

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LET THEM CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH:  
DIVINE HEALING AND THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE  
IN SOUTH AFRICA<sup>1</sup>

by

**Gregory Crofford and Mashangu Maluleka**

**Introduction: Divine healing and the African context**

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to a multiplicity of Christian churches. While theologically diverse denominations are represented, Steve Weibe-Johnson, a Mennonite missionary, described the Christian religious landscape as characterized by a “generic Pentecostalism.”<sup>2</sup> Visiting charismatic evangelists like German Reinhard Bonnke fill stadiums with seekers looking for a God who cares about both the spiritual and physical aspects of their existence.<sup>3</sup>

This paper will investigate what role divine healing plays in some African quadrants of the Church of the Nazarene, a non-charismatic denomination operating in a charismatic milieu. To this end, the paper will investigate the meaning of James 5:13-18 and its importance as a New Testament example of how divine healing may function within the life of a local congregation. Next, it will study the origin and evolution of Nazarene Article of Faith XIV, “Divine Healing.” Finally, it will present comments from some Nazarene pastors in South Africa who have incorporated divine healing into the ecclesiology of the local church.

**James 5:13-18: Divine healing in the congregation**

Healing is a theme in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>4</sup> James 5:13-18 is the *locus classicus* on divine healing and is significant for its setting in a local community of faith. James wrote:

(13) If any of you are suffering, they should pray. If any of you are happy, they should sing. (14) If any of you are sick, they should call for the elders of the church, and the elders should pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. (15) Prayer that comes from faith will heal the sick, for the Lord will restore them to health.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the Third Global Nazarene Theology Conference held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in March 2014. It first appeared in *Didache: Faithful Teaching* 13, no. 2 (January 2014), at [didache.nazarene.org](http://didache.nazarene.org).

<sup>2</sup> From a conversation with Greg Crofford, September 1999, in Cotonou, Benin (West Africa)

<sup>3</sup> Bonnke held a crusade in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 2011 and has visited West African nations multiple times.

<sup>4</sup> An examination of healing in Scripture is Frederick J. Gaiser, *Healing in the Bible: Theological Insight for Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010).

And if they have sinned, they will be forgiven. (16) For this reason, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous person is powerful in what it can achieve. (17) Elijah was a person just like us. When he earnestly prayed that it wouldn't rain, no rain fell for three and a half years. (18) He prayed again, God sent rain, and the earth produced its fruit. – *Common English Bible*

Peter Davids noted that epistles commonly ended with wishes for health.<sup>5</sup> He believed v. 14 was an allusion to something “outside the human sphere” where “either God or evil powers must be involved.”<sup>6</sup> Less speculatively, Luke Timothy Johnson spoke of an illness of limb or organ.<sup>7</sup>

The term “elders” (*presbyteros*) appears here and in Acts 20:17, where Paul called for the elders of the church in Ephesus. Rabbinic texts affirmed that elders traditionally visited the sick.<sup>8</sup> James encouraged the individual who was ill to call for the elders to pray over him (or her) and anoint with oil, likely simultaneous with the prayer. This echoes the ministry of the Twelve in Mark 6:13.<sup>9</sup> The type of oil used is not indicated, nor is there consensus whether the meaning of the anointing is medicinal, sacramental, or merely symbolic.<sup>10</sup> John Thomas argued, however, that oil came was associated with God's ability to heal and that eschatological healing was an “implication of the inauguration of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>11</sup>

The “prayer that comes from faith” (v. 15a) should not distract from the one who is the source of healing, “the Lord,” who “will restore them to health” (15b). The phrase “and if they have sinned, they will be forgiven” underscores that some (not all) illnesses are the result of sin (Mark 2:1-12).<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982), 191.

<sup>6</sup> Davids, 191.

<sup>7</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 37 a in the Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 330.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, 330.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Leicester, England: Wm. B. Eerdmans and Apollos, 2000), 238.

<sup>10</sup> Moo, 238-40.

<sup>11</sup> John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2010), 16.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas, 243.

confession of sin may have included confession in community meetings or private confession to another person.<sup>13</sup>

Frederick Gaiser summarized the connection between the proclamation of the gospel and the ministry of healing:

Healing is not a commodity to be dispensed by the church or achieved or purchased by the individual (2 Kings 5:15-16); healing comes not apart from us, but along with, forgiveness and salvation (Mark 2:9-12). Like forgiveness and salvation, God's healing is free, given without condition (Acts 3:6). Thus, both biblically and in the practice of the church, healing will be found in the context of the gospel, as part of the ministry of word and sacraments. Prayers for and services of healing should be a normal part of that ministry, complementing the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.<sup>14</sup>

James 5 is notable for the context in which healing occurred, a local church where presumably believers knew each other. Unlike the current practice of "faith healing" that emphasizes itinerate evangelists performing to large crowds in stadiums with its limited accountability, James encouraged divine healing within a local community of faith, with prayers and anointing offered by trusted members known for their integrity. This understanding of divine healing informs Nazarene Article of Faith XIV. It is to this Article that we turn.

#### **Article of Faith XIV: Origin, development, and meaning**

The first three Nazarene *Manuals*, published in 1898, 1903, and 1905 under Phineas Bresee, contained no mention of divine healing. However, the 1907 *Manual*, published following the union meeting in Chicago, included a paragraph under the section "doctrinal statement":

The harmony and unity of the holiness people is absolutely essential, and while we recognize that God heals with and without means, we hold that no one has the right to take such an extreme position as may result in the death of any person without medical attention.<sup>15</sup>

The reference to "harmony and unity" is important, bringing into focus the differing emphases of the regional groups that eventually would compose the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene.<sup>16</sup> Stan Ingersol clarified that the Holiness Church of Christ (known as the "South group") desired more clarity on both

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<sup>13</sup> Davids, 196.

<sup>14</sup> Gaiser, 249.

<sup>15</sup> *Manual of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, Published By Authority of the General Assembly Held at Chicago, Illinois* (Los Angeles, CA: Nazarene Publishing Company, 1907), 26-27.

<sup>16</sup> This was the denomination's name from 1908 through 1919, when the General Assembly dropped the word "Pentecostal," reverting to the shorter original name of the denomination.

the second coming of Christ and divine healing, viewing the latter as the “practice of the New Testament” and as one of the “primitive spiritual gifts” one should expect to manifest itself in Holiness churches.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequent editions of the *Manual* demonstrated ambivalence about divine healing. In the next four quadrennial editions of the *Manual* (1911-1923), no longer was divine healing treated in the doctrinal statement but under the secondary heading of “special advices,” where other topics were addressed, including the support of ministers, temperance and Prohibition, marriage, divorce, and the election of church officers. The revised statement read:

We believe in the Bible doctrine of physical healing, and urge our people to offer the prayer of faith for the healing of the sick. Providential means and agencies, when necessary, are not to be refused.<sup>18</sup>

The 1915 *Manual* changed “physical healing” to “Divine Healing.”<sup>19</sup> While this might seem a small change, the word “Divine” emphasized Christ as the Great Physician, the healer. Otherwise, the one offering the prayer for healing might mistakenly be considered the “healer.” Further, in 1928, the “Special Advices” were removed from the *Manual* and “Divine Healing” was promoted back to its place with other doctrines, becoming paragraph 30, Article of Faith XV.<sup>20</sup> The phrase “Divine Healing” (uppercase) became “divine healing” (lowercase).<sup>21</sup>

Two further changes occurred in the 1989 *Manual* and 1997-2001 *Manual*. In the former edition, an Article of Faith on the Church was added, resulting in a re-ordering of existing Articles, making “Divine Healing” thereafter Article XIV. More importantly, an updating of language and clarification occurred in the 1997-2001 *Manual*:

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<sup>17</sup> Stan Ingersol, in Floyd Cunningham, ed., *Our Watchword and Song: The Centennial History of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2009), 154.

<sup>18</sup> E.F. Walker and E.A. Girvin, eds. *Manual of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. Published by the Authority of the General Assembly, Held at Nashville, Tenn.* (Kansas City, Missouri: Publishing House of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, 1911), 28-29.

<sup>19</sup> E.F. Walker, ed. *Manual of the History, Doctrine, Government, and Ritual of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. Published by the Authority of the General Assembly Held at Kansas City, Missouri* (Kansas City, MO: Pentecostal Nazarene Publishing House, 1915), 28.

<sup>20</sup> E.J. Flemming, C.A. Kinder, J.B. Chapman, et al., eds. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *Manual of the History, Doctrine, Government and Ritual of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1923), 33.

<sup>21</sup> The switch to small letters may only indicate changing conventions regarding capitalization.



We believe in the Bible doctrine of divine healing and urge our people to seek to offer the prayer of faith for the healing of the sick. We also believe that God heals through the means of medical science.<sup>22</sup>

From a non-Western perspective, this change may be seen as unfortunate. The older wording of “providential means” was broad enough to encompass Western medicine or traditional remedies that are commonly gathered in nature – such as herbs or teas – particularly in rural areas of Africa where there is no doctor. As the article currently reads, there appears to be no allowance for medicine that – while not scientific in the strictest sense – has no link with the occult and has proven beneficial.

Nevertheless, Article of Faith XIV serves an important theological purpose. Timothy Crutcher noted that it guards against the Gnostic notion that our bodies are evil. Rather, they are the objects of God's loving concern.<sup>23</sup> He cautioned that Article XIV should not be taken as a guarantee that God will heal, but rather as an “exhortation to prayer.”<sup>24</sup>

Having examined the meaning of James 5:13-18 and the origin, development, and meaning of the Nazarene Article of Faith on divine healing, the stage is set to consider how the doctrine functions in the denomination's ecclesiology. While a broad study examining this question in multiple nations would be illuminating, this paper will only consider how representative Nazarene pastors in the Republic of South Africa have incorporated divine healing into their worldview and church practice.

### **Divine healing as related to the worldview of many Africans**

The study of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John is informative. This includes how Jesus rolled out his ministry (Luke 4:18-19), his instructions to the disciples when he sent them to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 10:1, 7-8; Mark 6:7, 12-13; Luke 9:1-2), his instructions to the seventy-two sent to the cities ahead of Jesus (Luke 10:1, 17), and his final orders to the eleven disciples before ascension (Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:16-20). In light of this study – in addition to the ministry of the early church as contained in the book of Acts – it may be concluded that the mission of the church is to provide divine solutions to human problems for the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, the benefit of humanity, and to the glory of God.

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<sup>22</sup> John Bowling et al., eds. *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, 1997-2001: History, Constitution, Government, and Ritual* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1997), 33.

<sup>23</sup> Timothy J. Crutcher, in Gay Leonard, ed., *Articles of Faith: What Nazarenes Believe and Why* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2005), 83.

<sup>24</sup> *Articles of Faith*, 84.

What these Scriptures underscore may be termed P.H.D. (preaching, healing, and deliverance). These are the marks of a healthy church. If the church is called to be the bridge between the divine and the human, then there is a need for the church to fully understand God and the divine mission and to fully understand the worldview of the people to whom she ministers. My observation of the Church of the Nazarene in South Africa and beyond is that the application of Article of Faith XIV on divine healing in the Nazarene *Manual* is informed by an individual's worldview. Moses' calling at the burning bush was God's empowerment through the use of a staff turned snake and that should be understood in-line with Pharaoh and his people's belief in the power of the rod and magic snakes (Exodus 4:2-9; 7:9-12).

The God who called Moses also empowered him in-line with the expectations of the Egyptian's worldview. He knew that an African Pharaoh would never believe in a God who had never proved His power to him and his officials. Rinaldo Ronzani best expressed this African perspective:

In a world that is regarded as 'religious' – like the traditional African world – where there is a complex interaction between God, mysterious powers, the spirits and the ancestors, when someone gets sick, the two most frequent questions are, 'who did it?' and 'why'? This is due to the fact that sickness is not something purely biological or physiological. Sickness is looked at as the 'enemy of life' and it represents a lack of harmony and balance, a disorder introduced into the social and cosmic fabric.<sup>25</sup>

The African traditional healers, African Independent churches like the Zion Christian Church in South Africa, and the success of Pentecostals in attracting African crowds is owed to their ability to understand and accommodate that worldview. Meanwhile, the old missionaries missed the boat. Philemona Mwaura explained: "The problem here, as Pobe points out, is that the early missionaries tended to deny the reality of malevolent powers at work in the community and to dismiss belief in witchcraft as superstition and heathenism."<sup>26</sup> It is that very mistake that – according to Cephas Omenyo – has become the unpaid bill by mainline churches of Ghana that proved to be fertile ground for the birth and fast growth of the African Independent churches:

Africans both accepted the gospel and appropriated it within the African context, thus leading to the emergence of African Independent Churches, or

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<sup>25</sup> Rinaldo Ronzani, *Christian Healing: The Anointing of the Sick* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications, 2007), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Mwaura Njeri Philemona, "Healing as a Pastoral Concern," in *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Challenging Essays in Pastoral Theology*, D.W. Waruta and H.W. Kinoti, eds. (Nairobi, Kenya: Action Publishers, 1994), 34.

they remained within the Western-founded churches and later sought to renew those churches along the lines of pneumatic and African traditional spirituality.<sup>27</sup>

The bottom-line is that the only way that the Church of the Nazarene can successfully incorporate and implement Article XIV in a way that will impact the African church is by heeding this suggestion from Turake Yusufu:

Christianity has to address the African holistic/organic view of the world, which is governed by the law of harmony. Here, Christianity faces not a specific religious belief, but a philosophical worldview that is expansive and covers the totality of life, both in the human world and in the spirit world.<sup>28</sup>

### **Interviews with select South African Nazarene pastors regarding divine healing and the practice of ministry**

Interviews conducted with select Nazarene pastors in South Africa – inquiring how their practice of ministry reflects Article XIV – demonstrated that each response was informed by underlying beliefs regarding the source of sickness and how sickness is defined. Those who believe sickness to be caused by bacteria and germs are more inclined to the medical solution and hospital ministries, while those who believe the source of sickness to be both physiological and spiritual are more inclined to seek a holistic approach including medical science. Cephas Omenya referred to this very group when he observed: “In Africa, there is no un-consecrated medicine. Every medicine or healing system needs to be consecrated in order to be potent enough to deal with both the physiological and the spiritual dimensions of the sickness.”<sup>29</sup>

The Church of the Nazarene in South Africa is faced with the challenge of carrying out the mission of Christ in a way that will speak to the worldview of most Africans without accepting the pagan aspects of it, and to allow the Holy Spirit to use her to provide divine solutions to human problems without being seen to be Pentecostal. She also has to face the reality of the impact that the African Independent churches are making because of their holistic approach. A wrong response to this reality can cost the church dearly:

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<sup>27</sup> Cephas N. Omenyo, “New Wine in and Old Wine Bottle? Charismatic Healing in the Mainline Churches in Ghana,” in Candy Gunther Brown, ed., *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 232.

<sup>28</sup> Turake Yusufu, “Africa Traditional Religious System as Basis of Understanding Christian Spiritual Warfare,” in *The Lausanne Movement: The Whole Church Taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World* (Nairobi 2000), consulted May 27, 2013, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/all/nairobi-2000/194-west-african-case-study.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Omenyo, 245.

Initially, the mainline churches adopted a rather negative and contemptuous disposition toward the AICs and later Pentecostal churches that followed in the trail of renewal movements. This attitude cost the mainline churches dearly, as it led to a mass exodus of their members to the various AICs due to a perceived lack of sensitivity of the churches to the spiritual needs of their members.<sup>30</sup>

One of the serious over-sights of the Church of the Nazarene in South Africa was the omission of a module on African spiritualism, divine healing, and spiritual warfare in our ministerial training curriculum. This resulted in our pastors graduating unequipped in the area. Doing church in Africa needs to begin with an acknowledgement that the worldview of most Africans is among other things holistic, communal, pragmatic, and power oriented. Accordingly, Cephas Omenya quoted Steyne as having said: "Since man's needs cannot be met without it (power), a powerless religion is valueless."<sup>31</sup>

The views of this present investigation are informed by my personal experience.<sup>32</sup> This includes fifteen years as a member of the Zion Christian Church (the largest and fastest growing African independent church in Southern Africa), thirty-five years of pastoral ministry in the church, evangelistic and revival preaching across South Africa and beyond, study at the B.Th. level of African spirituality and divine healing plus information gathered from interviewing Nazarene pastors from the black, white, and colored communities in South Africa.

The first discovery was that most queried – this writer included – approach ministry from a warfare perspective as informed by both our understanding of the Bible (Matt. 16:18-19, Luke 4:18-19, Eph. 6:10-20) and the context of our reality. Mr. Shonisani Mundzedzi is an elder in our church and one of his responsibilities is to coordinate the Sunday 6 a.m. intercession for the morning worship. The following is an SMS message that he sent to the members:

6:30 – Divine hope prayer time. Pray for Rev. Maluleka – revelations & anointing, worship team – glory abound, and under the total control of the Holy Spirit, Main service – salvation, healing deliverance & blessings. Sunday School – knowledge and growth. Pray against contrary spirits. Come with an expectant and obedient heart.<sup>33</sup>

This message reveals the expectation of most when they come to church. Ministry is treated as engaging in a war against evil powers. Prayer is at the

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<sup>30</sup> Omenya, 233.

<sup>31</sup> Yusufu, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Mashangu Maluleka

<sup>33</sup> From an SMS sent to Divine Hope Church of the Nazarene (Pretoria), from Shonisani Mundzedzi in May 2013.

center of things. Christ made it His lifestyle to go to a solitary place for prayer. His ministry on earth and its extension through His church are seen and treated as direct blows against the kingdom of Satan. Bible scholars view healings and deliverance as the manifestation of the invasion of the power of God into the enemy's territory. O.C. Edwards confirmed that when he said: "By also expelling unclean spirits and curing diseases, Jesus proves that the kingdom is being inaugurated by his proclamation of it. Thus Jesus proclaims the nearness of the kingdom by deed as well as by word."<sup>34</sup>

The information uncovered during interviews was enriching, including evidence that the Church of the Nazarene in South Africa has been trying for a while to respond to the reality under discussion. One of our Shangaan pioneers wrote a booklet in the 1960s entitled "Kriste kumbe Vuloyi" (Christ or Witchcraft?) teaching Christians about the power of God over witchcraft and demonic forces. Retired Afrikaner pastor, Rev. Louis Kriel, showed me a booklet entitled "Jehovah Rapha" (God our healer). Likewise, Rev. Dawie De Koker is the pastor of one of the fastest growing churches on the Gauteng district. His grandfather early on wrote a booklet attempting to introduce Christians to the God who is able to heal our disease.

Below are the responses of some of the people interviewed on the subject of divine healing. Each response contributes toward a better understanding of the Church of the Nazarene in South Africa as related to the topic:

We believe in divine healing and lay hands and anoint with oil on the sick in our church. It's not done every service but only when there is a need. We anointed a lady in our church that was diagnosed with cancer and the Lord removed cancer from her body.<sup>35</sup>

We just had an evangelistic campaign at Sebopje, a young girl came to be prayed for. She was sick, said she was dreaming being attacked by snakes every night. She was possessed and was stronger than eight men. I prayed for her; she was healed and delivered from demons. She testified that when I laid hands on her, she felt like something fell from her shoulders. That night when she got home, a snake fell from the roof into her bedroom and was killed and she is completely delivered and healed.<sup>36</sup>

A Hindu woman had a shrine in their house; she could not sleep in the night and could not conceive. The family had visited every temple for help but it was all in vain. We were called in. We prayed and laid hands

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<sup>34</sup> O.C. Edwards, *Luke's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 37.

<sup>35</sup> From an interview with Rev. David Mahon, Vendeijlpark, May 2013.

<sup>36</sup> From an interview with Rev. Frank Mahlaba, Limpopo Province, May 2013.

and anointed with oil. She was delivered, could sleep and conceived and gave birth to a baby boy.<sup>37</sup>

We had a healing service in our church. I preached from the book of James and we laid hands on the sick. Two members were there on wheelchairs. They both came to be prayed for and one of them was healed. She is walking on her own, and many others testified to God's healing experience.<sup>38</sup>

Recently, I was sick; no food could stay in my tummy. Our cell group prayed for me and the Lord healed me.<sup>39</sup>

The practice of divine healing in the Church of the Nazarene in South Africa is influenced by worldview. Most black pastors avoid anointing with oil or external substances. Also, most growing churches have a healing ministry. Pastors from both African and Indian backgrounds spoke interchangeably about sickness and demon possession. There is a special emphasis on prayer in those churches. This is in conformity with Charles Nyamiti's hypothesis: "...God's kingdom which was brought by Christ through his healing ministry affects being holistically, by curing their physical, moral-spiritual, psycho-emotional, societal and ecological dimensions."<sup>40</sup>

### **Conclusion: Divine healing an integral part of holistic Gospel proclamation**

The topic of divine healing continues to fascinate the Church of Jesus Christ generally, and specifically Nazarenes in Africa. James 5:13-18 provides an important part of the biblical rationale for praying for and anointing the sick, and particularly for tying the practice to the local congregation. Likewise, Nazarene Article of Faith XIV as it has developed across the years has preserved for the Church of the Nazarene a recognition that God still acts in power for bodily healing. For at least some Nazarene congregations in South Africa, this message and practice remains a part of our ecclesiastical heritage, and where it is being practiced, positive results have ensued. As a denomination in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, divine healing should remain part of our holistic proclamation that God addresses both spiritual *and* physical needs.

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<sup>37</sup> From an interview with Rev. Rodney Pfeiffer, Durban, May 2013.

<sup>38</sup> From an interview with Rev. Elvis Mvulane, Eldorado Park, May 2013.

<sup>39</sup> From an interview with Rev. Dawie De Koker, Rustenburg, May 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Nyamiti, *Studies in African Theology, Vol. 2* (Nairobi, Kenya: CUEA Publications, 2006), 149.

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