



WORLDVIEW CLASH: IMPACT OF PERSISTENCE OF THARAKA TRADITIONAL WORLDVIEW ON CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AMONG EVANGELICALS IN THARAKA

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ABSTRACT

Christian discipleship is recognized by evangelicals as playing a pivotal role in the life of an individual Christian as well as the congregation at large. This is because it promotes character transformation which in turn makes one handle life diverse challenges including economic spiritual and social challenges experienced in our day. Although this is so, this emphasis is actually not done in many congregations in Tharaka as evangelicals see recommended in the Bible. One thing that hampers Christian discipleship in Tharaka is that many evangelicals still revert to African traditional worldview in the times of crisis. This is despite the fact that at many points, there is a worldview clash between evangelical faith and Tharaka traditional worldview. This consequently impends Christian discipleship. The research design used in this study was descriptive survey, stratified random sampling was used to obtain a representative sample. Using face to face interviews, focus group discussions and interviews, the study revealed that persistent of Tharaka traditional worldview among evangelicals promotes nominal Christianity, produces inconsistent Christians, promotes syncretism, demeans the means of grace, leads to poor evangelism, undermines the role of Jesus Christ in redemption and produces imbalanced theology. Informed by the theory of the Flaw of the Excluded Middle, the paper argues that evangelicals need to take note of the fact that the persistence of Tharaka traditional worldview aspects condemned by evangelicals among them would imply that these evangelicals are finding relevance in these worldview aspects. Evangelicals hence need to present the gospel at worldview level to allow the gospel to speak to the African reality. Thus African church will yield its spiritual influence in world Christianity as was the case in the period of the early church fathers.

Keywords: Worldview, Persistence, Discipleship, Evangelicals, Tharaka, Christianity

INTRODUCTION

Christianity in Tharaka and indeed in Africa, as we know it today, was not introduced in a vacuum. Already, the Tharaka had their own religion that formed the basis of their worldview (Ndunjo, 2018, Gitonga,2008). The Western missionaries, who introduced this Christianity, demanded that any African who converted to this faith should totally

abandon his or her beliefs and practices as a mark of genuine conversion (Mugambi, 1989)? This contrasted with the approach adopted Jesus since they did not demand wholesale was contrary to the proclamation of the apostles who did not demand wholesale abandonment of a convert's former culture but only aspects of the former culture which were the antithesis of the Christian faith. Accordingly, many continued to hold onto the Christian faith while secretly practicing their traditional faith. Some thus continued to keep protective medicine such as charms or have some incisions made on their body to safeguard themselves from malicious people such as witches and wizards. Others visit religious specialists such as diviners and medicine men especially during crisis in a bid to understand the source of their problem believed either to be caused by a human or divine agent. (Ndunjo 2018, Gitonga 2008).

The above situation prevails despite the fact that evangelicals in Tharaka oppose it? Informed by the Holy Scriptures, which evangelicals consider the infallible guide on matters of faith and conduct, evangelicals urge their members to reject any traditional worldview aspect that is out of sync with evangelical faith (Kirimi 2018). The supremacy of the Scripture comes in because for the evangelicals, "the Bible has stood the test of authoritativeness, reliability, inerrancy, non-contradiction and is universal" (Kigame, 2018). It can therefore speak to all cultures with authority.

The persistence of traditional worldview among evangelicals is well illustrated by evangelicals in Tharaka, Kenya. Many of them still hold on to the anthropocentric worldview as opposed to theocentric worldview (Ndunjo 2018). Similarly, they have a distinctive approach to suffering believing that suffering is always caused by a human agent such as a witch or a spirit agent such as an ancestor (Ndunjo 2018). Consequently, many visit divines and medicine men to find out the source of their problem and seek solutions (Ndunjo 2018). The fear of spirit beings, witches and sorcerers makes some evangelicals to look for protection in charms and other protective medicine. The fact that evangelicals in Tharaka and indeed in Africa hold on to these worldview aspects condemned by evangelicals impacts Christian discipleship. This study therefore sets out to discuss this impact.

Impact of Persistence of African Traditional Worldview on Christian Discipleship

From the aforementioned, we have noted that evangelicals in Tharaka, and by extension in Africa, continue to hold on to African traditional worldview considered incompatible with the biblical faith. This is in spite of evangelicals persistently condemning these practices. Below is a presentation of effects of holding on to some aspects of African traditional worldview considered unbiblical by evangelicals in so far as Christian discipleship is concerned.

Promotion of Nominal Christianity

When professing Christians continue holding on to aspects in the African traditional worldview considered unbiblical by evangelicals, nominal Christianity increases. The data from the questionnaires revealed that out of 321 respondents, 180 (56%) said that when professing Christians turn to diviners and medicine men for help, they with time no longer become serious in following Jesus. Similarly, 135 (42%) stated that the believers who turn to these religious specialists may eventually end up just becoming church goers without active involvement. Other respondents, 67 (21%), observed that those who turn to diviners and medicine men for help begin living their lives as they want. Also, 83 (26%) stated that such professing believers go to a Sunday service, listen to the pastor or the one sharing the gospel yet do not practice what they hear. Further, 116 (36%) stated that some walk in open rebellion while still professing to be Christians. In short, professing believers who continue visiting diviners and medicine men for help become a weak 'Christian' who can be described as a nominal Christian. There is no visible distinction with unbeliever, his or her worldview is unchanged out unconverted.

Similar views were expressed in the focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews. Muthee (01:20:10:2017) reported that when believers reverted to seeking help from diviners and medicine men because of their view of causation, they displayed several characteristics: lose their sense of commitment to the things of God as they no longer get involved in the service of God; may come late for service or may not come at all; remain alone and take the back seat while in the service; become disinterested in the work of God; no longer interested in prayer; display lack of trust in God and become uncomfortable when in the company of believers. If the sin is not confessed, one loses relationship with Jesus Christ and merely becomes a Christian by name (Muthee 10:20:10:2017). Nominal Christians do not demonstrate that Christ is Lord or master of their lives as they do not submit to his authority (Muthengi FGD: 20:08:2017).

As regards nominal Christianity (O'Donovan, 2000) notes that there are very many nominal Christians in the church of Africa today: these display an external change such as going for service on Sunday or having a Christian name but have no evidence of an internal transformation that affects their whole being (Kunhiyop, 2008). As a result, they resolutely hold on to deep-seated traditional beliefs and practices as their hearts are unconverted (Kunhiyop, 2008). Kunhiyop thus agrees with the respondents that when professing Christians continue sticking to worldview aspects which conflict with biblical Christianity, they demonstrate that they are nominal Christians.

Holding on to aspects of African traditional worldview which conflict with the Christian faith promotes nominal Christianity. Such individuals continue to profess to be Christians yet do not leave according to the Christian ideals required of a disciple of Jesus. Acts 19:19 indicates that at Ephesus, many who were involved in magic brought the things of their art to be burnt as a clear indication that they had repented and were willing to follow Jesus. Nominal Christians however have no evidence of repentance. The prevalence of nominal Christianity means that the quality of Christianity is weak, poor and below the standard brought out in the New Testament. It also means that this is the quality of Christianity that will be passed on to the subsequent generations (Ndunjo 2018). The church will continue expanding numerically but spiritually, it will be weak. There is need to arrest this situation. The way out is for all evangelical denominations in Africa to frequently preach and teach on how one becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ and what this means. This will mean that the place of repentance in personal conversation needs to be emphasized so that the people clearly understand who a disciple of Jesus Christ is and the marks of this disciple.

Normal Christianity has also implication for ministry. Christians are called to be the light and salt of the world (Matthew 5:13-16) this means they ought to have a positive impact wherever they are. This is possible if their worldview has been changed to reflect the biblical view of reality. Normal Christians lack this hence they cannot impact this space they are in with the gospel of Christ hence bring an impact. For institutions such as political, business, marriage, media and entertainment as well as education to continue flourishing the impact of gospel needs to be felt through Christians. One mark of Christian discipleship is abiding in Jesus Christ that is, maintaining a growing relationship with Jesus Christ as the true vine (John 15). This is a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. Retreating

to aspects of African traditional cosmology undermined by evangelicals does not produce such a relationship. On the contrary, the life of that believer is characterized by an inconsistent walk with God. For example, when believers who still hold on to African view of causation go through periods of suffering, they may give up their faith in God especially when they pray to God and God does not respond; so they choose to visit a diviner who has a quick fix to their predicament. They may only come back to Jesus Christ when the dark cloud clears.

Mwangangi (FGD: 27:08:2017) stated that some believers who still hold that the ultimate cause of suffering is a spirit agent such as an ancestor or human agent such as a witch, many a times become inconsistent in following Jesus Christ. They follow Jesus when it is convenient. When all is well, they feel God is on their side and that they are loved by him. On account of this, they joyfully love and follow God. However, when the road becomes rough and challenges present themselves, they are not willing to hold on to the Christian faith. Some leave the faith and seek help elsewhere, for example, in diviners. Some evangelicals too turn to God when they are in need and when they get what they want, they cease seeking Him. They never long for an abiding relationship with God or daily pursuit of God in all seasons of their life (Ndunjo, 2018).

While it may be true that some professing Christians may fall away from the faith during times of suffering as a result of thinking God is not concerned, this is not necessarily the case. Sometimes, difficulties may cause people to seek God the more. Also, some people may follow God the more when they see Him responding to their needs. What stands out however is the fact that it is possible for those who maintain the African view of causation and the anthropocentric worldview to seek help from African religious specialist rather than wait for God. When they do that, they do not display a supreme love for Jesus Christ, demonstrate their unwillingness to carry the cross and fail to continue abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ: all requirements of Christian discipleship (Ndunjo, 2018).

The situation among some evangelicals in Africa may indicate a failure of the evangelicals to help believers firstly, embrace the biblical theodicy that recognizes that God, who is sovereign is with Christians even in suffering. Secondly, evangelicals seemingly have failed to help believers embrace a theocentric approach to God. The view of causation addresses itself to the present crisis of this life and when evangelicals in Africa at most do not give an answer to the cause of the present crisis, believers will thus continue reverting to aspects of African traditional worldview considered unbiblical from the perspective of evangelicals. This is in accordance with the theory of the flaw of the excluded middle which maintains that western missionaries tended to ignore the middle zone which comprises of spirit, demons and powers when preaching the gospel to cultures that turned to have an emphasis on these zones (Anyanwe, 2004, Hiebert, 1982). Biblical perspective on these issues needs to systematically be presented to bring renewal of the mind in the lives of people. This way, many will cease follow Christ only when it is convenient.

Syncretism

The persistence of African traditional worldview gives opportunity for syncretism to manifest. In syncretism, believers practice dual allegiance: practising the Christian faith alongside traditional African religion. The results from the questionnaires revealed that 241 (75.2%) of the participants for instance affirmed that the persistence of Tharaka traditional worldview promoted syncretism.

In syncretism, the practitioner seeks Jesus's help while at the same time, visits diviners or medicine men to try out which side yields results. This was the case with the children of Israel in 1 Kings 18 when Elijah challenged them to choose whom to worship – God or Baal – instead of practising double allegiance Mwenda (01:13:11:2017) remarked that some professing believers visit diviners and medicine men when they are sick and at the same time, come to their pastor for prayer. They try both ways so that whatever works, they will be okay. He added that when this divided attention is tolerated, there is no seriousness in the things of God. The same individuals keep charms to protect themselves from witches while at the same time pray to God for protection (Mwenda 10:13:11:2017).

Syncretism is not only found among the congregants but also the church leaders. Mutembei (FGD: 20:08:2018) commented that some ministers of the gospel such as pastors also visited religious specialists to seek power to draw crowds while at the same time call on the name of Jesus Christ. This power may enable these ministers to tell people what they are going through or even help them perform miracles (Mutembei: FGD:20:08:2017). This way then, they become popular. Kiremu (2009) makes a similar observation when he notes that magical powers are used by some Christians in the healing ministry: these ministers do it by chanting magical powers through the help of the magicians.

It is indisputable that some ministers can with the help of magical powers perform miracles. These incidents are recorded in the Bible, for example, Exodus 7:11-12, 22:8:7. Jesus likewise said that not all those who preach in his name and perform miracles are necessarily his disciples (Matthew 7:21-23). Evangelicals consequently do not support use of magic as a way of accessing power. The Holy Spirit is legitimately the source of a minister's power: He enables the gospel to be preached with conviction and power (Acts 1:8). Depending on God while at the same time looking for help from magic is in itself an evidence of syncretism.

There is danger in syncretism. Gitonga (FGD: 27:08:2017) argued that disciples of Jesus Christ who for example entertain the belief that his or her ancestors can communicate to him or her through say a dream, and thus obliged to obey the message communicated, exposes himself or herself to deception. The reason is that it is impossible for the dead to appear to the living and communicate with them as they are not allowed to.

Commenting on this, O'Donovan (1992) notes that the dead are not free to leave their abode and visit the world of the living: communication between the dead and the living is cut. From the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31, it is alleged that verse 24-26 implies that the dead are restricted to the place assigned to them - Abraham tells the rich man that none can cross to where the rich man is and vice-versa even if one wanted (O'Donovan, 1992). Nevertheless, many evangelicals agree that it is only God alone who can permit the dead to leave their abode as it seemed likely with Samuel's appearance to Saul with a message of condemnation as is recorded in 1 Samuel 28:15-19 (Gehman, 1989). Similarly, Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus and three of his disciples though in this case, Moses and Elijah speak to Jesus only in Matthew 19:1-19 (O'Donovan, 1992). and not to Moses or Elijah.

Evangelicals therefore note that since the devil is called a liar and a father of lies (John 8:44), as well as deceiver (Revelation 12:9), the devil and his agents are able to imitate the dead relatives as they can appear in any form to human beings even as angels of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). As such, one can be deceived easily, thinking that the message is from one's ancestor while actually, it is from the deceiver of brethren, Satan or his agents (Nkansah, 2006). Syncretism no doubt affects one's relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ requires his disciples to love him supremely. In other words, there is no any other relationship that should supplant Christ's centrality in the life of believers. Since syncretism produces dual allegiance, this requirement of Christian discipleship lacks when one practices syncretism. Equally true, it is impossible to love God with the whole heart while at the same time, pay allegiance to what he hates, namely turning to diviners and medicine men in this context.

Syncretism too shows lack of trust in God's ability to help an individual which again shows that one is not willing to follow God whenever he leads, as a requirement of Christian discipleship. When divided loyalty exists, one fails to enjoy the fruit of abiding in Jesus Christ, one of which is answered prayer (John 15:16, James 1:5-6). Where syncretism exists, deception is not lacking as the sufficiency of Scriptures as a source of authority in matters of faith and conduct is ignored (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Evangelicals therefore need to help their members to accept the centrality of the Scriptures in guiding them in this pilgrimage and only embrace cultural beliefs and practices that do not contradict Scriptures.

Demeans the Means of Grace

Evangelicals see salvation as a means of grace. (Ephesians 2:5, 8-9). They too emphasize on the need of the believer to grow in the grace of God (2 Timothy 2:1). One way of growing in the grace of God is by utilizing the means of grace provided by God. These include prayer, fasting, reading and applying the word, fellowship and even worship. The responses from the questionnaires revealed that persistence of Tharaka traditional worldview demeans the means of grace provided by God to believers.

When evangelicals continue reverting to traditional religious specialists for help, they do not see the need for prayer as they see people such as diviners and medicine men as able to help them. Such people too tend to avoid fellowship with other believers as they think that believers know what they have done; they may have a sense of guilt which may keep them away (Ndunjo, 2018). In addition, these individuals may not have room for the word of God in their life. They may not depend on it for wise council and guidance as they have other sources of help. Therefore, believers who consult these specialists neglect prayer, Christian fellowship and the word of God, key means of grace for a disciple of Jesus Christ (Ndunjo, 2018).

The means of grace God has provided for believers are a means of deepening of a believer's relationship with Jesus Christ. Grudem (1994) too sees the means of grace provided by God as a way of helping a believer become more like Christ, a way of showing one's dependence on God and a means of allowing the Holy Spirit to take charge of one's life. Observing them then, discipleship is enhanced while neglecting them, discipleship is hindered. Coleman (1993) too makes a wonderful observation about this subject. He asserts that Jesus Christ helped his disciples learn his way of living with God. This was through his personal prayer life as well as use of Holy Scriptures. His disciples caught up these godly habits and passed them to their converts (Acts 2:42). No wonder they were unwilling to give up the ministry of prayer and the word to serve tables (Acts 6:4): they understood that their power and strength came from God. Simpson and Willard (2005) also state that humanity first fell into sin because of allowing deception to penetrate their mind and hence influence them; the way back is to allow the mind to be renewed through knowing the word of God and obeying it.

Since these means of grace are central in helping a disciple of Jesus follow him and overcome temptation, neglecting them has consequences. When a disciple of Jesus Christ ignores God's guidance through prayer, the word, the community of believers and seeks help from diviners, one denies himself or herself an opportunity to nurture friendship with Jesus Christ, his teacher and guide. One also lacks spiritual strength to overcome temptation hence may not be able to be vibrant in his or her walk with God and influencing others around him or her for Jesus Christ as is expected. There is more need to help believers recognize the benefits of these means of grace which are underrated when professing Christians turn to diviners and medicine men for help.

Moreover, in focus group discussion, Muthuri (FGD: 27:08:2017) reported that, "the current teaching that all believers should prosper and not suffer at all is gaining popularity in Tharaka as it resonates with the Tharaka view. Such teachings do not motivate believers to seek God at all times in order to deepen their fellowship with God. In a man-centered approach to God, one turns to God when there is need. One is not thus encouraged to follow Jesus closely when such a worldview persists:"

In order to respond to this assertion, it is good to note that Jesus Christ called his disciples so that he could have a relationship with them and secondly, send them to share the good news with others. (Mark 3:13-14). This underscores the fact that Jesus Christ's desire for his disciples is that he wants to have a personal and growing relationship with them. This should be key to anyone who would want to follow him. Since the underlying motive in a man-centered approach to God, as is the case with Tharaka Traditional Religion preachers in Tharaka, is what God gives not who he is, this relationship is hindered. Deepening one's relationship with Jesus Christ through the different means of grace is hence not pursued. The professing Christian therefore cannot follow Jesus Christ as is expected of a disciple of Jesus Christ for the motivation is not Jesus Christ but his gifts. Evangelicals in Africa hence have a task to present biblical truth to their congregations so that they can know the truth, hold on to it and share the truth with others.

Poor Evangelism

Christians have an obligation to pass on the Christian message to the next generation (2 Timothy 2:2). This implies that Christians as disciples of Jesus Christ should have thoroughly grasped and obeyed God's truth. It is in so doing that they can better prepare themselves to be effective ministers through words and deeds. However, many a time, this is not what happens among many evangelicals in Africa. Many first and second generation Christians are practising dual piety. They display outward religiosity on Sunday but in the rest of the week, they visit diviners, medicine men and even wear charms and other protective medicine – all condemned by evangelicals (Ndunjo, 2018). Young people therefore cannot see the older generation as good Christian models for they cannot see the Christian faith lived at home and in the society. So, the young become confused. Such may reject this poor quality Christianity being passed to them because there is no relationship between what is taught and what is practiced. These children may consequently rebel and indulge in antisocial behavior because of moral confusion. Some may also become agnostic or atheist, both growing worldview trends in Africa.

Secondly, individuals who continually turn to diviners, medicine men and other aspects of African traditional worldview condemned by evangelicals may eventually totally lose interest in their Christian faith and abandon it. This act may not be a good example to unbelievers, especially in circumstances where the person moving out was very influential and people looked to him or her for guidance (Ndunjo, 2018). In this case then, those that he or she was mentoring or those who considered the person a role model may be discouraged. The person who has fallen into this trap becomes a poor Christian witness. Again, believers who turned to medicine men and diviners lost their confidence

in sharing the gospel. This may happen if the sin committed was unconfessed and has been known by the public. If the sin however is not confessed before God, one will not shy away from sharing the gospel.

A respondent in the face to face interviews noted,

When believers are not an example in the community they are living in, the proclamation of the gospel is largely affected: unbelievers view those people as practicing hypocrisy for while publicly condemning visiting diviners and medicine men, these people secretly go to these religious specialists they are condemning to solicit help for themselves and their businesses. While these professing believers visit these religious specialists, they may meet those unbelievers who eventually expose their hypocrisy to the public. When such a thing happens, the church's power to witness in the community is hindered (Nyaga: FGD:27:08:2017).

Indeed, the conduct of believers is crucial in so far as lifestyle evangelism is concerned. Matthew 5:13-16 and John 9:5 shows that disciples of Jesus Christ are the salt and the light of the world. They thus have a responsibility to impact the society positively through the way they live their life. Dual allegiance ruins this witness. Titus 2:10 indicates that through their lifestyle, disciples of Jesus Christ should endeavor to make the gospel of Jesus Christ attractive to those who are around them. Coleman (1993) and Olander (2013) agree that lifestyle evangelism is a strong method of evangelism as it involves living the Christian life in a fallen world which is waiting to see such a life lived.

To sum up, we note that the reverting of some evangelicals in Africa to African traditional worldview considered unbiblical by evangelicals implies that something ought to be done. The proclamation of the gospel should be presented with a view to address this challenge; this is by presenting the gospel at the philosophical level. This is by letting the gospel meet the needs that make people turn to medicine men, diviner or even carry charms and amulets. Jesus should be presented as able to meet human fear, uncertainty, anxiety and so on.

Undermines the Role of Jesus Christ in Redemption

Jesus Christ has a special role in redemption: salvation of humanity from sin. During the annunciation of Jesus' birth, an angel of the Lord tells Mary that the child she will bear would be called Jesus because he will save his people from their sin (Matthew 1:21). The message of the gospel therefore should centre around the salvation of humanity from sin. Nevertheless, this is not so in the message propagated by the prosperity gospel proponents.

Regarding this, Nyaga (FGD: 27:08:2017) noted,

Anthropocentric approach to God, common among evangelicals in Tharaka and Africa in general, undermines the place of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death in salvation by emphasizing that people need to come to Christ so that they may receive physical blessing. Such a gospel has no place for the cross of Jesus and need for personal repentance, both of which are key in so far as following Jesus Christ is concerned.

Similarly, Adeleye (2011) and Musyimi (2016) state that the man-centered approach to God evident in the prosperity gospel misses out on the heart of the gospel: redeeming humanity from their sin. Likewise, this observation finds support from Allred (2003) who notes that Jesus Christ came to save humanity from state of lostness in sin (Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10). This was accomplished by Christ when he died on the cross and his blood was shed for the redemption of humanity as captured in Mark 10:45, Ephesians 1:7 and 1 Peter 1:18-19 (Allred, 2003).

The anthropocentric worldview in the prosperity gospel resembles the man-centred approach to God found in the African cosmology. In both cases, God is approached in order that He may intervene in human situation. The motivation behind coming to Jesus is to get physical and material needs not necessarily because they are aware of their sins and need to change. Such an approach, therefore, reveals that most evangelicals may not be aware of the true meaning of the gospel which revolves around Jesus death, burial and resurrection to purchase those who will believe in him from their lostness (1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 1 Peter 1:18-19). There is thus need for evangelicals in Africa to systematically and clearly preach and teach the true gospel, a gospel that is theocentric not anthropocentric.

On the other hand, evangelicals state that Jesus Christ is sufficient and well-able to address all areas of life: fears, anxiety, sickness, worries, deliverance and so on (Arnold, 1992). This is because Jesus Christ has been given a name greater than all other names and is seated at the place of honor and authority as high priest and mediator as brought out in Ephesians 1:20-23 and Philippians 2:9-11 (Arnold, 1992). To sum up then, when evangelicals continue fearing witches and seek personal protection outside God's will, visit diviners and medicine men, they undermine Christ's

role in redemption. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, one should discover the liberating truth and significance of the cross of Jesus Christ for in doing so, one is able to have confidence and security. There is need for evangelicals to emphasize on Christ's role as a mediator and high Priest to help believers love and take in this truth.

Regarding the role of Christ in redemption, Kabuiti (FGD: 27:08:2017) underscored that Christ's role in redemption is important as he is also God's voice for the world today. So, believers who claim to have received a message from their ancestors which they or their family members ought to obey, belittle Jesus' ability to guide them in their pilgrimage (Kabuiti FGD: 27:08:2017). Indeed, Jesus is the one chosen by God as his voice today and believers ought to listen to him allowing him to direct their every step (Matthew 17:5, Hebrew 1:1-2). This is through the Holy Scriptures. Hearing God through God's word should therefore be encouraged in churches in Africa.

Imbalanced Theology

Evangelicals have a special emphasis on the need for believers to anchor their faith in God's word. In the proclamation of the gospel, they too seek to present the whole council of God so that no doctrine is emphasized at the expense of others; all doctrines should be emphasized to maintain good theological balance (2 Timothy 2:15). Through this then, the purity of doctrine is maintained and healthy growth of believers cultivated. This theological balance however is threatened when Tharaka traditional worldview that conflicts with biblical faith still continues to guide the life of many evangelicals in Tharaka.

In respect to this, Turaki (2006) notes, "Traditional Africans believe very strongly that their destiny and well-being are controlled and manipulated by supernatural or unseen mystical power. Thus, they embark on a quest for power to enable them to predict, control and manipulate the spirit-powers for their own benefit They can consult specialists who have special means of gaining access to the spirit-powers and may make use of rituals, divination, ceremonies, sacrifices, incantation, symbolism, witchcraft, sorcery, charms, fetishes and white and black magic." For this reason, Africans have a desire to be associated with people with power.

Turaki (2006) additionally notes,

It is believed that by keeping in close contact or touch with great men or women such as heroes, heroines, leaders and warriors, one may be able to absorb significant measure of life force One result of this belief is that men and women of stature, status and power usually attract a great following and many disciples. This also applies to great religious leaders in modern Africa and to some extent among certain Christian groups in their expressions of African Christianity. The followers and disciples are usually attracted by the unusual spiritual and mystical powers manifested by the religious leaders.

People in this case follow these leaders not because of the social teachings they receive from them, but because their ministry has evidence of power the very thing they are looking for. Instead of signs and wonders accompanying them, they are pursuing them irrespective of whether what the leaders teaches is true or not. Kigame (2008) too renders support to Turaki's assertion when he notes that "people who do or look like they can wield power are often elevated over the word of God, over Christ and God the Father." The words or messages of such people is often taken as gospel truth and the followers of such people do not exercise the wisdom exemplified by the Bereans who after listening to Paul and Silas consulted the Scriptures to find out if what Paul and Silas were preaching was true (Acts 17:10-11). Such 'powerful preachers' in Africa are often called the men of God or the anointed ones. They hold a special place in their followers, that of demi-gods. The result of such imbalance is that it may promote personality cults in Africa. Even though this imbalance is a possibility on the account of Africans desire for power, Evangelicals should not be indifferent to the African interest in power. A biblical theology of power should be presented in a balanced way. Evangelicals should constantly teach their members to fully understand and appreciate that, God is the only source of legitimate power and He holds and sustains His creation under His providential and sustaining power. Any power obtained from sources other than Him are illegitimate and open to condemnation" (Turaki, 2006). A believer's source of power and security should thus be the omnipotent God who has revealed Himself to humanity through Christ Jesus; Christ whom even the winds and the waves obey him (Matthew 8:27). This Jesus lives in the heart of every believer and so a believer has all the power he or she needs to overcome every challenge in life; be it fear of witches, uncertainty about what the future holds or even going through a time of suffering. God is thus able to meet the deep longing among Africans that may lead them to desire power.

CONCLUSION

The effect of the continuity of evangelicals in Tharaka and other parts of Africa reverting to pre-Christian worldview aspects in conflict with scriptures especially during crisis is indeed enormous. This should not be taken lightly by evangelicals for this current condition is not working to strengthen the Christian faith in Africa but to weaken it. The weakening of the church in Africa not only affects Africa but also Christianity in the world. This is especially because Christianity is recording exponential growth in Africa than other parts of the world to the point that it has rightly been argued that the numerical growth of the church worldwide tends to lean south of the Equator: in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Jenkins, 2002).

The critical concern here is the type of Christianity that is being embraced and practiced by these many converts in Africa. If Christians in Africa have to experience spiritual depth in faith in the face of great expansion of the faith as well as brave the challenge of Islam and other faiths, Christian discipleship must be practically emphasized by the evangelicals and the issue of evangelicals reverting to their pre-Christian worldview intentionally addressed. By so doing, the church in Africa will not only experience rapid growth numerically but also spiritually hence playing a key role in world Christianity as was of the case in the early church fathers such as St. Augustine and St. Athanasius.

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