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# Dependence Versus Independence: an Evaluation of the Relationship between World Gospel Mission and the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

DEPENDENCE VERSUS INDEPENDENCE:  
AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORLD GOSPEL MISSION  
AND THE AFRICA GOSPEL CHURCH IN KENYA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY  
IN LEADERSHIP IN THE EMERGING CULTURE

BY  
PATRICK L. MURUNGA

PORTLAND, OREGON

FEBRUARY, 2011

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Bible unless noted otherwise

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# **DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE**

**PATRICK L. MURUNGA**

**DATE: MARCH 11, 2011**

**TITLE:**

**DEPENDENCE VERSUS INDEPENDENCE:  
AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
WORLD GOSPEL MISSION AND THE AFRICAN GOSPEL CHURCH  
IN KENYA**

***WE THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ  
THIS PROJECT AND APPROVE IT AS ADEQUATE IN  
SCOPE AND QUALITY TO COMPLETE THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN  
LEADERSHIP IN THE EMERGING CULTURE DEGREE***



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## ABBREVIATIONS

AGC	Africa Gospel Church
AIM	Africa Inland Mission
CMC	Church Missionary Society
FAIM	Friends African Industrial Mission
IBEAC	Imperial British East Africa Company
NHA	National Holiness Association
NHMS	National Holiness Missionary Society
WGM	World Gospel Mission

## GLOSSARY

- agc (africa gospel church).** The name given to the church planted by World Gospel Mission
- autonomous.** The term autonomous carries the meaning of self-governing, independent, subject to one's own laws, and not subject to control from outside.
- dependency.** This refers to a state of being influenced or controlled by an entity outside oneself. It also refers to a state of subordination
- indigenous.** The term means, something originating in and characteristic of a particular region or country. Something that is native to that place. Indigenous leadership will be able to make the church attractive to the indigenous people, a church that would be able to support itself, govern itself and propagate itself.
- mission.** This carries the meaning of a group of people who are sent overseas or to a place not their own for a special reason. A mission station is referred to here as the dwelling place for missionaries.
- self-governing.** This describes a period in time where foreign missionaries relinquish control of the indigenous local church to the local people, and allows these local Christians to shape the direction of the church without any interference from a western mission board.
- self-propagating.** When local people become Christians, they are taught, encouraged and sent to witness in order for them to make others like themselves, bringing them into the church without the sole efforts of foreign missionaries, the church will be self-propagating.
- self-supporting.** While a missionary will probably begin a church with funds from his home country, the local people must not depend on these funds, but must learn to look to God to provide through their own local resources. When the local people contribute sacrificially for their church, they feel part and parcel of the church and will help it grow and not look at the church as a foreign entity. This then is the meaning of self-supporting.
- wgm (world gospel mission).** World Gospel Mission is the missionary agency responsible for the establishment of the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya. The name was adopted in 1948. The original name of the mission was The Missionary Society of the National Holiness Association for the promotion of Holiness.

## Abstract

Africa Gospel Church has a serious problem of an unhealthy relationship with the World Gospel Mission. Since its inception, the mission has struggled to let go off the church. The church on the other hand, has been happy to see this relationship go on in the same dependent way without much concern. The Africa Gospel Church is over seventy years now and is at a place in its life where it needs to chart its own course.

This study evaluates the relationship between the mission agency and the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya. It investigates the historical challenges that might have contributed to the lack of progress in developing a church with an established indigenous leadership.

The study shows that the vision of the founding father was that in Africa would be established an African church led, supported and financed by Africans. But subsequent missionaries who followed him somehow lost that vision. Instead of training and turning the work over to national leaders, the missionaries continued recruiting more missionaries and in the process relegating the nationals to the sidelines as spectators. In time, the nationals grew up believing that work and financial support of the church belonged to missionaries.

To resolve the issue of unhealthy dependence, the study recommends that the mission be persuaded to step aside for a while to allow the national leaders to organize themselves and make decisions on how the church will move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating church.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Church is the body of believers in Christ, called out from the world by God to live as his people under the authority of Jesus Christ, transforming society for God on behalf of Christ, who is the head of the Church. Ephesians 1:22-23 says, “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all”. This body of believers as constituted is made up of all believers beginning from Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost through Christ’s return.

The mission of Church is stated in clear and concise terms in Matthew 28:18-20. In verse 19 the writer says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” In other words, the Disciples of Christ are supposed to reach out with the gospel message and disciple the nations for God so that in turn the nations reached can reach out and with the same message and transform the world for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Africa Gospel Church (AGC) is an outcome of efforts by Christ’s disciples from America pursuing God’s call to reach the ends of the earth with the gospel message, making disciples, starting and organizing Christian congregations. According to oral history, the Church traces its roots from the arrival of its first missionary, Willis Hotchkiss. As one looks at his work, it is obvious that his aim and goal was that the Church that he founded should become indigenous and capable of establishing itself as a responsible national Church. He encouraged the education of national leaders by building

schools, educating them and then sending them into the field to do the work of spreading the good news. Thus he advocated for the development of an indigenous ministry that would finally become an autonomous Church and free from undue influence of missionaries.

There is no doubt that the AGC has grown. The Church has opened mission stations within and without the country. Local missionaries have been sent out. Many departments have been started and the work of the Church continues to expand and to grow. However, the complaint that was frequent in my early years of Bible College continues. The complaint was that, 'AGC lacks quality leaders' in the Church – “men who are strong, courageous, and exemplary in character, wise and positive, and inspiring to others.”<sup>1</sup>

Gottfried Osei-Mensah observes that the problem of trained leadership persists in many other Churches in Africa today. He says, “Everyone agrees that there is an acute shortage of trained leadership at all levels in the Church in Africa today, especially given the current phenomenal rate of growth of the Christian community on the continent.”<sup>2</sup>

Reflecting on the same issue, Edgar J. Elliston writes:

It appears that we are falling further behind in the preparation of Church leaders for the number of new Churches which are now being established. Now in Africa there are more than 500 ministry training institutions and yet the continual plea is for more leaders.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Mills, “Leadership in the Churches,” *The Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship* 30 (1980): 46.

<sup>2</sup> Gottfried Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders* (Achimoto, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1990), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Edgar J. Elliston, “Designing Leadership Education,” *Missiology: An International Review* 16, no. 2 (April 1988): 205.

The late Bishop of the Africa Inland Church Bishop Birech states:

We are winning lost souls to Christ in unprecedented numbers in Kenya... We are humbled by our success, but realize that these great numbers have created new problems. We do not have adequately trained leadership for our established Churches, much less the new congregations that are forming all over the country.<sup>4</sup>

J. Mugambi, expresses similar sentiments when he writes,

As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it can be affirmed that Christian Churches have greatly expanded in membership but provisions for effective pastoral care to cope with this increase have been neither forthcoming nor finely attuned to the immediate needs of contemporary society. It will be necessary not only to increase the number of pastors, but also to retain those already in service.<sup>5</sup>

I believe that these writers rightly identify the AGC problem. This Church has indeed had a rapid growth, but unfortunately the growth rate in membership has far exceeded that of Church leadership. The aim of this study is that AGC leadership will be helped to select, train and develop indigenous leaders to lead the Church to face the challenges of today and tomorrow.

This study observes that funding is another major hindrance the Church faces in moving forward. For a long time the AGC has been dependent on funds from the mission to do ministry to the point that our leaders feel that we cannot survive without external funds. This study therefore also aims at finding ways to help the AGC realize that God has blessed members of the Church with wealth beyond anybody's imagination, and that it will take the leaders careful planning and teaching to bring about change of mind on the part of the congregations on how they can individually help fund the ministry of the Church. Indeed, funds can be mobilized locally to facilitate the process of Church

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<sup>4</sup> "Kenya: The Need for Church Leadership," *AIM International* 85, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 2.

<sup>5</sup> Jose B. Chipenda, *The Church of Africa: Towards a Theology of Reconstruction*. (Nairobi, Kenya: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1990), 42.

growth. Africa Gospel Church is not poor and all the needed funds can be sourced locally instead of always looking to the west for funds.

Missionaries have served the Church well for years. Their contribution to the growth of the Church has been enormous and there is no doubt about that. However, missionary work has gone through major changes through the years. The methods that the founding missionaries used in planting Churches have been overtaken by time. The way that they worked with national workers has also changed. The leadership style that was in practice at that time is no longer appropriate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

When one looks at AGC, it becomes obvious its existing structures and systems in operation were inherited from the missionaries. These structures and systems are sometimes not flexible and hinder the Church from moving forward. Through this study, it is hoped that the leaders of the Church will evaluate and contextualize these structures and systems in order to conform to the current century and culture. Erwin R. McManus observes that “though the world and the Church are changing, the decision makers in the Church have often been unprepared to face the new realities.”<sup>6</sup> Everywhere we look, change is evident: In our families, our schools, our workplaces and even Churches. Indeed the whole world is caught in the cycle of change. Change is unavoidable. Change is not necessarily a bad thing even for the Church. How should Africa Gospel Church embrace the changing scenario? Through this study, it is again hoped that Church faces up to the reality of change and embraces the change for its own good.

One major change that the writer would like to see happen in AGC is to see missionaries relinquishing the work to national leaders. The writer observes that the

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<sup>6</sup> Erwin R. McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God had in Mind*, (Los Angeles, CA: Yates and Yates, 2001), 26.

missionaries have indeed done a commendable job in starting Churches and training leaders. However, what the missionaries did and how they did it can be improved on. Given a chance, the current leaders can develop indigenous leaders who will lead the Church into the next century as a fully-fledged self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating Church with no need of outside support or intervention in fulfilling its mandate of making disciples of all nations. The current national leaders need to step up to the plate and make this happen.

Chinua Achebe an African writer argues that the reason why things do not move in the direction they should is simply lack of quality national leaders who will be bold enough to make this happen. He writes of his native Nigeria,

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climatic or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which are the hallmarks of true leadership.<sup>7</sup>

These words written to a secular audience might as well be said of the Church – AGC, in particular. The trouble with AGC is simply and squarely a failure of leadership to purposefully and diligently pursue what is right for the national Church.

Through this project it is believed that the national leader at the head office will pay very close attention to the urban Churches. The urban Church first of all feels marginalized by the rest of the Church. Given the importance of urban Churches, town Churches are not well represented in councils or committees deciding the destiny of AGC. Constitutionally the urban Churches are entitled to two representatives on the Central Church Council. But that has not happened yet. The leadership of the central

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<sup>7</sup> Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Nairobi, Kenya: Heinemann, 1983), 1.



Church council needs to fix this anomaly. The urban Churches need adequate representation in order for its voice to be heard. They participate in many of the Church activities of the denomination faithfully and make contributions without complaining and it is fair to treat these Churches as equal to the rural Churches within the denomination rather than treat the urban Churches as “illegitimate.”

The other challenge this study hopes to be addressed by the leaders is the training and equipping of the Church. Stanley, a pastor in an urban Church with AGC says, “Empowering pastors is lacking in AGC. Unbiblical requirements have been put in place to hinder the pastors from effectively doing ministry. Pastors need to be exposed to various courses and seminars that will keep them current to what is happening around them and beyond”<sup>8</sup>

Kenneth Gangel commenting on training says,

The issue of training is no longer limited to teaching people how to stand before a group, prepare a lesson, or go out on evangelism, though those are still all important. Now we must begin much earlier - with a foundational understanding of the very nature of leadership and how it functions within the biblical framework.<sup>9</sup>

Personally, AGC in my almost twenty years of service has never offered to improve my skills which could make me a better minister, nor has it ever asked if I needed any kind of support in what I was doing. There has never been an inquiry into the type of ethical decisions that I must make in the course of my work. There has never been public affirmation of the ministry that I do. In conclusion, AGC really does not have the least interest whether or how ministers, myself included, perform their daily work.

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<sup>8</sup> Stanley Amimo, interview by author, Nairobi, Kenya, May 17, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Gangel, *Feeding and Leading: A Practical Handbook on Administration in Churches and Christian Organizations*. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), 240.

“A healthy Church’s leaders always focus on methods that ‘prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up’ (Eph. 4:12). Genuine leaders identify the guidelines, resources and accountability that enable others to develop expertise in accomplishing, specific objectives of ministry.”<sup>10</sup>

Another area of concern is the marginalization of pastors in the area of ordination. Pastors need to be ordained to fully do the work. They need to be enabled. Ordination of local pastors in my view is an aspect of devolution of power and an aspect of delegation. “Delegation is learning how to identify the work that we are doing and devising methods of passing these pieces of work on to other people, but maintaining a management check on these activities.”<sup>11</sup> Central office cannot do everything. They need to give pastors the right to make decisions and do ministry on behalf of the central office and Christ so that the Church can grow. Peter Drucker has given three diagnostic questions for those in leadership to measure their effective use of time. He says managers need to ask themselves:

1. What am I doing that really does not need to be done by me or anyone else?
2. Which of these activities on my time log could be handled as well, if not better, by someone else?
3. What do I do that wastes the time of other people.<sup>12</sup>

In ordaining urban pastors, the central office will spend its time in more important and productive matters rather than tasks that can be done by local pastors. By not delegating to ordained pastors, they are wasting their time doing things others should do.

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<sup>10</sup> James Means, *Effective Pastors for a New Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), 115.

<sup>11</sup> Olan Hendrix, *Management for Christian Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 90.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

In AGC, we seem to believe that leadership is commensurate with advanced age. More than 50% of central Church council members are 60 plus years. Many are elected not necessarily for their ability to do the job but for the respect they command as a result of their years of existence. Most of them have very limited education with about 95% of these leaders coming from rural Kenya and from the same tribe. It is hoped that this project will help the Church to move away from this trend and indeed make the Church a national Church rather than a tribal Church full of leaders that are past their prime.

For any living thing to continue in existence, it must regenerate itself or reproduce. For the Church of Jesus Christ to grow and achieve its purpose the Church must reproduce the next generation of leaders. The apostle Paul says that these must be reliable people. Paul says to Timothy about mentoring other younger leaders, “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (2 Timothy 2:2) A myth that seems prevalent with our Church leadership is that training, equipping and reproduction of leaders is not important.

Paul is very clear in his teaching that older leaders reproduce themselves in younger leaders. Paul is a classic example of a leader who mentored younger leaders. Paul had the ability to discover young, teachable men and women with potential leadership qualities, whom he took, spent time teaching and mentoring them and then deployed them into ministry.

Leaders in AGC need to do the same in developing younger leaders, encouraging them, trusting them with responsibilities, counseling them and developing them to reach

their full ministry potential. The leaders also need to be able to prepare younger leaders who are ready not only to face the challenges of tomorrow but also of today.

While serving on the central Church council the writer unfortunately observed that some of the members of the council had been allowed into Church leadership in disregard to biblical qualifications. Some were in leadership because of the honour and privilege that comes with Church leadership. Others were in leadership because of social and/or economic advancement. The author Charles Taber observes:

In an institutional Church ...the importance of hierarchy is emphasized. This results in many members aspiring for positions in this hierarchy, not so much for the service they can render but for honour and publicity, they can gain. Power and rivalry between leaders are created.”<sup>13</sup>

As one member of the central Church council confided in the writer, “I was not able to come to the Central Church council from the urban centre and so shifted my base to the rural so that I could be elected to the highest office of the Church.” This is not biblical.

True leadership is achieved not by reducing men to one's service but in giving oneself in selfless service to them. And that is never done without cost. It involves drinking a bitter cup and experiencing a painful baptism of suffering. The true spiritual leader is concerned infinitely more with the service he can render God and his fellow men than with the benefits and pleasures he can extract from life. He aims to put more into life than he takes out of it.<sup>14</sup>

A person's view of what leadership is and how it functions will always have an impact on how one leads. In the African context the model of leadership often followed is based on culture, society and politics rather than the leadership principles of Jesus as demonstrated in the Bible.

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<sup>13</sup> Charles R. Taber, *The Church in Africa* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 96.

<sup>14</sup> Eugene Habecker, *The Other Side of Leadership*. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), 51.

Paul Kohls quoting Bengt Sundkler describes what he calls an African pattern of leadership. He suggests that,

.....a fundamental pattern in traditional African society is the representative character of the chief over against his tribe or people. The representative idea is carried over into the Church and applied to its African office-bearer. [Thus, this] pattern or

representation imposes itself on the emerging African Church.<sup>15</sup>

It is this understanding of leadership that is carried over to the Church.

P. M. John says, "The servanthood of the traditional African leadership seems to have been lost completely. It is this understanding of the leader that is carried over to the Church leadership. Instead of the leader-servant of the Bible, we have pastor chiefs."<sup>16</sup> The writer hopes that this project will encourage AGC to take another look at servant leadership and embrace it.

### **The Statement of the Problem**

The Africa Gospel Church has an unhealthy relationship with World Gospel Mission. This has led to an unhealthy dependence by the Church on the mission agency. The most unfortunate thing is that the leaders do not seem to realize this. There is need to aggressively work towards freeing the Church from this cycle of dependence and leading the Church towards becoming an indigenous and autonomous Church able to run its own affairs. What has compelled the writer to undertake this study is the lack of competent leadership, and the absence of will power on the part of the leaders of the Church to chart their own course without undue influence and domination by the World Gospel Mission

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Kohl, "A Look at Church Leadership in Africa," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 17, no. 2. (1998):114.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 114.

(WGM) and move towards becoming a Church that is independent, fully self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.

In order to address this problem, a more focused leadership is proposed that allows for flexibility and adaptability, enabling the Church leaders to develop forms and structures that will work in transforming the Church and reverse the stagnation.

### **Thesis**

The ultimate purpose of this project is to awaken the leaders of the Africa Gospel Church from their slumber and take action against the current lack of spiritual growth in the Church because of the lack of trained pastors, poor financial resources, leadership rigidity and the unhealthy relationship that exists between the World Gospel Mission and the Africa Gospel Church. The study will suggest some practical ways to address this problem.

### **Overview**

This paper is composed of seven chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. Chapter two presents the history of Christianity in Kenya. It traces the origin and development of Christianity from the coast to the heartland of Kenya culminating in the coming of World Gospel Mission. The chapter follows World Gospel Church to western parts of Kenya and talks about the birth of the Africa Gospel Church. This chapter also highlights the life and work of the founding missionary of WGM Willis Hotchkiss. The chapter discusses the methods used to start Churches, including the recruitment of staff, training and deployment of these trained leaders to various parts of the country.

Chapter three addresses the historical background of the indigenous Church principles and validity of the theory of self-support, self-government and self-

propagation. These chapter traces the beginning of these principles, the leading proponents and the use of these principles in growing the Church of Jesus Christ.

Chapter four discusses the initial signs of dependence on the mission agency by the Africa Gospel Church, the role played by the mission agency to perpetuate dependency and the lack of vision on the part of the Church leaders, leading the Church into the quagmire of dependence.

Chapter five discusses the importance of training local Church members how to use their finances in support of Church ministry. The scarcity of funds in the Church is attributed to the lack of proper teaching in the area of Christian stewardship by both missionaries and local Church leaders.

The sixth chapter gives us a model of Church planting adopted by the Apostle Paul. Here we see Paul's practice of allowing the Churches he started to become self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. This chapter answers the questions; what relationship did Paul maintain with the Churches he started and gives us a model of ministry which avoids paternalistic control.

The paper concludes with chapter seven looking at strategies the Church can use to overcome dependency and strategies for how missionaries can help the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya to be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

## CHAPTER 2

### A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIANITY IN KENYA

One cannot comprehend African Gospel Church (AGC) unless one studies the coming of Christianity to the shores of the coastal town of Kenya, Mombasa. For this reason, this section gives a brief history of Christian missions in Kenya, the World Gospel Mission (WGM) and AGC in Kenya.

#### Early Christian Missions

Christianity appeared and was restricted to the shores of Kenya with the coming of the Portuguese Catholic missionaries in 1631.<sup>17</sup> The impact of the work by the Catholic missionaries on the coastal people was negligible. It was not until the arrival of Protestant missionaries in the middle part of the 1800s that the Catholic missionaries were forced into aggressive evangelization of the coastal villages.

Johann Ludwig Krapf, a Protestant missionary from Germany was the first European of the modern missionary era to start work in Kenya.<sup>18</sup> He arrived at the coastal town of Kenya, Mombasa in 1844 under the Church Missionary Society (CMS). The CMS was founded in Aldersgate Street in London in 1799. The founders were members of the Clapham sect, an evangelical and active group in the Anglican Church. The purpose of the society was mainly to abolish slavery, be involved in social reforms in their own country and do missionary work throughout the world. William Wilberforce

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<sup>17</sup> John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History* (Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publications Africa, 1998), 373.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present* (London, England: SPCK, 1995.), 137.



was a founding member of this organization.<sup>19</sup> The Anglican Church in Kenya (ACK) traces its origins to CMS work.

Krapf came to Kenya after working in Ethiopia for a period of three years.<sup>20</sup> The vision he had for Ethiopia was to convert the Oromo people to Christianity, but he faced stiff opposition from the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. They were opposed to his pietistic interpretation of Scripture, and were not ready to convert to another way of belief or life.<sup>21</sup> On realizing that things were not going as planned, he decided to leave and headed further south to the coastal town of Mombasa in Kenya. Krapf was very passionate about mission work. He soon was busy evangelizing among the coastal people of Mombasa.

Life however, was not easy for the pioneering missionaries. Apart from contending with harsh climatic conditions, primitive means of transport and cross-cultural challenges, illnesses and diseases were the order of the day and most critical threat to their missionary work. Krapf and his wife at one point became seriously ill with malaria. His wife and new born baby died as a result of this tropical disease while Krapf himself was temporarily incapacitated. He regained his health and despite the heavy losses, Krapf continued with the work that he felt God had called him to do at the coast. As Herbert

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<sup>19</sup> The Church Missionary Society, "A Brief History of CMS," The Church Missionary Society, [www.cms-uk.org/about/history.htm](http://www.cms-uk.org/about/history.htm) (accessed July 27, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Peter Falk, *The Growth of the Church in Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 233.

<sup>21</sup> Louise M. Pirouet, "The Legacy of Johann Ludwig Krapf," Martyn Mission, <http://www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/ckrapf.htm> (accessed on July 23, 2009).

Kane says, indeed, “The story of missions in Africa .... is an amazing tale of adventure, endurance, privation, sickness, weakness, and death.”<sup>22</sup>

Johann Ludwig Krapf worked alone until the CMS sent Johann Rebmann who joined him two years after his arrival. Johann Ludwig Krapf was a hard, highly-driven and motivated man who did not allow challenges to slow him down. During his time among the coastal tribes, he studied and mastered the local languages and produced the first Kiswahili dictionary. Krapf left the CMS and joined the Methodist mission to Kenya intending to help the Methodist Mission attain its vision of creating a chain of mission stations between East and West Africa.

Having worked among the coastal people of Kenya with minimum results, Krapf decided to take his work to the interior of the country. His goal for the work remained the same; to win many nationals to the Lord, to make disciples and help bring about rapid growth of the Church.<sup>23</sup> Because of poor health he did not go far with these plans. Krapf returned to his native country and died in 1881.

While men like Krapf and Rebmann were fulfilling their call of evangelism, political leaders in Europe were meeting in Germany to divide Africa amongst themselves. The meeting took place in the city of Berlin. At this 1884 conference, the partition of Africa was completed. This had been preceded by what was known as “the scramble for Africa”, which was a religious as well as a political race between European and American missionary groups competing intensely to divide and occupy Africa for

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<sup>22</sup> Herbert J. Kane, *Concise History of the Christian World Mission: A Panoramic View of Missions from Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), 138.

<sup>23</sup> Zablon Nthamburi, *From Mission to Church: A Handbook of Christianity in East Africa*. (Nairobi, Kenya: Uzima Press, 1991), 8.

their respective Churches.<sup>24</sup> The initial result of the scramble was the establishment of hundreds of mission stations across Africa. However, little was done to convert natives to Christianity and to start Churches. Significant work begun only after the partition was complete.

The partition of Africa had major implications on the way missions would be conducted in Africa. In the past, the missionaries established mission stations wherever they felt it best suited them. Missionary societies were free to recruit staff across the continent of Europe. Due to the Berlin conference however, things would be done differently. Mission organizations would now have to get clearance to work in a particular country from the colonial government in-charge. They also ceased recruiting missionary staff from across the continent, and would instead recruit only from the land from which the mission organizations originated.

This also gave a new impetus to colonialism and colonial power. In 1888, the Imperial British East Africa Company (I.B.E.A.C.) was formed and granted a charter to develop and administrate Kenya. This had a direct bearing on the expansion of Protestant missionary activities. Sir Mackinnon, a director of this company, not only allowed missions to come to East Africa but encouraged them to expand their work into the interior of the territory under his care. However, I.B.E.A.C's primary motive in Kenya was economic. The leadership understood that for the company to attain its goal, it would do well if the company interfered as little as possible with the affairs of the missionaries and the local people.<sup>25</sup> To cement the relationship even further, the chief administrator of

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<sup>24</sup> Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa* (London: Heinmann Educational Books Ltd., 1978), 30.

<sup>25</sup> A. J. Temu, *British Protestant Missions* (London, UK: Longman Group Limited, 1972), 44.

I.B.E.A.C invited the Church missionary society to partner with the company and to follow it into the interior.<sup>26</sup>

These developments encouraged the Church of Scotland to enter Kenya and others soon followed. Among the new entrants was the Africa Inland Mission (AIM). The AIM missionaries to Kenya arrived in October 1895 under the leadership of Peter Cameron Scott. The party of six consisted of Scot, his sister Margaret, Frederick W. Krieger, Willis Hotchkiss, Minnie Lindberg, Miss Rickling and Lester Severn. In a little over one year these men and women had established four mission stations in the interior of Kenya. Because of the extremely hard pace at which these missionaries drove themselves, Peter Scott succumbed and unfortunately died at the end of 1896.<sup>27</sup>

The demise of Scot was hard on AIM since he had single-handedly founded the mission and was leader of the first group of missionaries sent to Kenya. When he died the mission was in disarray and almost dissolved a year after Scot's death. Some of the missionaries also succumbed to disease and died, while others resigned from the mission. Consequently the ministry did not progress during the first years.<sup>28</sup>

Willis R. Hotchkiss, one of the six pioneer missionaries who had accompanied Scot resigned from AIM and returned home to America. While in America Hotchkiss met a leading Quaker theologian called Arthur Benton Chilson. Hotchkiss influenced and convinced Chilson about doing mission work in Kenya. Chilson in turn shared the idea

<sup>26</sup> Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa* (London, UK: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1978), 40.

<sup>27</sup> Africa Inland Mission USA, "Africa Inland Mission," <http://www.aimint.org/usa/heritage.html> (accessed June 17, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Peter Falk, *The Growth of the Church in Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 265.

with his colleague, Edgar T. Hole, who previously had thought about doing missionary work abroad.<sup>29</sup> After a lot of preparation these men set sail from America mid June 1902 and arrived at the Kenyan coast towards the end of the same month. From the coastal town of Mombasa, they headed west towards Kisumu, their final destination and then on to Kaimosi in western Kenya.

They traveled a total of 583 miles by train, terminating their train journey on the shores of Lake Victoria at a town called Port Florence, present day Kisumu (see appendix 1.) From there, they hired native porters to carry their luggage and then trekked another 85 miles north to a place called Kaimosi. Here they pitched tent and begun work. They purchased 858 acres of land from the British government and started a mission station. The station established is the present day headquarters of the Yearly Meeting of Friends in East Africa.<sup>30</sup> Hotchkiss' arrival in western Kenya would later prove very valuable to the establishment of World Gospel Mission (WGM) work in Kenya.

### **World Gospel Mission**

WGM started in 1910 as a missionary department of the National Holiness Association (NHA) for the promotion of holiness. The vision of the NHA was "to make Christ known to all people and proclaim the message of scriptural holiness to the ends of the earth".<sup>31</sup> Upon its launch, two missionary couples were appointed and commissioned to pioneer NHA missionary work in China. These two families were given additional responsibilities of organizing and running a mission organization that would send

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<sup>29</sup> Edna Chilson, *Ambassador of the King* (Wichita, KC: E.H Chilson,), 1943.

<sup>30</sup> "American Friends Board of Foreign Missions," *Foreign Mission Work of American Friends: A Brief History of Their Work from Beginning to the Year Nineteen Hundred and Twelve; Each Sketch Prepared by the Board in Control* (Richmond, IN: American Board of Foreign Missions, 1912), 76.

<sup>31</sup> MinistryWatch.com, "World Gospel Mission," [http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/F\\_SumRpt.asp?EIN=350911947](http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/F_SumRpt.asp?EIN=350911947) (accessed January 18, 2008).

missionaries all over the world. The major challenge for these pioneer missionaries was how to combine their work on the China field and the work in the home office in the United States. The answer came in 1925 when the homeland office found a permanent home in the Chicago Evangelical Institute.

In 1926 the mission was finally incorporated as the Missionary Society for the Promotion of Holiness. The organization's name was changed to the National Holiness Missionary Society (NHMS) in 1937. In 1948, it became necessary to change the name yet again. The main reason for the change of name was that many missionary organizations had come into existence that used names very similar to NHMS hence confusing many that would want to associate themselves with NHMS. After prolonged discussions, in 1954 the name, WGM, was adopted as the new name of the organization. Previously in 1946 the mission had reported 102 missionaries within seven fields, including China, India, Burundi, Honduras, Bolivia, the Mexican border and Kenya. After several moves, WGM made its permanent move to its present headquarters in Marion, Indiana in 1975. Hubert P. Herriman is the current president today.

From its humble beginning in June 1910 when the infant mission was born and appointed its first missionaries to China, the work has grown to its present status. The official website of the World Gospel Mission reports the following,

Currently, World Gospel Mission has more than 300 missionaries and support staff serving on six continents. The fields of service include Argentina, Bolivia, Burundi, Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, St. Croix, Sudan, Taiwan, Uganda and Ukraine as well as Muslim Ministries, the American Indian Field, Haitian American Ministries USA and Stockton Neighborhood Center. As an international organization, WGM partners with individual, small groups, college groups, and Churches to internationally address the physical and spiritual needs of individuals and communities. Field service include the American Indian field, Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvado, Haiti, Haitian American Ministries, Hispanic Ministries

USA, Honduras, Hungary, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Middle East, Muslim Ministries USA, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Stockton Peniel, Sudan, Taiwan, Uganda, Ukraine, West Indies, and Creative Access Nations.<sup>32</sup>

The Africa Gospel Church has a long history with World Gospel Mission that dates back to the arrival of the first missionary in 1929. Clara Ford, daughter of Friends missionaries in Kenya was sent by the mission to explore the possibility of starting WGM ministry. Among her contacts was Willis Hotchkiss.<sup>33</sup>

Willis R. Hotchkiss, as mentioned earlier, first came to Kenya in 1895 under the AIM. His first station of service was among the Kamba people in the eastern part of Kenya. He pioneered the opening of several mission stations, and served among the Kamba people for several years. After the death of the founding leader and pioneer missionary of AIM, Peter Cameron Scot, Hotchkiss resigned from the AIM in 1899 and joined the Friends African Industrial Mission (FAIM). In 1902 Hotchkiss returned to Kenya under the FAIM and set up camp at Kaimosi.

Hotchkiss and his party of three men, while prospecting for another site in western Kenya, stumbled upon and then felt led to begin work among the Nandi people in the Rift Valley. As Fish and Fish report, "Their scouting took them into the area just beyond the forest; this was the home of the Nandi, a very war-like tribe at the time."<sup>34</sup> At this time, open hostility had erupted between the Nandi and the colonial government. The government restricted movement in this region to anyone including missionaries.

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<sup>32</sup> World Gospel Mission, "World Gospel Mission history," <http://www.wgm.org/page.aspx?pid=235>; Internet; accessed February 27, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Burnis Bushong, *The Best of the Story: Miraculous Answers to Prayer* (Marion, IN: World Gospel Mission), 1993.

<sup>34</sup> Burnette C. Fish and Gerald W. Fish, *The Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: General Printers Ltd., 1989), 23.

Therefore, Hotchkiss and his party could not begin work among these people until order had been restored by the colonial government. It took a considerable number of years before the hostility between the colonial government and the Nandi people came to an end. Hotchkiss was forced to move elsewhere, and he moved to the neighboring district of Kericho to work in a village known as Lumbwa.

The Kipsigis people were another section of the same tribal family, speaking the same language. At the time, relocation of the four men from Nandi to Lumbwa seemed to be frustrating their plans, but events that followed proved that they had made the right decision, and that they were indeed in the will of God to work amongst the Kipsigis.

All the trekking that they had done so far, took a toll on Hotchkiss and his men. It was no wonder that Hotchkiss and one of his men contracted malaria. They temporarily abandoned their mission to Kipsigis land and sought treatment in the Friends mission hospital in Kaimosi. Kaimosi was inhabited by the Luhya tribe. After hospitalization and upon recovery they stayed longer in Kaimosi and helped in establishing the FAIM.

Mr. Hotchkiss was a man with a vision. He was able to see into the future and plan for that future from the beginning of his ministry. Vision is a declaration of intent about how to invest one's energy. It serves as a source of sustaining direction and a fuel for action.<sup>35</sup> Steve Covey describes vision as "the ability to see beyond our present reality, to create, to invent what does not yet exist, to become what we are not yet."<sup>36</sup> Because of his vision, Hotchkiss made several decisions which would be well ahead of his time.

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<sup>35</sup> Jim Loehrer and Tony Schwartz, *The Power of Full Engagement* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 146.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *First Things First* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1994), 105.



From the very beginning of his work among the local people, he made sure that the nationals were involved. He emphasized the “imperative necessity of teaching the native Christians from the very beginning to assume responsibility for the propagation of the faith amongst their own people; and the possibility of making the mission itself largely self-supporting.”<sup>37</sup> He further understood that in order for the Church to thrive, the local people would need to be taught to read and write. He not only opened educational institutions that taught the natives how to read and write, but he also opened technical schools that taught them marketable skills. He believed that “A lazy person in any land makes a poor Christian...and again, if a self-supporting Church was ever to be formed, the members would have to be freed from their condition of poverty by being taught how to work.”<sup>38</sup> He taught the natives how to till the land, how to raise better crops, how to make bricks to build better houses and how to turn logs into beautiful furniture. He started health care facilities, opened schools for both basic and secondary education and provided theological training for evangelists and pastors.

After two years of service in Kaimosi, Hotchkiss returned to the Kipsigis people. The work among the Kipsigis, close relatives of the Nandi, resulted in the opening of the first non-denominational mission station at Lumbwa – present day Kipkelion. Mr. Hotchkiss settled first at Chesinende which was located approximately seven kilometers (four miles) from the railway centre; the railway station was known as Lumbwa....The

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<sup>37</sup> Willis R Hotchkiss, *Then and Now In Kenya Colony* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, MCMXXXVII), 95.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

work Mr. Hotchkiss established among the Kipsigis was called the Lumbwa Industrial Mission.<sup>39</sup>

In 1931 Mrs. Hotchkiss was taken ill and had to be taken back to the United States for treatment. The nature of her sickness was such that she would not return to Kenya again. Mr. Hotchkiss could not stand the possibility of closing the work he and his wife had started in Kenya. In 1932 Hotchkiss met with the leadership of the NHA and entered into an agreement about the station and work he had begun in Lumbwa. Hotchkiss agreed to turn over his Mission to the WGM. That same year, WGM sent the Smiths and Kirkpatrick to serve on the Kenya field<sup>40</sup>. As part of the agreement, Hotchkiss was appointed a WGM missionary serving in the home office. He agreed to this arrangement.<sup>41</sup> Shortly after accepting his appointment to WGM and his agreement with the mission about his work in Lumbwa, Hotchkiss lost his beloved wife. After the death of his wife, Hotchkiss took time to reevaluate his appointment as a WGM missionary and the work he had turned over to WGM in Lumbwa. After a lot of soul searching, Hotchkiss resigned from WGM due to doctrinal differences with WGM.

Hotchkiss returned to Kenya in 1934 and stayed until 1935. He resumed work at his station in Lumbwa, but played a pivotal role in introducing AGM to the Kipsigis people. With his help, WGM was granted a ten acre property at Tenwek. The location was in the fertile highlands of Bomet District among the Kipsigis people.

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<sup>39</sup> Burnette C. Fish and Gerald W. Fish, *The Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: General Printers Ltd., 1989), 30.

<sup>40</sup> Burnis H. Bushong, *R.U.N. Reaching the Unreached Now: A Brief History of World Gospel Mission* (Marion, IN: World Gospel Mission, 1995), 16

<sup>41</sup> Burnette C. Fish and Gerald W. Fish, *The Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: General Printers Ltd., 1989), 37.

The vision Hotchkiss had for the African Church remained intact upon his return to the mission field. His vision was to see a Church be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. To this end he dedicated his life to this vision. In a letter he wrote in 1901 he said:

Africa must be won by the Africans, hence to train native evangelists and place them in outstations under missionary supervision, seems to be the best course to pursue, in view of the inadequacy of the force of missionaries, and the insufficiency of funds. In this way we conserve our force and accomplish by far the greater good in the least possible time, and that too, with greater prospect of permanency.<sup>42</sup>

It is very clear that Hotchkiss envisioned an African Church supervised by Africans, sustained by funds from Africans, equipped with African personnel who were trained in Africa. Hotchkiss put his words into practical effect, traveling throughout the country, laying down the foundation of what is today the Africa Gospel Church. Hotchkiss invested time in the local people. As a mentor he was more than willing to take risks and train potential leaders. Robert Clinton defines mentoring as that process where a person who is in leadership sees leadership potential in a still-to-be developed person, the protégé, and is able to provide guidance and influence the protégé in realizing his or her potential.<sup>43</sup> In the book *Connecting*, the word mentoring is defined as “a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources.”<sup>44</sup> Because of his vision to mentor national leaders, Hotchkiss invested time in identifying

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>43</sup> Clinton J. Robert, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 130.

<sup>44</sup> Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1992), 30.

and training potential Kenyans who would later on carry the baton when he was long gone.

His first convert became his first protégé. His name was Mongesoi. Mongesoi became a Christian through the witness of Hotchkiss. After becoming a Christian, he was baptized together with his wife in 1919 and changed his name to Johana Ng'etich. Like the relationship in the Bible of Barnabas and Paul, Hotchkiss took Mongesoi and had him minister with him. In Acts 11 Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus to minister alongside him after Paul's conversion in Antioch. He mentored Paul who in time discovered what God had called him to be and do – the apostle to the Gentiles. Barnabas had done a good job mentoring Paul. In the same way Mongesoi and his wife were mentored well by Hotchkiss and in time took up the task of evangelizing their own people through the support, encouragement and training of Mr. Hotchkiss.<sup>45</sup> They preached the gospel clearly in the language of the people in remote areas of Sot. The people understood the gospel in their own language and embraced Christ.

Hotchkiss recruited many others into his team. He trained them and then deployed them to serve as evangelists and local missionaries among their own tribe. Those who served include, Isaiah Misoi, who in 1935 made a trip to Burundi to help the Friends Mission get started. He evangelized and served as pastor of the local Church in Tenwek. Another man who served the Lord amongst his own people for a number of years was Reuben Kibet. Having been trained by Mr. Hotchkiss, he served as pastor in different Churches from 1936 to 1939 in Sot, Longisa, Saoset and Magoma. Elijah Busienei served

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<sup>45</sup> Burnette C. Fish and Gerald W. Fish, *The Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: General Printers Ltd., 1989), 45.

the Lord in the Tenwek area from about 1940. He felt his call was to go and preach where no one else had preached. He was very successful in his work.

The work done by these Kipsigis men and others not mentioned here bore fruits. Many Churches were planted. By the time WGM entered Sot, six out-stations had been started by the local evangelists. The six centers were: Siwot, Kongo'tik, Tulwetab Mosonik, Kiplelji, Mengit, and Kimagata. Given that mission work was just starting, Hotchkiss' step in deploying local people to evangelize their own was indeed brave and visionary and very much in line with his vision of Africans winning Africans to Christ. As Zablon Nthamburi says,

The Church in Africa must subscribe to the understanding of God who is always present in the world and who is willing to transform it. Our God calls us to work with Him in order that he can transform the world through us. Our mission frontier is where the needs of the people are met in the name of Jesus. It is where displaced persons find new hope, where victims of ethnic hatred see the one who is a friend to all people. The hungry see Jesus as the person who gives them bread, the sick see him as the Great Physician, while the sinner sees Jesus as the one who pardons and restores wholeness. The Church in Africa must, more than ever before, begin to bear the imprint 'made in Africa.'<sup>46</sup>

The imprints of a Church "made in Africa" were visible in the hills and valleys of Kipsigis land through the efforts of Hotchkiss. By 1958 local congregations had increased to sixty-one. The Church met regularly for services in various parts of Kipsigis land under the national leadership.

Mr. Hotchkiss left Kenya for the United States of America in 1939 with an intention of coming back, but he did not return. On June 25, 1948 Mr. Hotchkiss died. Mr. Willis Hotchkiss left an indelible mark on the landscape of Kenya. The work and life of both Mr. Willis R. Hotchkiss and his wife will be remembered with great respect and

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<sup>46</sup> Zablon Nthamburi, "The Church in Africa: Making its way from Dependency to Self Reliance," *Missionary Frontiers*, 06 (2006).

honor. His contribution as a man of God, who faithfully proclaimed the good news, was big. He gladly accepted the call to become a pioneer missionary to Kenya to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the masses. He also brought about transformation in individual lives and societal living as a result of the gospel message. He desired to see native Christians taught the Christian faith from the very beginning, so that they would be in a position to teach their own people what they had learnt in their own language. He was dedicated to spreading the Gospel as epitomized in the Book of Acts, “and you will become my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) Ultimately his vision was to produce Churches which are self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating, thus becoming autonomous with indigenous leadership.

The challenging task that was before him required a lot of courage and sacrifice in the face of hostility of every kind. As already observed from the restriction given to Willis Hotchkiss when they attempted to open a station in Nandi, the colonial government and mission organizations were sometimes weary of each other. Always suspicious that one group was working against the other’s mission. The colonial government was known to take drastic measures to restrict missionaries from doing their work. But in the face of such threats, Hotchkiss was always ready to try something else or go a different direction in the face of opposition. He was like “the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Issachar should do...” (I Chro. 12:32).

Tropical diseases were the most critical threat to the missionary work in Kenya. As observed, Christian missionaries came to the Kenyan coast very early. But due to the

high mortality rate resulting from malaria, yellow fever, dysentery etc, many agencies did not eagerly send missionaries to the continent. As already observed Johann Ludwig Krapf lost both his wife and his son to tropical diseases. Hotchkiss lost his many colleagues to tropical diseases. He lost his wife as a result of her illness contracted on the field. Hotchkiss himself almost died as a result of a disease he contracted on the field too. All this greatly slowed and hampered the growth of the ministry but he soldiered on knowing that he was a “partaker of a heavenly calling” (Hebrews 3:1).

In addition to attrition due to diseases, adequate transportation was a challenge. The early missionaries in Kenya faced the immensity of the country and the long distances between villages and towns. The means of transport were primitive and vehicular transportation unheard of. Transport was mainly on foot, donkeys or piggy back rides on the backs of local people by the missionaries. As stated elsewhere Hotchkiss and his party relied heavily on local people working as porters for them. This hindrance still did not discourage Hotchkiss. He was focused on attaining the vision God had given him for Kenya.

For this man of God as Verkuyl says, “Being on the mission field had not been a voluntary affair, a hobby some people have, an activity to be done by people who are interested in that sort of thing. Such people must hear once again...it is obedience.”<sup>47</sup>

Kwame Nkurumah speaking about missionaries in his beloved Ghana said it well.

If you .....visit more widely in this country, you will often find as you travel along the roads, little cemeteries lost in the bush where lie buried the brave men and women who, in bringing the Christian faith to this country, gave the last full measure of their devotion. They knew that they faced the certainty of loneliness and imminent risk of death. Yellow fever decimated them and their families. But

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<sup>47</sup> J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 164.

still they came. They belong to the martyrs of Christianity as surely as those who faced persecution for their faith. Their fortitude which they showed is the sure foundation upon which your work has been based.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed the quote is a befitting tribute to pioneering missionaries such as Hotchkiss, who made possible the gospel message to reach the African people.

Mr. Willis R. Hotchkiss left a positive legacy. I agree with Finley Allen who writes, "The success of missionary work is not determined by the number of missionaries, the value of property, or the highly developed organizational structures - but by the Church that is planted, takes root, and grows in that society."<sup>49</sup>

Although Willis R. Hotchkiss is justifiably the recognized founder of the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya, it is important to remember that Africa Gospel Church grew because of the local men and women trained and mentored by Hotchkiss. These men in turn passed on what they had learned from Hotchkiss to other faithful local men and women. These local people in turn transformed the landscape of Kipsigis land with the gospel message of Christ and thus laid down the foundation of what is today the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya.

Johana Ng'etich a man discipled by Willis Hotchkiss became the first national leader of the Africa Gospel Church. He came to salvation through the witness of Hotchkiss. Hotchkiss took him under his wings discipling and teaching him. After spending time under the tutelage of Hotchkiss, Johana chose to become an evangelist. The desire to tell his own people about Christ burnt in him. Johana went about evangelizing Kericho with much zeal and within a very short time, Johana's message had

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<sup>48</sup> John Pobee, "The Church in West Africa," *The Church in Africa* (1977):15.

<sup>49</sup> Allen Finley and Lorry Lutz, *The Family Tie* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 33.



gotten through to the people of Kericho. He became a highly respected and sought after advisor to many in the Kipsigis community. When the Africa Gospel Church was established, the people elected him as the first moderator of the Africa Gospel Church.

### **The Africa Gospel Church**

It was not until 1961 that The Africa Gospel Church (AGC) was registered by the government as a separate entity from the mission. Prior to registration, the name of the Church had been unanimously agreed on by the people. As Fish and Fish report;

The nationals agreed to take the name AFRICA GOSPEL CHURCH for several reasons. AFRICA pinpointed it geographically, but it did not limit membership to nationals as African would have. The GOSPEL was the message the body of believers, the CHURCH, would proclaim.<sup>50</sup>

The mission of the new Church was stated simply as: "Spread the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and to establish believers in the faith".

Prior to registration, both the nationals and the missionaries worked together on a constitution. Based on the vision of Hotchkiss; "The missionaries knew that they wanted two things: a constitution which would be workable, and a Church which would be truly indigenous."<sup>51</sup> The mission further recognized that: "No institution planted by the missionary can come to maturity and reach a position of strength and stability unless its roots go deep in native soil and it is able to draw support from its local environment."<sup>52</sup>

In the mission's policy handbook, as quoted by Fish and Fish, the mission clearly articulated the position of its relationship with the national Church. The handbook says; "In order to establish a truly indigenous work, the Christian nationals should be

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<sup>50</sup> Burnette C. Fish and Gerald W. Fish, *The Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: General Printers Ltd., 1989, 184.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 179.

encouraged to share responsibility for the establishment, maintenance, management and growth of the work.”<sup>53</sup>

This indeed was thinking in the right direction. From the very beginning the mission believed that “... mission work should move forward toward self-government and self-support by emphasizing the privilege of Christian stewardship, and making proper adjustments to the local economic and social environment...”<sup>54</sup> Further the mission firmly believed that ...the New Testament indicates that there should be local indigenous Churches with power of self-government, and that when they increase sufficiently in number, they should be organized into a larger body, a conference, which should exercise authority over the local Churches.<sup>55</sup>

Discussion on the formulation of the constitution was lengthy and lasted for over six years. But finally the constitution was agreed upon and presented to the Registrar of Societies in 1961. Apart from stating the ministry of the Church, some of the provisions included in the constitution were the right to own property, the right to transact on the owned property, the right to take a stake in other organizations, the right to make contracts and/or incur liabilities, and the right to invest excess funds.

The constitution further made provision for the Church to be governed through councils and committees. Levels of councils range from central, areas, districts to local councils. At the time there was no urban work and hence there was no representation for the urban Churches at the central Church council level. However, in the last fifteen years an urban Church council has been added. All urban Churches are represented at the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 180.

central leadership in this way. Decisions of the Church are therefore passed through these bodies.

The head of the Church is known as the “Moderator.” Whereas the moderator is the head of the Church, he is not the supreme authority of the Church. The moderator is answerable to the Central Church council. This council is the supreme decision-making organ of the Church. The constitution did not specifically give the chairmanship of the Central Church council to the moderator but instead provided for any member of the central Church council to be elected chairman of the council.

The Africa Gospel Church system of governance is a hybrid of both congregational and denominational structure. It is congregational in that all Church property ownership and maintenance is vested in the local Church and held in trust to the local Church by the Africa Gospel Church trustees. The local congregation is responsible for the running of its own affairs, including the election of elders and appointment of the local pastors. It is denominational in that all Churches affiliated with Africa Gospel Church operate under the Africa Gospel Church constitution and subscribe to the same doctrinal statement.

This was one of the brightest moments for World Gospel Mission. As the then WGM field director noted in his report in 1962, “...the Church is no longer a child and is quite capable of caring for itself”.<sup>56</sup> Bishop Nthamburi agrees with this thinking. He says,

...the African Church will not grow into maturity if it continues to be fed by western partners. It will ever remain an infant who has not learned to walk on his or her own feet. A child who depends on parental support

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 184..

even during teen-age years may never be able to walk with dignity. We must challenge the Churches in Africa to be self-reliant as a way of proving that the Church has taken root and has developed an African character.<sup>57</sup>

After the registration of the Africa Gospel Church, the Church entered into a new relationship with the mission. The Church and mission agreed to continue working together but operate as separately registered legal organizations. The mission and the Church set up joint committees of missionaries from America and national leaders. Much of the work was possible because of U.S funds which were available to sustain the groundwork, and to give support to the outreach.<sup>58</sup>

Since the beginning the relationship between AGC and WGM was not governed by any written agreement. The two organizations operated on the basis of common understanding. Six years ago however, it became clear that there was need to develop a clear mutual understanding on the working relationship. The two organizations came up with a memorandum of understanding in 2003 (see appendix 2). The present memorandum of understanding clearly defines the working relationship between the Africa Gospel Church and World Gospel Mission.

A second major milestone for the Church and Word Gospel Mission happened in 1972. The mission and the national leaders were convinced that time had now come for the relationship to take another major step. The mission agreed to turn over to the national Church leadership the work as well as Church property. The goal was to give autonomy to the national Church in the running, governing and sustenance of the Church.

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<sup>57</sup> Zablon Nthamburi, "The Church in Africa: Making its way from Dependency to Self Reliance," *Missionary Frontiers*, June (2006).

<sup>58</sup> Marlin L. Nelson, *Readings in Third World Missions: A Collection of Essential Documents* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1978), 70.

Hitherto the work was concentrated in Kericho and its environs, but after the handing over, the Church became more focused and ventured aggressively outside the Kericho/Kipsigis areas.

Terry Duncan, a former field director of WGM in Kenya, in looking back to where the Church has come from says the following about the growth of the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya:

As of 1995 AGC had 700 Churches mostly in the Kipsigis land, and fifteen urban Churches and six mission stations outside the Kipsigis land. AGC also has one large mission hospital in Tenwek and several medical centers, two Bible schools, a TEE department with 1,500 students, and other departments. The number of members is 50,000.<sup>59</sup>

The Africa Gospel Church has come a long way. Most recent estimations show that the Church has since grown from three areas to 23 areas, four mission stations, 21 urban Churches and 1057 rural congregations. The registered members are estimated at 820,000 with an average attendance to Sunday services estimated at 300,000.<sup>60</sup> The institutions of the Church are three. The Church runs six dispensaries and three bookshops. It has sixteen mission outreach stations, five of these are outside Kenya – two are in Tanzania, one in Uganda and two in Southern Sudan.

### Conclusion

Willis R. Hotchkiss had a vision of opening mission stations throughout Kenya. He envisaged mission stations that would plant Churches throughout Kenya that were led by the local people. By God's grace, he managed to open three mission stations with three different missionary societies and one independent mission station before he died.

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<sup>59</sup> Isaac T. Saoshiro, "*Dynamics of Church Expansion in Urban Kenya: A Multiple Case Study In Nakuru*" (Doctor of Ministry/Missiology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1997), 83.

<sup>60</sup> CORAT, *Draft Report on Evaluation of Africa Gospel Church*. (October/November, 2001): 6.

In 1895 together with Peter Scot Cameron and others, he helped open several stations in Kamba land. Kaimosi` Friends African Industrial Mission was opened in 1902. He crossed over to Lumbwa and started Lumbwa Industrial Mission in 1904/05. The last mission he helped start was the World Gospel Mission in 1932.

The fundamental issue that faced missionaries in Hotchkiss' time was how to establish Church that would stand and not close when the missionaries left. Hotchkiss' answer was to develop indigenous leaders, so that if for one reason or another something happened and the missionaries had to leave, the Church would not die.

Hotchkiss understood that to reach the vast nation, the gospel needed to be preached, and he did this diligently. Preaching the gospel was one of the major tasks. Preaching the gospel is the proclamation of the gospel. Martin Luther's taught that every believer is a priest, that is, one who mediates the gospel to others. This is biblical theology. Every believer must pass on the power of Christ, which has come into his or her own life. They must express the faith in loving action, and in this way communicate it to others.<sup>61</sup> Hotchkiss wanted to see this effected in the native believers. He firmly upheld the teaching of the apostle Peter that "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9-10). Without preaching the gospel and planting of Churches, the establishment of the Church would be in vain.

Hotchkiss was convinced that the best way to grow the Churches he had planted was to develop indigenous leadership. He believed the Bible message that "you shall

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<sup>61</sup> Harold Taylor, *Tend the Sheep*. (London, UK: SPCK, 1983), 23.

receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Matt. 28:19-28). In this passage Christ commands His followers to preach the gospel to all nations but to specifically begin with Jerusalem where many would respond, be taught, baptized and start Churches.<sup>62</sup> He begun at home and trained the local people so that they would reach their neighbours, relatives and friends.

Church leaders need to be equipped through education. Hotchkiss believed that a Church was as strong as the leadership. He saw education as an important and essential component to the future of the Church. His belief in the education is seen in the mission stations he opened. On each station he opened a training institute. These institutions’ main objective was the training of national leaders. He personally participated in the recruiting of students and was also involved in direct teaching of these students.

Hotchkiss understood that a Church that does not provide for dynamic trained indigenous leadership dies on its feet. In the gospels, Christ called for the disciplining of believers, who in turn would reproduce themselves in others. Training local believers, as Hotchkiss saw it would perpetuate the gospel. He understood that home-grown indigenous leadership reduces the need of imported leadership from abroad to do the job that can be done more efficiently by local people. Hotchkiss would have been proud of the African Church leaders who expressed his sentiments of training national leaders in a meeting in Willingen in Germany. They expressed the need for the training of capable nationals, so that they could become Church leaders and replace the missionaries<sup>63</sup>. That

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<sup>62</sup> Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 29.

<sup>63</sup> Elliot Kendall, *The End of an Era: Africa and the Missionary* (London, UK: SPCK. 1978), 75.

should always be the aim of a missionary to “work themselves” out of a job. This way indigenization of the Church is promoted.

Hotchkiss worked hard. Like many early missionaries, he had attained Bible training as well as training in using his hands. The Bible tells us that Jesus came not only as one who preached but also as one who served.<sup>64</sup> Hotchkiss tried to emulate this example.

Hotchkiss left behind a well-organized ministry and a rapidly growing Church. And although Hotchkiss’ interest was in education, he did more than people realized in laying the foundation of the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya. AGC owes him a debt of gratitude for what he started, fought for and accomplished. He was not bound by the old traditional missionary way of doing God’s work. He broke ranks with the traditional way. He advocated that the work of spreading the gospel be done by the native people. He fought for the independence of the Church to decide its own affairs. His ultimate goal was to see an African Church planted that was self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

The Africa Gospel Church has come a long way, but it has a long way to go still. The leaders need to emulate the founder of the Church by putting the Church’s purpose in the forefront of all activities. In so doing, the Church will constitute itself as an autonomous Church, with the full mandate to make its own decisions without looking over its shoulders in fear of an external force. Hotchkiss proved himself to be an innovator of considerable determination, and his tenacious leadership of the

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<sup>64</sup> J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI:Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 211.



independence issue profoundly affected the direction of the growth of AGC. Hotchkiss' achievements can thus scarcely be overestimated.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A SURVEY OF THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH PRINCIPLES**

In the previous chapter, it is evident from the life and work of the pioneer World Gospel Mission missionary, Willis Hotchkiss, that his approach to missions is clearly based on the indigenous Church principles. The indigenous Church principles suggest that the goal of the mission societies is to bring the Church started by missionaries to the place where it is self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. The implication is that there comes a time in the development of the native Church when the local leadership and the missionary organization recognize that the Church has reached the stage of maturity in national leadership, is able to financially support and do the work of the local Church without the support of the missionary organization. Therefore the logical implication at that point is for the mission organization to disengage itself from that context and move on to other fields of service.

In the writers understanding self-supporting means that regardless of the social and economic standard of the local believers, they should be able to take the financial responsibility of the local church without outside help. Self-governing means that the local believers set up the standards and direction of the church without missionary interference. Whereas self-propagating carries the idea that the local believers evangelize using methods that are local and understandable to them, winning new members and establishing them in the church. It is therefore the logical that at that point the mission organization should disengage itself from that local church and move on to other fields of service.

In embracing these principles, Hotchkiss was simply following the approach to missions which generally characterized missions in his time. These well known indigenous Church principles were developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson as criteria that could measure whether a Church was indigenous or not. The two men having had firsthand experience of the extreme paternalism practiced by western missionaries of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in Asia decided to develop these principles<sup>65</sup>. With these principles, missionary-founded Churches always strove to establish Churches that were self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. These principles have been debated, criticized, added on to and even dismissed today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This chapter will survey leading proponents of the indigenous Church principles and also to discuss their teaching.

By virtue of its calling, the followers of Jesus Christ have been called to build “the Church.” The Bible makes it clear that the Church of God does not consist of buildings, but of people. The people of God are called to be “living stones” that ensure that they are built up into a holy temple, the Church whose foundation is God and that the Church is rooted in Christ, the chief cornerstone. The fundamental issue that confronts the Church however is this; what sort of Churches should the Church build that will meet the needs of this present century?

Regarding the Africa Gospel Church, what is the vision of the Church in light of the vision that the founding father of the Africa Gospel Church? Hotchkiss had a vision of planting indigenous Churches. The indigenous Church principle suggests that the goal of missionaries is to establish Churches and bring them up to the point where they are

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<sup>65</sup> The Indigenous Church Mission, “Indigenous Church Principles,” *The World News*, [http://wn.com/indigenous\\_church\\_mission\\_theory](http://wn.com/indigenous_church_mission_theory) (accessed March 1, 2011).

“self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. The implication is that missionaries disengage themselves from that Church and move on to other fields of service. This was the principle that Hotchkiss seems to have espoused. He was in the business of starting ministries, mentoring the national leadership to maturity and then disengaging from the work but leaving it under able national leadership.

### **Dr. Henry Venn**

Dr. Henry Venn, honorary secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from 1841 to 1873 “was one of the movers and shakers of the nineteenth century missionary movement.”<sup>66</sup> Venn taught that the purpose of missions is the development of indigenous Churches which eventually become self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. The term indigenous is defined as “something produced, growing or living naturally in the country or climate; something that has become native.”<sup>67</sup> The Church thus produced would as rapidly as possible become self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. In time this method of planting Churches came to be known simply as “three-selves,” and is generally attributed to both Venn and Rufus Anderson.<sup>68</sup> The three-self principle simply says that mission-established Churches can be (and should be) self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Gerald H. Anderson and others, eds. *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (MaryKnoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1994), 54.

<sup>67</sup> Urbana, “Panel on the Indigenous Church (1954), <http://www.urbana.org/articles.cfm?RecordId=498> (accessed January 19, 2009).

<sup>68</sup> Jehu Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission: African Church Autonomy in a Colonial Context*. (London: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 25.

<sup>69</sup> Glenn J. Schwartz, “*When Charity Destroys Dignity: Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement*” (Philadelphia, PA: World Mission Book Service, 2007), 59.

Henry Venn, by virtue of his position in CMS, was a very influential person. In his days, the Anglican Church was highly respected and given a prominent place in the politics of the land. Venn's position as the secretary of CMS allowed him to have influence beyond the Church. His influence extended into the government of Britain. He and others in the Church used this influence to lobby the British parliament to pass acts that favoured Christian work. One significant act they strongly lobbied parliament to pass was the act abolishing slavery from all British colonies. Venn worked hard both at convincing civic leaders as well as clergy to join his quest at instituting change.

As the secretary of the Church missionary society, he did a lot of research to arrive at principles that would enhance world-wide missions. He saw weaknesses in a missionary-founded, missionary-led Church. "What, he asked, gave a Church integrity? A Church had to feel self-worth." Over a period of fifteen years he identified three aspects of that self-worth. "A Church must be led by persons drawn from its own membership. So long as a group of people look to an outsider to furnish leadership, they will feel less than fully responsible."<sup>70</sup> He was of the opinion that spoon-feeding the local people would only produce "rice-Christians." He strongly advocated the need for a true conversion on the part of the native Christians. This in turn would reflect a willingness of the native Christians to support the work of the Church and not be dependent on the benevolence of missionaries to carry on its work. The product of dependence would lead to Christians who were malnourished, weak and unable to stand on their own feet. In turn they would be easily manipulated and would not be able to decide the destiny of their own Church without oversight from the missionaries.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 59.

Venn formulated the concept of a *Native Pastorate*.<sup>71</sup> By native pastorate, he meant “the settlement of a native Church, under native pastors, free from all supervision by a foreign agency.”<sup>72</sup> In this way, the Church members would identify with the Church and become more responsible for the care and support of all activities initiated by the native Church pastorate. He felt that so long as missionaries dominated the pastorate, the national Church would not be able to rise to the occasion and take charge of their own affairs. The unenviable end result would be a Church that would struggle to make a smooth transition from missionary-led to native pastoral leadership. His conviction about national leadership was so strong that he once wrote, “So long as a group of people must look to an outsider to furnish leadership, they will feel less than fully responsible.”<sup>73</sup>

On the issue of self-support, Venn believed that a Church must be taught and then allowed to take responsibility in meeting the financial obligation of the Church. He said about the local people, “if they do not bear the burden of supporting the life of the Church financially, their membership will lack integrity.”<sup>74</sup> Accordingly Venn believed that “self-support” was the point at which the national Church became independent of the funds given to it by the foreign mission. The Church was then fully operational with funds from among its own members regardless of the social and economic standards of the national believers. He taught that, “Pastors should not be raised by training or salaries to habits and expectations too far above the people...the people must be capable of

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<sup>71</sup> Jehu Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission: Africa Church Autonomy in a Colonial Context* (London, UK: Praeger Publisher, 2002), 25.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>73</sup> G.H. Anderson and N.A. Homer, *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 1 Issue 2, (April 1977): 16-19.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 18.

supporting their pastors.”<sup>75</sup> In his mind he envisioned a native Church that was in a position to meet the salaries of both the pastoral and support staff. He also saw a native Church that would be able to take care of its own temporal needs, including capital developments and maintenance of Church property.

Concerning “self-governing” he believed and taught that as soon as possible the local Church should be allowed autonomy from the parent mission organization. This would help the national Church find its own truly national leadership. In his thinking, “the traditional system under which all was dependent on the missionary, subverted the corporate life and development of an indigenous Church.”<sup>76</sup> He wanted to see national leaders take charge in running the affairs of their own Church without supervision or interference from the foreign mission organization.

In time Venn began to employ the phrase “euthanasia of a mission”<sup>77</sup> to describe the new process by which a mission became progressively indigenous and independent. By “euthanasia of missions,” he meant that missionaries were on the field very temporarily. In Venn’s mind,

The foreign mission is generally seen as scaffolding which must be removed once the fellowship of believers is functioning properly. Missionaries provide teaching, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finance and authority, and train local converts to take over these responsibilities.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> William C. Peter, *The Idea of Self—Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy* (Leiden, Netherland: E.J Brill 1990), 6.

<sup>76</sup> Jehu Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission: Africa Church Autonomy in a Colonial Context* (London: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 26.

<sup>77</sup> African Legacy, “Henry Venn,” [http://www.dacb.org/stories/non%20africans/legacy\\_venn.html](http://www.dacb.org/stories/non%20africans/legacy_venn.html); (accessed January 20, 2009).

<sup>78</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, “Indigenization,” <http://www.wordinfo.info/words/index/info>; (accessed January 28, 2009).

He believed that as soon as all the work is done, the mission Church attains autonomy.

This “euthanasia of a mission”, he further explained, took place,

...where the missionary, surrounded by well-trained native congregations under native pastors...gradually and wisely abridges his own labors, and relaxes his superintendence over the pastors, till they are able to sustain their own Christian ordinances, and the district ceases to be a missionary field, and passes into Christian parishes under the constituted Ecclesiastical Authorities.<sup>79</sup>

In other words, the mission organization, after it has done its job and local mission-minded Churches are established, would hand over all responsibilities to trained national leadership. This did not however mean that the missionaries left the field and returned to his or her home country. What this meant was that the missionary after successfully planting and helping establish the local Church, moved to another field where the same process would be repeated to start new Churches.

C. Peter Williams says that “Venn had developed some of the most distinctive features of his thinking about native Churches, most significantly a commitment to their eventual independence and to eschewing any policy which would remove pastors much beyond the learning and experiences of their culture”.<sup>80</sup> Again, Venn maintained “that the euthanasia of the mission was complete as soon as the Church had reached autonomy”.<sup>81</sup>

Venn was a strong believer in the training of lay leadership to carry on the work after missionaries left. He was thoroughly interested in seeing a “self-propagating” Church. By “self-propagating,” he meant that it was the responsibility of the national

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<sup>79</sup> Jehu Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission: African Church Autonomy in a Colonial Context* (London, UK: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 26.

<sup>80</sup> Williams C. Peter, *The Idea of the Self-Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill 1990), 7.

<sup>81</sup> Charles H. Kraft and Tom N. Wisley, *Reading in Dynamic Indigeneity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library 1979), 78.



Christians to evangelize in all its forms, winning new converts to the Christian faith and establishing them in the Church. The new believers would then start new Churches, thus perpetuating the Church of Jesus Christ. It is said of Venn, “to help keep the mission of the Church in the foreground, he repeatedly arranged for the training and appointment of members of the younger Churches to serve as missionaries.”<sup>82</sup>

### **Rufus Anderson**

Venn found a disciple in Rufus Anderson of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. R. Pierce Beaver states, “There has never been another person in the American world mission who has rivaled Anderson in creativity, in shaping policy, and in uniting the roles of administrator and theoretician.”<sup>83</sup> Anderson argued very strongly for the creation of native Churches that were not dependent on western missionaries or Churches. Accordingly, as Venn before him, he advocated for Churches that were self supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Unlike his English contemporary who never visited any of the mission fields started by CMS, Rufus visited many missionaries and fields overseas and experienced first-hand what the missionaries were encountering on the field.

Like Venn, he advocated the “three-self principles” of Church planting. In his day and age, there was the challenge of extreme paternalism. This is where the missionary or missionary organization so clung to leadership in the native local Church that the Church was stifled and could not do anything unless the missionary or missionary organization

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<sup>82</sup> G.H. Anderson and N.A. Homer eds., “Henry Venn,” *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Apr. 77, Vol. 1 Issue 2. [http://www.dacb.org/stories/non%africans/legacy\\_venn.html](http://www.dacb.org/stories/non%africans/legacy_venn.html); (accessed January 20, 2009).

<sup>83</sup> Gerald H. Anderson and others, eds. *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (MaryKnoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1994), 548.

gave permission to do so. Anderson did not appreciate this. The local Christians had been completely socialized to be dependent on missionaries for everything. “The missionaries in turn expected unquestionable loyalty from the local believers and resisted giving up authority and control to the nationals. This led to a very unhealthy parent-child relationship between the missionaries and the local believers.”<sup>84</sup>

Anderson using his position as Administrator of the American Commissioners for Foreign Missions, sought to address this challenge. Earlier in his Christian service, he had served with the Presbyterian missionaries in China in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He believed that first and foremost the missionaries were on the field to convert the lost. Anderson’s fundamental thesis was that,

Missions are instituted for the spread of a scriptural self-propagating Christianity—this is their only aim. These factors are included in the aim: (1) the conversion of lost men, (2), organizing them into Churches, (3) giving these Churches a competent native ministry, and (4) conducting them to the stage of independence and (in most cases) of self-propagation. Anything additional is secondary, or even superfluous.<sup>85</sup>

He believed that “a foreign missionary should not be the pastor of a native Church. His business is to plant Churches, in well-chosen parts of his field, committing them as soon as possible to the care of native pastors; himself sustaining a common relation to all, as their ecclesiastical father and adviser.”<sup>86</sup> He did not rule out that mistakes would be made and that the native Church might initially struggle. He noted that “mistakes, perplexities

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<sup>84</sup> Pierce R. Beaver, “The legacy of Rufus Anderson,” *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 3 (3): 95

<sup>85</sup> Gerald H. Anderson and others, eds. *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (MaryKnoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1994), 549.

<sup>86</sup> R. Pierce Beaver, ed., *To the Advance the Gospel: Rufus Anderson* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1967), 99.

and sometimes scandals, there will be; but it is often thus that useful experiences are gained.”<sup>87</sup> Roland Allen agrees with this point when he writes that, “It would be better, far better, that our converts should make mistakes, and fall into many errors, and commit many offences, than that their sense of responsibility should be undermined.”<sup>88</sup> In this way Anderson believed that the Church would be compelled to move towards self-reliance, governance and propagation.

Anderson believed that it was not the responsibility of a missionary or a Church to bring about social transformation or civilization to a particular group of natives. This he believed, as I do, was a natural consequence of transformed lives. He taught that the one and only responsibility of both the missionary and the Church was to evangelize. He says, “A truly mature local Church is an evangelizing, missionary one, a growing Church, a Church going out to others... and all other activities should be directed toward that end. The governing object to be always aimed at is self-reliant, effective Churches-Churches that are properly native.”<sup>89</sup>

Anderson espoused St. Paul’s missionary practice and taught it as the model for missions. In his study of Paul he observed and concluded that the work of reaching the unreached could not be done in any other way but through the power of the Holy Spirit. He argued that Paul the apostle brought the people together and then preached the gospel message of salvation. Paul and his entourage would stay at a place and teach the people

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>88</sup> Allen Roland, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company 1962), 145.

<sup>89</sup> Gerald H. Anderson and others, eds. *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (MaryKnoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1994), 550.

after conversion. Thereafter he would leave the responsibilities of the brand new Churches in the hands of indigenous leadership. Anderson says,

It was by gathering converts into Churches at centers of influence, and putting them under native pastoral inspection and care. The means employed were spiritual; namely, the Gospel of Christ. The power relied upon for giving efficacy to these means was divine; namely the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. The main success was among the members of the middle and lower classes of society; and the responsibilities for self-government, self-support and self-propagation were thrown at once upon the several Churches.<sup>90</sup>

### **John Nevius**

John Nevius a young contemporary of Venn and Anderson served as a Presbyterian missionary to China in late 1800s. After serving on the China field for a while, he was disturbed by what he saw practiced by western missionaries in China. He questioned the methods they used in the planting of Churches in China. According to Nevius, he considered the fundamental and primary work of the missionary as that of preaching the Gospel. Secondly, he also acknowledged the place of meeting the physical needs of the natives. Preaching he defined as “every possible mode of presenting Christian truth.”<sup>91</sup> He taught that “The Church’s messengers must introduce Christ’s truth ‘among the natives first and principally by oral instruction in their mother tongues; by acts of kindness and sympathy; by lives embodying and illustrating the Gospel which they preach.’”<sup>92</sup>

Nevius did not support the practice of paying local workers out of mission funds. He spoke very strongly against this practice. He believed that a true native and healthy

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 550.

<sup>91</sup> Gerald H. Anderson and others, eds. *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (MaryKnoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1994), 193.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.,

local Church should be able to support its own local workers in whatever manner it deemed fit without suggestion from or interference from missionaries. The disillusionment with the missionary practices in China, led him to write a manual. In this manual, "The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches," he developed further the principles of Venn and Anderson. In the manual, he advocates for an abandoning of missionary methods of establishing Churches and the adoption of indigenous principles of Church planting. In his teachings and writings, it is clear that he was greatly influenced by Venn and Anderson. His writings incorporates the principles of "self-propagation, self-government and self-supporting" as taught by the two men.

Regarding self-governance, Nevius envisioned a Church starting from the very beginning with its own home-grown leadership. In his early missionary work, he observed missionaries who had started the work and when it was time for them to move on, they could not bring themselves to hand over the work to the local people. The reason for this, Nevius believed was that the missionaries had not invested time, energy and resources to train local leaders. For this reason therefore, he advocated sourcing home-grown leaders; converts who would continue in their station in life, putting their faith into practice in their community, receiving training from the missionary, unpaid and eventually accepting leadership and being recognized as leader of the local congregation.

The idea of a local Church receiving full-funding from a Church outside the local, native Church appalled Nevius. He devoted himself to training local leaders who would lead Churches to become self-supporting. He taught that the Church in China had the capacity to fund itself

He viewed self-propagation as “every believer a teacher of someone, and a learner from someone else better fitted; every individual and group seeking by the ‘layering method’ to extend the work.”<sup>93</sup> He believed that if a Church followed this teaching, it would spare itself the agony and pain he had observed Churches go through at the point of transition from a missionary-led Church to a national-led Church. “The Church begun Dr. Nevius’ way, has from the beginning the authority that goes with responsibility, and the joy and freedom that go with sacrificial giving, and the painful period of transition is largely obviated.”<sup>94</sup>

His methods, which later came to be known as “The Nevius Plan or Method” became popular among Church leaders and was applied to start and grow healthy Churches in China and Korea. “The Nevius Method is built around two interrelated principles - systematic Bible study and economic independence.”<sup>95</sup>

The strongest point of the Nevius Plan was in the systematic teaching and study of the Bible. Nevius believed that the Church would only grow strong as long as the native believers were systematically taught the Bible. He stressed the importance of the training of local converts by the missionary. The missionary thus had the sole responsibility of raising believers who were grounded in the word of God. Preaching, he believed, was secondary to teaching. One of the things he believed in strongly was the power of the message presented in one’s own native language. Clear understanding comes by clear

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<sup>93</sup> Gerald H. Anderson and others, eds. *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (MaryKnoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1994), 194.

<sup>94</sup> John Nevius, *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (London: England: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1958), 4.

<sup>95</sup> Kraft, Charles H and Tom N. Wisley, *Reading in Dynamic Indigeneity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library 1979), 78.

articulation of the message in the indigenous language. For this reason he demanded that foreign missionaries learn the local language.

He also structured his teaching in such a way that the people found it easy to read the lessons, comprehension of the subject matter increased. The educational material was affordable to the people so that it was not necessary for the missionary to financially support the education of local leadership training from outside.

He wrote: “We have found it necessary, in order to systematize and unify our work, to establish rules and regulations, which have been put in our chapels as placards. Most of these are now embodied in the new edition of *The Manual for Inquirers*. This manual, the Catechism, and the Gospels, are the books which I place in the hands of every inquirer, and little more is needed for years in the way of textbooks for those who have not previously learned to read.”<sup>96</sup> The Nevius Plan in summary taught that: (1) Christians should continue to live in their neighborhoods and pursue their occupations, being self-supporting and witnessing to their co-workers and neighbors, (2) missions should only develop programs and institutions that the national Church desired and could support, (3) the national Churches should call out and support their own pastors, (4) Churches should be built in the native style with money and materials given by the Church members, and (5) intensive biblical and doctrinal instruction should be provided for Church leaders every year.<sup>97</sup> The missionary leadership in China rejected his teaching and did not embrace his teaching. However, the people of Korea quickly embraced his

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<sup>96</sup> John L. Nevius, *The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (Grand Rapids: MI, 1958), 8.

<sup>97</sup> Terry John Mark (2000), “*Indigenous Churches*,” in Moreau, a Scott, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 483-485.

teaching and it soon became the guiding principles for the young Church of Korea. “In 1890 Nevius was invited to Korea where he expounded his plan which became ‘one of the most important factors in the dynamic development of the Korean Church.’”<sup>98</sup>

The outstanding growth of the Church in Korea today can be attributed to the Nevius principles. When American Presbyterians began their work in Korea, the new missionaries invited Nevius to advise them and embracing his method, the Korean mission enjoyed great success. The outstanding growth of the Church in Korea is a living example of the Nevius principles.

### **Roland Allen**

Roland Allen appeared on the scene in the late 1800s to early 1900s. He was an Anglican missionary who served in China with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel from 1895 to 1903. He was forced to return to his native England due to illness. On his return to England, he spent the next 40 years reflecting on and writing about his experiences on the mission field. This led to a radical reassessment of his thinking on missionary methods of the Western Churches. His reflections and experience as a missionary in China are well-documented in his two books, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* and *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church: And Causes that Hinder It*. These books are still in print and a must-read for all Church leaders and missionary candidates.

Allen was a strong proponent of establishing Churches which from the very beginning would become “self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.” He says, “If the propagation of the Gospel is to be at any time the spontaneous work of

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<sup>98</sup> Charles H. Kraft and Tom N. Wisley, *Reading in Dynamic Indigeneity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library 1979), 79.



native Christians, it should be so from the very beginning. Every moment of delay is a moment of loss, loss for them, loss for their country.”<sup>99</sup>

Allen believed very strongly in the role the Holy Spirit played in establishment of an indigenous Church. He believed that “the Holy Spirit sends missionaries to bring all men to Christ, but not to make them copies of the missionaries.”<sup>100</sup> He also believed that when local believers were filled by the Holy Spirit, “they begun to seek to bring back others.”<sup>101</sup> In his opinion, the Holy Spirit allows the local people to experience Christ in their own unique local ways, and then in turn, the people express Him in their own unique manner. Like the first century Church, after the Holy Spirit came, the Church was able to experience Him in its own unique way. Allen was against the notion that only duly appointed and trained ministers should preach.

He firmly believed that it is through the power of the Spirit that the Church is sustained. “A Church that has the Holy Spirit, its own clergy, and the sacraments, will be self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending Church according to Allen.”<sup>102</sup> Based on his study of Paul’s missionary methods, Allen was convinced that in Paul’s methods can be found the solution to most of the difficulties of the day. He believed the recognition of the Church as a local entity and trust in the Holy Spirit’s indwelling the converts and Churches were the marks of Paul’s success. He believed that if the Church

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<sup>99</sup> Allen Roland, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church: And the Causes Which Hinder it* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 25.

<sup>100</sup> Charles H. Kraft and Tom N, Wisley, *Reading in Dynamic Indigeneity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library 1979), 81.

<sup>101</sup> Allen Roland, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 93.

<sup>102</sup> Charles H Kraft and Tom N, Wisley, *Reading in Dynamic Indigeneity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library 1979), 82.

was to truly become indigenous, then the best example to follow was Paul's. He also believed that missionaries of his day were unable to entrust their converts to the Holy Spirit. Instead they relied on their own ingenious ways in establishing the Church, growing it and then being unable to hand the Church over to national leadership. The missionaries had a lot of self-vested interests.

When Allen decided to go against the grain and oppose the established plan of Church planting in his time, he embarked on a journey that, as he predicted, pitted him against his contemporaries. He was not taken seriously. He predicted that it would be decades before they would give him a hearing, appreciate him, and follow his suggestions. As Charles H. Long and Anne Rowthorn say, "His prophetic message was largely ignored in his own day, but subsequent generations have rediscovered the legacy of his writings..."<sup>103</sup> True to this prophecy, his books are a must-read for those who are preparing to enter the mission field or those preparing to do some form of cross-cultural work.

Roland Allen worked with and was influenced by Sydney J. W. Clark. Clark was a successful businessman in London who left his business and embarked on a life of missionary research. Just like Roland Allen, he was interested in indigenous principles. He believed and taught that the national Church must be given the responsibilities necessary to grow the Church. He felt that the money given by the western Churches to support local initiatives resulted in very little fruit.

Roland's call for self-supported Churches meant the material and spiritual stewardship must become part of the life of the young Church from its very beginning.

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<sup>103</sup> Gerald H. Anderson and others, eds. *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* (MaryKnoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1994), 383.

Allen proposed that new converts should be left to take care of their own affairs from the very beginning. They were to be responsible for their own sanctuaries of worship without undue western contribution. He believed that native Churches should be left to choose and support their own pastor.

Sydney Clark made several noteworthy contributions to the cause of missions in regards to an understanding of the indigenous principles. First, he alerted the missions that their spending of great sums of money resulted in little fruit. From this he proceeded to teach that self-support, as a principle of total stewardship both material and spiritual, should become a part of the life of the young Church from its beginning. Second, he expressed horror over the inadequate management of big and costly institutions. “We have too much machinery, it threatens to submerge us,” he warned.<sup>104</sup> He also pointed out the gap between the static mission compounds and the task of world evangelism.

Clark confronted the mission boards with cold facts based on scientific research and challenged them to present facts to prove their theory that the best way to plant Churches was maintenance of great educational, ecclesiastical and medical institutions. He called for a “balance” between institutional and evangelistic work. Finally, together with Allen and Cochrane, Clark was largely responsible for the establishment of the World Dominion Movement which he financed and which later became the World Dominion Press. “This organization became the main vehicle through which dozens of pamphlets and books on the indigenous principles were produced and distributed.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Charles H Kraft and Tom N. Wisley, *Reading in Dynamic Indigeneity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library 1979), 82.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*,

### Melvin Hodges

Another important name in our study is Melvin L. Hodges (1909-1988), an Assemblies of God missionary to Nicaragua. He popularized the indigenous Church idea in the 1950s through the publication of his book, *On the Mission Field: The Indigenous Church*. In this book, he defined the indigenous Church as "a native Church . . . which shares the life of the country in which it is planted and finds itself ready to govern itself, support itself, and reproduce itself."<sup>106</sup> The native Church he argued,

Must be like a banana plant in Central America-so indigenous to its environment that it requires no special attention to thrive. Banana plants grow in this climate wherever there is adequate water. A banana plant in Canada, however, cannot survive without special care. Before winter it must be dug up and transported indoors and seldom, if ever is able to bear fruit.<sup>107</sup>

In his writing, Hodges makes a comparison of the missionary ministry using Henry Venn's example of scaffolding on a building. "The object, it was stated, is to build the building, which in this case, is the Church, and when the Church is built, the scaffolding is taken down, as it is not a part of the permanent structure."<sup>108</sup> He continued to say that, "In comparing the missionary as scaffolding and using the familiar term that 'the missionary should work himself out of a job,' it should be remembered that the point of emphasis is that the missionary should develop national Church leadership rather than

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<sup>106</sup> Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House 1996), 186.

<sup>107</sup> Melvin L. Hodges, *On the Mission Field: The Indigenous Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press 1953), 7.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

consider himself the permanent leader of the Church.”<sup>109</sup> Many mission works, however, were unable to stand without the support of the scaffolding.

Paul the Apostle used this method in planting Churches. After becoming a Christian, and after receiving his calling to full-time missionary work, he founded Churches in different cities and countries. As soon as a Church had been started, the apostle would pass it on to others within the local communities to continue with the work. Paul did not consider himself a permanent part of the new Church. Neither did the apostle import ordained men and women from Jerusalem or Antioch to pastor the newly founded Churches. Leaders for the Churches were sought and found within the local Churches started. Local people gifted by the Holy Spirit, were given on-the-job training by the apostle and thrust out to work. Hodges believed that missionaries on any field should work in this way – to be ready to uproot yourself as soon as a Church had taken root.

Hodges was totally opposed to missionary financial support of the local Church. Looking at the practice of the day, he felt that the “entire mission system is based on this unscriptural ground which has produced a set of spoon-fed workers....spiritually and financially crippled.”<sup>110</sup> He also believed that foreign money created dependence and established paternalistic patterns within mission movements, leading to an unhealthy, anemic Church. He sited three dangers of missionaries meeting local Churches financial needs. He wrote, “It has been demonstrated that....for a Church to depend upon foreign sources for its finances kills its initiative and deadens the sense of responsibility”.<sup>111</sup> He

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>110</sup> The Legacy of Melvin L. Hodges. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, (Jan. 1998): 5

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 56.

further said that “if the Church in a given country is dependent upon mission funds, it goes without saying that the work cannot advance any further than the supply line will permit. The limit to expansion is imposed by the limitation of funds.”<sup>112</sup> He strongly believed that a new Church experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit would be able to grow without depending on foreign missions for financial aid.

Hodges studied Roland Allen in his early years as a missionary. In Hodge’s thoughts and writings, it is apparent the immense influence Roland had on him. This influence came through in his beliefs on the role the Holy Spirit plays in evangelism and Church growth as taught in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Hodges emphasized that the Holy Spirit was part and parcel of the rapid expansion and growth of the Church. He wrote, “People of other lands can be converted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry on the work of the Church... We serve the same God and His Holy Spirit is with us as He was with the Church in the New Testament times.”<sup>113</sup> He believed that in the same way the Holy Spirit worked in the Church of old, the Holy Spirit is today still indispensable in the successful work of missions.

On local leadership and the Holy Spirit, Hodges held to the belief that indigenous leadership was very crucial in making the Church attractive to the indigenous people. The nature of this kind of leadership will have cultural ties with its own people. However, “this leadership must be truly called of God and filled with His anointing and spiritual gifts that provide the indispensable preparation for the work of the ministry.”<sup>114</sup>

### **Conclusion**

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 14

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 16.

It is clear from the foregoing that for a Church to be indigenous, components of self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating must be present. Thoughtful men such as Hotchkiss understood that a healthy Church is an indigenous Church. In order for a self-governing Church to emerge, a pool of home-grown leadership must be allowed to emerge through the training facilitated by the pioneering missionary. According to John Nevius those trained and disciplined will learn not only the principles of the Scripture, but will gain a better understanding on the “how and why” of the policies and procedures of that national Church. However, too often in missions, the missionary imports policy from the sending Church and tries to force those policies on the national Church. At the time the missionary might be able to explain them. But years later they might become irrelevant and unexplainable, and hence the Church might regress into what it was not supposed to.

When national leadership is trained and allowed a free hand in directing the affairs of the Church, the growth of the Church is less restricted. The national believers set up the standards of admittance into the Church; they set up structures for the Church and chart the course the local Church will take. Initially the native Church will face big heart aches and challenges, but eventually they will become a strong Church.

Paul the Apostle was a master at this. In the book of Acts we have numerous examples of what he did. In Acts 14:21-23 one reads of Paul starting Churches which then he did not visit again for a long time. He had the courage to believe that God would continue with the work which he had started. He made sure he trained a few leaders and then gave them the responsibility of the brand new Church. Given, mistakes will be made, but experience shows that that when responsibility is given to national leaders, they rise

to the challenge, take the responsibilities and make decisions that grow the Church.

Dayton and Faser said it well, “God is willing to start with Christians where they are...”<sup>115</sup> The missionary needs to trust that God is able to sustain and keep that which has been begun in His name.

Self-support traditionally has been a larger challenge. But as we have seen, the advocates of indigenous Church principles teach that regardless of the social and economic standards of the national Christians, they should fully take the financial responsibilities of the Church. The pioneering missionary needs from the very beginning of the Church, to socialize the native Christians into funding the salaries and support of all Church workers. They should be responsible for the purchase of property, capital development, and maintenance of buildings and equipment of the Church. The missionary needs to refrain from funding Church activities and paying salaries. The problem with western missionary benevolence is that it creates dependency on the missionary that is not easily broken. In the event that the missionary has to leave the mission field, the work dies because it has been dependent on that particular missionary. The outcome, according to Venn, of “spoon feeding” the national believers produces “rice Christians,” who are unable to stand on their own two feet. By the terms “spoon feeding” and “rice Christians,” he metaphorically meant the relationship a mother has to an infant where the infant is totally dependent on the mother, and in return the infant gives total loyalty to the mother.

The final process of the indigenous Church is self-propagation. From the very beginning of missionary work, evangelism has to be taught as a normal activity and the

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<sup>115</sup> Edward R. Dayton and David A. Faser, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 1990), 187.



responsibility of every Church member. The Church must make every convert a witness.

When the message of the gospel is shared by those from within a culture, it is more readily received and embraced. When a Church witnesses to its own culture in such a way so that it reaches the people of its own culture, then it is in a position of growth.

As important as it is for a Church to reach the stage of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating; of paramount importance will be the Church leadership sensing God's call to go beyond their culture to other cultures. When a "missions receiving Church" becomes a "missions sending Church", the commandment of Jesus to "make disciples of all nations", is accomplished.

When considering the subject of embracing an ancient/future ontology of leadership based on the kingdom of God, there is a classic piece of Christian literature from one of the great fathers of the Church which must be considered. Saint Augustine's *City of God* contrasts two cities of people who are coexisting within the same world and yet are headed in completely different directions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### INITIAL SIGNS OF DEPENDENCE IN THE AFRICA GOSPEL CHURCH

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, providing funds and availing foreign workers to do the work of a native Church creates dependence and establishes paternalistic patterns within the mission founded Church. This in turn leads to an unhealthy, anemic Church. The founding missionary of the Africa Gospel Church, Willis Hotchkiss wanted to see established an African Church, led, supported and financed by Africans. In his lifetime, he worked towards achieving this goal. Yet years after his demise, this vision seems to have been set aside. As the ministry of the Africa Gospel Church expanded, so also did the need for “ready-made” workers. The mission recruited more missionaries from the US. These missionaries come funded to do the work at the expense of training national workers to carry out the work. The national Church was soon relegated to the sidelines to watch as the missionaries worked. This soon led to a state of dependence. The purpose of this chapter is to trace and highlight some of the issues which contributed towards this initial dependence.

#### Willis Hotchkiss: Origin and Development of Africa Gospel Church

The beginning of Africa Gospel Church can rightly be traced to Willis Hotchkiss. He accepted the call to become a missionary in rural Kenya with World Gospel Mission in pursuit of the WGM’s vision, “to make Christ known to all people and proclaim the message of scriptural holiness to the ends of the earth”.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> MinistryWatch.Com, “Origin of Africa Gospel Church,” [http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/F\\_SumRpt.asp?EIN=350911947](http://www.ministrywatch.com/mw2.1/F_SumRpt.asp?EIN=350911947); (accessed January 18, 2008).

He stated his personal desire about the work saying that, Africa must be won by the Africans, hence to train native evangelists and place them in outstations under missionary supervision, seems to be the best course to pursue, in view of the inadequacy of the force of missionaries, and the insufficiency of funds. In this way we conserve our force and accomplish by far the greater good in the least possible time, and that too, with greater prospect of permanency.<sup>117</sup>

His vision was to plant an indigenous Kenyan Church, staffed with trained local Kenyans, empowered to do the work. “The indigenous principle suggests that the goal of the missionary movement is to bring the Church in the lands where missionaries serve to the place where it is “self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.”<sup>118</sup> Hotchkiss emphasized the importance of “teaching the native Christians from the very beginning to assume responsibility for the propagation of the faith amongst their own people.”<sup>119</sup>

Hotchkiss believed in the ideal of education and training the whole person – body, mind and spirit. He succeeded in establishing evangelistic, educational, medical and industrial training centers specially set up to train the nationals. “Hotchkiss based the rightness of the industrial facet on the example of the Apostle Paul who supported himself and those with him by tent-making”.<sup>120</sup> Hotchkiss was highly successful in the training and development of indigenous leadership. Many of those he trained he deployed

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<sup>117</sup> Burnette C. and Gerald W. Fish, *The Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and The Africa Gospel Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: General Printers Ltd. 1989). 25.

<sup>118</sup> T. Stanley Soltau, *Missions at the Crossroads* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1954), 20.

<sup>119</sup> Willis R. Hotchkiss, *Then and Now In Kenya Colony* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, MCMXXXVII), 95.

<sup>120</sup> Burnette C. and Gerald W. Fish, *The Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and The Africa Gospel Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: General Printers Ltd. 1989). 26.

into the community. Many were involved in community affairs and were even engaged by the colonial administration in community governance. Hotchkiss' ultimate goal was to see an indigenous, autonomous Kenyan Church take root. He asked his superiors, "Ought we not to aim at something more...namely the creation of a self-supporting, self-propagating native Church?"<sup>121</sup> It is clear that he wanted to bring the native Church to a place where it would take responsibility to participate in the mission of the Church of God by being an indigenous self-reliant Church in Kenya.

He began work among the rural people of Kericho, located south of the Rift Valley of Kenya. He recruited other missionaries from his home country to assist him in this great task. And although the work was hard, Hotchkiss did not give up. He put his words in practice by traversing the whole length and breadth of the district, starting Churches, opening schools, health centers, theological institutions and technical schools, thus laying the foundation for what is today the Africa Gospel Church. As Greg Lewis says, "Hotchkiss ...poured out his life for the Kipsigis people, preaching and teaching among them for over thirty years."<sup>122</sup>

The Church experienced tremendous growth both in membership and new Churches planted. Through the education system he had set up, many gained formal education and also found Christ in the course of their education. As ones got employed in government offices and moved out of the villages, they spread the message of the Bible and many more were added to their numbers. Others moved into the big towns in search of either higher education or better paying jobs, and as they went they also spread the

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<sup>121</sup> Willis R. Hotchkiss, *Sketches from the Dark Continent* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Friends Bible Institute and Training School, 1901), 147-148.

<sup>122</sup> Lewis Gregg, *Miracle at Tenwek: The Life of Dr. Ernie Steury* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 2007), 50.

message of salvation. Because of this migration into the towns, Africa Gospel Churches were born in many of the major towns of Kenya.

Meanwhile on the political front in Kenya, there was a rising tide of nationalism. Many African nations were on the verge of getting rid of the yoke of colonialism and gaining independence. There was a wind of change blowing throughout Africa. The same was evident in Kenya. In some countries, the wind of change would bring independence but at a very high cost for missions. Missions were particularly targeted and missionaries looked upon with grave suspicion by the nationalists because of the supposed links with the colonial government. In many cases, the mission played a major role both in promoting and inhibiting social and political change and in the process was viewed as conspiring with the colonial government. Thus mission centers and missionaries were targeted.

The nationalists saw the colonialists and the missionaries as one and the same. This view is expressed in the often quoted saying of Africans, “When the missionaries arrived, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, ‘Let us pray’, and when we opened our eyes we had the Bible and they had the land.” Because of this reason, many Africans viewed both groups as colonizers. One was a political colonizer and the other a spiritual colonizer. While the political colonialists took land, the missionaries, on the other hand, “took primitive African souls” by converting them to their faith.

A leading Kenyan nationalist and first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, says of missionaries at the time, “they set out to uproot the African body and soul from his old customs and beliefs and put him in a class by himself, with all his tribal traditions

shattered and his institutions trampled upon.”<sup>123</sup> Africans were forced to change their manner of dress in order to identify with the white man. The Africans were compelled to change their names in order to be accepted into the white man’s religion. They were forced to enroll in mission schools and were taught to understand and speak a language that was not their own. As Dennis Wepman observes,

The missionaries were happy to find an intelligent native who was interested in learning the ways of the whites. They took him in gladly as a resident student. Their purpose in Africa was to “civilize” the natives by teaching them how to live and think like the English.<sup>124</sup>

Some of the people chosen by the colonial government to receive education were people whom the community did not approve. This led to the community resenting those who had received education from the settlers.<sup>125</sup> Because of these things, the people were determined to end British rule. They coined the term Mau Mau (**Mzungu Arudi Ulaya Mwafrika Apate Uhuru**): the white man must return to Europe and the African must get independence.

Parallel to the political development in Kenya was the emergence of an active African indigenous Church. Starting in the 1960s, the Churches in Africa were seeking freedom from missionary control. According to Adrian Hastings, foreign missionaries became essentially redundant during the 1970s.<sup>126</sup> These events put added pressure on

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<sup>123</sup> Dennis Wepman, *World Leaders Past and Present: Jomo Kenyatta* (London, UK: Burke Publishing Limited., 1985), 19.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>125</sup> Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1962), 154.

<sup>126</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 224.

mission organizations throughout Africa to decide to hand over mission founded Churches to national Christians.

In the case of World Gospel Mission,

The transfer of power came as a result of soul searching, grappling and answering questions such as: Should the World Gospel Mission stay on in Kenya? Was the mission needed any longer? How could the mission best transfer to the Church the responsibilities which were rightly hers? Should all of the WGM work be transferred?<sup>127</sup>

A decision was reached to transfer World Gospel Mission work over to the new leadership of the Africa Gospel Church. A list of properties owned by the mission was prepared and most of it was formerly handed over to the new national Church. At this time also, the Kenyan government officially recognized the Africa gospel Church pastors and allowed them to legally perform marriages as legal representatives of both the Church and state. This was indeed a milestone in the life of the mission and in line with the desire of Hotchkiss that the local people assume responsibility for the affairs of their fellow citizens.

#### Transition

The transition from missionary leadership to national leadership was not an easy transition. Here were two organizations that had existed in a master -servant relationship but now the roles were reversing. It was a very confusing time for the partners. Some missionaries continued to play the same roles they played unsure of how to act in the situation.

I have alluded to the fact that the mission did not turn everything over to the national Church. Most of the missionaries lived on 'the mission stations.' These stations, they had built from the ground up. The mission station was home. Their lives revolved

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<sup>127</sup> Dean Strong, "Shauring' wong," *Call to Prayer*. LIV, No.4, (September 1972): 8.

around them. Yet they were to hand over the mission station to the Church to be used as the denominational headquarters. At that time, handing over was done only on paper, yet the missionaries continued living, working and training from the mission station/house and sidelined National leaders.

Two equal powers were present at mission/Church headquarters and things did not go well. Roland Allen in his book, *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours*, writes that

The idea of building mission stations represents a foreign power. When a Church is founded, it creates a situation where two centers of power come into existence. In a situation of this nature undue competition will arise and is not healthy for the national Church.<sup>128</sup>

It is clear that national leadership was undermined. Although independent, the Church did not have adequate staff, facilities or money to carry out its programs. The missionaries continued to do their work without consulting the national leaders. I want to suggest that because the Hotchkiss vision was not fully implemented, the national Church was not fully equipped and hence lacked the capacity to assume full responsibility for the affairs of the Church.

When we look at the vision that Willis Hotchkiss had for national workers, we discover that he emphasized the need to train natives and place them in places of leadership in outstations in order that they would assist in doing the work of ministry. Along the way this seems to have been lost. Over forty years after Hotchkiss started the work in Kenya, the mission had failed in training enough national workers to take over the enormous responsibility of running the Church and its various departments. The failure of the national Church to quickly move the Church to the next level lies squarely

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<sup>128</sup> Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1962), 154.



at the feet of the mission. It was their primary duty to mentor and create skills in the nationals and prepare them to succeed in the work. Administratively therefore, many of the key departments remained in the hands of missionaries. Fish and Fish report that “when the executive-finance committee met...it recommended that certain committees continue without African representation. Those were: the executive-finance committee, Evangelism, Women’s work, Vacation Bible School, Sunday School, etc.”<sup>129</sup>

### **Leadership Development**

If we look back to the life of Willis Hotchkiss, we see clearly that he was committed to training local leaders. This is seen from the schools that he built and the men that he trained and sent out to plant Churches. It seems to me that after Hotchkiss was long gone, the mission changed course and invested less and less time and resources in training local leaders. Instead of more nationals recruited and trained more missionaries were recruited and given leadership positions in the Church.

Expansion of the Church in every country depends on solid Christian training of national leaders. If national Church leaders are not trained in leadership, growth of the national Church is curtailed. By virtue of their calling, missionaries are charged to focus their leadership on passing on what they have learnt to others, so that they too pursue the same goal that Christ pursued: that of helping his followers to become all that they could become under God. Jesus said, “I have come that you may have life – life in all its fullness” (John 10:10). To have life in its fullest is only achieved when mature leaders invest their time and their resources in the development of indigenous people who would interpret the Christian faith to their own people with a true sense of belonging.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 89.

Paul the Apostle is a good example. He was sent out from the Church at Antioch with the gospel to the population centers of the ancient world. Paul's ministry focus was threefold: To share the gospel, to make disciples and to establish local indigenous Churches. These Churches would be self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating, indigenous bases for continued propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire region where they were located. In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul reveals the passion of his heart as he speaks to Timothy: "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

Paul was concerned that disciples be trained who would carry on the work within their own local Churches that were established. Timothy, Titus, Apollos, Aquilla and Priscilla were examples of those who were nurtured, trained and instructed in planting of Churches directly or indirectly through the ministry of Paul.

Johana Ngetich, Zephaniah A. Maina and Dishon A. Kisembe were leaders trained and put to work by Hotchkiss, becoming the first three national pastors ordained by the mission. This indeed was in fulfillment of his vision of trained national leadership taking charge of the Church. These men were sent to far off places to establish new congregations.<sup>130</sup> These men had a true desire to see the growth of the Church and were willing to pay the price in hard work. They organized Churches, set goals, developed plans and mobilized the people to work and grow the Church. They were creative, innovative and assertive in regard to the vision and mission God had for His work.

The unfortunate thing however, is that in subsequent years fewer people were trained and fewer deployed to start Churches. Those that the missionaries trained instead

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<sup>130</sup> Burnette C. and Gerald W. Fish, *The Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and The Africa Gospel Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: General Printers Ltd. 1989), 47.

ended up either working as teachers in Church sponsored schools or took up well-paying jobs in the government. The work of Church planting slowed down or was simply not done. With fewer national leaders, the demand for missionaries increased.

When the transition happened, Rev. Dishon Kitembe was the Moderator of the Africa Gospel Church. This was in 1961. He had replaced Rev. Johanna Ngetich who headed the Church prior to registration of the Church. Rev. Kitembe was a dynamic and charismatic leader. Unlike the leaders who followed him who feared missionaries, Rev. Kitembe was fearless. It is said that he was a man who spoke his mind and who confronted injustice whenever he saw it.

Having been trained under Hotchkiss, he expressed concern over the delay in handing full leadership to national leaders. He spoke about the unhealthy relationship that had emerged between the mission and the Church. He spoke about the need to train more Africans for the evangelism of their own people. According to Rev. Samuel Rotich, Kitembe reaffirmed the principle that the primary agent of mission work in Kenya was the indigenous Church. He further demanded the mission share with the African Church responsibilities and powers with respect to work and finances. He expressed concern about the disparity in the life styles lived on the mission station between the missionary and the local person.<sup>131</sup>

As Fish and Fish report, “along with other concerns of the Moderator, Rev. Dishon Kitembe, was the question of ownership of plots of land and buildings. ‘Should these not be turned over to the Church?’”<sup>132</sup> Rev. Hollis Abbot, field director representing

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<sup>131</sup> Samuel Rotich, Interview by author, Nairobi: Kenya, November 15, 2010.

<sup>132</sup> Burnette C. and Gerald W. Fish, *The Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and The Africa Gospel Church in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: General Printers Ltd. 1989), 190.

the homeland office spoke on behalf of the WGM dismissing the notion of transferring the property to the Church. Rev. Kesembe appealed his case to both mission headquarters in the US and to two local members of parliament. This did not please the mission. Action was taken against the Moderator and as Fish and Fish reports, “the difference of opinion between Rev. Kisembe and the mission led to the Church relieving the Moderator of his position and credentials.”<sup>133</sup> He later formed his own Church in 1964.

This dismissal engineered by the mission was most unfortunate. What was needed in this situation was for the mission and the national Church to listen to one another in a relationship of equals. The mission would have done well to respect the independence, autonomy and separate identity the Church was taking and allow it to discuss its affairs without due interference on the part of the mission.

A lesson that WGM would do well to learn from is the partnership between the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Kenya. This Church grew out of the pioneering missionary zeal of the Church of Scotland in 1891. For many years it depended on financial and personnel assistance from Scotland. In 1956 the Church became autonomous from the Church of Scotland. It however maintained relationships with other Presbyterian Churches in the west. In the early 1970s although the Church still desired positive relations with the mother Church, decided that it was time to become self-reliant. The Church decided, planned and carried out in the Church a program of self-reliance. The mother organization allowed them room, fully supported

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 190.

and did not interfere with what the Church had decided.<sup>134</sup> Today the Church stands as a symbol of a Church born out of a partnership of a visionary national leadership and a mission that understood and respected the need of the national Church to decide its own future.

In the case of the World Gospel Mission, beyond the question of being the mother organization, whatever its experience or qualification, the mission should have realized that what was best for the Church must be arrived at locally. The mission failed to take into account the intellectual and spiritual ability of the local leaders and their desire to express their selfhood despite the ‘wisdom’ missionaries might bring to the table.

### **Dependency**

God has created the human race in such a way that the race depends on each other in order to live. Human beings are designed to live in relationship. The very survival of the race is interdependence on others. As it has been said, “No one is an island.” This means that we all need each other. However, the extent to which we depend on others can make or break us. Ultimately, any kind of dependence that leaves a person completely at the mercy of another is dangerous and unhealthy. As Abide says, “Dependency is injurious; it encourages laziness and indolence, and makes the recipient dependent indebted to the donor”.<sup>135</sup>

In missions, dependency is an issue that is widely recognized. Dependency has been defined as the “state of relying on someone or something. To be dependent is, first

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<sup>134</sup> Glenn Schwartz, “From Dependence to Fulfillment,” The World Mission Associates, <http://www.wmausa.org/page.aspx?id=98600> (accessed November 5, 2010).

<sup>135</sup> Sabella Ogbobode Abide, “Do African Countries Need Foreign Aid? Economic Aid, HIV/AIDS, and Nigerian Churches,” <http://www.nigeriansinamerica.com/articles.php?articleId=225> (accessed August 15, 2009).

and foremost, to be reliant on another.”<sup>136</sup> Schwartz suggests that “dependency relates to Churches that could stand on their own but for one reason or another have chosen to let someone else support them.”<sup>137</sup>

Dependence can therefore be said to be “a state where Christians as individuals or as a congregation have allowed themselves to become reliant on another outside group or individual for financial and material means and, sometimes, administrative guidance, and are not, therefore, functioning in an indigenous manner...”<sup>138</sup> Dependency can become so addictive that being weaned of it can result in death of the Church.

According to Daniel Rickett, however, dependency can either be healthy or unhealthy. In healthy dependency, he says “each [partner] maintains independence and capacity to instruct, correct and refuse the other...it is important in a partnership to not only give but to receive, to not only teach but to learn.”<sup>139</sup> We often call this interdependency. About unhealthy dependence he says,

Unhealthy dependency occurs when reciprocity and responsibility are ignored, overruled, or undervalued. If the accent is on the exchange of money or personnel and not on the complementary contributions each partner makes, the importance of reciprocity is easily overlooked. If resources are shared more for the benefit of one partner than for the purpose of ministering more effectively to others, the receiving partner’s responsibility is effectively sidelined.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Daniel Rickett, “Dependency in Mission Partnership,” <http://www.partnersinternational.ca/vision/dependence.htm> (accessed March 2, 2010).

<sup>137</sup> Glenn J. Schwartz, “Questions Raised by Missionaries and Mission Leaders in East Africa,” <http://www.wmausa.org/page.aspx?id=83544> (accessed February 10, 2009).

<sup>138</sup> Glenn M. Penner, “Dependency: When Good Intentions Aren’t Enough,” <http://www.farmsinternational.com/pdf/dependency.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2010).

<sup>139</sup> Ronnie Hahne and Wouter Rijneveld, “Literature Study on Dependency,” <http://knol.google.com/k/dependency-in-missions#> (accessed November 19, 2009).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 6.

Rickett's definition of "healthy dependency" carries the meaning of mutual respect between partners with clearly defined boundaries. It is healthy in that the call for self-reliance does not necessarily mean independence from the other. It means that the person is fully responsible and accountable for his or her existence as a good steward. Any other influence or dependence is subjected to scrutiny so that it liberates, empowers and equips the person to be more productive and fruitful as opposed to enslaving through unhealthy dependency.

Some Churches and mission agencies in the new world find themselves trapped in unhealthy dependency. These Churches have concluded that they are too poor to support their own Churches, and they wait for outside help to pay salaries, purchase land and buildings. On the other hand, the mission agency does not teach the local Church to take care of their own affairs, but instead encourages the Church to look up to it for sustenance. Penner writes, "busy national leaders, seeing the eagerness of westerners to help and the vast amount of money available, conclude that it is easier to raise money from overseas than locally."<sup>141</sup> Others, like World Gospel Mission in Kenya, enter in some form of agreement/partnership with the local Church, money is supplied by the mission, and the nationals do the work. According to Donald Smith, when "fundamental decision-making is implicitly the prerogative of the donor not the recipient,"<sup>142</sup> then the local program or the Church is set up to fail. As Norm Howell says, "Help them to be indigenous and they will grow."<sup>143</sup> Craig Ott states,

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<sup>141</sup> Glenn M. Penner, Dependency, "When Good Intentions Aren't Enough," <http://www.farmsinternational.com/pdf/dependency.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2010).

<sup>142</sup> Donald Smith, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 269-270.

History is replete with sad stories of resentment created when developing Churches became dependent on Western funding. Programs are developed and workers are hired on the basis of outside subsidies and the national Churches come to expect and count on them. When the sending Churches seek to reduce the subsidies, or when the national believers spend or hire in ways disagreeable to the supporting Churches, hard feelings and misunderstanding normally result.<sup>144</sup>

Roland Allen argues that the Apostle Paul never took financial support to the Churches that he helped start. Paul persuasively spoke against such a practice.<sup>145</sup>

In the end, these Churches become enslaved and become victims of hopelessness and desperation. Unhealthy dependency unfortunately starts slowly and innocently and before the victims realizes it; they are overtaken by it and cannot easily extricate themselves from its control. The African continent is the hardest hit by this epidemic.

There is no doubt that the Africa Gospel Church in general and the missionaries in particular have played a role towards the enslavement of unhealthy dependency. This explains why many of the Churches struggle to survive on their own. They must rely on foreign aid and foreign personnel to run their affairs.

### Conclusion

Evidence points to the fact that it is possible for the missionaries to do mission work without causing dependency. This dependent syndrome can however be eliminated where it already exists. Glenn Schwartz says that to eliminate this dependency, there is a price to be paid and includes the following: (1) generous dose of humility and cultural

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<sup>143</sup> Norm Howell, "How to Develop a Healthy Partnership," <http://images.acswebnetworks.com/2015/51/HowtoDevelopaHealthyPartnership2006FallHeartline.pdf> (accessed January 18, 2008).

<sup>144</sup> Craig Ott, "Supporting National Pastors – Let the Buyer Beware," <http://www.ugandamission.net/ministry/money/supportnationalpastors.pdf> (accessed April 17, 2010).

<sup>145</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or ours?* (London, UK: World Dominion, 1927), 73-8.



sensitivity, (2) serious time of reflection on how to get out of the current state of dependency in which congregations find themselves, and (3) serious hard work over a longer rather than shorter period.<sup>146</sup>

Glenn Schwartz adds,

There is one thing about which I am convinced. I do not believe that serious dependent Churches are healthy, happy or honouring to the Lord. Whatever can be done to avoid or lift the burden will be a merciful thing for all who are involved.<sup>147</sup>

He further challenges the Church thus:

Remember the Macedonian Church which the Apostle Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:3. Of these people Paul wrote "...out of severe trial and extreme poverty they pleaded for the privilege of giving" He concludes by saying that "without spiritual renewal, Churches will not overcome the dependency syndrome."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Glenn J. Schwartz, "Avoiding or Overcoming Dependency in Cross-Cultural Church Planting," [www.wmausa.org](http://www.wmausa.org) (accessed November 4, 2009).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>148</sup> Glenn J. Schwartz, "Avoiding or Overcoming Dependency in Cross-Cultural Church Planting," [www.wmausa.org](http://www.wmausa.org) (accessed November 4, 2009).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **TRAINING IN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Hotchkiss and a few other missionaries taught and worked towards achieving the goal of an African Church, led by Africans, supported by Africans and financed by Africans. This we have seen in the previous chapter. However, many years after the demise of Hotchkiss, this vision seems to have been set aside. Dependency on outside funds remains a major challenge to the Africa Gospel Church. This remains one of the most difficult problem facing the Church to this day. Change from dependency to self-support could probably take a long period of time, but it is possible. Again, not all efforts to move from dependence to self-supporting are successful and encouraging. It sometimes seems like the Churches will never become self supporting as the Church heavily relies on foreign funding. Such dependence makes one fear for the future of the Church to the point of asking, how long will our Churches continue to be on the receiving end? Don't the scriptures say that there is more happiness in giving than in receiving? Then why is the Church in Africa comfortable with only receiving?

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight how the lack of teachings on how to manage finances and the sole control of finances by the mission agencies has contributed to this unhealthy dependency on foreign funds.

#### **Teaching**

It seems to me that there is a major disconnect between what members of the Church earn, their action in their community and their giving to the Church. They give very little and yet earn a lot. This disparity does not enhance the work of the Church

instead the ministry of the Church suffers and remains stagnated. To that end, the major challenge facing the Church is financial. I do not believe that the problem is giving but rather I see the problem as the lack of teaching on finances and the financial responsibility of the local members to the Church as the biggest drawback and hindrance to the indigenization process of the Church.

In the early years of missionary work, the missionaries endeavoured to train nationals in all other areas except on how to give and support the work of the Church. The missionaries wrongly perceived that the local people did not have and hence resisted burdening them with financial responsibilities over the Church. As already stated elsewhere in the previous chapter, the local people were given responsibilities in the Church only as determined by the missionary and only in certain areas. The local people soon learnt what they could be allowed to do and what they were not allowed to do by the missionary. Work in the Church was regarded as belonging to the 'white man' and nationals only came in to help him accomplish his goal.

In the early days of missionary work, the local population did not use "money" as we know it today for trade. Business was transacted mainly through barter trade. Money was not easily accessed by the local people. And so the unspoken reason why people did not give was lack of money. Lack of money however should not have defined the local people. Downes and Awuku says,

Statistically speaking, Africa is not rich monetarily in comparison to Western nations....But does the fact that one is not as rich as his neighbour entitle the poorer person to forego giving at all?....If the widow in Mark 12 would have compared her mite with the great amounts of money given by others, she might

have decided to leave the giving to those who had more and depend on them instead of giving her part.<sup>149</sup>

The widow understood that she had a part to play in the advancement of the kingdom of God no matter how little her part was. She understood that God would honour her part in the building of the kingdom. Her understanding came through education. Throughout in the Bible, it teaches the value of tithing and giving to the work of God. The Jews understood this teaching very well and religiously they not only subscribed to this teaching but followed it to the letter. She gave all that she had.

Some of the nationals may have had little in terms of monetary wealth, but they were rich in agricultural produce, livestock, or raw materials. This is where the emphasis should have been. A person in traditional Kenyan culture was considered rich in terms of the livestock that he owned, and the tracts of land that belonged to him. On this basis, they should have been taught. A leading Kenyan Christian writer Bedan Mbugua says,

It is true that some missionaries implied that the only gift God appreciated was cash, not for example, produce from the farm such as grains, fruits and animals. Consequently, Africans who had no cash could not participate in giving. Gradually African believers became mere spectators.<sup>150</sup>

Fred Kawuma has noted that

...Africa is predominately a non-monetary economy. It is possible that missionaries saw Africans as poor, because they did not have "money" and thus could not support the work of the Lord. As a result of this, people have borne the mentality that they are poor because they do not have hard cash and cannot support the Lord's work. This is a bad mentality because although they may not have "cash" they do have wealth in forms other than money.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Donna R. Downes, *Raising Funds in Kenya: A Survey of Middle to Upper Income Nairobi Churchgoers* (Nairobi, Kenya: Daystar University College, 1991), 59.

<sup>150</sup> Bedan Mbugua, "Stewardship: Only Coins for the Master?" *Beyond*, (1985): 5.

<sup>151</sup> Fredrick Kawuma, "What the Church Needs to Know About Giving," Paper Written for Communication Course, Taught at Daystar University College, (June 1987): 3.

This trend seems to have been followed by missionaries unknowingly encouraging monetary giving and discouraging any other form of giving. This led to the national Church feeling that it did not have much to offer monetarily and so grew up with the mentality that since they could not give in that way they did not have anything to contribute to the Church and sooner than later dependence mentality that giving monetarily is the work of missionaries grew.

This unhealthy dependency mentality seems to have seeped into the minds of the national Church leaders to the point that giving is a very hard practice in the Church. It therefore goes that when as the missionary society reduces its giving to the Church, the Church is immobilized and cannot continue operating without missionary financial support. The author had firsthand experience of this when he was appointed as the first national pastor of Good Shepherd Church. Immediately after the missionary handover, the Church began struggling. And as mentioned elsewhere in this paper deliberate efforts were made to turn things around. Leopold Fouler explains the struggle other Churches use in raising funds. He says,

The Church is using ...inadequate, unworthy and ineffective motives of appeal on the following pretexts; that missionary societies are withdrawing their support, that since they are withdrawing their support, there would be a cut in pastors' salaries, that schools abdicated by missionaries would close if the people do not give, that self support would be maintained if the people learn to support their own work; that people would govern themselves if they support their work...In view of this the financial crisis of the Church is not solved because the motives are alien to the life of the Church and its *raison d'être*.<sup>152</sup>

Mbugua further observes that,

When the giving of Church members is poor, the affected Church is gradually pushed into despair. It follows that she will welcome funds from any source. When congregations see no hope of improving their financial position through

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<sup>152</sup> Leopold Foullah, "The Biblical Motivation and Methodology for Giving and Fundraising," *Evangelical Ministries*, January-April, (1987): 22.

normal giving or pledged income, they turn to schemes and gimmicks to try to bring in a little money.<sup>153</sup>

It needs to be understood however, that the missionary on the field remains part of the problem of dependency. As much as the attempt is made to cut back on mission giving to the national Church, the impression that the local people have of the missionary is that of the “benevolent white man” who comes into their lives with loads of money to bail them out of their financial misery, an image, which the mission does not seem to dispel. When one local leader was asked why they cannot fund their own Church activities, his response was, “we know that in the end the mission will come to our aid.”

Discussions have gone on for a long time between the mission and the Africa Gospel Church on the need to turn the “whole work,” to national leadership. Both the national and missions’ leadership have been committed to establishing a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating Church but procrastination on the part of the two groups makes this transition impossible. The fear is that the Church that they have nurtured to this point will collapse if mission funds are stopped. As Swartz says, “Sometimes...missionaries are reluctant to see the outside support stopped because the projects they started might be closed down or fail to operate”.<sup>154</sup> Deep inside there is not much willingness to change that romanticized image of the missionary nor is there attempts by the sending mission to change it.

Writing on how control of finances by mission agencies has contributed to dependency syndrome, Verkuyl pointed out that “Financial assistance too often goes

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<sup>153</sup> Bedan Mbugua, “Stewardship: Only Coins for the Master?” *Beyond*, August, (1985): 4.

<sup>154</sup> Glenn Schwartz, “Dependency,” <http://global-connect-asia.net/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=5586&mode=v&pagenum=3&lang> ( accessed March 8, 2010).

hand in hand with power. The danger is more than illusory that mission agencies could either wholly or – more frequently – in part become the managers of the full time workers in the native Churches and be tempted to manipulate these Churches.”<sup>155</sup>

Reverend Jeremiah Prescod shared his concern on dependency in an article entitled “*Hooked on foreign money*” he says,

God used our brethren in the north to bring the gospel to us. They gave both themselves and their money to us generously, and they have continued to give money, so much that we in the third world just sit back and wait for money to come from America for our programmes. We have not developed the ability, ourselves, to minister in a material way to spread the gospel. The consequence is that the west continues to get the blessing that the Bible attaches to generous giving and we do not.<sup>156</sup>

If a good portion of funds for the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya continues to come from the west, our Church will not have an independent identity and to some extent it will continue to be controlled by the mission and the national Church will not be able to determine its own destiny.

On the other hand, missionaries can support the Church financially as they are able to but without any conditions. Unfortunately as Allen Finley and Lorry Lutz observe; “Where the American dollar is, there he [the American] must be in person. If he is not there, his dollar [is not there either].”<sup>157</sup> In his article “*Dependency in Mission Partnership*,” Daniel Rickett says, “Money is one form of power, when one ministry relies solely on another for financial support, the balance of power leans heavily toward

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<sup>155</sup> J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978) 323.

<sup>156</sup> Jeremiah Prescod, “Hooked on Foreign Money,” *Beyond*, 08 (1985): 28.

<sup>157</sup> Allen Finley and Lorry Lutz, *Mission: A World Family Affair* (San Jose, CA: Christian Nationals Evangelism Communication, 1981), 54.

the funding source. This is a problem because unhealthy dependency thrives on the imbalance of power”.<sup>158</sup> Writing about foreign support of relief and development efforts, Bruijne and Gatimu in an article in *Evangelical Ministries Magazine* say, “the donors control funds and this by implication shapes the relationship between the donors and the recipients. The recipients’ institutions have to accept the donors’ perception of ‘development.’ ...Recipients’ institutions do not participate in the formulation of development models”.<sup>159</sup>

This means that if a Church is dependent upon foreign assistance, it remains subordinate to the donor organization. If a Church has attained autonomy in structure and contextualized in content, then different patterns of ministry emerge because it is freed to do as it pleases without looking over its shoulders. Continued dependence on financial support from the west stifles the desire of the local people to take responsibility for their own Church and therefore, self reliance cannot be achieved.

### **Case Study – Good Shepherd Church, Nairobi**

Financially, the Church had not reached the point of self support. As already stated, “the Church had independence but did not have the money to run the activities of the Church”. Church programmes up to this point were mission-supported. Salaries were minimized because most of the workforce of the Church were missionaries. The mission gladly continued to put money in running the Church. Because of this, the Church

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<sup>158</sup> Daniel Rickett, “Dependency in Mission Partnership,” <http://www.partnersintl.org/pdf/dependency.pdf> ( accessed February 6, 2010).

<sup>159</sup> Otto Bruijne and Gatimu Kiranga, “Foreign Support and Development Efforts,” *Evangelical Ministries*, January-April, (1986): 26.



remained dependent on the mission. This focus on money had a detrimental effect on the growth of Church and the relationship with World Gospel Mission. Norm Howell says,

When we try to help in the wrong way we cause the national Church to be spiritually stunted in their faith? When they start depending on your support instead of trusting God by faith for HIS supply of their needs (Philippians 4:13) then dependency has began. The non-western Church may never have the resources that a western Church has.<sup>160</sup>

Attention was not paid in leading the Church towards the path of dependency.

The Church that the writer pastors is a good example of a Church caught in the cycle of dependency. His involvement in this Church dates back to 1988 when he was appointed an assistant pastor serving under a missionary senior Pastor. The Church is urban and was started in 1974 by World Gospel Mission in partnership with the Africa Gospel Church. For 23 years of its existence, the Church depended on the mission for its existence. The Church did not pay a pastor's salary (he came funded), pay for buildings, utilities, workers or the programmes of the Church. In fact, the land, the buildings that house the Church, Church office, pastor's house and the nursery school were all bought and built with funds raised by the mission.

Whenever there was a financial need, the missionary pastor would call his supporters abroad and the need would be met. If it was a building, he arranged for a work team to come and the building was put up. The national Church stood on the sidelines watching and cheering as the work was done for them. This was most unfortunate and most unhealthy because the Church learned dependency.

In those days, when the missionary pastor went on furlough, another missionary pastor was shipped in from abroad. However in 1992 the writer stepped into the senior

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<sup>160</sup> Norm Howell, "How to Develop a Healthy Partnership," <http://images.acswebnetworks.com/2015/51/HowtoDevelopaHealthyPartnership2006FallHeartline.pdf> (accessed January 18, 2008).

pastor role because a replacement pastor from the mission could not be found after the senior pastor of the Church left for furlough. Realizing the crisis, the writer was asked to fill in for a year until the pastor returned. This arrangement lasted just for one year. In mid 1993 the Church reverted to pastoral missionary leadership until 1997, when the writer returned from studies and was installed as the first senior national pastor of the Church. The reason the missionary pastor came back in 1993 was simply because the Church had not invested in training anybody for urban ministry.

The new phase for Good Shepherd Church was a challenging one. Hitherto, the Church had fully depended on the mission for support. With the missionary pastor gone, all form of support stopped. The local Church was now forced to deal with the reality of paying the new national pastor's salary as well as fully funding all Church programmes. Initially it was tough. The people did not understand where the sudden heavy financial responsibility had come from. The pastor had always been paid and all Church expenses paid.

The local Church council of the Church decided that from January 1998 until end of 1999 they would spend time teaching the congregation about their roles as members of the Church. They got the people to identify their spiritual gifts and encouraged them to use those gifts within the Church. The people got involved in the various ministries of the Church and were getting excited about serving. In the second half of 1999, the leadership taught on stewardship. Ahead of time they announced that at the end of the series of sermons at the end of the second half of the second year of teaching they would require those members, associate members and anybody who identified the Church as their home Church commits to give his or her tithe. That Sunday was the beginning of

transformation for Good Shepherd Church. The one offering for that one Sunday surpassed all the collections the Church had taken the entire six months previously. Good Shepherd Church has never looked backed since. According to the Finance committee report of 1<sup>st</sup> September 1997, “the Church budget was Kenya shillings 1,300,000.”<sup>161</sup> On 6<sup>th</sup> November 1998 the budget was reported by the finance committee to “be Kenya shillings 1,750,000.”<sup>162</sup> 1998 is when the series on giving began. In 1999 the finance committee reported that “the income would rise to Kenya shillings 2,069,500.”<sup>163</sup> This would be at the end of our series of messages on giving. Each urban Church is required to give a tenth of its total income to help with the ministries of the Central office. The tithe given by Good Shepherd Church to the central office continues to be the highest every year.

As Glenn Schwartz says, “everyone involved in situations where dependency exists will need to become aware of how serious the problem is. In fact, some people will need to be convinced that there is even a problem.”<sup>164</sup> Good Shepherd Church worked hard at showing Church members the problem and convincing them to get out of the problem. The Church did get out of the malady. The congregation realized that they had a God-given obligation and privilege to give of their time, talents and tithes so that the Church can grow.

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<sup>161</sup> Minute of the Good Shepherd Church Finance Committee Meeting held on September 1st 1997.

<sup>162</sup> Minute of the Good Shepherd Church Finance Committee Meeting held on November 6th 1998.

<sup>163</sup> Minute of the Good Shepherd Church Finance Committee Meeting held on September 6th 1999.

<sup>164</sup> Glenn J. Schwartz, “Avoiding or Overcoming Dependency in Cross-Cultural Church Planting,” [www.wmausa.org](http://www.wmausa.org) (accessed November 4, 2009).

A lesson that the writer learnt from this experience is this: If the Church as an institution does not teach its members to become self-reliant, the followers are given the wrong impression that their existence and survival depends on the missionaries and the Church will therefore not be involved in any effort towards self-reliance. The consequences, therefore, are that the health of the Church for years to come will be compromised and the Church becomes stagnated and can even die because of dependency.

At the central office level however, the mission continued paying subsidy for the running of the central Church office and its programmes. This is because many Churches have not been able to raise sufficient funds to run both their programmes and those of central office. It seems to me that the Church seemed happy with this arrangement and did not do much to break itself free from missionary support. The mission on the other hand seemed content to have the national Church look up to it for support. As the mission brought more missionaries to fill vacant positions that local people were unable to take up. As the number of missionaries increased, so did the level of financial support to the Church.

To date the assistance from the mission continues. The central Church budget and all local Church budgets are submitted to the mission treasurer to facilitate financial help to both the denomination and the local Churches. Many of the mission stations started by the denomination are highly subsidized by World Gospel Mission. Two of the Church's large project are staffed and funded mainly by money from America. One of the institutions, Tenwek Hospital serves a large population of people who would otherwise not receive medical attention from anywhere else. Government hospitals are far and most

of them lack adequate facilities. It is my hope that someday in the future the Church will be able to subsidize treatment and also train and have national doctors to serve in Tenwek. The Abandoned Baby Centre is the other institution fully supported by the mission.

Financially then, the Church looked to the missionaries to finance the programme of the Church. The mission seemed happy to help out. In fact it was more than happy to meet the financial obligations the national Church. They invested money in Church buildings and paid staff salaries without necessarily evaluating the long term implications of their support. Some of the projects were missionary thought and implemented. No national input was sought. When the missionaries leave, they cannot be sustained and are allowed to die a natural death. As Terry says, “missions should only develop programs and institutions that the national Church desired and could support.”<sup>165</sup>

Without doubt, the founding father of AGC did not want a culture created that would result in dependence on outside help on the part of the Church. Willis Hotchkiss wanted the Africa Gospel Church eventually to be released to national leaders and become “a native Church...which shares the life of the country in which it is planted and finds itself ready to govern itself, support itself, and reproduce itself”.<sup>166</sup>

Whereas it is wrong for a national Church to continuously expect to be helped by the mother missionary organization without making plans to stand on its own two feet, it is equally wrong and selfish for the missionary organization to want the Church to remain dependent on its support. Foreign money does not help the Church in the long run. Self-

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<sup>165</sup> John Mark Terry, *Indigenous Churches*. In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 483-484.

<sup>166</sup> Malvin L. Hodges, *On the Mission Field: The Indigenous Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), 7-8.

support should be the goal of the Church. The Church has to teach its people to become self-supporting. The well-trained and equipped leaders will in turn be able to develop and plant self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating Churches. A Church that has developed to be self-governing will be able to run its own affairs without interference from outside. Financially it will also be stable to move freely spreading the message of the gospel.

### **Partnership**

According to the memorandum of understanding between the World Gospel Mission and Africa Gospel Church, Kenya, the two organizations entered a new era of partnership. My understanding of partnership is that “partners are trusting co-equals, who choose to share complementary strengths and resources to achieve mutual goals”.<sup>167</sup> However, the “partnership” between the Church and the mission leaves a lot to be desired. The missionaries seem to have been caught in a time capsule. They were tempted to hold on to control of power too long. They had exercised too much real power. Relinquishing power proved an uphill task for many of them.

It has been observed in this partnership that when the Church proposes to do certain projects not in line with what the mission wants, the mission vehemently opposes those projects and works towards their downfall or out rightly blocks them from being implemented. But when the mission wants to do projects, it does not request, inform or consult the Church, it simply goes ahead and implements the projects. A good example is the guesthouse started by the mission in Nairobi. In 2002 Good Shepherd Church wanted to start a guesthouse but this was opposed by the mission. However the following year without consultation a guesthouse was started. To add insult to injury, in the same place

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<sup>167</sup> Douglas Marsh, “The Partnership Principle,” *The Royal Rangers Partnership Plan*.

Good Shepherd Church had proposed to open the guesthouse. The guesthouse is running to date.

The most unfortunate thing is that the Church leaders know what the mission is doing but are afraid to confront the mission. They fear the missionaries and will seldom tell them the truth. They will tell the missionaries what they want to hear rather than what they ought to hear. And so the Church drags itself along dissatisfied with the decisions that have been made but seem powerless to change or do anything. This is unhealthy dependency.

Ken Shingledecker a former missionary in Kenya and a person closely associated with WGM says,

We used to discuss the influence of the American missionary and put it in terms of this. If you have a committee of ten people and one American on the committee and the rest are Kenyans, the committee will always decide the way the American thinks.<sup>168</sup>

Glenn Schwartz adds to this and says,

A Church leader from Central Africa once said, 'As long as there is one white missionary present in the meeting, we will vote the way he wants us to vote, even if he doesn't say anything. We will watch his eyes and we will know how we are supposed to vote.'<sup>169</sup>

Missionaries in the Africa Gospel Church need to avoid undue influence in the decision making process of the Church. I agree with Ken Shingledecker when he says, "that there is a need for some of the missionaries to pull back out of decision-making positions and

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<sup>168</sup> Kenneth Shingledecker, interview by Robert Shuster, March 6, 1985, BGC Archives, <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/297.htm> ( accessed February 26, 2010).

<sup>169</sup> Glenn J. Schwartz, "Avoiding or Overcoming Dependency in Cross-Cultural Church Planting," [www.wmausa.org](http://www.wmausa.org) (accessed November 4, 2009). Schwartz, 1998b.

decision-making roles and let the Church call some of its own shots”.<sup>170</sup> But for that to happen, the burden is really on the mission to actively remove real and potential causes of undue influence.

Perhaps the greatest indicator of healthy relationships between mission organizations and the Church is the independence to make decisions. At the end of the day, control over the decision-making process determines who really is in charge. Whoever sets the goals and agenda of the ministry is in charge.

### Conclusion

Discussions have gone on for a long time between the mission and the Africa Gospel Church on the need to turn the “whole work,” to national leadership. Both the national and missions’ leadership have engaged each other on the need of establishing a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating Church but procrastination on the part of the two groups makes this transition difficult.

The time has come for Africa Gospel Church to seriously take hold of its God-given mandate to evangelize Kenya. John Gatu says,

The time has come for the withdrawal of the foreign missionaries from many parts of the Third World, that the Churches of the Third World be allowed to find their own identity and that the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this selfhood of the Church<sup>171</sup>.

He goes on to say;

We in the Third World must liberate ourselves from the bondage of Western dependency by refusing anything that renders impotent the development of our

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<sup>170</sup> Kenneth Shingledecker, interview by Robert Shuster, March 6, 1985, BGC Archives, <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/297.htm>; ( accessed February 26, 2010).

<sup>171</sup> Sundkler. B and Steed C, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1027.



spiritual sources, which, in turn makes it impossible for the Church in the Third World to engage in the mission of God in their own areas.<sup>172</sup>

The Church must teach its members to know the importance of giving. Both tithing and giving are God ordained methods of supporting the ministry of the local Church. The Church should never use the excuse of poverty for not supporting Church ministry. The Church in Macedonia was poor yet we are told that out of their poverty they asked for the privilege of being allowed to give out of their deep poverty (2 Corinthians 8:3-4). John Mbiti rightly concludes when he says, ‘The missionaries Christianized Africa; now it’s time for the African to Africanize Christianity.’<sup>173</sup> I believe it is high time the leaders of AGC took teaching the truth of Biblical giving seriously so that nationals are equipping nationals.

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<sup>172</sup> Bigambo M, *From Dependence to Selfhood: A Challenge for African Christianity*, M.A Dissertation, (University of Nairobi, 2001), 28.

<sup>173</sup> Herbert Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission: A Panoramic View of Mission from Pentecost to Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 144.

## Chapter 6

### A BIBLICAL MODEL OF SELF-GOVERNMENT, SELF-SUPPORTING, AND SELF-PROPAGATING

Most of the leaders in the Africa Gospel Church and World Gospel Mission agree that the church by its very nature should be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. They would also agree in principle that the most effective indigenous church is that which is independent of missionary control and financially dependent rather than dependent on support from a foreign mission organization. Unfortunately that is where the agreement seems to end. There are both nationals as well as missionaries still strongly believe that the mission should help sustain the church by providing financial and personnel assistance to Africa Gospel Church. These same people further believe that the local leadership of the church should be allowed oversight of both the funds and staff members. However, the indigenous church should be given space to run its own affairs and determine the destiny of the church so that the church becomes self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

“The church in Antioch is the biblical example of an autonomous church in which they sent...Paul and Barnabas and later the two teams of Paul and Silas and Barnabas with Mark”<sup>174</sup> and sustained these men by providing financial as well as other forms of care independent from the main church in Jerusalem. Paul and others continued with this trend of empowering the new local churches they started to stand on their own. Evidence of churches that became self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating can be found throughout the New Testament. The purpose of this chapter is to examine Paul’s

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<sup>174</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger than You Think* (London, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publication, 1998), 185.

ministry model of self-government, self-supporting and self-propagating churches in the New Testament.

Paul was a missionary to the Gentiles, a pioneer church planter and a disciple of Christ set apart for the gospel.<sup>175</sup> We will look at his methods of starting and establishing churches in the first century. The focus will be a look at his development of a self-governing Ephesians church, a self-supporting Corinthian church, and finally a self-propagating church at Antioch.

### **The church of Ephesus – a model of self-governing**

Ephesus was the capital city in the Roman province of Asia Minor. It was an important city - politically, commercially and religiously. The earliest reference to the coming of Christianity at Ephesus was in A.D. 52, when the apostle Paul made a short visit and left Aquila and Pricilla in the city (Acts 18:18-21).

### **Organization and leadership**

As the most important capital city in Asian Minor, Ephesus was of strategic importance. “The book of Acts records three missionary journeys that took Paul throughout the Roman Empire in one of the greatest evangelistic endeavours in church history...Paul first ministered in Ephesus but did not remain there”<sup>176</sup> (Acts 18:19-21). Paul returned later and stayed for at least two years (Acts 19:8, 10) evangelizing and establishing a strong church. These believers met in the homes of people. Paul alongside these people carried out the work of missions. Karen Hinckley observes that, “Paul and his team spent two and a half years in Ephesus making converts and training leaders to

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<sup>175</sup>. Martin K. Bussey, *The Message of Romans: A Commentary for Today's Church* (London, U.K.: Grace Baptist Mission, 2001), 6.

<sup>176</sup>. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Rich*. (London, England: Scripture Press, 1976), 16.

take responsibility once the mission team left.”<sup>177</sup> It appears that the need for a strong organization of the Ephesians church was one of the apostle’s primary concerns during his stay in the city. Paul was concerned that the people wouldn’t look to him for ultimate leadership of the church. He therefore, appointed local elders to oversee the work that he had started (Acts 20:28).

This and other churches Paul founded did not necessarily have a structure in the strict sense of the word. It seems that Paul’s first converts were probably Jews and Gentiles who had chosen to convert to Christianity. The Jews had been members of the Jewish synagogues and were familiar with the way synagogues operated. In setting up the structures for their house churches, they borrowed heavily from the organization structure of the synagogue and used that system to set up their churches. Hasselgrave describes the organization at the time:

In order to organize a synagogue or hold meetings it was necessary to have at least 10 men. The elders of the congregation selected a ruler (or possibly several of them). The ruler was responsible for synagogue services and properties. He often designated others to conduct the expressions of praise, prayer, reading of the law and the prophets, and giving of exhortations. Several assistants carried out menial duties, inflicted corporal punishment or otherwise disciplined members, and dispensed alms received from the members.<sup>178</sup>

New Testament believers thus had a pattern to follow in organizing and running the New Testament church. Being in the know about how synagogues carried out their functions, the Ephesian leaders, “having been strengthened, exhorted to continue in the faith, appointed with prayers and fasting, and committed to the Lord; (Acts 14:22, 23)

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<sup>177</sup> Karen Hinckley ed., *A Life-Changing Encounter with God’s Word From the Book of Ephesians* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1985), 12.

<sup>178</sup> David J. Hasselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 351.

those who were assumed able to fulfill the responsibilities assigned. As F. F. Bruce suggests, “One way of strengthening the churches was making provision for leadership in them. In each of them were some members who had already attained a sufficient degree of spiritual maturity to serve their fellow believers as guides and give them the further instruction and encouragement they required...”<sup>179</sup>

### **Methods of Appointing Leaders**

It is probably safe to assume that the same procedure was followed in the appointment of the elders by Paul and Barnabas for the churches they founded on their first missionary journey (Acts 14:23). In this church were men and women who were exceptionally gifted and did not shy away from using their gifts to serve in the church. There is no doubt that these were “appointed” to serve.

It would appear that the length of term for the serving elders was at the discretion of individual congregations. With the appointment and functioning properly of the various offices according to Ephesians 4:11 it leads “to the building up of the body of Christ.” John MacArthur suggests that “the immediate goal of God’s plan for the operation of His church is it’s being built up. Proper equipping by the evangelists and pastor-teachers ... results inevitably in the building up of the body of Christ.”<sup>180</sup> This was the trend with all churches Paul planted, as Allen states: “They no longer depended necessarily upon St. Paul. If he went away, or if he died, those who had become

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<sup>179</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 280.

<sup>180</sup> John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 156.

Christians remained. They grew in numbers and in grace: they were centres of spiritual light by which the darkness of surrounding heathenism was gradually dispelled.”<sup>181</sup>

Paul’s goal of ministry is clearly stated in Col. 1:28: “We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” That was Paul’s goal in every city he preached. Paul did not waste time in starting churches. In Derbe we are told that he “preached the gospel and had many disciples....strengthening the souls of the disciples.” (Acts 14:23) “A disciple is not simply an accumulator of information or one who merely changes moral behaviour in regards to the teachings of Jesus Christ, but in response to God’s work in him, he seeks a fundamental shift toward the ethics of Jesus Christ in every way<sup>182</sup>.” In this sense a disciple is one who learns from a teacher or a student whom the teacher entrusts with the responsibility of passing on what he or she has learnt.

Jesus Christ had at least a dozen men as well as some women ministering with him while on earth. These became his disciples. Gene A. Getz says, “He spent much of His time with twelve men whom He had carefully selected and trained, not in a formal educational setting, but rather in a “field-type” real-life learning situation”<sup>183</sup> and then released them into the world and wherever they went – in the synagogues, from house to house, in the work place and on the streets brought men and women to the saving knowledge of Christ and thus establishing and growing His church. They changed the world and this is exactly what Paul did. He spent some time with his disciples teaching

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<sup>181</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960,), 111.

<sup>182</sup> Discipleship, “Be Transformed,” <http://www.theopedia.com/Discipleship>; (accessed June 12, 2010).

<sup>183</sup> Gene A. Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1974), 28.

them and then released them to the responsibility of establishing the church. In Acts 14:23 we are told that after spending time with them Paul and those with him “appointed elders for them...having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord ...” Paul did not allow himself to be tied down to a particular church for a long period of time. He moved on to start other churches. However he did not forget the churches he helped to start in other regions. He visited and re-visited them encouraging and helping them in any way possible with one goal in mind; self-governance.

Before leaving Ephesus for Macedonia, Paul appointed Timothy, his son in the faith, to give leadership to this church (1 Tim. 1:3) with instructions to feed and build the flock through teaching the true gospel and living an exemplary life. He charged Timothy to further look for faithful persons who he would train and in turn they would train others (2 Tim. 2:2)

### **Maintenance of Church and Missionary Relationships**

It is obvious that a strong relationship existed between Paul and many of the churches he planted. Although he was the founder of these churches, Paul did not exert undue pressure on them to do things his way. Hesselgrave says; “...in the case of that great apostle, the relationship could not be characterized as being one of “dominion”<sup>184</sup> (2 Cor. 1:24). Paul allowed these churches to determine their destiny. The word that best sums up Paul’s relationship with the churches is the word “Koinonia” (Phil. 1:5). “Koinonia” is a Greek word frequently used in the New Testament to describe the

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 404.

relationship within the early Christian church and is usually translated “joint participation” or “partnership.”<sup>185</sup>

Paul’s relationships with the churches he found were both physical and spiritual. His letters offer clear indications of what was involved in this genuine “Koinonia.” Hesselgrave notes:

- The apostle felt a responsibility for the continued well-being (especially spiritual well-being) of the church and believers he had fathered in the faith. All of the Pauline letters bear witness to this. Paul did not wash his hands of the sometimes impure Corinthians Christians once they had said their mutual farewells...Rather, he had a genuine and abiding burden for the fledgling churches and their members. So much so that he writes of “the daily pressure...of concern for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28).
- The founded churches were expected to give special attention to the words spoken, and the example set, by the apostle, precisely because he had fathered them in the faith (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:15-16)
- The founded churches participated with Paul in his ministry through prayer, gifts and the sending of helpers (Phil. 2:25; 4:14-16; Col. 4:3). Note, however, that though the apostle greatly appreciated and even solicited some types of partnership he by no means demanded it nor did he always receive it (Phil. 4:15). It seems evident that New Testament “Koinonia” involved reciprocal concern, respect and obligation between the apostle and the churches he founded, a relationship that went beyond a handshake and a farewell. It entailed an abiding concern, each for the other, and all for the Christian cause.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 404.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 104.



It is clear that Paul, anxious for the development of the believers, used all the available means to teach them sound doctrine, allowing them to grow in their relationship with Christ, aware of their responsibilities in the church.

### **Summary**

It is evident that Paul's primary concern for the churches he planted was to develop into self-governance. This was his priority from the first missionary journey onward. Conscious of the importance of his calling to open churches in the gentile nations, aware of the enormity of the task and the challenge of allowing self-governance, he appointed local elders in each church to be responsible for feeding and taking care of the flock of God. This appointment was accomplished through prayer, fasting and commendation to the Lord's care.

It is certain that before the appointment of the elders to their offices, Paul taught them the essentials of Christian living and practice, tested them and found them to be trustworthy, and then exhorted to be faithful to their call (Acts 14:22). They had the responsibility of "perfecting" the saints for works of service (Eph. 4:11-13) through teaching them the word of God as well as passing the same to other faithful men, who in turn would teach others.

This ministry begun by Paul at Ephesus continued even after he left. I want to believe that it was by stepping aside that the leaders were given the opportunity to fully exercise their responsibility. Melvin L Hodges understood the need for self-government in planting and establishing local churches. He concluded that, "To fail to place the responsibility of self-government on the converts is to choke their initiative and dwarf

their growth.”<sup>187</sup> Herbert Kane a missiologist says about the missionary started churches in Africa;

Most of the “daughter” churches in the Third world have reached maturity. Some of them are already in the third generation. Having come of age they naturally desire to be in charge of their own affairs. The unholy alliance between the Christian mission and Western imperialism has been severed; but the stigma lives on, and the national churches find themselves on the horns of a dilemma: How can they be truly Christian and truly indigenous at the same time? They feel that as long as the missionary remains with them they will not be able to achieve full independence. Some of them are calling for a five-year moratorium on men and money from the Western churches.<sup>188</sup>

This is unlike Paul. Paul trusted that these churches would be able to grow into responsible growing churches. Granted that Paul’s churches made mistakes, he knew that this was part of the initial teething problems experienced by the young churches. Sanders says,

The fact that a person is indwelt by the Spirit and seeks to be led by the Spirit will doubtless mean that he is less liable to make mistakes than those who do not; but since he is still in the flesh, he is not infallible. Even the divinely called and Spirit-filled apostles made mistakes which required divine overruling.<sup>189</sup>

The point is, Africa Gospel Church, a church planted by missionaries needs to be allowed to take care of their own affairs without interference from World Gospel Mission.

### **The Church of Corinth – Self-Supporting Church**

In appointing elders in every newly planted church, Paul’s intention was not only to charge them with “self-governance,” but also to charge them with the responsibility of financing their church operation as well as giving to the needy. The church at Corinth

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<sup>187</sup> Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), 23-24.

<sup>188</sup> Herbert Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission: A Panoramic View of Mission from Pentecost to Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 176.

<sup>189</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1967) 147.

was blessed with many gifted people (I Cor. 12:4-12). Unfortunately church members abused their gifts, given to them by God for the sake of building the church of God. The gift that seems to have been frequently abused was that of giving. This came to the attention of Paul. As the founding missionary of the church, he took it upon himself to give a few words of advice to his spiritual children. He deals with these shortcomings of the church in the letters of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians.

#### Tent-Making as a Ministry

He tells them first of all that when he came to them he did not burden them with any financial giving towards him. In his first encounter with the Corinthians, Aquila and Priscilla, two prominent people in the community, accommodated him. This husband and wife team was not only known for their passion for the things of God but for their service to the Lord in a full-time capacity. They did not rely on the church to support them financially but rather they supported themselves in ministry through tent-making. Being of the same trade, we are told (Acts 18:2-3) Paul joined them and worked together with them to earn a living. Because he was self-supporting, the apostle placed no financial demands on the Corinthians. He deserved to be paid by the church but he did not ask them to pay him (I Cor. 9:14, I Tim. 5:18).

Here, Paul is suggesting to the Corinthians that by being self-supporting, he was giving them an example to follow. He says, “We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow”. (II Thess. 3:9) Further in Acts 20:34 we learn that he not only worked to supply his personal needs, but he also worked to help meet the needs of those who were with him (Acts 20:34).

Paul was telling the church at Corinth to follow his example in supporting the work of their church and give care to the less fortunate within their own community.” He says in Acts, “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

### **Principles of Giving**

The idea of self-supporting was very important to the apostle Paul. In two chapters of II Corinthians 8 and 9 he gives insight to the church at Corinth concerning giving. He uses the model of the churches of Macedonia to motivate the Corinthian churches to be involved in caring for others. The gift that the Macedonian churches give to the Jerusalem believers was raised at a time when the churches were going through great trials. In these verses, several principles stand out, as noted by Harlow:

- A. Giving should be done by a person who is willing, not by command or pressure from others. They should not wait until they have more money, but give at once from what they possess (vv. 10, 11).
- B. God accepts a gift according to what a person has; He does not blame us for not giving what we do not have. The Lord Jesus praised the poor widow woman not because she gave a lot, but because she kept nothing for herself (Mark 12:41). The first thing is to have true love for God, then give from what we have.
- C. Giving to other believers is not to give them an easy time, but to share God’s provision on an equal basis (vv. 13, 15).<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> R. E. Harlow, *Second Corinthians: Paul and the Church at Corinth* (Scarborough, UK: Everyday Publications 1985), 49-50.

Paul attested that the churches of Macedonia gave all they could and even more. This action came from their own desire, not the result of the apostles' pleading or begging for more money (Acts 8:3). Therefore, "Paul wants them to give based on their eagerness, to follow others' examples, and not to feel like he is abusing his authority or exploiting them."<sup>191</sup> The church at Corinth learned some of the guidelines for faithful giving: there must be willingness, not outside pressure to give, they were to give according to their ability and lastly the gifts given to the Lord should be carefully "handled" to avoid any charge of dishonesty.

### Summary

It is evident from these two chapters that the Corinthian church was self-supporting. There is no mention in the New Testament that the church received support or gifts from any other churches outside itself. Instead, out of their income, with enthusiasm, they were ready to supply for Paul's needs (2 Cor. 11:7, 9) and they sent a reasonable gift to believers in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26). This action proved that this church was able to provide for its own needs and even help others from local funds.

### The Church at Antioch – Self-Propagating Church

Antioch was the capital city of the Roman province of Syria, located about three hundred miles from Jerusalem. According to Norman Thomas, Antioch was a large Gentile city, "a melting pot of Western and Eastern cultures, Greek and Roman traditions mingled with Semitic, Arab, and Persian influences. Antioch had everything to offer."<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The New Cambridge Bible Commentary: 1-2 Corinthians* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 2005), 205.

<sup>192</sup> Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig ed., *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 146.

The gospel was brought to Antioch in a special way. After the martyr of Stephen, the Christians scattered to various parts of the region. Luke reported that “all except the apostles were scattered” (Acts 8:1). Hellenistic lay believers from Cyprus and Cyrene who had been scattered out of Jerusalem following Stephen’s death and the subsequent persecution simply could not keep quiet about Jesus. They went everywhere including Antioch preaching the Good News (8:4). The Lord was with them in power and a great number of people believed and turned to Christ (Acts 11:19-21) Thus, the gospel spread among the Gentiles and an assembly of believers was “founded, led and spread by laypeople.”<sup>193</sup>

### **Sending Missionaries**

The Lord was doing amazing things in the church in Antioch. The news of what was happening there, reached the ears of believers and church leaders in Jerusalem. Wanting to know what was happening, the church decided to investigate. They decided on Barnabas, a man who had lived among Gentiles in Cyprus (Acts 4:36), and dispatched him to Antioch.

The teachers and prophets of Antioch are an interesting mixture. They show what an interracial, cross-cultural church had grown up in that metropolitan city which from this point on became the headquarters of missionary Christianity. The Lord had called into fellowship and into leadership positions people from several nations. A fellowship from the then-known world could be led to the decision of wanting to reach the world. This could never have happened in the Jerusalem church.<sup>194</sup>

No wonder on seeing what was happening at Antioch Barnabas “rejoiced when he saw how God blessed the people.” (Acts 11:23)

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<sup>193</sup>Ibid., 147.

<sup>194</sup> Lloyd J. Ogilvie ed., *The Communicator's Commentary: Acts* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 207.

At seeing what God was doing in this church, Barnabas decided to stay and minister here a little longer. Through his ministry, the number of believers increased rapidly. The growth of this church was so rapid that he decided to recruit more help. He found Saul in Tarsus and brought him along to Antioch. Together they ministered there for a whole year, teaching these believers the Word of God and how they should live in the midst of a pagan society. The teaching was so effective that amazing things were happening in this town to the point that “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26)

The book of Acts attests to the fact that the church at Antioch was indeed growing in all ways. Noteworthy was growth in its dependence on the leading of the Holy Spirit, its transcultural fellowship and shared leadership. Acts 13 is the account of the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul for missionary work.

In this passage we are told that “The Antioch church was richly endowed with leaders – prophets and teachers. Prophets were gifted in bringing edification, exhortation, comfort and encouragement. Teachers taught effectively in a sustained ministry.”<sup>195</sup> In Acts 13:1-2 the results of the excellent leadership produces both spiritual as well as physical growth, “...now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers...while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Because the church was in tune with each other and with the Holy Spirit, they understood what the Spirit desired and did what He asked for.

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<sup>195</sup> Doug Priest Jr. ed., *The Gospel Unhindered: Modern Missions and the Book of Acts* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1994). 78.

Notice that in this church, the composition of its members reflected the cosmopolitan nature of the city. Michael Green says, “Barnabas was from Cyprus, . . . Simon was clearly a Nilotic; Lucius of Cyrene was another North African of lighter hue, Manaen came from the court circle round the Herods, and Saul from Tarsus in Turkey. A mixed cartel of leaders, with astonishing variety of background.”<sup>196</sup> These people were spiritually mature and did not allow their different backgrounds to hinder the work of God.

At Antioch there is a tremendous amount of shared leadership. No one leader is superior but all use their spiritual gifts appropriately in the church to the glory of God to hear, discern and act as the Holy Spirit led them. Richard N. Longenecker in his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles says, “For just as it was the whole church that sent them out, so it was the whole church the missionaries reported to on returning to Antioch. Nevertheless we view the details of their call and commission, ultimately, Luke insists, Barnabas and Saul were ‘sent on their way by the Holy Spirit’”<sup>197</sup> (13:4).

This church literally exploded so much so that by the leading of the Holy Spirit it called its very own missionaries and sent them out to the mission field. Acts 13:3 says, “Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them they sent them away...” Here the appointing officer was the Holy Spirit, whereas the approving officer was the church.

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<sup>196</sup> Michael Green, *Thirty Years That Changed the World: The Book of Acts Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2002). 154.

<sup>197</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Gaebelin Frank E ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 417.



## Evangelism, Edification and Establishment

During their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in many cities. Their work together was blessed of the Lord and according to Acts 13:12-48 many believed. But due to sharp differences on their second missionary journey, however, Paul and Barnabas parted company. While Barnabas took John Mark with him, Paul decided to travel with Silas.

Although separated, the two teams continued with their mission of evangelizing, edifying and establishing believers in their faith. In evangelizing these men looked for both an opportunity and the right time to preach the gospel boldly starting in Antioch, where they told anybody who cared to hear about Christ. The results were that many were added to their numbers in Antioch. They preached in synagogues, from house to house and in public places persuading men and women, giving everybody the opportunity to hear the message and to become Christians. McGavran says, “The great advances of the church have not occurred at just any time; regardless of the historical, cultural, and social environment, the advances occurred at the opportune times – at the right *kairos*.”<sup>198</sup>

Because of reliance on God and their being led by the Holy Spirit and because of their courage and boldness in proclaiming Christ, many believed as in the case of Acts 19:9-18. Vaughn says regarding the powerful preaching of the gospel, “....the gospel confronted idolatry, superstition, and vested economic interests.”<sup>199</sup> Many people believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and were gathered together into congregations.

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<sup>198</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), 104.

<sup>199</sup> Curtis Vaughn, *Acts: A Study Guide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 117.

Wherever these men went, they were able to disciple and help the believers mature in their faith through edification. Paul conscious of this expresses himself in Colossians 1:28-29: "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me".

Paul's concern was that the believers be taught sound doctrine so that they would be able to stand and not moved by strange doctrine making its round at the time. For this reason he spent time teaching, exhorting, praying and living as a personal example before them. Allen notes, "Paul did not go about as a missionary preacher merely to convert individuals: he went to establish churches from which the light might radiate throughout the whole country round."<sup>200</sup>

Paul seems to have been very successful at training his converts and leaving them after a short time for other places of ministry. He succeeded in training them to be autonomous. Allen states:

The secret of success in this work lies in beginning at the very beginning. It is the training of the first converts which sets the type for the future. If the first converts are taught to depend on the missionary, if all the work, evangelistic, educational, social is concentrated in his hands, the infant community learns to rest passively upon the man from whom they receive their first insight into the Gospel... a tradition very rapidly grows up that nothing can be done without the authority and guidance of the missionary, the people wait for him to move, and the longer they do so, the more incapable they become of any independent action.<sup>201</sup>

Paul avoided this pitfall by entrusting leadership and responsibilities to the local church elders, and keeping on with his vision of evangelizing new areas.

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<sup>200</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), 81.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 81

### **Summary**

The church at Antioch through the unction of the Holy Spirit were true to the calling of Jesus Christ by beginning to reach its own people with the gospel message, witnessing to those in neighbouring cities and then spreading the gospel to the utmost parts of the earth. They spoke the word to both Jews and Gentiles and did not discriminate.

These men were convinced that their work was to evangelize the world, edify believers and establish churches. They heard the Good News; they were taught the word, they matured in the faith and then took the Good News to others. Indeed for effective self-propagation the church at Antioch was obedient to the Holy Spirit, sent its most choice, most faithful, and most able men and women.

### **Conclusion**

We have seen that Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in various cities of Asia Minor and won a large number of followers. After a period of time, they returned to these cities, including Antioch, strengthening and encouraging the believers to remain steadfast in their new faith. They appointed elders in each of the home churches they had started, prayed for them, committing them to God, whom they had put their trust in.

According to Paul and Barnabas then, the goal of any mission organization should be to preach the gospel, according to the command of Christ, with a view of establishing an indigenous church. Indigenous is defined as something “having originated in and being produced, growing, or living naturally in a particular region or environment.”<sup>202</sup> To

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<sup>202</sup> Webster New Collegiate Dictionary, “Indigenous” (Springfield, Massachusetts, G and C Merriam, 1974), 585 Company.

reproduce a replica of the sending church does not make a church indigenous. According to New Testament teaching and especially the book of Acts, the church is truly indigenous when it is self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

### **Summary**

An indigenous church must be self-governing. The biblical example that we have seen of a New Testament church is one that allows God to call ministers from among a group of local believers, and allows the local church to ordain and call those called of God into ministry and gives room for the local church to chart its own course without undue influence from outside.

An indigenous church must be self-supporting. When you look at the teaching of Paul concerning self-support, you discover that his goal was always to see a church able to meet all its financial obligations. Regardless of the economical standing of a local congregation, Paul believed that the churches could give and sustain the ministry of the local church. That means that the salaries of those who minister, the support of all church workers, the maintenance of all church buildings and equipment should be given by the local congregation and not a mission organization.

An indigenous church must be self-propagating. The New Testament believers after they believed immediately became witnesses to their own people in their own way, winning new people and establishing them in the church. The New Testament Church considered personal evangelism as a normal activity of every church member. Each person took it upon him/herself to tell others about Christ – it became a life style. The most effective method of self-propagation is when the local Christians win others to

Christ through quiet, consistent witness by their life and not wait for the missionaries to do that.

When an indigenous church is self-governing and self-propagating the members will support it with their finances. And when they have supported the church with their money and their time, they will be more than willing to talk to others about Christ.

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the history of the Africa Gospel Church (AGC), Word Gospel Missions (WGM) went all out to win the lost and establish Churches in Kenya. As the ministry of the Church expanded, the missionaries worked hard to put structures in place and to organize the new Churches into a denomination by recruiting national leaders who would eventually assume the responsibility for the work started.

The action of the mission was well-intended but the reality on the ground was that the nationals were not prepared to totally assume the responsibility because they had not been trained. It became necessary for the missionaries to serve in roles of denominational leadership until such a time that the nationals were ready to completely assume responsibility for their Church. Unfortunately the longer this went on the more comfortable the missionaries became and the more the nationals were content to depend on the missionaries for everything. As noted earlier, this kind of dependency is not healthy. In the Bible, you see that God calls His Church to be dependent upon Him and no one else for the substance of the Church.

The apostle Paul and the Christians in Antioch give us the best example of how a Church can grow without undue influence from the outside in its leadership, finances, and propagation. This chapter aims to discuss how AGC can overcome dependency and become a Church under God, led by Kenyan national leaders, charting their own course in the commonwealth of God.

### **Suggested Methods for Developing Self-Government in the AGC**

An important aspect of a healthy Church is its organization. The Bible teaches that the local Church should be autonomous. In the New Testament times, each congregation of Christians was autonomous. Each was a separate entity under the lordship of Christ. They related to each other in fellowship, but no human individual or group exercised authority over the congregations.”<sup>203</sup> Acts 6:3-7 and Acts 13:1-3 are good examples of autonomous local Churches. A Church is said to be “autonomous” if it is self-governing. This means that it does not answer to another Church or organization for any of its decisions. Obviously the Church is not completely “autonomous” because it ultimately answers to Jesus Christ who is the head of the Church according to Ephesians 1:20-23. Daniel Rickett discussing self-sufficiency, self-reliance and self-governing says,

Self-sufficiency begins with acknowledgment of the all-sufficiency of Christ. Only God is self-reliant. The rest of us should be God-reliant. To be self-sufficient does not mean to be independent of Christ or the rest of his body. “Self” in this regard is not egoism but personal responsibility. “Sufficiency” is not independence, but having enough to meet one’s needs on the basis of one’s capabilities...Self-reliance should not be confused with independence. Rather it is the condition for fellowship and collaboration with the larger Christian community...Self-determination is the capacity of the ministry to make its own decisions and chart its own course.<sup>204</sup>

Understood in this sense, Melvin Hodges suggests that

...of these three aspects, self-government is the most difficult to accomplish and requires the longest time for achievement. Yet the principle of self-government is so important and the result in the spiritual life of the Church is so vital, that if we

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<sup>203</sup> Baptist Distinctives, “Baptists Believe in Church Autonomy,” <http://www.baptistdistinctives.org/articles/Churchautonomy.shtml> (accessed June 2, 2011).

<sup>204</sup> Daniel Rickett, “Preventing Dependency: Developmental partnering.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (1998): 4

fail there, it could well mean that we shall fail in the entire program of establishing the indigenous Church.<sup>205</sup>

It is critical therefore, that the AGC establish a competent leadership, chosen by God's Holy Spirit, and installed by the national congregation with a specific mandate of tending "the flock of God which is among you" (Ephesians 20:28) in an organized manner. The Church is not only to grow itself but grow the work of God in the nation of Kenya and beyond.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see that the apostle Paul had a definite plan in fulfilling the calling God had placed on him in Acts 9:15. God says of Paul, "...He is a chosen instrument of mine to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." McGavran says, "Paul had a deliberate plan, and I think I know where he got it... When he came to Antioch, Paul saw the Churches there growing according to the Antioch plan; that is, they grew around the synagogue communities."<sup>206</sup> Paul adapted that plan and used it very effectively in planting Churches throughout the region of Asia Minor.

The writer's opinion is that a well-defined plan and strategy is a must for any autonomous Church to develop and grow and recommends the following: -

### **1. Developing Autonomous Leadership**

Reflecting on Paul's strategy of developing autonomous local leadership, we can deduce at least three major points that apply to our situation in the AGC in the appointment of leaders.

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<sup>205</sup> Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 22.

<sup>206</sup> Donald A. McGavran and Arn Win C, *How to Grow a Church* (Glendale, CA: G/L Publications, 1973), 31.



Paul spent over two years in Ephesus. The apostle was very deliberate when he entered a city. He first of all evangelized the people. Once the people had come to a personal knowledge of Christ, He secondly spent time with them and equipped these people. Thirdly when he thought they were ready for the next step, he established Churches. Hasselgrave notes that “New Testament evangelism results in new converts coming into the Christian fellowship of congregations new and old, and in new congregations being established in communities around the world.”<sup>207</sup> As Hasselgrave asserts, evangelism always came first, then the congregations were born out of that. This is plainly the New Testament order of events. In my view the single most effective method of bringing people to Christ is evangelism.

As one reads Paul’s life, it becomes clear that evangelism was important but so was the other aspects of his work of instructing, teaching, training and admonishing the believers to be faithful to the Lord (Acts 19:9; 20:20-32). In Ephesians 4:6, 11-12 the author explains that the fundamental mission of the Church is “the equipping of the saints.” Paul understood that if members of the congregation were empowered to do the work, he would be released to go elsewhere and do the same. He concludes his thoughts by saying that with the Church properly equipping its members; it will be enabled to perform “the work of ministry.”

In an interview with Joseph Marin Samson a Nigerian missionary in Kenya, he told me this about the efforts of his Church in evangelizing and equipping its members,

Very early (our Church) leadership realized that if the Church was going to grow, it needed to train its own Church workers. For this reason the Church built schools to train workers. Today we (denomination) require that every regional Church council builds its own theological school to

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<sup>207</sup> David J. Hasselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A guide for home and foreign missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 33.

train its own workers. It is important for a Church not to rely on workers trained elsewhere.<sup>208</sup>

Joseph adds another dimension to what Paul did. He evangelized and equipped the local people. As Joseph continues saying, “When you train them at home, they have a ‘home’ perspective and can better minister to the needs of the people within their own communities. Our Church is now 5 million people strong.”<sup>209</sup>

Paul’s conclusion is that by evangelizing and equipping the saints, the body of Christ will be edified. Edification or to edify is the same Greek word that Paul uses when he speaks of preaching Christ where He was not known and edifying, or “building” where no one had built before (Romans 15:20-21). Apparently, preaching the gospel results in increase in membership and spiritual growth of the Church. In Acts 20:17-38 he enumerates about his stay with them. Two examples stand out; openness and discipleship.

Paul’s work at Ephesus was characterized with openness. He was always in close contact with those that he had “fathered.” They saw him for who he was. They knew his weaknesses and strengths. Paul’s “self-exposition,” allowed his disciples to relate to him and he to his disciples.

Because of the “missionary compound” mentality perpetuated by the missionaries and also adapted by national leaders, missionaries operated within the missionary compound and did not mix with the local people. Therefore, many of our Church leaders are removed from both those they are working with and working for. They travel the road

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<sup>208</sup> Joseph Marin Samson, interview by author, Nairobi, November 7, 2007 at Nairobi.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.,

of ministry alone. There seems not to be a deliberate effort to “make others like ourselves.” As Hans Finzel has said, “Organizations live and die on the basis of their flow of new leadership talent...the only way to guarantee that your group does not slide down the back side of the curve to institutionalization, calcification, and death is to constantly renew yourself with fresh blood in the form of new leaders.”<sup>210</sup>

Paul was in touch with the grass roots and was able to address their needs because he lived and associated with the Ephesians and those he worked with. The hallmark of his ministry however, was discipleship. Hadidian notes that this is the same way that Jesus begun his ministry. He says, “One cannot examine the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ without seeing the emphasis He placed on discipling”.<sup>211</sup> In almost all the journeys he made, Paul was accompanied by his disciples. A disciple according to Cosgrove Jr. is “a follower of Jesus Christ, desiring to learn his ways and apply them to his life”.<sup>212</sup> In Acts 19:22-29 you find Paul with Timothy, Erastus, Gaius and Aristarchus. He gave these young disciples opportunities to learn from him but also tasked them with responsibilities by themselves. He sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia while he remained at Ephesus (Acts 19:22). He commissioned Tychicus to report to the Church about his situation (Eph. 6:21-22). He gave these young people opportunities to grow in ministry. As “mentoring is a relational process in which a mentor, who knows or has experienced something, transfers that something to a mentee, at an appropriate time and manner, so that it facilitates development or empowerment.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Hans Finzel, *The Ten Top Mistakes Leaders Make* (USA: Victor Books, 1994), 161.

<sup>211</sup> Allen Hadidian, *Successful Discipling* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1979), 7.

<sup>212</sup> Francis M. Cosgrove Jr., *Essentials of Discipleship: Practical Help on How to Live as Christ's Disciple* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1980), 25.

In AGC, many of the leaders are old and rural in thinking. They have not been exposed to newer and modern ways of doing Church. As far as I can tell no plan has been made to mentor any of the up-coming ministers for ministry hence many of the pastors struggle alone in their various Churches or stations. No plans have been made to train those currently in leadership. In my letter of February 20, 2006 to the AGC bishop, his assistant, WGM field director, the outreach committee and the urban Church chairman, I wrote “Personally, AGC in my almost twenty years service has never offered to improve my skills which could make me a better minister, nor has it ever asked if I needed any kind of support in what I was doing. There has never been an inquiry into the type of ethical decisions that I must make in the course of my work. There has never been public affirmation of the ministry that I do. I must conclude that AGC really doesn’t have the least interest whether or how I minister in my daily work so long as I stay under the radar and don’t get caught in some scandal.”<sup>214</sup> It is my prayer that AGC leadership will revisit the CORAT (CORAT stands for Christian Organization Research and Advisory Trust – it provides capacity enhancement to Churches and Church related organizations through innovative approaches and creative learning models) recommendations in this area. CORAT recommended that the Church needs to “Develop an effective and sustainable staff development program that will address capacity needs of the Church.”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships you Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1992), 40.

<sup>214</sup> Patrick L. Murunga, *Sabbatical Reflections*: ( paper written to the Bishop, assistant bishop, WGM field director, outreach committee and the Urban Church council chairman on return from a year’s sabbatical, Nairobi, February 20, 2006).

<sup>215</sup> CORAT. “Executive Summary of the external evaluation of Africa Gospel Church,” (paper presented to the central church council of Africa Gospel Church, August 10, 2002).

Many of the Church leaders walk alone, carrying many burdens by themselves for fear of being seen as incapable or someone else discovering their weaknesses. Jesus in Matthew 10:1-5 provides a glimpse into key discipleship principles. He calls them “to himself,” and then the twelve are sent out. “First the disciples cultivate their relationship with Jesus, only then are they to be used by Him in ministry”.<sup>216</sup> AGC leadership needs to cultivate this kind of discipleship culture were the leaders invest their lives in evangelizing, equipping by training others and establishing by placing people in the ministry of making others like themselves..

## 2. Development of National Leadership

Paul developed national leadership for the Churches he started. “Timothy was the son of a Gentile father and a Jewish-Christian mother named Eunice.”<sup>217</sup> Timothy played a very prominent role in the ministry and life of Paul. Erastus is spoken of in I Timothy 4:20 as a well-known companion of Paul’s who had a special interest in the Church at Corinth. His name is a common Greek name, giving indication of his lineage.<sup>218</sup> Aristarchus was “a Macedonia of Thessalonica who was with Paul in Ephesus.”<sup>219</sup> A faithful companion and friend who accompanied Paul and attended to him in prison (Acts 27:2).

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<sup>216</sup> Allan, Coppedge, *The Biblical Principles of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1989), 85.

<sup>217</sup> Herbert Lockyer ed., *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), 1052.

<sup>218</sup> Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 501.

<sup>219</sup> John D. Davis, *A Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968) 53.

Only a few of the leaders Paul developed are mentioned here. However, as one looks at the short list, one notices that the mentioned companions of Paul were from different social-cultural backgrounds. I believe it was by design because Paul understood that ministry to the “nations” needed men and women who understood and lived in the “nations.” In AGC we will do well to learn this.

AGC prides itself as a national Church, but the truth of the matter is that AGC is still a tribal Church. It is a heavily Kipsigis (tribe) oriented Church – all the national leaders are Kipsigis – that is the bishop, his assistant, the administrative secretary and all departmental heads. Statistically, the Church is at least 95 per cent Kipsigis. This statistic is bad for the Church seeing that Kenya is composed of 42 tribes. The Church headquarters are at the denominational headquarters in the heart of Kipsigis land – Kericho. The national languages of Kiswahili and English are often not used in transacting Church business at the central office level. The language of choice at the central Church council meeting is Kipsigis rather than the two said national languages. Most of the rural Churches are staffed with Kipsigis pastors and workers. It is only in some of the urban Churches that pastors are from other communities – the writer is among the few non-Kipsigis pastor to serve at the highest council of the Church. However, when it comes to ordination of pastors, the urban Churches are marginalized.

I am of the opinion that the Church needs to remedy this situation by first moving the Church headquarters to a location that would give it a national outlook. It would also be wise for the leadership to purposely work towards getting other tribes into the leadership of the central office. I would advocate affirmative action to make this happen.

At the central Church council, we have a dying and myopic leadership. Half of the council is in their early to mid 60s. We need to aggressively recruit young men and women for the ministry. We need to have young people who are sold to Christ and his cause whose purpose is to serve the Lord without expecting much in return. We need to develop an internship program that forces the leaders to be embedded with interns for duration of one year to learn all that they can from the older leaders. A report should be given to the central office quarterly and a comprehensive report given at the end of the internship. These I believe will transform AGC into a vibrant Church of Jesus Christ.

### **3. Transition from Mission to Church**

WGM has basically handed over all the responsibilities of the Church to national leadership. However, by all practical purposes the mission did not really leave. Missionaries still remain on major Church committees. They are the invisible hand that directs activities of the Church. On the committees, they either manipulate the leaders to arrive at a decision that favour them or out rightly campaign against decisions of the national Church if they do not get their way. As already stated, it would be prudent for the missionaries to allow the national Church some space to determine their God given destiny without missionary interference. Patterson a former missionary says;

The modern western missionary's most common sin is controlling the national Churches. I had to learn to keep out of the way and let the Spirit's power inherent in the Churches produce the ministries by which the Churches were edified and reproduced.<sup>220</sup>

The missionaries during this time simply need to guide and encourage national leaders and if possible take a leave of absence for a specified-agreed upon period of time and

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<sup>220</sup> George Patterson, The Spontaneous multiplication of Churches. In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, rev. version, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 9.

return only after the national Church has determined God's direction for the Church. Upon returning, the missionaries would be allowed to plug into the mission and vision of the Church, working alongside national leaders. They will work only where the Church requests them to work and they will place themselves under complete direction of national leadership and follow their vision.

This will be a big shift for the Church and the major challenge for the missionaries will be to develop trust and confidence in the national leadership. Mistakes and shortcomings will be made and indeed, are expected to be made. The process will indeed be a difficult one but one that the Church must face head on if the Church is going to be a true African Church made by Africans for Africa.

### **Developing Self-Support in AGC**

Efforts in making the Church self-supporting have started to bear fruit. However, the Church is still dependent on the mission to fund programs of the Church. It is of paramount importance that the national leadership establishes financial policies for the Church and promotes local methods of fund-raising in order to fund the programs of the Church. The Church should politely refuse to accept "gifts" from the mission, given on the pretext that they are not really supporting the Church but just "facilitating" Churches to steady themselves. Holloway says, "As long as you are seen as being supported by foreign funds, local people will not feel the need to help you with funds or other kinds of support. They will assume that you have money from overseas and that you can buy whatever you need."<sup>221</sup> John Gatu a retired Church minister in Kenya however, believes

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<sup>221</sup> Richard Holloway, *Towards Financial Self-Reliance: A handbook on Resource Mobilization for Civil Society Organizations in the South* (London, UK: Earth scan Publications Ltd, 2001), 11.



that the Church in Kenya is able to stand on its own two feet without assistance from outside. He says,

Our wealth is our own people. That is our biggest resource. Africa is not poor. We have resources here. Money is not always going to come from Britain, America, Canada and these places. We need to stop bringing money from the west, we have to raise resources and then translate that into money. We need to challenge the leaders to do this. We need to challenge our people to rise up to the occasion.<sup>222</sup>

The writer shares the same view and is convinced that when appropriately challenged to contribute to Church work according to the means they have, many believers in AGC will be able to meet their own Church's needs. The Church should experiment with ethnically sound fund-raising techniques so that the Church may discern the most effective method of financial development. Patrick Mwangi a pastor with Presbyterian Church of East Africa says,

Our Church is fully self-sufficient financially. We have taken the shilling that members have given us and we have invested it. Like the shrewd steward we want to make the most out of the shilling, so that the shilling is stretched for the glory of God. We have invested in guest houses, schools, rental properties etc.<sup>223</sup>

Thus to become a self-supporting Church, AGC must embark on the following:

### **1. Emphasize proper biblical teaching on giving**

There is a lack of teaching on giving and matters related to supporting the Church with tithes and offerings of the people in AGC. To establish a self-supporting Church, proper biblical teaching is a must. Hodges writes about giving and says,

It is much easier to teach a convert his financial obligations to the work of God during the first few weeks after his conversion than it is to do so after he has been a member of the Church for ten years. He will see no reason why he should begin

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<sup>222</sup> John Gatu, a retired moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, interview by Glenn Schwartz, *An eight hour video-audio series for Church leaders and mission leaders*.

<sup>223</sup> Patrick Mwangi, interview by author, Nairobi, December 6, 2006.

them, after long without it. So the time to start is while the converts are still young in the faith. If their lives have received the touch of the Spirit of God, they will respond to the challenge of carrying their own proper share of the load.<sup>224</sup>

Too much "pity" on the local members because of their economical condition can prove disastrous to the whole process of self-support. Monsma argues that limited initial assistance can be given to the Churches in the initial stages of planting a Church until the Church stabilizes.<sup>225</sup> However Hodges is of a different view. He says,

Under ordinary circumstances, even the poorest Church can support a pastor according to their own standard of living if there are ten or more faithful tithing families in the congregation. Some missionaries object on the ground that the people are too poor to support their pastor. They overlook the fact that these same people once supported their priests or witchdoctors in heathendom.<sup>226</sup>

## 2. The proper motive for giving should be stressed

It is obvious that we cannot over-emphasize the importance of missionaries in the establishment of the AGC. But, because we cannot change the past, it is better to approach the present reality with relevant solutions. Thus, to become a self-supporting Church, the AGC must emphasize proper biblical teaching on giving, addressed first to the pastors and Church workers, who will in turn be charged with the task of motivating the local congregations. Proper biblical teaching on giving should be stressed in Bible Schools, and seminars should be organized in the districts to educate believers.

The motive of all this is to built on understanding God's unconditional saving act through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:25; 5:6, and 8:10). The example of

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6. <sup>224</sup> Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 85-

<sup>225</sup> Timothy Monsma, *An Urban Strategy for Africa* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1979), 130.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

the Macedonian Churches, which demonstrated the grace of God by giving abundantly at a time of “severe test of affliction” and “extreme poverty”, should be a challenge to the members of AGC.

### **3. AGC needs better accountability**

Exacting standards for budgeting, with receipts for every income, expense and reporting to the congregation must be maintained. Downes discusses the issue of accountability and says,

Problems with dishonest handling of finances occur in every country, every culture, but it is a particular shame for such problems to undermine the Church and her gospel message...we in Christian organizations need to see accountability as a ministry rather than a burden - a ministry that proves to others our trustworthiness and uprightness in the Lord and encourages others to do likewise.<sup>227</sup>

Church projects must be clearly defined and regular reports given to the Church. There is nothing as devastating to a giver, as money being used for something other than what it was designated for.

### **4. The people need to trust God’s ability to provide for their needs**

Our Lord exhorted us not to worry about our daily bread, clothing and other needs (Matt. 6:25-32). We have examples in the Bible of God’s generous provision to His people. In the wilderness God provided for His people unconditionally (Deut. 2:7, 8:4). In his book *Managing*, Stephen Douglas states:

We should trust God for all our needs...God is the ultimate source of everything that we will ever need in life. Our part is simply to trust and obey Him. The basis of our trust is God’s promise to help us and provide for us, a promise which

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<sup>227</sup> Donna R. Downes, *Raising Funds in Kenya: A Survey of Middle to Upper Income Nairobi Churchgoers* (Nairobi: Daystar University College, 1991), 83.

occurs frequently in the Scriptures. Psalms 50:15 is but one example: "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor me".<sup>228</sup>

God's immutability (Hebrews 13:8), His loving-kindness, and His faithfulness to His promises should be enough to motivate us to fulfill our responsibilities in contributing effectively to His work through the Church, knowing that divine blessings are the direct results (Malachi 3:10b and Galatians 6:9-10).

### **Developing Self-Propagation in the AGC**

A Church that does not propagate itself will soon die out. AGC needs to propagate itself. As seen from Paul's dealing with the Church in Antioch, his greatest desire was to see that the Church propagate itself. Aware of the importance of his task and the scope of his ministry, the apostle Paul was intensively involved in the process of edification. He taught his disciples day and night (Acts 20:31), imparting to them everything profitable for their spiritual growth (Acts 20:20), warning them against false teachers (Acts 20:20), and exhorting them to maintain unity in the faith and to live holy lives (Ephesians 4:1-13; 17-5:7). Thus, with only two years of training, he could leave his disciples, commending them to God, confident that they would remain faithful to the Lord. Hasselgrave quoting Roland Allen says of his success,

In a little more than ten years St. Paul established the Church in four provinces of the Empire; Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. Before A.D 57 St. Paul could speak as if his work there was done, and could plan extensive tours into the far West without anxiety lest the Churches which he had founded might perish in his absence for want of his guidance and support.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Stephen B. Douglas, *Managing Yourself* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade For Christ, 1985), 190-1.

<sup>229</sup> David J. Hasselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980) 28.

In many AGC Churches, on the other hand, even after fifteen years or twenty years of “shepherding” whenever the pastor leaves, the believers seem confused about the on-going ministry of the local congregation. The basic reason for this seems to be that they are never fully equipped and empowered to take leadership and stand on their own.

To develop and maintain an ongoing self-propagation ministry we suggest that AGC works on the following three areas, each of which is vital to the expansion of any Church with a vision to reach the world with the message of Christ.

### **Proposed Method for Developing Self-Propagation in AGC**

#### **1. Programs in the Local Churches**

Throughout the AGC, every local Church should be urged to establish a clear annual program of outreach, follow-up and basic discipleship training. Each local Church should send its program to the area Christian education director, who is empowered and facilitated to follow up and make sure that the local Churches implement the program. The area director will compile everything that he or she receives from the local Churches in his area and dispatch the same to the central office for further accountability. There will be a mid-term and end-of-term evaluation of these programs every year. A well-planned program will help the Church keep its vision before it.

#### **2. Every Believer a Witness**

Every believer in AGC should be given the opportunity of training with the straight purpose of becoming an effective witness for Christ in life and indeed (Mathew. 4:19; John 15:8; Galatians 5:22). New believers’ classes must be made compulsory for every new believer. Leroy Eims argues that it is from this sort of discipline that believers are established. He asks of the apostles,

Why did they always give this particular message? The answer is found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) This is the gospel. This is the good news. Jesus explicitly told his followers to "preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). Peter and all the other apostles obeyed the command.<sup>230</sup>

He goes on to say that to train people to witness is one of the most gratifying and fulfilling aspects of the discipleship ministry. Witnessing is not a human invention. It is God who starts it (Acts 2:47). Today as always, God is using Christians to be His chosen means of preaching the gospel to the people who need to hear the Good News.<sup>231</sup>

### **3. Discipleship**

In the AGC, the test of discipleship training for believers should be based on their faithfulness to the Lord, their availability and teach ability during the required follow-up sessions. God demands of the Church a discipleship ministry (Matt. 28:19; 2 Tim. 2:2). Today, in the AGC, many people are committing their lives to Christ, but because of lack of training, most of them are mere spectators. This presents a challenge to the AGC to take its call for training men and women seriously.

### **4. Evangelism**

Because of the fast growth of other religions in the region, AGC must use every possible method at its disposal to evangelize and the Church must evangelize everywhere. As already mentioned, AGC is a rural Church. Many ministries are therefore concentrated in the countryside. As important as that might be however, the Church

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<sup>230</sup> Leroy Eims, *Disciples in Action* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1981), 54-55.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 55

needs a paradigm shift. It needs to view cities as places of greatest ministry. The Church needs to come up with a strategy of reaching those living in cities. Cities are the keys to winning nations for Christ. Hodges states,

The life of the nation is principally directed from the cities. It is in the cities where the schools, universities, government installations etc., are established. To fail to reach the city with the gospel is to fail to evangelize the country.<sup>232</sup>

There was a time that rural people looked at cities very suspiciously. I went from the city to go to Bible College in the rural. The rural people always questioned if I was a Christian. The belief at the time was that no one in the city can get “saved”. Dawson observes the same thing. He says, “Christians feel alienated by the city and see it only as a dark and evil place to be avoided, but this is not God’s attitude”.<sup>233</sup> God indeed sees men and women who are lost and need to become followers of Christ. Dawson notes that “over one-half of the world’s population lives in the urban centers”.<sup>234</sup> According to a research published by Daystar University in 1989, “People are moving currently into the city at the rate of more than 500 per day or around 200,000 per year”.<sup>235</sup> If this trend has persisted to date, then AGC needs to wake up and do something about the lost of our cities. Our Churches must break away from the rural mentality which expects a Church to be made up of people from just one tribe. The reality of life in the city is that people from many different tribes and social groups are thrown together in their neighborhoods, work

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>234</sup> John Dawson, *Taking Our Cities for God* (Lake Mary, Florida: Creation House, 1989), 34.

<sup>235</sup> Larry Niemeyer, *Summary of the Nairobi Church Survey* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kijabe Printing Press, 1989), 13.

place, Churches and schools.<sup>236</sup> Because of this, AGC despite her reservations about cities must catch a new vision of ministry for cities. With “our new vision of Christian missions, we must bring nations to Christ and in the process we win their cities”.<sup>237</sup>

### Conclusion

The major challenge facing the Africa Gospel Church is how to emancipate itself from an unhealthy dependency cycle. This can be attained by observing the following lessons: First, AGC in overcoming dependence must be more vigilant and must develop a dependency on the Holy Spirit. This is in the area of the direction of the Church, the structure of the Church and in the appointment of national and local leaders.

Second, AGC needs to come up with an extensive strategic plan of training and equipping workers for the ministry. Ephesians 4:7-13 says that, God has given the Church all gifts necessary for the Church to grow. This means that the Church will function properly if these gifts are put into their proper use. The responsibility of training is the pastors and teachers. They are to make sure that these gifts are discovered and used in the Church.

The third lesson is stewardship. Like the Church in Corinth, AGC is not rich. The Corinthian Church was not hindered from giving because of poverty. The Church needs to learn the lesson of generous and self-sacrificial giving like the Churches of Macedonia. I am convinced that when appropriately challenged to contribute to Church work according to the means they own, believers in AGC will be able to meet their own Church's needs.

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 35.



The fourth lesson is culturally relevant evangelism. The Church needs to develop an indigenous Church that is sensitive to the needs of local people so that it evangelizes them within that context. Propagation of the Church to the utter most ends of the earth is an indigenous initiative of fulfilling the Great Commission and accomplishing the mission of God in the world.

### **World Gospel Mission**

#### **Moratorium**

World Gospel Mission (WGM) is a major player in the life of the AGC. There is no doubt that without the help of the mission the Church would not be where it is today. However, the time has come for the mission to give the Church its space to grow without providing it “training wheels.”

In the late 60s and early 70s, a movement led by John Gatu a Presbyterian minister speaks to some extent about what I would like to see in the relationship of the mission and the Church. I would like the Church to embrace a moratorium in regards to her relationship with the mission for an agreed upon period of time.

A moratorium would perhaps go a long way in addressing the imbalance that exists between the AGC and the WGM. Moratorium as discussed by Rev. John Gatu the secretary general of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa is defined by *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* as: “an official stopping of an activity for a period of time”.<sup>238</sup> The *Merriam-Webster English Dictionary* on the other hand defines it as: “a legally authorized period of delay in the performance of a legal obligation or a waiting

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<sup>238</sup>Online Dictionary, *Longman English Dictionary*  
<http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/moratorium> ( accessed May 22, 2010).

period set by an authority a suspension of activity.<sup>239</sup>” Note that this is not an expulsion of missionaries. It is simply a cooling-off period.

In a speech to a mission festival in 1971 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, United States of America, John Gatu proposed to the Church in the West that,

the time has come for the withdrawal of the foreign missionaries from many parts of the Third World, that the Churches of the Third World be allowed to find their own identity and that the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this selfhood of the Church.<sup>240</sup>

He went on to say:

We in the Third World must liberate ourselves from the bondage of Western dependency by refusing anything that renders impotent the development of our spiritual sources, which, in turn makes it impossible for the Church in the Third World to engage in the mission of God in their own areas.<sup>241</sup>

Rev. Gatu’s insistence ruffled feathers among the sending Churches in the west. In 1974 the leadership of the Evangelicals of the world called a meeting in the city of Lausanne in Switzerland to address the moratorium issue. A resolution was reached. The meeting gave a definition to the moratorium. In “The Lausanne Covenant, article 9,” says that a moratorium is “A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country...to facilitate the national Church’s growth in self-reliance and to release resources for un-evangelized areas”.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Online Dictionary, *Merriam-Webster English Dictionary*  
<http://lynx.cb.com/dictionary/moratorium> ( accessed May 22, 2010).

<sup>240</sup> Sundkler. B and Steed C, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1027.

<sup>241</sup> Bigambo M, *From Dependence to Selfhood: A Challenge for African Christianity*. M.A Dissertation (University of Nairobi, 2001), 28.

<sup>242</sup> The Lausanne Movement, “Lausanne Covenant, art. 9,” <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>; (accessed February 6, 2010).

Rev. Gatu was determined to reduce the number of missionaries in his Church and to see his Church become a self-reliant Church. On his return home, he led the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Kenya to refuse foreign funds, personnel assistance and begun making important operation decision for the Presbyterian Church in Kenya.

The congregation was challenged to rise up to the occasion and take up the challenge of making the Presbyterian Church a truly African Church. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa did not disappoint. The congregation was challenged by the idea of self-reliance translated into Kiswahili as "jitegemee." It was through this motto "jitegemee" that the Church was rescued from its dependency on western funds, personnel and decision making and developed its local resources, demonstrating that it is possible to generate all the resources needed by a Church to advance its God given mission on earth without outside support. AGC is capable of doing the same.

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## Appendix 1

### MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between the  
**AFRICA GOSPEL CHURCH KENYA**  
And  
**WORLD GOSPEL MISSION KENYA**

#### **Introduction:**

Africa Gospel Church (AGC) and World Gospel Mission (WGM) have been together since their foundation/beginning in 1932. AGC was registered on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1961 while WGM updated its registration in 1992 as a society working with and in support of the AGC Kenya.

In an effort to explain the relationship that exists between AGC and WGM today, this memorandum of understanding is presented. Both organizations have enjoyed a mutually warm and supportive relationship since the 1930's. This evolving relationship has developed into a partnership which we would like to define with the following statements of responsibilities to each other.

#### **Mission Statement:**

The mission of the two parties is similar:

AGC, Kenya--The purpose of AGC in Kenya is to model holy living in Christ by: evangelizing the unsaved, edifying believers, establishing churches, and exercising compassion.

WGM, Kenya--The mission of WGM Kenya is to emulate Christ by making disciples, training servant leaders and demonstrating compassion.

#### **Guiding Principles of This Partnership:**

- The partnership is built on respect for, trust in, and commitment to each other
- Both WGM and AGC will seek to mutually edify and admonish each other in love to fulfill Christ's prayer for unity (John 17)
- The doctrine of holy living (from the Wesleyan Armenian perspective) will be practiced and taught
- Both WGM and AGC recognize the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us in this partnership
- In recognition of the autonomy of each organization, the voluntary nature of the partnership, and the necessity of mutual accountability, we agree to:
  - Autonomy in administration
  - Partnership in ministry

#### **Shared Core Values:**

- We value belief in and practice of holy living
- We value training and equipping for effective ministry
- We value integrity, commitment and excellence in all we do
- We value proper planning and research prior to implementation of any ministry
- We value diversity in ministry

- We value regular evaluation of existing ministries, and openness to change when needed
- We value taking risks and thinking creatively in outreach and ministry—"thinking outside the box"
- We value thoughtful and timely communication
- We value a holistic approach to ministry, meeting both spiritual and physical needs
- We value accountability in our lives, conduct and our use of finances
- We value "family"
- We value a team approach to ministry

#### **WGM/AGC Mutually Agree To:**

- Follow their respective constitutions and by-laws
- Respect each other's code of conduct
- Buy, hold and sell property in its own name
- The possibility of partnering with other organizations or initiating independent projects as needed to achieve its objective so long as the independent projects do not harm the objectives of the other

#### **AGC Agrees To:**

- Orient all WGM missionaries appointed and seconded to AGC
- Defend any WGM missionary who may be falsely, unlawfully or unjustly accused
- Give moral support to WGM missionaries working in various fields as long as it is in line with mutually agreed guidelines and visions of both AGC and WGM
- Provide support and assistance to WGM in government related issues i.e. immigration, income tax
- Send representatives to WGM Committees/Meetings/Celebrations as and when invited

- 
- Initiate, set criteria, identify and recommend individuals for staff development
  - Actively seek to provide personnel and some finances for mutually agreed upon ministries and projects
  - Provide financial reports on projects and ministries supported by WGM
  - Trust WGM to appropriately dispose of its assets in the event WGM leaves Kenya
  - Use all financial gifts as designated

#### **WGM Kenya Agrees To:**

- Place its missionaries in consultation and agreement with AGC
- Promote the work of AGC Kenya
- Participate in local AGC churches
- An AGC orientation of all new missionaries by AGC leaders
- Send representatives to AGC committees, as invited
- Make available to AGC Administration WGM's handbook containing its constitution and by laws ("Red Book")
- To make capacity building/leadership development within AGC a priority
- Participate in new AGC outreach ministries as mutually agreed upon
- Initiate/Implement new AGC projects only with the full approval and participation of AGC at every stage

- Make every attempt to have a future national leader being actively mentored within five years of commencing a new AGC project
- Support AGC Medical Ministries prioritizing primary health care
- Contribute financially to AGC central office administration on a decreasing scale
- Participate in financial support of AGC's capital projects, ministries and institutions within WGM Kenya's budget guidelines or ministry
- Actively encourage contributions to national staff salary endowments
- An evaluation process of its staff by church/mission leaders as outlined by Coordinating Council
- Make available financial documents such as operational budgets, goals, and annual Kenya field audit of its financial records
- Transfer all AGC endowment and all designated funds to AGC in the event WGM would leave Kenya
- Consult with AGC regarding any transfer or termination of a missionary who is seconded to AGC

**Period of Agreement:**

The agreement will become effective when signed by both parties. Each party will review this memorandum every three years.

**Amendments or Modifications:**

Should the need arise this agreement may be amended by mutual agreement by both parties (AGC Central Church Council, WGM Kenya Field Meeting)

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Moderator of the Africa Gospel Church*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Director, World Gospel Mission Kenya*

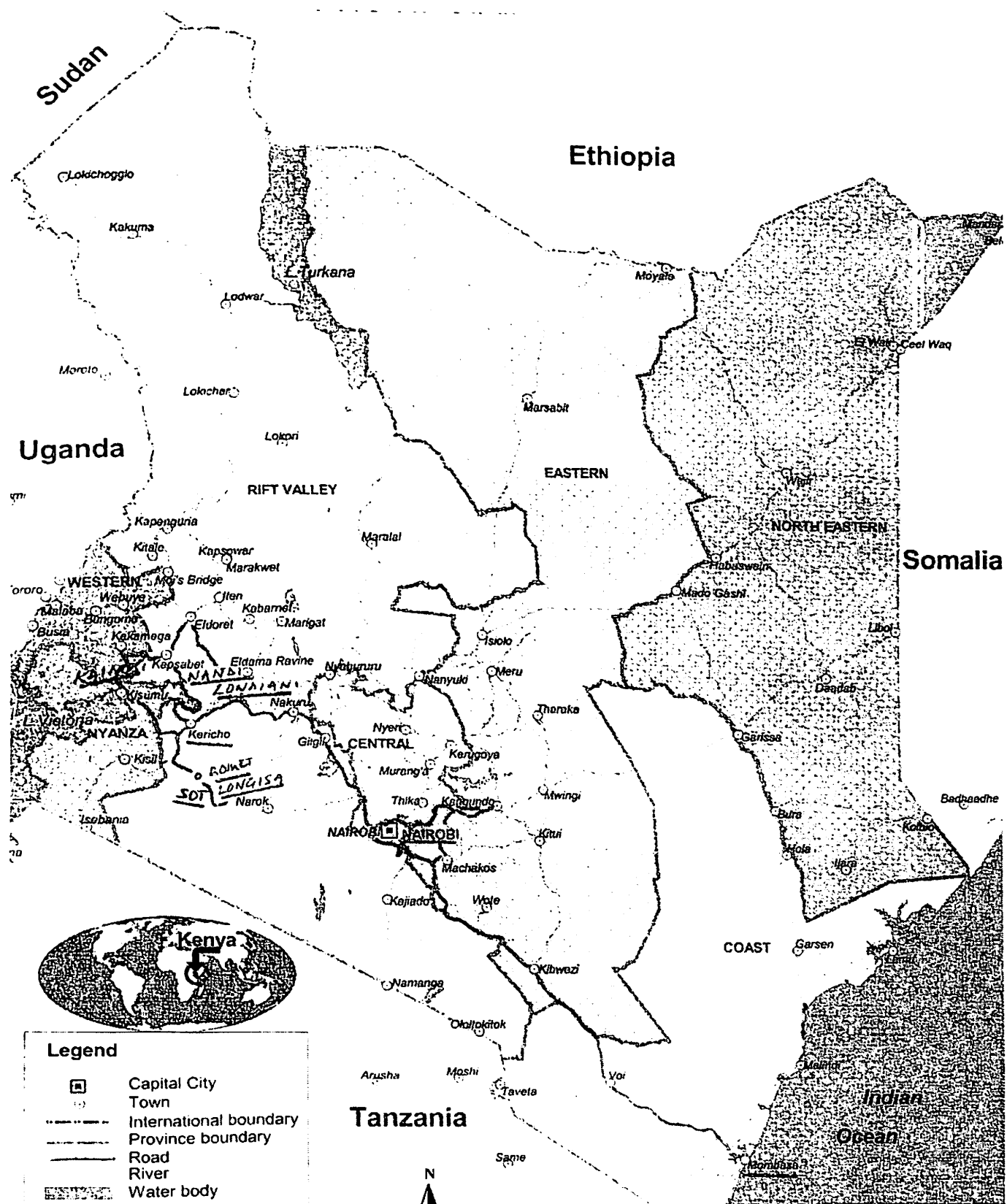
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Witness for the Africa Gospel Church*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Witness for World Gospel Mission Kenya*

Signed this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_



## Historical Places on the Map of Kenya



## Appendix 3

### Interview Questions

1. What do you consider to be the three greatest strengths of Africa Gospel church?
2. What are the three greatest weakness of Africa Gospel church?
3. Give three suggestions on how we can improve the health of Africa Gospel church.