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The Adventist Church's Position and Response to Socio-Cultural Issues in Africa

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Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE ADVENTIST CHURCH'S POSITION AND RESPONSE

TO SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES IN AFRICA

A Project Report

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

John A. Kisaka

May 1979

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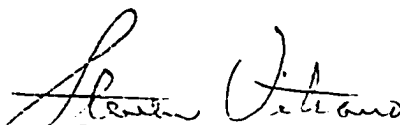
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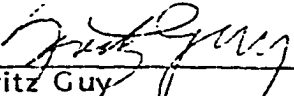
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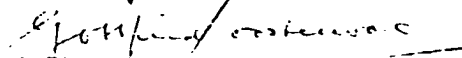
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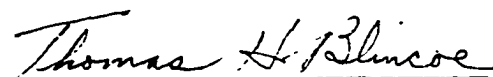
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May 30, 1979
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Africa, who must deal with the difficult issues described and analyzed in this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has been possible because of the special contributions of several individuals. Dr. Steven Vitrano, chairman of my doctoral committee, has spent many hours counselling and guiding me up to this final stage. Dr. Fritz Guy, another committee member, has provided expert advice in the preparation of this project.

Committee member, Dr. Gottfried Oosterwal, provided the inspiration for this project in a "Church Growth Seminar" conducted at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Dr. Arnold Kurtz's encouragement in the overall program is very much appreciated.

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It is my hope that this project will serve as a sign of my continued commitment to His cause.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Africa at one time was the bulwark of Christianity. The great church fathers such as Cyprian, Tertullian, and Augustine lived and worked there. During their days, there were thousands of Christians in North Africa. The Sahara Desert prevented all but a few Christian traders from reaching the West and South; but from Egypt, Christianity reached residents of the Nile River valley as far south as Ethiopia and aimed to spread to East and Central Africa, the heart of the continent.

In the seventh century, however, Christianity confronted and was almost destroyed by Islam. It took over a thousand years for the Christian movement to find its way to the heart of the African continent where it has grown for the last one hundred fifty years.

There is reason to believe that Christianity was not replaced by Islam primarily because of the bitter persecutions of Jihad (Islamic Holy War), for Christianity had survived terrible persecutions during the second and third centuries. The main reason was that Christianity in North Africa was not firmly rooted in the African context, in the day-to-day life experience; it had not identified itself with the common people.[1] The official language of the church was Latin, which ordinary people could hardly understand. The music and order of service were not within the African context. Many of the indigenous socio-cultural

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[1] John M. Staples, "The Church's Greatest Need in Africa," *Christianity Today*, June 7, 1968, pp. 10-11.

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practices were termed pagan, heathen, superstitious, and un-Christian. To Africans, Christianity remained a foreign religion, a religion of the white men. Islam, on the contrary, accepted Africans just as they were, and there was no major confrontation between Islamic and African socio-cultural practices especially in the areas of marriage, polygamy and dowry, and traditional religion (e.g., ancestor veneration).

Today, there are millions of Christians in Africa. The Seventh-day Adventist Church alone has about a million members and those who are in the baptismal class, according to the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (1979). Most of these members live in the rural areas and many of them in the extended families. Though Christianity has tried its best to identify with the common people in Africa today, there are still some unresolved socio-cultural issues such as polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration which will be discussed in this paper.

To respond to the challenge of bringing the Christian church more within the African context by attempting to resolve the socio-cultural issues is the goal of this study, "The Adventist Church's Position and Response to Socio-cultural Issues in Africa." This study is discussed in a paper which has two parts. Part One is entitled "The Church's Position in Relation to Socio-cultural Issues in Africa" and deals with five Biblical-theological principles (based on Acts 15) and three socio-cultural issues in contemporary Africa. Part Two is entitled "The Church's Response to Socio-cultural Issues in Africa" and proposes six methods for settling an issue. Finally, there will be some recommendations, a summary, and a conclusion.

Definition of Key Terms

Several key terms are used throughout this paper. Six of them are defined below.

Theology

"Theology" is derived from two Greek words: "theos" which means "God" and "logos" which indicates "word" or discourse or doctrine.[1] In dealing with the socio-cultural issues there must be some theological principles for determining the most appropriate response. The Biblical understanding of God will help us to know how God reveals Himself to nature, history, and culture. By studying and interpreting God's word carefully, many issues can be resolved in Africa.

Christianity

Christianity is the religion of the Christians who are the followers of Christ ("Christos" means "annointed") as presented in the New Testament.

Christ preached His good news of salvation in Palestine where He attracted disciples who then became apostles, "ones sent forth." Both the apostles and other followers of Christ proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus in Judea and beyond, especially when persecutions began in Jerusalem. The Gospel reached Antioch, the Christian headquarters in the Gentile world, where the believers were called "Christians" for the first time. By missionaries and gospel workers, Christianity now is almost

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[1] Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 24.

[2] Acts 11:26.

all over the world. It is now one of the major religions in Africa.

Church

"Church" is a translation of the Greek word "ekklesia" ("ek" means "out" and "kaleo" means "call").

> In the LXX ekklesia is the rendering almsot exclusively of the Hebrew qahal (I Kings 8:14, 22; I Chronicles 13:2, etc.), "gathering," "congregation," or "assembly." New Testament usage of the term seems to be based on the usage of the LXX.[1]

Ladd explains, "Ekklesia is never used of a building as is the English word 'church.' It is the assembly of saints for worship."[2] Ridderbos agrees, "In addition to the local and universal church, 'ekklesia' in the writings of Paul can have the significance of a religious gathering."[3]

This church, a community of saints, is still on earth, yet, "in the world" but not "of the world."[4] It is real and concrete. "Whatever else the church may be, it is a community of men responding to the gracious act of God. Whenever we emphasize that the church is a people called of God or that it is a people answering . . . we are equally concerned with a concrete, earthly people."[5] Since the church

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[1]Siegfried H. Horn, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1960), s.v. "church."

[2]George Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 210.

[3]Herman Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 329. Compare with 1 Cor 11:18; 14:19, 28.

[4]John 17:15, 16.

[5]Claude Welch, The Reality of the Church (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 19750, pp. 43-44.

is a human organization under God's leading, the church is subject to human social and cultural forces[1] which may become real issues. In Africa there are many churches today.

Culture

"Culture" has many shades of meaning with almost three hundred definitions.[2] Culture is the "total way of life of any society. . . . Every society has a culture, no matter how simple this culture may be, and every human being is cultured. . . ."[3] It is a fact that "culture is a body of ready-made solutions to the problems encountered by the group . . . a cushion between man and his environment."[4] It is a plan to which society adapts itself to its "physical, social, and ideational environment."[5] Since culture is a product of a society, the word "socio-cultural" is often used in connection with the issues in Africa. In this paper, culture is treated as African heritage.

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[1]Robert Worley, "The King is Dead: An Inquiry into Wise Rule in the Church," 1971, quoted in Arnold Kurtz, "A Design for Continuing Education in Church Leadership for Clergymen" (D.Min Project Report, McCormick Theological Seminary, 1975), p. 13.

[2]A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 291.

[3]Carol Ember and Melvin Ember, Cultural Anthropology (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 20.

[4]Ina Corinne Brown, Understanding Other Cultures (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 5.

[5]Louis J. Luzbetak, The Church and Cultures (Techny, Illinois: Divine Word Publications, 1970), p. 60.

Issue

An "issue" is a matter or question in dispute regarding a customary practice or behavior. An issue necessarily concerns people. In terms of this paper, such an issue is the result of a conflict or confrontation between accepted Christian ideals and an indigenous tradition. Following an initial culture shock, a traditional practice appears strange in light of Christianity, and vice versa. "Culture shock can be described as that emotional disturbance which results from adjustments to a new cultural environment."[1] If there is no acceptance of new practices the result is a confrontation or conflict which becomes an issue calling for discussion and decision. Failure to resolve an issue may produce tension leading to a more serious situation.

> When a man becomes involved in a way of life affected by his society, some degree of tension is created. Whether the tension be great or small, it is there, and it is almsot impossible for man to avoid confronting it. And this tension has to be taken care of, or he is very uncomfortable.[2]

In this paper three socio-cultural issues in contemporary Africa will be discussed.

An Extended Family

> An extended family consists of two or more monogamous, polygynous, or polyandrous families linked through a sibling tie; this variant is called a joint family. . . . Extended families may be quite large containing many nuclear families and including three generations.[3]

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[1]William A. Smalley, "Culture Shock: Language Shock, and Shock of Self-discovery," Practical Anthropology 10 (March-April 1963) :49.

[2]Kwang Rim Chough, "A Study of the Concepts of Worship Held by Korean Seventh-day Adventist Youth Undergoing Cultural Shift in the United States" (D.Min. Project, Andrews University, Michigan, 1978), p. 30.

[3]Ember and Ember, pp. 178-79.

The African extended family is usually built on the patrilineal pattern (descent through the father instead of the mother).[1] This family is a contrast to the nuclear family, a basic social unit consisting of parents and their children living in one household, which is the pattern common in the Western world.

Extended families tend to be found in societies with sedentary agricultural economies.[2] Thus many extended families live in the rural areas where they work together in communal tasks. It is no wonder that President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania introduced village communities (Vijiji vya Ujamaa)[3] for more effective government services and individual and group activities. Christianity is widespread among African extended families but has produced some difficult issues.

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[1]Ibid., p. 191.

[2]Ibid., p. 179.

[3]C. K. Omari, "Emerging Themes on Rural Development Policy in Nyerere Thoughts," African Theological Journal, No. 2, Arusha, Tanzania (1977):19.

PART ONE

THE CHURCH'S POSITION IN RELATION TO

SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES IN AFRICA

I. INTRODUCTION

Part One of this paper contains some Biblical-theological, and personal observations regarding the church's position on socio-cultural issues in contemporary Africa. The historic Jerusalem Council will serve as a Biblical case study, providing an example of solving a socio-cultural problem within the Christian church. This study considers five Biblical and theological principles: equality, unity in diversity, the dignity of man, salvation as a gift, and universality of the church, suggested in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, which are basic in dealing with and settling socio-cultural issues.

A discussion of three related socio-cultural issues in African extended families follows. These issues are polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration. These three selected issues will be theologically and practically examined.

It is the intention of this study to help in the resolution of these issues and contribute to the development of the Christian church in the African context.

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II. FIVE THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES IN ACTS 15

The fifteenth chapter of Acts, which deals with the Jerusalem

Council, was selected as a Biblical precedent or case study for a theo-

logical basis of this project. It is an outstanding chapter. "This is

one of the most important chapters in ecclesiastical history. This chap-

ter is magna charta of the Christian church."[1]

Acts 15 contains five theological principles which are fundamental

in dealing with an issue in the Christian church such as the one in

Antioch. These theological principles are equality, unity in diversity,

the dignity of man, salvation as a gift, and the universality of the

church.

Equality

While the Jerusalem Council was in session, Peter rose and said,

> Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice
> among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the
> word of the gospel and believe. And God who knows the
> heart bore witness to them, giving to them the Holy Spirit
> just as did to us; and he made no distinction between us and
> them, but cleansed their hearts by faith.[2]

The one key sentence which describes equality is "He made no distinction

between us and them." The phrase "no distinction" in Greek $o\dot{v}\delta\acute{e}v$

$\delta\iota\acute{e}\kappa\rho\iota\nu\acute{e}v$ suggests "no difference" as it appears in the King James

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[1]Joseph Parker, The People's Bible: Discourse upon Holy Scrip-
tures, 28 vols. (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Company,
1950) 24:67.

[2]Acts 15:7-9.

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Version. It indicates that "us" or "Jews" and "them" or "Gentiles" have the same means of salvation, and the same standing before God.

This theological principle has a far-reaching effect. It looks back to creation when God created man in His "image" and His "likeness."[1] God's plan from the beginning was that all men would be equal, but because of sin man's evaluation and estimation is that some are suprior or inferior. Thus the great cry in the world today is for equality both in national and international circles.

Unfortunately, the Jews had adopted the principle of "inequality" instead of "equality." This was the burden of Peter as he stood before this assembly.

There are several characteristics of equality. First, by creation all people are sons and daughters of God. Matthew traced the lineage of Jesus Christ to Abraham,[2] the founder of the Jewish economy and faith. Luke traced it to Adam,[3] the father of mankind. Thus, Luke, the author of Acts, suggests the importance of all humanity.

Second, by redemption all people are equal and the same before God. Jesus stressed, "whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."[4] In writing to the Galatians, Paul emphasized,

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.
For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on
Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither
slave nor free, there is neither male or female for you are
all one in Christ Jesus.[5]

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[1]Gen 1:26-27.   [2]Matt 1:1-17.

[3]Luke 3:24-38.

[4]John 3:16.

[5]Gal 3:26-28.

In writing to the Romans, Paul stressed that "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him."[1] Bruce comments, "The way of salvation and the terms of church fellowship were to be the same for Jews and Gentiles alike; their basis was God's free grace in Christ, to be received by faith alone."[2] And this equality is not limited only to the Jews and Greeks; it goes beyond and reaches deeper and wider down through the ages to all people.

Third, all are equal by the baptism of the Holy Spirit who dispenses spiritual gifts on all men. At the Council, Peter recalled his past experiences as he witnessed the historic Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and he also recalled his experiences with Cornelius, a Roman centurion. There Peter had "perceived that God is no respector of persons."[3] There the Holy Spirit fell on "all" of them. This manifestation of the Holy Spirit was a concrete sign that all were equally accepted before God.

Fourth, by the cleansing of their hearts all are made equal before God. Sin is the enemy of equality. It recognizes distinction between Jew and Greek and promotes hatred and racism. When sin is confessed and forsaken, members, whether white or black, become equal.

Thus in seeking a solution for a problem or settling an issue such as the Antiochian question before the Jerusalem Council, the theological principle of "equality" is necessary. Peace and truth were to be

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[1] F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of the Acts (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), p. 311.

[2] Acts 10:34.

obtained between the wounding (Judaizers) and the wounded (Antiochian Christians). This principle can work very well in dealing with the African issues described in this paper.

Unity in Diversity

At the root of the Antiochian issue was the theological principle of "unity in diversity." Unity means oneness, a condition of harmony, and accord. Diversity means different kinds or varieties. Unity and diversity have different meanings, but they are not necessarily opposites. For example, in the rainbow there is unity with different colors.

The Trinity (Godhead) is made up of the Three Divine Persons, but all in unity. God created men and angels; they differed, but were part of the same family of God before sin entered the universe. Indeed, in all creation, there is unity in diversity. This is God's plan. So, the gospel is to be taken to all peoples within their settings and cultures. The Word of God is for all, the Jews and the Gentiles alike.

The Jews misunderstood this great theological principle of unity in diversity. Instead, they adopted the principle of unity in conformity (conformity meaning the state of being similar or identical). The issue before the Council was, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."[1]

The Judaizers knew of "proselyting, but that meant bringing Gentiles into the Jewish church with an understanding that such converts should observe all things required of the Jews."[2] Bruce comments,

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[1] Acts 15:1

[2] Horn, p. 26.

> The vast majority, including even such hellenized Jews as
> Philo of Alexandria, insisted on circumcision as indispensable
> for all males in the commonwealth of Israel, whether they
> entered it by birth or by proselytization.[1]

The Council wished to retain the principle of unity in diversity as indicated in the speeches of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas who all had experiences with the Jews and the Gentiles. Although Council's delegates represented various theological views they were united by their common faith, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ. In Acts 15:1, "brethren" ἀδελφούς indicates closeness, harmony, and unity by different individuals or members (overlapping with the principle of equality): in verse three, "church" Ἐκκλησίας suggests a congregation, an assembly of brethren united in one faith; and in verse twenty-five, "one accord" ὁμοθυμαδόν indicates harmony in oneness. Praying for this unity or oneness, Jesus had said, "that they may all be one."[2]

In dealing with an issue in the Christian Church, this principle of unity in diversity must be maintained as one of the theological touchstones.

The Dignity of Man

The word "dignity" suggests basic worth, the quality of being worthy of esteem or honor. The dignity of man is one of the greatest theological bases in dealing with socio-cultural issues.

The dignity of man cannot be estimated because man was created by God in His image and likeness.[3] Man is "fearfully and wonderfully

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[1]Bruce, p. 302.   [2]John 17:21.

[3]Gen 1:26, 27.

made."[1] Man is made a little lower than the angels.[2] Jesus calls us "friends" if we do His will.[3] By creation and by redemption man is of great worth and dignity. As a cultural being, man must be respected and his culture honored as long as it is not contrary to God's law. Therefore, dealing with human issues is a very delicate thing which requires love, sympathy, and tact. The good example is how Jesus dealt with the Samaritan woman (John 4). He rebuked sin but respected a person.

Unfortunately, the Judaizers who came to Antioch violated to some extent the theological principle of the dignity of man. Peter pleaded before the Council, "Now why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"[4] The word yoke in Greek, ζυγὸν, means wooden bar or frame by which two draft animals as oxen are joined at the heads or the necks for working together. The yoked oxen had no freedom, were under control, and sometimes were cruelly beaten. There was no or very little dignity or worth in such beasts of labor. This illustrates the case of the Antiochian Christians in the face of the Judaizing teachers. "Besides, the yoke which some were now proposing to lay on the necks of Gentile Christians was one which they themselves and their forefathers had proved unable to shoulder."[5] No wonder jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."[6] While Jesus recognized the great value and dignity of those whom He

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[1]Ps 139:14.   [2]Heb 2:7, 9.

[3]John 15:13-15.   [4]Acts 15:10/

[5]Bruce, p. 307.   [6]Matt 11:30.

came to save, the Judaizers were only concerned that their imposed re-
quirements were practised by the Antiochians.

James, the chairman of the Council, suggested that "we should
not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God."[1] The verb "to
trouble" $\pi\alpha\rho\epsilon\nu o\chi\lambda\epsilon\iota\nu$ is complementary to the word "yoke" defined
above. It means to worry, to cause difficulty.[2] It suggests disturbing
others mentally, spiritually, physically, socially, and emotionally. This
reduces the value and dignity of man to that of animals or machines; man
becomes just a cheap thing which can be handled or manipulated.

The Council decided to send a letter and some brethren to
Antioch to relieve them from the unnecessary "burden" $\beta\alpha\rho o\varsigma$
(Acts 15:28) which refers to something oppressive and worrisome. Jesus
had warned the Pharisees about such burdens when He said, "They
bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders;
but they themselves will not move them with their fingers."[3]

> With all their minute and burdensome injunctions it was an
> impossibility to keep the law. Those who desired to serve
> God, and who tried to observe the rabbinical precepts, toiled
> under a heavy burden. They could find no rest from the
> accusings of a troubled conscience. Thus Satan worked to
> discourage the people, to lower their conception of the character
> of God, and to bring the faith of Israel into contempt.[4]

In dealing with issues, one must respect the dignity and impor-
tance of man, to promote love, joy, and peace, the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

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[1]Acts 15:19.

[2]Sakae Kubo, A Reader's Greek-Lexicon of the New Testament
(Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Printers, 1971), p. 116.

[3]Matt 23:4.

[4]Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, California:
Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), p. 29.

Salvation as a Gift

Salvation is a "free gift"[1] which comes to man through the grace of the Lord Jesus. This is another theological principle in dealing with issues in the church.

This free gift of salvation comes to all as indicated in Acts 15:8-11. God who knows the hearts (v. 8) of all people gave the gift of the Spirit to dispense blessings of salvation to all. Peter illustrated this by his personal experiences both with a Roman centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10), and the Christian Jews ("us" in v. 8). In this way, God made no distinction between Jews and the Gentiles (v. 9) who believed in Him. In fact, God cleanses the hearts of Gentiles by faith (v. 9) as He does to all sinners who come to Him. This great theological principle is developed later in more detail by Paul in his great theme of salvation by faith. So Peter summarized, "We believe that we (Jews) shall be saved through the grace of the Lord, as they (the Gentiles) will."[2]

To the Judaizers, this was not enough. Unless the Gentiles were circumcised according to the custom of Moses, they could not be saved. As Parker indicates, the Judaizing teachers insisted that the Gentiles obey Moses as well as Christ and add circumcision to faith.[3] Whitelaw sees the danger of the Jewish reasoning. Circumcision was directly challenging the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice as an atonement for sin.[4] This was contrary to the principle of salvation stated above. The Jerusalem Christians felt that they belonged to New Israel Society;

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[1]Rom 6:23.   [2]Acts 15:11.

[3]Parker, p. 67.

[4]Thomas Whitelaw, The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary, 32 vols. (New York & London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1953) 26:319.

they were Christians, but within Judaism.[1] They were all circumcised;

they worshipped in the Temple; and they held to the Holy Scriptures.

They found it very hard to believe that salvation was complete in

Jesus Christ. Though they saw Jesus dying on the cross, they did not

believe that that was the end of all feasts and offerings, that the type

had met the antitype.[2] This same Jesus who introduced circumcision

to Abraham had now abolished it and all the feasts, for they were point-

ing to His coming. In fact, Jesus had warned them against outward

show and observances. Thus, not good works nor keeping the Decalogue

but Jesus Christ was the source of their salvation.

In dealing with issues, the theological foundation of salvation

as a gift must be maintained since all will be saved by the grace of Jesus

Christ.

Universality of the Church

Paul was the greatest missionary to the Gentile world. As he and

Barnabas labored at Antioch, the mission headquarters, they were

obeying the Divine commission of Jesus Christ to "Go therefore and

make disciples of all nations.'[3] This commission was referred to by

John when he said, "Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with

an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every

nation, and tribe, and tongue and people."[4]

The church's mission is a universal one. The prophets of the

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[1] Balmer H. Kelly, ed. The Layman's Bible Commentary, 25 vols. (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1960), 20:86.

[2] White, p. 757.   [3] Matt 28:19, 20.

[4] Rev 14:6.

Old Testament, such as Isaiah, had been shown that the Gentiles would come unto the house of the Lord; others had been sent to the Gentile cities, as was Jonah to Nineveh. Jesus, too, during His earthly ministry went to the Samaritans, Greeks, and Romans, and even beyond the Jewish borders. The persecution in Jerusalem had caused many to go to Asia, Europe, and Africa. Peter and some of the apostles had already made some contacts with the Gentile converts. The principle of the universality of the church was ordained from heaven and initiated by Jesus Himself when He left Heaven for earth to save men and women.

The Jews had misunderstood this principle; they did not entertain the idea of the universal church for all.

> They did not become the light of the world, but shut themselves
> away from the world in order to escape temptation to idolatry. . . .
> But it was used to build up a wall of separation between Israel
> and all other nations. The Jews looked upon Jerusalem as their
> heaven, and they were actually jealous lest the Lord should show
> mercy to the Gentiles.[1]

Even those Jews who became Christians still required the Antiochian Christians to abide by Jewish practices and culture. They expected too much of them, and they were disappointed when the Antiochians rejected their instructions.

With the Jewish emphasis on circumcision, there was little hope for Christianity to be a world-wide religion.[2] There are many tribes and nations who do not practise circumcision. Since this is not a requirement for man's salvation, people must be allowed to be Christians in their own settings, backgrounds, and cultures. "Men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers. . . .

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[1]White, p. 29.

[2]Whitelaw, p. 319.

Church planters who enable men to become Christians without crossing

such barriers are much more effective than those who place them in

men's way."[1]

However, where there is a conflict between the Word of God

(divine) and culture (human) it is better to obey God than man. This

is a very important criterion. Thus, the Council, in its letter to the

Antiochians, emphasized the keeping of God's law (e.g., the first,

sixth, and seventh commandments which were often broken by the

Gentiles).

The Council was beginning to realize its mission task and its

implications and to understand the relationship between the older and

the younger churches and the equal and mutual responsibilities among

churches throughout the world.

> The church was both flexible and firm . . . while refusing
> to compromise with paganism and demanding strict conformity
> to high moral standards by its members, the church nonetheless
> allowed those members to maintain familiar cultural practices which
> were not in violation of the essentials of the Christian faith.[2]

From Acts 15 there have been drawn the theological principles

which were either consciously or unconsciously observed by the Jeru-

salem Council in settling the Antiochian issue.

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[1]Donald McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 198, 200.

[2]E. LeRoy Lawson and Tetsunao Yamamori, Church Growth: Everybody's Business (Cincinnati, Ohio: A Division of Standard Publishing, 1942), p. 29.

III. THREE SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES

In this section the writer will discuss three selected socio-cultural practices which have become issues confronted by the Christian Church, especially in African extended families. These issues are polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration.

In considering the positions on these issues, we will bear in mind the five Biblical-theological principles discussed in the previous section and in certain cases we will apply them. There is a main reason for this application. The writer believes that the five Biblical-theological principles served as a sure foundation in resolving the Antiochian issue which was brought before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). The same principles can be a strong foundation in resolving the socio-cultural issues in the Christian church in Africa.

First, the equality of man can apply to all Africans, whether they are polygamists, dowry givers-receivers, or ancestor venerators. In spite of different practices, customs, traditions, cultures, and heritages God sees all people equal because He created them and He wants to redeem them.

Second, even in Africa itself, there is unity in diversity. All Africans are human beings. They have the same basic needs such as food, shelter, marriage, sex, religion, and so on. But, they differ in their tribal customs, traditions, cultures because of the geographical positions, climate, and traditional backgrounds. They never attempt to

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bring all Africans to unity in conformity, that is, all things to be similar or identical, for this is quite impossible. Some live in the cities, others in the rural areas, and still others on the mountains where it is cool or down in the valleys where they are constantly experiencing the tropical heat.

Third, Africans respect the dignity of man. To them, man is a social and cultural being. Whether it be a child or an adult, a man or a woman, he or she is an important member of the society. Africans want to be free to do things in their own way. They hate imposed foreign cultures which break their family solidarity, disorganize the society, and exploit their heritage. They hate wars and slavery which result in making a person a mere object of nature, an animal, a chattel, or piece of machine to be manipulated. They like to encourage the dignity of man.

Fourth, since salvation is a gift from God to all, the Africans will be part of that great number of the redeemed, that great multitude of the saints which will be in the Kingdom of God. Since this salvation comes to all as a gift through the grace of Jesus Christ, and not because of our works, customs, and cultures, all have an access to the Kingdom of God.

Finally, the universality of the church includes all Africans who accept Jesus as their Savior. The gospel news has to reach the polyga-mists, dowry givers-receivers, and ancestor venerators. An American or European or African or Asian will be there regardless of his lifestyle, culture, and heritage. The main requirement is to know God and do His will.

Polygamy

This section will deal with the definition of polygamy, some Biblical-theological positions, and several socio-cultural considerations on polygamy.

Definition

Polygamy "is the state or practice of having two or more wives or husbands at the same time; plural marriage."[1] Ember defines polygamy and two other related terms in this way: "polygamy is a marriage to more than one spouse simultaneously; polygyny is a marriage of one man to two or more women at a time; and polyandry is a marriage of one woman to two or more men at a time."[2] In the area discussed in this paper, polygyny is very common, while polyandry is a very rare practice. Throughout this study, except where indicated, polygamy, which is a common term, will be used instead of polygyny.

There are two types of polygamous marriages. First, consecutive polygamy is having one spouse after another in a sequence involving divorce and marriage. It is not strange to find someone with two or three former wives or husbands in the Western World where the divorce-marriage rate is climbing rapidly.[3] Consecutive polygamy is sometimes called serial monogamy. In the New Testament, serial monogamy is alluded to in the case of the Samaritan woman to whom Jesus said, "For

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[1]Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Edition (1974), s.v. "polygamy."

[2]Carol Ember and Melvin Ember, Cultural Anthropology (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 388.

[3]Robert Hughes and others, "The American Family: Future Uncertain," Time, December 28, 1970, pp. 42-44.

you have had five husbands and whom you now have is not your husband."[1] A consecutive polygamy may include a remarriage after the death of one's spouse. In fact, during Jesus' time it was an issue brought before Him by the Sadducees.

> Teacher, Moses said, "If a man dies, having no children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. So too the second and the third, down to the seventh. After all the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, to which of the seven will she be wife? For they all had her."[2]

Second, simultaneous or contemporaneous polygamy is having more than one spouse at the same time. It is a common thing in an African extended family for a husband to have three or more wives at the same time. This kind of polygamy is socially and legally accepted among most people of sub-Sahara Africa where Christianity is widespread.

Some Biblical-theological Positions

In this section several sources will be consulted such as the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, some commentaries, and the policies or actions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Old Testament has much to say about polygamy and persons who married more than one wife. The writer appreciates the good work of Roland de Vaux in his book, Ancient Israel, which deals with the social institutions. He lists Bible chapters and verses connected with this study and some of these references will be used.

With regards to Adam and Eve, the first human beings (Gen 2: 21-24), monogamy presents the will of God to this type of marriage.

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[1]John 4:18.   [2]Matt 22:24-28.

"The patriarchs of Seth's line (e.g., Noah in Gen 7:7) are said to be monogamous, and polygamy first appears in the reprobate line of Cain, when Lamech takes two wives (Gen 4:19)."[1]

Abraham, the founder of the Jewish economy and a friend to God had one wife, Sarah, and it was because she was barren that he took her handmaid Hagar, at Sarah's own suggestion (Gen 16:1-2). Abraham also married Keturah (Gen 25:1), but since this is related after the death of Sarah (Gen 23:1-2), Keturah could have been his lawful, wedded wife. In Abraham's case, we learn that he took Hagar in order to get a child because his wife, Sarah, was barren. This is the main reason indicated in the context. He took Keturah because his wife, Sarah, died and Hagar was not his legal wife but simply a handmaid or concubine. In those days, a concubine was not regarded as a legal wife.

> In all this the patriarchs are following the customs of the time. According to the Code of Hammurabi (about 1700 B.C.), the husband may not take a second wife unless the first is barren, and he loses this right if the wife herself gives him a slave as concubine. The husband can, however, himself take a concubine, even if his wife has borne him children but the concubine never has the same rights as the wife, and he may not take another concubine unless the first is barren.[2]

Jacob is another example of the Old Testament polygamists. Jacob married two sisters, Leah and Rachael, each of whom gave him her maid (Gen 29:15-30; 30:1-9), and Esau had three wives who were of equal rank (Gen 26:34; 28:9; 36:1-5).

When the Israelites entered Canaan, polygamy continued to be practised by many, even judges and kings. Gideon, for example, had

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[1]Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961) 1;24.

[2]Ibid., p. 24.

many wives and at least one concubine (Judg 8:30-31). Samuel's

father had two wives, one of whom was barren (1 Sam 1:2). Hannah

was barren but she prayed to God for a child. God, who is no respector

of persons, heard her prayers and she was given a boy who was named

Samuel. God hears prayers even in the home of a polygamous husband.

According to 2 Chr 24:3 it appears that the priest Yehoyada had chosen

two wives for King Joas.

> In a society which tolerated polygamy, the possession of a
> large harem was a mark of wealth and power. It was also
> a luxury which few could afford, and it became the privilege
> of kings.[1]

Many kings of Israel were real polygamous husbands. Saul had

at least one concubine (2 Sam 3:17), and elsewhere there is mention of

his "wives" (2 Sam 12:8). Even when David was reigning only in Hebron,

he already had six wives (2 Sam 3:2-5), and in Jerusalem he took more

concubines and wives (2 Sam 5:13; cf. 2 Sam 19:6), including Bathsheba

(2 Sam 11:27). When he fled from Absalom he left ten concubines in

Jerusalem (2 Sam 15:16; 16:21-22; 20:3). According to 2 Chr 11:21,

Roboam had eighteen wives and sixty concubines. Abiyyah had four-

teen wives according to 2 Chr 13:21. But all these are eclipsed[2] by

the fabulous harem of Solomon who had, according to 1 Kgs 11:3, seven

hundred wives and three hundred concubines. He had a total of one

thousand, a number which has never been reached by a known African

polygamist.

> There was, it seems, no limit to the number of wives and concu-
> bines a man might have. Much later, the Talmud fixed the
> number of wives at four for a subject and eighteen for a king.
> In practice, however, only royalty could afford the luxury of a

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[1]Ibid., p. 115.   [2]Ibid.

large harem, and commoners had to be contented with one
wife, or two at the most.[1]

The levirate: this social institution is mentioned in the Bible.

According to a law of Deut 25:5-10, if brothers live together
and one of them dies without issue, one of the surviving orothers
takes his widow to wife, and the first-born of this new marriage
is regarded in law as the son of the deceased. . . .

This institution is called levirate, from the Latin levir, trans-
lating the Hebrew Yabam ('brother-in-law'). Only two examples
of it occurs in the Old Testament, both of them difficult to inter-
pret and only imperfectly corresponding to the law in Deuteronomy:
the stories of Tamat and Ruth.[2]

Concerning levirate, Vaux continues,

This story of ancient times presents the obligation of the levirate
as much stricter than in the law of Deuteronomy; the brother-in-
law may not decline the duty, and it passes to all the surviving
brothers in turn (cf. Matt 22:24-27).[3]

By studying the levirate marriage carefully, one may observe

these essential factors. The essential purpose is to perpetuate male

descent, the "name," the "house," and of course the first child was

considered the child of the deceased man. It was not mere sentiment,

but an expression of the importance attached to blood-tie. In addition,

the levirate marriage prevented the alienation of family property. This

consideration appears in Deut 25:5, which makes it a condition of the

levirate that the brothers should be living together. This kind of

levirate and its implications can be observed very clearly in the African

extended families. That is why my uncle has three wives; one of them

a widow left behind by my uncle's brother who died ten years ago.

Though there are no explicit Bible verses on polygamy in the

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[1]Ibid., p. 25.   [2]Ibid., p. 37.

[3]Ibid.

New Testament, especially on the simultaneous type of polygamy, there are some allusions to the consecutive polygamy as indicated in John, chapter 4 and Matthew, chapter 22. Paul, in writing to Timothy, specified that a bishop should have one wife. "A bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife . . . let deacons be the husband of one wife."[1] Though there may be some theological interpretations to this, it is clear that a bishop must be a man of "one wife" and not two or more (polygamy).

The Bible records too the bitter experiences in a polygamous marriage. A barren wife would be despised by her companion (e.g., Hanna and Peninnah, in 1 Sam 1:6), even if the latter were a slave (cf. Sarah and Hagar, in Gen 16:4-5); and the barren wife could be jealous of one with children (as Rachel was of Leah, Gen 30:1). The husband's preference for one of his wives could make this rivalry more bitter (Gen 29:30-31; 1 Sam 1:5), until eventually the law (Deut 21:15-17) had to intervene to prevent the children of his favorite from receiving more than their fair share of the inheritance.[2]

A sincere and frank African polygamist may ask a question: Do not jealousy, envy, rivalry, hatred, and the like happen in the homes of monogamous marriages? Is it not possible that jealousy takes place between two families of monogamous marriage; one childless couple being jealous of the other with their children? Rivalry between children of the same monogamous family? Backbiting between man and his wife? In most cases jealousy, rivalry, and hatred, which happen in the polygamous homes, are not due to polygamy as such, but because the

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[1] 1 Tim 3:2, 12.   [2] Ibid., p. 25.

devil is everywhere--both in the polygamous and monogamous homes.

Another argument may be that it is impossible for the polygamous man to love his wives equally. An instruction was given in the Bible: "Husbands, love your wives."[1] This argument is not grounded. If a monogamous husband can love his four children, without dividing his love; a polygamous husband may love his four wives without dividing his love. Love begets love, love can be doubled or multiplied, and love can be shared. One day an African teacher wept when she said goodbye to her forty students. She loved them all. She wept because she would never see her students again as a group after their graduation.

Another argument may be: too many children of the polygamous marriage become impersonal. One chief who had fifty-four wives and more than two hundred children, asked one of his sons, "What is your name, young man?" The boy looked at the ground in shame and replied politely, "I am your son, Father." Are there not some impersonal children in some monogamous homes too? Do all those young people in the prisons or reformatories come from the homes of the polygamists? In every home there should be true training, discipline, love, and care for children.

Some Bible commentaries share the same view on Lamech's case of polygamy.

> Lamech was the first to pervert marriage as ordained by God into the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh, without even the pretext that the first wife had no children. Polygamy was a new evil that held its ground for long centuries.[2]

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[1] Eph 5:25.

[2] Francis D. Nichols, ed. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953) 1:243.

Calvin comments, "We have the origin of polygamy in a perverse and degenerate race."[1] Though Skinner agrees with the rest he feels that there was "no judgment passed on Lamech's bigamy and probably none was intended." Having more than one wife was Lamech's choice, and God respected his choice. He was free to choose to do good or evil and accept the consequences accordingly.

Concerning polygamy, two quotations are taken from the writings of Ellen G. White.

> Polygamy was practised at an early date. It was one of the sins that brought the wrath of God upon the antediluvian world. Yet after the flood it again became widespread. It was Satan's studied effort to pervert the marriage institution to weaken its obligations, and lessen its sacredness; for in no surer way could he deface the image of God in man and open the door to misery and vice.[2]

> Polygamy had become so wide-spread that it had ceased to be regarded as a sin, but it was no less a violation of the law of God, and was fatal to the sacredness and peace of the family relation. Abraham's marriage with Hagar resulted in evil, not only to his own household, but to future generations.[3]

Both the Bible and Ellen G. white indicate that God instituted monogamous marriage only.[4] The phrase "one flesh" means more than some realize. It suggests a true family with total love, sharing, responsibility, unity, and equality.

There is no direct order from God that a polygamous husband "found living in a state of polygamy when the gospel reaches him, shall upon conversion be required to change his status by putting

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[1]John Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries, 45 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948) 1:217.

[2]Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), p. 338.

[3]Ibid., p. 145.   [4]Matt 19:4-6; Gen 2:24.

away all his wives save one, before he shall be considered eligible for baptism and church membership."[1] This is the issue which will be developed in Part Two of this paper.

Some Socio-cultural Considerations

So many African husbands practice polygamy that it is "well-nigh universal in tropical Africa."[2] In African society there are some basic factors underlying polygamy.

There may be four major factors. The first is to ensure children. To an African married couple, bearing children is of paramount importance. Nothing tortures an African married couple as much as the absence of a child in the home. A barren woman or sterile man would pay any price to a physician or to an African herbalist to be able to bear children. Children add to an extended family, which is an asset to the tribe and the nation. A child is a blessing from God. A barren African wife would freely request her husband to get another legal wife to bear children. A man must have children to be remembered as one of the ancestors.

A second, basic factor of polygamy is that it avoids immorality. The Western mind associates polygamy with immorality. This may not be quite true. In fact, African polygamy discourages immorality.

There is a good deal of justification for the generalization that until outsiders came, prostitution (and there is some justification for adding promiscuity and homosexuality) was scarcely known in the interior of Africa. Polygamy in the form of polygyny was

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[1]General Conference Committee Minutes, The Archives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington, D.C., June 5, 1941.

[2]Stephen Neil, A History of Christian Missions (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1964), p. 495.

widely practised, but its rules were strict and it was not a form of licentiousness.[1]

When his wife, for any reason, is incapable of sexual intercourse (during pregnancy and weaning--about two years), a husband relies on his other legal wife or wives. This makes fornication or adultery less likely.

Third, polygamy is an economic asset. The more children and wives one has, the more man-power is available for farming, building, shepherding, and ceremonial festivities.

> When a family is made of several wives with their households, it means that in time of need there will always be someone around to help. This is corporate existence. For example, when one wife gives birth, there are other wives to nurse her and care for the children during the time she is regaining her vitality. If one dies, there are others to take over the care of her children. In case of sickness, other wives will fetch water from the river, cut firewood, cook and other jobs for the family. If one wife is barren, others bear children for the family, so that the torch of life is not extinguished. Where peasant farming is the means of livelihood, the many children in a polygamous family are an economic asset--even if they also must eat plenty of food.[2]

Thus the polygamy issue should be considered in its basic underlying factors which are social, economic, and cultural. Such consideration should be grounded on the five Biblical-theological principles discussed above.

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[1]Ralph E. Dodge, The Unpopular Missionary (Westwood, New Jersey: F. H. Revell, 1964), p. 145. See also Noel Q. Kind, Religions of Africa (New York, London, and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 75.

[2]John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1969), pp. 142-43; cf. Remi Clignet, Many Wives, Many Powers: Authority and Power in Polygynous Families (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 20.

Dowry

Definition

Dowry is a marriage gift or present. It is not a "bride's price," for Africans believe that dowry giving is not a matter of buying or selling wives.

> Marriage gifts are the legal instruments which authorize the husband and wife to live together and to bear children. . . . The gifts may consist of foodstuffs, drinks, money, cattle, sheep, goats, utensils, ornaments, tools, and other material things, and possibly also of work done by the groom and his relatives for those of the bride. The gifts are given during engagement and continue after marriage. They are not to be regarded as payment for the wife, even if some greedy parents today act as though they were selling their daughters to get money.[1]

The "bridal payment" is Western thinking, and unfortunately many books report that Africans buy and sell their wives and thus discredit their love. Dowry expresses a "big thank-you" to the parents of the bride for raising a daughter who is beautiful and worthy. It is also a small token for the loss of the daughter and her service from their home as she joins another extended family. It is never a price or payment.

> In accordance with ancient custom, money (or other valuables) was given by the bride-groom to the father of the bride as compensation for his loss of a daughter. The payment gave assurance that the bridegroom was able to support his bride.[2]

Some Biblical-theological Reflections

The holy Scriptures have little to say about dowry, a custom practiced by some of the people of the Old Testament. Perhaps it was never an issue. This reflects how little the Word of God interferes

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[1] John S. Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion (New York: Praeger Publishes, 1975), p. 101.

[2] Horn, p. 278.

with people's customs and cultures as long as they are not contrary
to the will of God.

The Bible suggests three types of dowry practice in the Old
Testament. First, the Hebrew word zebed suggests an endowment or
gift which is given to the bride. Second, the Hebrew word mohar
indicates a present given to the father of the bride. And the Hebrew
word shilluchim suggests a father's gift to his daughter.[1]

> The mohar was a sum of money which the fiance was bound to pay
> to the girl's father. The word occurs only three times in the
> Bible (Gen 34:12; Exod 22:16; 1 Sam 18:25). The amount could
> vary; it depended on the girl's father (Gen 34:12), and on the
> social standing of the family (1 Sam 18:23).[2]

Jacob worked for a dowry to get his wife Rachel (including
Leah), daughter of Laban who lived in Haran. He not only gave
marriage gifts, but also worked for Laban fourteen years to get his two
wives. Some of the marriage gifts were given to Laban's daughters as
a parting gift. This was a provision for their new home.

There is another aspect of dowry relating to the bridegroom.
He must prove that he is a dependable and hard working young man.

> In early times custom required the bridegroom, before the ratifi-
> cation of a marriage engagement, to pay a sum of money or its
> equivalent in other property, according to his circumstances, to
> the father of his wife. This was regarded as a safeguard to the
> marriage relation . . . generally the dowry which the father had
> received was given her at her marriage . . . the ancient cus-
> tom . . . was productive of good results. When the suitor was
> required to render service to secure his bride, a hasty marriage
> was prevented, and there was opportunity to test the depth of
> his affections, as well as his ability to provide for the family.[3]

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[1]Horn, p. 278; compare with Gen 30:20; 34:12; 1 Kgs 9:16.

[2]Vaux, p. 26.

[3]White, Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 188-89.

Ellen G. White comments on dowry either in material things or service. First, as a safeguard[1] to the marriage relation. Second, as a provision for the support of a family. Third, to show that the man is dependable. Fourth, to give the couple enough time to know each other and escape hasty marriages which can bring a new home into a disaster.

Some Old Testament bridegrooms gave dowrys either at once or by installments which continued after engagement. Some gave goods, and others preferred money.[2] Even kings were not exempted from this practice; in fact one king gave a city "as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife."[3]

Dowry was mainly practiced in Old Testament times and there is no direct or indirect disapproval of it. Evidently it was not an issue. However, dowry is one of the issues in Africa because it is discouraged.

Some Socio-cultural Positions

In African extended families, the dowry practice is a custom handed down from one generation to another for centuries. It is socially and legally accepted in many African communities. The dowry has some basic underlying factors.

One of the factors is that the dowry unites members of an extended family. It is not the business of the bridegroom alone, but of

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[1] Ellen G. White, The Adventist Home (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1925), p. 92; cf. Ellen G. White, Messages to Young People (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1930), p. 46.

[2] Exod 22:17.   [3] 1 Kgs 9:16.

the bridegroom, his parents, close relatives, and intimate friends. Each contributes a little until the whole dowry is complete. Thus it is not a burden at all, although the bridegroom often takes a larger share than the rest, for it is his dowry for his wife. For example, at my own marriage I gave six head of cattle (four cows and two bulls) for my wife. I worked for only two cows; the rest were purchased with money contributed by my parents and close relatives.

The custom of dowry draws all the members of the family together. Cooperation is appreciated, and nothing offends a relative more than being overlooked in contributing to the dowry for a prospective bride. Some of the dowry will be spent for the wedding, and no one wants to miss the wedding service and feast.

The African dowry stands as a guarantee for good treatment and a legal proof that a woman is officially married. The man gives the dowry because he is the head of the house, not because he is less important than the woman. Thus, the marriage gifts "bind the man and the wife together in the sight of their families. They stabilize marriage. They are the symbol of the marriage bond or covenant. They seal up the sacred relationship."[1]

On the wedding day, the woman joins the man, and she carries with her some of the dowry materials for her new home. This is a sound provision for the young couple. Some of the dowry is divided among the parents and the very close relatives, while some is kept untouched for a long time, for it may be refunded should something happen to break up the home of the new couple. Nothing is taken for granted in dowry

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[1]Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion, p. 101.

policies in the extended family.

It is very interesting to note that where dowry is practiced, especially in Africa, the rate of divorce is low. Usually, in Africa, a dowried wife can hardly run to her parents or to the judiciary for small provocations. She thinks of her parents, dowry, husband, and children and decides to keep her home at all cost. By doing so, she maintains her composure, dignity, and worth.

Sometimes greedy parents demand too much. This discourages the marrying couple, and if the man fails to give the dowry the couple may resort to elopement, a practice hated by Africans. If the couple agrees to pay the high dowry in installments over a period of years, it becomes a burden, a debt for a new, young family. The result is the seeds of hatred of the demanding parents.

Like polygamy, the dowry has remained a problem, an issue in African extended families. Some missionaries, indoctrinated African brethren, church boards, and church policies do discourage the dowry custom on the grounds that dowry is pagan and un-Christian. The belief is that Africans are selling their daughters. This is a socio-cultural misunderstanding, and it must be corrected within the African context.

Ancestor Veneration

Definition

African ancestor veneration plays an important socio-cultural role in African extended families. Some historians report that Africans worship the dead, a practice referred to as ancestor worship. This is

a mistaken Western interpretation. In the opinion of many, Africans do not normally worship the dead, but they remember, venerate, and respect the names, deeds, memories, places, and events of their dead ones. "For no African prays to his dead grandfather anymore than he prays to his living father. . . . The Swazi address them in much the same way as they speak to the living."[1]

Africans often take time to remember their deceased loved ones. They hate to sense an everlasting separation. In one way or another, they must be connected, but they do not necessarily worship their ancestors. "African religion is wrongly called ancestor worship. . . . Africans do not worship their departed relatives . . . they show people's belief that the departed of up to four or five generations should not be forgotten."[2] Ancestors, therefore, are not worshipped but venerated.

Ancestors are men or women of distinction who are well known in a family and society. They are former national or tribal leaders, heroes, founders, rain makers, priests, kings, and medicine men. Therefore, not every one is called an ancestor.

> There are large numbers of deceased who never become ancestors: children, barren women or sterile men, cripples, social drop-outs, people who die away from their homeland, outcasts, and those who in any way incur social censure or disapproval.[3]

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[1]E. Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion (London: SMC Press Ltd., 1973), pp. 181-82.

[2]Mbiti, p. 16.

[3]Aylward Shorter, African Christian Theology (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1975), p. 126.

Some Biblical-theological Considerations

The Bible contains a large amount of records on the ancestors: their names, deeds, places where they lived, memories and events connected with them down through the centuries. In fact, in Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3 we have the genealogy of Jesus Christ from Adam, the great ancestor of man to Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born.

The Israelites during the Old Testament and the Jews during the New Testament times remembered and respected their ancestors. In their homes they remembered, venerated, and talked about their ancestors. In the temples and synagogues they sang and preached about their ancestors in connection with God's dealing with them for their salvation and protection. This is good.

Adam, the first great ancestor of all human beings is often mentioned in the Bible in connection with the story of creation and fall of man. He is the first on the list of genealogy of Jesus Christ as mentioned above.

Noah is another figure remembered as an ancestor who was found faithful before the flood, and one of the very few people who survived from the flood. He lived nine hundred and fifty years (Gen 9:29). By tracing the years of these great ancestors (including Noah's) we can study the chronology of the Bible.

Among the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stand out the foremost as ancestors. The Jews often were proud of their great founders and ancestors. "We are descendants of Abraham" (John 8:33), the Jews told Jesus. They asked Jesus, "Are you greater than our

father Abraham" (John 8:53). The word "father" means "forefather"
or "ancestor" in this context. Jacob's well in Samaria (John 4:6) con-
stantly reminded them about Jacob their ancestor.

Moses too is among the great ancestors in the Jewish economy and
faith. Moses' law refers to ceremonial practices, health, land, property,
and people. It became Judaism, the lifestyle of Jews. Above all,
Israelites and Jews venerated Moses and his deeds in freeing God's
people from the Egyptian bondage under God's leading. David devoted
the whole chapter of Psalm 78 in recounting the deeds and events which
happened in delivering Israelites from Egypt.

David is another great ancestor of the Jews. No wonder Matthew
began his first chapter with these words, "The book of the genealogy
of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1). In
the list of pillars of Jewish ancestry, David has his prominent place. On
many occasions Jesus was called the son of David (Mark 10:47). They
highly remembered, respected, and venerated David.

The Jewish people remembered too the places, deeds, and events
connected with their past history. The following are just a few.

The first stop of the Israelites after crossing the Jordan was
ha-Gilgal, the Gilgal. Here they camped (Josh 4:19-22), were circum-
cised (Josh 5:9), and celebrated the Passover (Josh 5:10). At this
place Joshua set up twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan and
instructed people to teach their children (and future generations) about
God's leading through the dry river, a miracle.

Some trees were remembered as sacred and important. One of
these is the Palm Tree of Deborah, somewhere between Ramah and Bethel

where the prophetess used to settle disputes between Israelites (Judg
4:5). Not far from here, below Bethel, there was the Oak of Tears
which was connected with the death of Rachel's nurse (Gan 35:8).
Near Hebron there stood the Oak of Mambre, where Abraham set up an
altar (Gen 13:18), and under which he received the three mysterious
visitors (Gen 18:4, 8); it was venerated until the Byzantine epoch.[1]
Even some mountains or hilltops were venerated if some great experiences
or events were associated with them. One of these mountains is Thabor,
the possible place where the Transfiguration took place (Matt 17:1).

It is very interesting to note that even family graves were kept
and venerated, a practice of some of the Old Testament patriarchs, such
as Abraham.

> Machpelah . . . a place near Mamre, consisting of a field with
> trees on it and a cave at one end of the field. This property,
> which belonged to Ephron the Hittite (Gen 23:9, 17), was pur-
> chased by Abraham, after a series of typical Oriental negotia-
> tions, as a family sepulcher (v. 3-20). In this cave were buried
> Sarah (v. 19), Abraham (ch. 25:9), Isaac, Rebekah, Leah
> (ch. 49:29-33), and Jacob (ch. 50:12, 13).[2]

It is very interesting to note how the Bible records the culture
and lifestyle of God's people. Africans who have similar trees as oaks
and palms, which are tied with life experiences, may read these stories
of veneration with great interest.

The problem is that some ancestor venerators may go to an
extreme and place their ancestors in the place of God, thus breaking
the divine law, "You shall have no gods before me."[3] Some ancestor
venerators believe that the dead return home, not in physical, but in

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[1]Vaux, p. 279.   [2]Horn, p. 672.

[3]Exod 20:3.

spiritual bodies. In the Kipare language, these spiritual beings are called mizuka. In the Old Testament they are known as "familiar spirits."[1] In the King James Version of the New Testament they are called "ghosts." Even the disciples were once frightened when they mistook Jesus for a ghost walking on the water in Galilee. Many Africans believe that there are mizuka. Ancestor veneration becomes wrong when it teaches that the dead are not dead, but alive.

There are some important similarities between Christian practices and the ancestor veneration that is a part of African traditional religion. There are three basic similarities. First, the record of the names and deeds of the dead in the Bible serves as history and chronology; ancestor veneration offers a library of memory as the elders tell and re-tell the past history and deeds of their departed people.

Second, Christians keep pictures and images of their deceased ancestors and relatives. They keep them on the walls, in purses, on tables, in bedrooms, and in public places. In the past, Africans could not keep such pictures and images as they can today. Instead, they had drawings, tablets, engravings, and skulls. In the Kipare language a human skull is called nkoma, which means highly respected. No child is allowed to play with a skull or touch it in vain.

Third, Christians go to cemeteries to visit the places where their loved ones are buried. There is nothing wrong with that if there is no sense of worship or belief that the dead are still alive. So Africans visit graves to remember their dead, to pay respect to them. While Christians place flowers, cement the grave nicely, and write the name and date on

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[1] 1 Sam 28.

gravestones, African ancestor venerators mark the grave-sides with stones and grow some plants to identify the place.

Often people like to go to cemeteries, even make pilgrimages, for example, to Westminister Abbey, Rome, and the Holy Land. Students at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary often travel to Battle Creek, Michigan, to visit Adventist historical sites, including the grave of Ellen G. White, where a guide briefly explains her life and the life of her family. People take pictures, too. There is nothing wrong in this since they do not worship her.

Ancestor veneration is not altogether bad, as is believed by most Westerners, some Africans, or some church manuals and policies. There are good aspects and moral ideals.

> Ancestor veneration is certainly comparable to the Christian
> cult of saints in so far as it is an expression of the moral
> ideals of society and Christian experiments in exploiting Afri-
> can attachment to their ancestors have usually met with
> success.[1]

Some Socio-cultural Considerations

As a part of African religion, ancestor veneration has an important place in extended families. First, ancestor veneration acts as a family library, a history of the past people and their deeds. Though African today has educational institutions and libraries, in many rural areas the "memory library" still goes on as elders tell and re-tell the past to their young.

Second, ancestor veneration is a unifying factor of family members. It ties families together as brothers and sisters of one big family.

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[1]Shorter, pp. 126-27.

Africans, in most cases, like to move as a team, not as individuals. "The ancestors are factors of cohesion in African society. This is a fact well illustrated in the sacred stools which are the ancestral symbol of the Ashanti, especially the 'Golden Stool.'"[1] Thus, ancestor veneration is a unifying factor for the living and the deceased in an African society. It ties the past and the present.

Behind all the ancestors, Africans believe that there is God, the chief of all ancestors, the source of all mankind. For instance, the Akan, Nyakyusa, and Zulu believe that God is both a true God and an ancestor of man.[2] In this respect, Africans acknowledge that there is a God, the Creator of man.

Ancestor veneration is an aspect of African traditional religion. There are some good moral ideals which, if rightly employed, could contribute much to the Christian church in Africa. But ancestor veneration is discouraged in Africa by some missionaries and indoctrinated Africans on the grounds that it is pagan, heathen, and un-Christian. This is the issue which will be dealt with in Part Two.

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[1] Idowu, p. 185.

[2] Harry Swryer, God Ancestor or Creator? (Bristol: Western Printing Services, 1970), p. 95.

IV. THE RELATION OF THE FIVE BIBLICAL-
THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES TO
THE THREE ISSUES

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) resolved the antiochian issue partly because the Council, likely, had a foundation of the Biblical-theological principles, such as equality, unity in diversity, dignity of man, salvation as a gift, and the universality of the church as discussed in this study. These principles, if followed carefully, may be a basis in settling the socio-cultural issues such as polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration in Africa.

First, the principle of equality must be maintained in dealing with all the three issues considered in this paper. By creation and redemption all people are equal before God. When people accept God they are called sons and daughters of God. This was true with the polygamists, dowry givers-receivers, and ancestor venerators who accepted God wholeheartedly during the Old Testament times. Abraham, who took Hagar in order to have a child and avoid terrible social shame, was a friend of God. Jacob, who gave dowry to Laban for his two wives, was named Israel. Both monogamists and polygamists (mentioned in the Old Testament) who loved God sincerely stood equally before God. Some of them such as Abraham, Jacob, and David were not only believers of God, but also held high responsibilities among God's people and were included among the progenitors of Jesus Christ.

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This same Biblical-theological principle could also be applied in Africa today where there are those found by the gospel in such situations. One exception is that a polygamist should not hold the office of a bishop or a deacon as instructed in 1 Timothy 3.

Regardless of color, culture, and background, God accepts those who come to Him just as they are, teaches them about His law and love, and sanctifies them. Peter emphasized it before the Council's delegates that there was no distinction between Jews and the Gentiles before God if they accepted Him wholeheartedly.

Second, the principle of unity in diversity must be observed in resolving the three issues. God's people are united because they have the same Jesus, the same gospel, the same faith, the same hope, the same Holy Spirit, and the same salvation before God. This is unity. However, because of different climates, environments, cultures, and backgrounds, people live, act, behave, and solve their basic problems differently. This is diversity. The Judaizers wanted unity in con-formity but the Jerusalem Council recognized the principle of unity in diversity if Christianity was to be a world religion as Jesus had com-missioned.

This unity in diversity should be observed in Africa in dealing with the three socio-cultural issues discussed in this paper. The gospel found many Africans practicing dowry, polygamy, and ancestor venera-tion. This is because man is a social being. Man has his culture, tradi-tion, and heritage. Some of these elements are for the family solidarity and marriage stability, a guarantee for the sure life in that particular African setting.

Third, the principle of dignity of man ought to be considered in settling the three issues. If there is Christian dignity, there is also socio-cultural dignity of man for he is a social and cultural being.

Normally, an African is polygamous, not because of the lust of the eye or flesh as some Western commentators interpret, out mostly because of the social, economic, and cultural necessities of life such as a childless couple wishing to have children, farming man-power, and perpetuating family ancestry.

In order to respect the dignity of man the Jerusalem Council decided to leave the Antiochians alone. It refrained from imposing Judaism or Jewish lifestyle upon the Antiochians who had their own way of living.

Fourth, the principle of salvation as a gift must be retained in dealing with these issues. Man's work, custom, culture, and heritage cannot buy eternal life. This free gift is offered to all freely and equally. Peter, like Paul in later years, stressed that both the Jews and the Gentiles are saved thorugh the grace of Jesus Christ. This principle includes the Africans who belong to various tribes and nationalities; who also have different socio-cultural practices as those discussed in this paper. Jesus Himself said that if people loved Him, they ought to keep His commandments which were easy.

It is interesting to note that dowry, ancestor veneration, and polygamy as socio-cultural practices are not condemned in the Bible. They are not even included in the Decalogue among those openly re-ceiving divine disapproval such as stealing, killing, and so on. Why? God knows. Any practice which violates God's law must be dropped.

The Decalogue is the standard of judging all man's practices, and a foreign culture should never be used as a criterion.

Fifth, the principle of the universality of the church must be sought in resolving issues. The Jerusalem Council realized that if Christianity was to be a world religion there was to be a change of policy in relation to the mission of the church as Jesus commissioned them (Matt 28:19, 20). Since not all peoples practiced circumcision, the Antiochians, for example, there was no need to require those who came to Christianity to be circumcised. So with marriage, not all peoples are monogamists, not all practice dowry, and not all peoples are ancestor venerators. What a diversity of cultures and heritages in the world! Nowhere in this world can people be compelled to conform to one practice, custom, and culture. What monotony that would be if the world were of one people and one culture. The mission of the church should grasp this principle as the gospel is presented, particularly to the many peoples of the Third World countries.

V. CONCLUSION

The writer's intention is not to <u>encourage</u> these socio-cultural practices, such as polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration in the African extended families. His concern is on the basic elements of these practices which stabilize marriages, maintain family solidarity, and protect African heritage. Most of these essentials have been <u>dis-couraged</u> by the overseas missionaries and indoctrinated African leaders on the ground that these socio-cultural essentials are pagan, heathen, and un-Christian. The Word of God does not condemn them as long as they do not come in conflict with the Decalogue which is the standard rule.

From the study in this paper, these three socio-cultural prac-tices have the basic underlying factors which are social, economic, and cultural. Like the Antiochians, the Africans prefer to keep their cul-ture, tradition, and heritage which are the possible solution for their life problems in their own setting.

If these five Biblical-theological principles are applied, the socio-cultural issues of polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration can be settled. This application will promote the mutual responsibilities and understanding of older and younger churches, not in terms of superiority or inferiority, but on equality before God.

> Christianity can permeate any part of the socio-cultural
> setting or make the whole over anew. An American can
> become a Christian as an American, without being made

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over into a Nigerian. A Nigerian can become a Christian as a Nigerian without becoming an American.[1]

In Part Two, six methods or strategies in resolving the issues will be studied. Those methods will be based on the Biblical-theological principles discussed in Part One as sure foundation in settling issues.

Thus we may conclude with the wise saying which states that in matters of taste (culture) one can swim with the current, in matters of principle (Decalogue) one can stand as firm as a rock.

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[1]Marvin K. Mayers, Christianity Confronts Culture (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 16.

PART TWO

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO SOCIO-CULTURAL

ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

I. INTRODUCTION

A number of unresolved issues facing the church in Africa
today have been caused by misinterpretation, misunderstanding, misin-
formation, and cultural dissonance. Some Africans feel that the major
single cause for issues in conflict is the imposition of foreign culture
by establishing Western churches on the African church in the name of
Christianity. Thus, both Western culture and the Bible become the
standards for salvation in the minds of Africans. This tension has caused
Africans to view Christianity as a foreign religion, a religion of white
men. Unless this view is corrected, the Christian church in Africa
will continue to be discredited.

This paper proposes some methods and procedures for dealing
with issues in general and with socio-cultural issues in particular. The
specific issues considered are polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration
which are most frequently found in African rural areas where Christianity
is most established.

As indicated in Part One, the polygamous husbands in African
extended families desire their cases to be reconsidered. Presently, they
are required to divorce all but one of their legal wives to be eligible for
baptism and full membership in the Seventh-day Adventist church. They
do not like the idea of being "probationary members"; they want to be
candidates for the Kingdom of God. Polygamous husbands and wives
argue that the Gospel message found them in that state, and they fear

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that divorce will produce a terrible family disaster, not family solidarity.

Most polygamists do not seek to hold church offices because they understand the instructions in 1 Timothy 3 that a church officer should be a "husband of one wife." They also agree that their children who have the benefit of Christian up-bringing should not be allowed to practice polygamy and remain in the church.

As indicated in the Position Paper dowry is simply a marriage gift. To the Western mind, dowry is a bridal payment or the bride's price which suggests that Africans buy their wives, thus discrediting their true love and dignity. If wives are bought and sold they are mere chattels.

Some of the African Adventists who practice dowry have been discouraged. Those who practice dowry argue that in the Old Testament times some believers in God, such as Jacob, practiced dowry.

Ancestor veneration, as explained in the Position Paper, is another aspect of African tradition, which has become an issue confronting the Christian church. Many practices associated with it have been called heathen, pagan, and un-Christian. There may even be good socio-cultural elements in this practice which could contribute much to Christian life if they were not ignored.

This paper presents a method or strategy which may prove helpful if applied to these three issues in Africa. This procedure has six steps which are information, consultation, discussion, decision, education, and evaluation. These six methods are grounded on the five Biblical-theological principles studied in Part One, as follows:

1. If all persons are equal, then information should be made available to all, consultation can be sought among equals, and equals are free to discuss issues as equals.

2. Unity in diversity is best achieved through all of the steps: information, consultation, discussion, decision properly arrived at, education, and evaluation.

3. The dignity of man presupposes that he is entitled to be informed, he is worthy of consultation, he is entitled to discuss and decide freely and is also entitled to education.

4. Salvation as a gift cannot be appreciated without knowledge, discussion, education, and decision. The gospel informs and teaches. We respond through being informed, considering, and deciding.

5. The universality of the church can best be achieved, maintained, and served through consultation, education, and evaluation.

While these steps may be observed in the on-going life of the church as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, they could be applied to most ecclesiastical issues in Africa.

This paper will consider their application only to the issues of polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration as found in rural Africa where there are many extended families and where Christianity is strongly established. Western culture dominates urban Africa, minimizing these issues in those areas.

It is a belief that these methods have not been followed carefully in the past. So it is the desire of the writer that this project, with God's blessing, will be a help to the Christian church in Africa.

II. PROPOSED METHODS IN DEALING

WITH SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES

The following methods or strategies which are mostly based on

the Jerusalem Council (Part One, Section II) are suggestions that

could be followed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa in

an attempt to resolve the socio-cultural issues.

Information

The Relation of "Information" to the Biblical-theological Principles

Possibly the Jerusalem Council sought all the available information

as its strategy in resolving the Antiochian issue.

This strategy "information" relates to the theological principles

discussed in Part One in that information serves to promote unity in

diversity. It also is a natural consequence of recognizing that all are

equal and therefore deserving of equal information.

The concern for information is seen at Antioch in that, first,

Paul and Barnabas and some of the other Antiochian delegates knew

the issue well, and that is partly why they were appointed to go to

Jerusalem. Peter who had some personal experiences with the Gentiles'

conversion (Acts 10), such as that of Cornelius, had enough information

for the Council. James, the chairman, knew the Judaizers and their

teaching well. So with all the representatives from the early Christian

churches. Peter, like Paul, had already known that God was no respecter

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of persons. The Jews and the Gentiles stood equally before God (15:9) as far as the gift of salvation was concerned (15:11).

Paul, Barnabas, Peter, and James, the chief pillars of the Council, had seen how Christianity was becoming a world religion as Jesus had commissioned them (Acts 1:8). James quoted the Old Testament as he informed the delegates that the conversion of the Gentiles was not a strange thing in the plan of redemption for the prophets had predicted it (15:15-17). The fact that nations seek the Lord suggests the universality of the church.

This method of information as grounded on the Biblical-theological principles can work well as a strategy in an attempt to resolve the three issues in the following section.

The Relation of "Information" to the Issues

A first important step in solving an issue is to secure all the information on an issue. There are several methods in which they may be done.

The issue must be carefully defined and, if possible, categorized as either theological or cultural. There is a fundamental difference between the two categories.

This was the procedure followed by the Jerusalem Council. First, it defined the issue as indicated in Acts 15:5. Second, it aimed to separate the socio-cultural practice of circumcision from the laws of God as revealed in the context. The delegates, such as Paul, Barnabas, Peter, and James, were well informed about the issue and they supplied the required information during the discussion in order to settle the Antiochian issue and avoid chaos and schism in the early Christian church.

It is interesting to note that many of the issues that disturb the church are cultural rather than theological. Issues can arise because of misunderstanding, misinformation, misinterpretation, prejudice, bias, anxiety, or cultural dissonance. It can be caused by an imposed foreign culture on the African lifestyle. Ellen G. White stated, "Too many of the methods and habits and fashions have been transported from America to Africa, and the result is not favourable."[1]

To define the issue is not enough. There must be reasons why an issue is an issue. In all issues there are essential factors to the people who are affected and involved as in those of polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration.

Some issues are local and others are more widespread or universal. Local issues are confined to individuals or groups in the local church or conference or field. Issues should be dealt with at their roots. A widespread issue may involve a union conference, division, or the General Conference.

It is helpful to know when the issue began, if it has been discussed before, and if decision was reached. If it is a new issue, one may need to discern how long it is expected to take to resolve or settle the matter in order to plan intelligently.

Polygamy

There are usually two categories of people to be considered in the issue of polygamy, those affected and involved, and those involved but not affected. "In any African socio-cultural issue such as polygamy,

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[1]Ellen G. White to a leading missionary worker in Africa, Manuscript Release 491, E. G. White Research Center, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

usually Africans are the ones affected and involved while missionaries are involved but not really affected."[1] There is some truth in this assertion. African polygamists must suffer the loss of their wives and their wives suffer separation from their husbands and children and the property they have jointly accumulated with their husbands. They experience the terrible situation of a broken home. They are really affected and involved. On the other hand, the missionaries are involved in committee discussions and decisions but are not directly affected. When their terms end they usually return home permanently.

Polygamy is widespread in rural areas of Africa among extended families.[2] Thus, the problem is both local and general, for it covers a vast area of the continent of Africa. In this case, the polygamy issue must be resolved within the African divisions of the church.

The issue of polygamy confronted the Christian church with its first encounter with polygamists in Africa during the early part of the nineteenth century. The Seventh-day Adventist church first faced the issue in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Since then it has received much attention in Christian literature. McClement says, "The greatest of all hindrances seemingly is polygamy. . . . Plurality of wives is the curse of Africa. . . ."[3] Polygamy in "heathen lands" became a real problem which received the attention of the General

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[1] Interview with Gado Ongwela, December 28, 1978. Mr. Ongwela is a Kenyan Seventh-day Adventist teacher employed by the church. Polygamy is practised in Kenya.

[2] Aywarld Shorter, African Culture and the Christian Church (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973), p. 174.

[3] William McClement, "In Mission Lands--Nigeria," The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, September 25, 1924.

Conference. In 1930 it was voted that polygamists could not become full members "unless or until circumstances shall change so as to leave them with only one companion."[1]

The 1959 edition of the Southern African Division supplement to the Church Manual's stated position of the church on polygamy is given below.

> A man found living in a state of polygamy when the gospel reaches him, shall upon conversion be required to change his status by putting away all his wives save one, before he shall be considered eligible for baptism and church fellowship.[2]

Polygamy is still an issue because polygamists still request full membership in the church. For example, the fathers of a married couple in Tanzania desired membership in the church. One had two wives and the other five. All of their wives became members of the Chome Seventh-day Adventist church.[3] Both men pleaded to be baptized into church membership while keeping their wives and children. This request was denied. One of the men died in his African religion, leaving behind his Christian widows and children. The other was baptized on his death-bed after renouncing all his wives except one.[4]

The author was the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary to the Masai tribe of Tanzania, East Africa. This tribe practi ed polygamy.

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[1] Statistical Department, Minutes of Meetings of the General Conference Committee, the Archives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington, D.C., November 3, 1930. See appendix A, p. 97, and June 6, 1941, p. 99.

[2] Southern African Division supplement, Church Manual (Cape, South Africa: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1959), pp. 319-20; see appendix A, pp. 98-99.

[3] See appendix a, p. 109.

[4] Personal experience of the author.

After seven years three Masai women were baptized in 1970. Many more followed. One of the Masai polygamists accepted Christianity along with all his family. His wives were all baptized into full membership, but although he pleaded for baptism the local church board which sponsored the work among the Masai followed the Southern African Division Supplement to the Church Manual and would not permit him to be baptized unless he divorced one of his two wives.

He was a sincere friend of the author and loved God with all his heart. After seven years he tearfully decided to divorce his first wife. The church hoped this action would be a good example for the Masai polygamists. He was baptized and given a new name, Isaka (Isaac), in accordance with the custom that new Christians adopt new names.

After a few weeks, however, the first wife returned and begged to be taken back into the home to avoid a life of prostitution. The man took her back into the home and resumed the marriage relationship.

One Adventist employee commented, "Polygamy is practiced in many areas in West Africa, both in the English and French-speaking countries. It is an issue which requires complete information and discussion to reach a meaningful decision."[1]

Dowry

The people affected and involved in dowry are the Africans who practice it. Missionaries, unless they get married there, are usually involved only in the committees which make decisions about it. Some

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[1] Interview with Joseph Nkou, December 26, 1978. Mr. Nkou is from the Cameroons, West Africa and has worked for the Seventh-day Adventist Church for seventeen years. Polygamy is practiced in West Africa.

are involved only as consultants or advisers because of their knowledge

and not necessarily because of experience.

As in the case of polygamy, dowry practice is widespread in

rural Africa among extended families. When the Gospel reached Africa

dowry practice was widespread. The Christian church discouraged it.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual states:

> Payment of Bride (or Lobola)--It is deplored that many
> Christians still consider the old lobola custom a means of mak-
> ing money out of their children; . . . we therefore counsel all
> mature and enlightened Christians that they be advised to re-
> frain from asking lobola for their daughters given in marriage.[1]

Dowry continues to be practiced. Recently, Shorter stated that

both the government and the church have failed to stop this practice in

spite of all the efforts and attempts.[2] There are even ministers who

practise dowry. Occasionally, local church boards discuss the issue

but cannot settle it. Like polygamy, dowry has been an issue for many

years in Africa. One concerned pastor remarked, "About lobola, most

of the African Christians who are affected pay no attention to the advice

of the Church Manual which was supplemented mainly by missionaries."[3]

Like polygamy, the complexity of the dowry issue can only be

appreciated by interviewing the people who practice it, by attending

the council of elders who have full knowledge of dowry practice in their

extended families, and by contacting some local government officials

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[1]Southern African Division Supplement, Church Manual, pp. 309-
10; see appendix A, pp. 102-103.

[2]Shorter, African Culture and the Christian Church, p. 167.

[3]Interview with V. Wakaba, January 25, 1979. Elder Wakaba,
an African from Transkei, Republic of South Africa, has worked for the
Seventh-day Adventist Church.

who are well-informed about dowry.

Ancestor Veneration

As presented in the Position Paper, ancestor veneration in-
volves a celebration on a particular stated day when members of a
family come together and recite the history of their ancestors.

As in the other issues, those affected are the indigenous
people in rural areas where extended families are common and those
involved are foreign missionaries who are not affected directly.

Like polygamy and dowry, ancestor veneration is widespread.
In spite of the advances of Western culture and Christianity, ancestor
veneration continues in homes and at shrines.

Local church boards have discussed and discouraged certain
aspects of ancestor veneration by forbidding Christians to weed and
visit graves, to keep shrines, and to observe veneration-day activities.
These activities include the so-called "certain debasing practices."[1]
Some have been encouraged to drop their ancestral names at the time
of baptism and adopt new (often Western) names. One reason for this
is to discourage ancestor veneration. One Adventist commented, "Africa
has values and essentials. One must be informed of them. There must
be some guiding principles to sort out the kernel from the chaff of
the African traditions and practices."[2] Every effort must be made to
know and understand the issues.

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[1]Church Manual, p. 321.

[2]Interview with Zaacheus Mathema, November 10, 1978. Mr.
Mathema, an African from Rhodesia, has worked for the Seventh-day
Adventist Church for five years.

Consultation

The Relation of "Consultation" to the Biblical-theological Principles

Very likely the brethren at Antioch consulted the Scriptures first about the issue. Paul, Barnabas, prophets, and teachers, possibly consulted one another, but as the issue became more complex than they had expected, they decided to send a delegation to Jerusalem, the headquarters of the Christian church. In Jerusalem they could consult with the "apostles and elders" (15:2).

The issue had disturbed the Antiochian Christians for it touched their lifestyle. They did not want the Jewish culture to dominate theirs. The Judaizers, in this sense, looked at the Antiochians not as equals, but as inferiors. This wounded the Antiochians' dignity. Circumcision became a stumbling block to their salvation which was freely given by the grace of Jesus Christ. They could not see how Christianity would be a universal religion if they were required to conform to Judaism.

This method of consultation rests on the Biblical-theological principles that people are equal and therefore consultation among equals is of value. It also supports the concept of man's dignity--he is worthy of being consulted, and the universality of the church--one part of the church is qualified to consult another on a universal basis.

The Relation of "Consultation" to the Issues

There are four authorities that should be consuslted in resolving an issue. Those authorities are the Bible, fundamental beliefs, and

policies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, cultural mores, and relevant literature.

Consulting the Bible

For the Christian church there is one supreme authority, the Bible, which is the standard rule. The Holy Scriptures contain the principles which are the unchanging truth from God. They are reliable. As culture changes the Word of God remains the same because it is universal, everlasting, and holy. In any issue one ought to consult the Bible (see Part One) which directly or indirectly contains the answers for human problems and issues. In cases where the Bible is not quite explicit or direct, Seventh-day Adventists consult the writings of Ellen G. White.

In settling a socio-cultural issue, three-fold Bible-based criteria should be employed: the word of God must not be denied, the life of man must not be threatened or denied, and the fundamental beliefs of the church ought not to be contradicted.

First, an issue, no matter how big or small, must not be affirmed if it denies God or His Word. This means that the laws of God must be kept. Second, no issue should be affirmed if man's life is threatened or denied because, as stated above, man was made in the image and likeness of God. Since Jesus gave His life to save him, man is of great worth, value, and dignity. No wonder, to protect man's life and dignity, God gave the Decalogue to man. The fundamental beliefs or doctrines of the church must be based on the sound principles of the Word of God in order to protect and save man.

Polygamy. Polygamy does not immediately threaten or deny man's life.[1] Instead, it may in some circumstances stabilize marriage and maintain family solidarity; but in terms of long-range consequences and the light of the gospel God shows man a better way. It is not God's ideal.

Dowry. In its true sense, dowry does not deny God or His Word since it is a sincere thank you or gift of appreciation symbolized in a marriage gift. It is never advisable to use the tithe to pay dowry or to conduct unnecessary marriage activities on the Sabbath or greedy parents to demand exorbitant dowry for their daughters. Some African governments have set "a ceiling limit on bridewealth."[2] Dowry does not threaten or deny man's life. However, if one steals cows or robs money in order to pay for dowry, then the case, like any other form of stealing and robbery, is condemned by the church and society.

Ancestor veneration. Ancestor veneration should never conflict with the Decalogue. It should be encouraged to promote men's dignity and unity. As long as the Ten Commandments are observed with integrity and sincerity ancestor veneration may contribute much to Christian life.

Consulting the fundamental beliefs
and policies of the Seventh-day
Adventist Church

The context of the fifteenth chapter of Acts hints that the Antiochians consulted such key persons as Paul, Barnabas, and the teacher-prophets in their local church. When the result was a heated dispute, a sound suggestion was to go to Jerusalem, the Christian

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[1]For detailed discussion of this matter see pp. 23-30 above.

[2]Shorter, African Culture and the Christian Church, p. 172.

headquarters to consult the "apostles and the elders about the question" (Acts 15:2).

The fundamental beliefs of the church are clearly outlined and explained in the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook.[1] Those beliefs concerning marriage and the state of the dead, for example, apply to the socio-cultural issues under consideration (see below, p. 67).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has five levels[2] or organization, including the local church, the conference or field, the union, the division, and the General Conference. Each level in succession is an appropriate one for consultation about an issue. These levels are divided into two categories, the primary local levels include the local church and the local conference or field and the secondary regional levels include the union conference, the division, and the General Conference.

In the case of an issue between individuals in the local church, the procedure outlined in Matt 18:15-17 must be used to settle the problem. If it cannot be solved by the individuals involved, it must be settled by the church. If it is not solved by the local church, it must be dealt with by the local conference or field which represents other sister churches in the same local area.

For consultation within these local levels, the following important steps should be followed. First, consult enlightened lay people who are knowledgeable about the issue. Some members who are not church board delegates may contribute much in problem solving. Second, consult

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[1]Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1977), pp. 5-6.

[2]Appendix A, p. 105.

regular church board members who should be most concerned about the church's welfare. Third, consult the congregation for suggestions and views in major issues. Fourth, the local conference or field should be consulted on major issues which, while originating in one church, may eventually involve others.

If any issue becomes widespread or has continental or global implications, higher levels of church administration must be involved in settling the issue. These levels are the union, the division, and the General Conference. Proper consultation regarding universal issues is an important factor in a world organization.

Consultation is important in avoiding errors, mistakes, and possible sins of ignorance. The fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are taken from the Bible and organized into twenty-two topics in the Yearbook. Polygamy and dowry may fall under the doctrines concerning marriage, while ancestor veneration may fall under the doctrine of the state of the dead. These doctrines must be interpreted correctly so that people are not misled by mixing theology and cultural practices. The five levels of administration in the church function harmoniously through the policies in the Church Manual and the Church Working Policy which established procedures for all levels of administration. In considering polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration, all levels must be involved and all policies consulted. Consultation may avoid repetition of problems and the waste of time and energy in discussing an issue previously resolved. The effective leader who deals with issues and problems must be "a prober and questioner."[1]

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[1]Richard C. Anderson, Management Strategies (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 75.

This is especially true with socio-cultural issues.

Consulting socio-cultural mores

Anything that threatens family solidarity is rejected by members of African extended families. A husband and his wife or wives, children, and close relatives must live together, share communal benefits, and celebrate ceremonial festivals together. Because marriage and religion are basic family institutions, polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration have become issues in the Christian church. If the Christian church strengthens the family, it is welcomed with open arms; if it weakens the families, it is condemned and rejected. If Christianity is forced on members of extended families, persecution of missionaries and converts results, as has happened in some mission stations. To avoid this tragedy, the essential socio-cultural mores that strengthen family solidarity must be preserved.

The African extended family has its own government, usually a simple one. There is a headman, elder, chief, or leader. Assisting him is a council of elders who have a knowledge (education) of the family, the history of the tribe, and tribal policies. African national governments usually respect local family governments if there are no major conflicts. Christianity should continue to respect local governments which are ordained of God (Rom 13).

The socio-cultural mores connected with family solidarity and government in extended families must be observed. Such mores are "folkways that are considered conducive to the welfare of the society

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[1]Richard C. Anderson, Management Strategies (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), p. 75.

and so, through general observance, develop the force of law, often becoming part of the formal legal code."[1] As such, they ought to be maintained.

In considering polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration, there are three groups outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church which may be considered. First, non-Seventh-day Adventist Christian communities have faced the same issues. Ministers and lay people in those churches may be able to share information on how they handled these issues. For example, the Lutheran church in Liberia decided in 1951 to grant membership to polygamists. The church decided that "polygamous husbands as well as their wives may be admitted to baptism and communion, although normally they may not hold official positions of leadership in the ecclesiastical organization."[2]

The Lutheran church in Transvaal, Republic of South Africa, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, and the Anglican Church diocese of Victoria Nyanza in Tanzania have taken the same step.

Roman Catholic Bishop, Peter Sarpong of Kumasi, Ghana, says, ". . . the African bishops should be conducting studies into the problem (polygamy) . . . maybe some theological leeways can be found."[3]

In December, 1973, sixty-five Roman Catholic bishops, representing the East African nations, met in Nairobi, Kenya, to plan for the 1980s. Bishop John Njenga of Kenya said that there must be a "call

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[1]Webster's New world Dictionary, Second College Edition (1974), s.v. "mores."

[2]Eugene Hillman, Polygamy Reconsidered (New York: Orbis Books, 1975), pp. 34-35.

[3]Peter Sarpong, "The Church in Africa: Coming into Its Own," U.S. Catholic 38 (February 1973):32.

for more study, research, education,and even rethinking and revaluation on the part of pastors, theologians, and the faithful"[1] on the subject of polygamy in Africa.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania encourages further study on the polygamy question. Bishop Joiah ibira, the first black African to head the fifty-eight-million-member Lutheran World Federation, says,

> Our greatest ethical problems are divorce and polygamy and, intertwined with them, the question of church discipline . . . the church should not simply stress laws without first making certain that these rules are a help rather than a detriment to those in need. . . . The problem of polygamy is the most difficult. In this area, the church in Africa is bogged down badly in need of a way out of the dilemma. . . . Perhaps, by theological study we may find that we should not prevent a pagan polygamist from being baptized if he is called in that condition.[2]

Second, some members of society may help by indicating the mores essential for the welfare of their society. Third, some local government officials may be another source of suggestions and information, such as comparing the divorce rate between the monogamists and polygamists, and between those who pay dowry and those who do not.

Unfortunately, such sources are frequently overlooked in consultation. Indeed, most other denominations are no longer shocked with the polygamy issue.

> Polygamy is generally no longer treated by informed missionaries with shocked denunciations, but with an appreciative understanding of the numerous problems. More and more missions are sympathetic to permitting polygamists to become members but not to hold office

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[1] John Njenga, "Customary African Marriage," African Ecclesiastical Review 16 (1974):120.

[2] Josiah Kibira, "the Church in Buhaya: Crossing Frontiers," Essay on the Nature of Mission in honor of Bengt Sundkler, Boktryckeri Ak., Uppsala, Sweden (1969), p. 196.

if such persons became polygamists before becoming acquainted with the gospel. Rather than have unwanted widows turned out to prostitution, churches have acted as sponsors of such women in arranging marriages.[1]

Consulting the relevant literature

There is considerable literature dealing with polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration. Adventist sources include the writings of Ellen G. White, the Adventist Review, and Trans-Africa Division Supplement to the Church Manual. Non-Adventist sources include books by missionaries and African scholars, such as Polygamy Reconsidered by Eugene Hillman, God, Ancestor or Creator, by Harry Sawyerr, African Culture and the Christian Church, by Aywarld Shorter, and African Religion and Philosophy, by John S. Mbiti.

Such literature contains valuable counsel for solving the issues of polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration. They also contain new insights. For instance, the term dowry has generally been replaced by "bridewealth."[2] This term is accepted by many Africans as more meaningful than dowry. This term should be adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual Supplement in future editions.

Discussion

The Relation of "Discussion to the
Biblical-theological Principles

The discussion, which began in Antioch on the issue, involved the whole congregation (15:300. What should have been an orderly

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[1] Eugene A. Nida, Customs, Culture, and Christianity (London: The Tyndale Press, 1954), p. 265.

[2] Shorter, African Culture and the Christian Church, p. 167.

discussion became a real dispute (15:2, 7) which could not be resolved
in Antioch. There was a danger of splitting the Christian church in the
Gentile world. The local church officers, fearing chaos and schism,
decided to refer the matter to the brethren in Jerusalem for considera-
tion. The delegates were Paul and Barnabas (the missionaries to the
Gentiles) and some Antiochians (15:20.

James was the chairman, Peter (the chief spokesman of the dis-
ciples) contributed much to the discussion because he had experienced
how God made all peoples equal by offering His free gift of salvation
to all men. The main part of the discussion was to separate the Decalogue
from Judaism (Jewish lifestyle) as we can learn from the context (15:19-
20, 28-19). To remove the burden (15:19, 28) and yoke (15:10) was
necessary in order that the Antiochians might enjoy the freedom and
dignity of man as children of God.

There was full participation in the discussions because the
plural personal pronoun "we" (15:19) was often used instead of "I" or
"You." They also used the strategy of "listening" (15:12). This indi-
cates that the discussion was orderly.

This method of discussion may accomplish much if it is built on
the Biblical-theological discussion above.

The Relation of "Discussion"
to the Issues

Discussion indicates "a sifting of a subject so as best to disclose
its real character and relations. It is most important that the question be
correctly worded so that there may be no vagueness in regard to the
subject to be debated."[1] To discuss or to debate a subject, question,

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[1]W. H. F. Henry and Dr. Levi Seeley, How to Organize and

or issue means more or less the same thing. "In parliamentary language, the terms 'discussion' and 'debate' are interchangeable. To say that a motion is 'debatable' then, means that it may be 'discussed.'"[1]

In the church, discussion or debate on a controversial problem or issue is very important. "Controversies are unavoidable and are a sign of life and activity. They are preferrable to the peace of the gravey It is through controversy that truth is developed and error defeated."[2] When there is an issue or controversy it is not advisable to suppress it, for it may result in "an accumulation of feeling, leading toward a potentially dangerous conflict."[3] It may also lead to a division among the churches.

> It was not enough to indulge in "dissension and questioning" at Antioch; the whole issue had to be discussed and decided "at the highest level" for there was grave danger of a complete cleavage between the churches or Jerusalem and Judea on the one hand and the churches of Antioch and her daughter churches on the other hand.[4]

The Jerusalem Council is a good example of discussion on an issue within the Christian church. The same should be true with socio-cultural issues within the Christian church in Africa.

This strategy of discussion has two important phases: participants must acquaint themselves with the issue before it is discussed, and

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Conduct a Meeting (New York: Noble and Noble Publishing, Inc., 1938), p. 47.

[1] Alice F. Sturgis, Learning Parliamentary Procedure (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1953), p. 59.

[2] Joseph S. Exell, The Biblical Illustrator, 56 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1954) 38:424.

[3] Speed, Leas and Paul Kittlaus, Church Fights (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1973), p. 47.

[4] Bruce, p. 304.

discuss the issues under consideration.

There must be a well-qualified chairman familiar with all the issues. During the Jerusalem Council, James, the chairman, understood the issue well. Unfortunately, committee discussion of these issues in Africa have been chaired by missionaries, often with unsatisfactory results, and/or unresolved issues. Committee members should be informed of agenda items far enough in advance to acquaint themselves with the issues to be discussed.

Committee members or delegates should represent those directly affected by and involved in the issue. Committee members should get acquainted with one another before discussion of the issue. Some may be present who have been directly affected by the issues of polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration. Some may come with "hidden" agenda, and some have decided issues before discussing them. There may be tension, anxiety, suspicion, bias, and prejudice. There are ways to ease such feelings, such as each member telling briefly about his background, a meaningful devotional service, and the chance for all to participate in the discussion.

Jesus used the method of easing hard situations. Consider, for example, His contact with the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well (John 4), and with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, who were greatly discouraged by the death of their Master, Jesus (Luke 24).

The principles of discussion

There are many necessary factors for good discussion. including openness, cooperation, consistency, and Bible-culture relation. First, an issue can be resolved if every committee member is open and

honest.[1] They must avoid backbiting, hidden agendas, lip service, and hypocrisy. They should not be "yes men," blindly supporting every-thing proposed by church administrators—as often happens with indi-genous members serving with missionaries. Openness must be en-couraged in dealing with African issues.

Second, discussion on an issue requires cooperative team work, full participation. Since the aim is to solve problems, there should not be competition for support but work toward the common goal. The theological principles of equality, the dignity of man, and unity in diver-sity should always be kept in mind.

Third, Africa suffered much from the inconsistencies of changing masters during the colonial era. Overreacting by stressing consistency, some africans believe that polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration should not even be discussed because they want the decisions of past to continue, partially in order to avoid shame. Such an attitude is not good. It is good to be consistent when right, otherwise change is necessary to be consistent with truth. An enlightened African layman suggested, "Consistency should be maintained. When new light is re-vealed, change for the truth must take place, especially on the un-resolved African issues."[2]

· Fourth, many indigenous Africans are confused between the Bible and the culture of those who brought Christianity to Africa. This is the real source of many socio-cultural issues. In discussing an issue,

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[1]Leas and Kittlaus, p. 47.

[2]Interview with Leonard Gashugi, December 27, 1978. Mr. Gahsugi, an African, is a Seventh-day Adventist member from Zaire.

matter pertaining to the Bible should be approached Biblically and theologically; those pertaining to socio-cultural practices should be approached culturally.

A committee generates friction, conflict, and confrontation. These discussion elements, if conducted in a healthy way, are important in solving issues. But the committee needs the oils of love and humor to function smoothly. Love sees a polygamist not as an emeny of Christianity, but a candidate for the Kingdom of God; dowry not as payment but as a gift; and the ancestor venerator as a future child of God. The true love, agape, encourages friendliness, patience, and peace. When discussion is deadlocked or breaks down, a bit of humor can relieve the tension. Africa is rich with people with a humor which is often employed in their meetings. This should be encouraged.

The roles of discussion

Adherence to the roles of discussion will ensure better discussion of the issues.

A committee chairman has many roles. He must introduce, define, and formulate the issue or question for the committee. A trained indigenous chairman must recognize and respect all members and encourage their participation. This can be facilitated by the physical arrangement of the meeting place. He should be able to distinguish fact from an opinion. As a part of his duty to clarify the discussion, the leader must help the group distinguish between fact and opinion.

Committee members or delegates also have several roles. A few will be mentioned here which apply specifically to Africa. Members must respect and accept the chairman. Discussion must not involve

personalities; it must be impersonal at all times.

Task-centered functions[1] should include the roles of initiating

new ideas, elaborating by adding ideas and suggestions, seeking more

information from resource persons, seeking opinions, offering opin-

ions, clarifying ambiguities, offering challenging views, and coordinat-

ing conflicting points of view. The group-centered functions should

include the roles of establishing a bond of fellowship, encouraging

silent delegates, restraining the most talkative members, harmonizing

member's views, and conciliating disputes.

In discussions of socio-cultural issues, the Africans should

take active roles because the problems and issues are theirs. Mission-

aries and overseas workers can ask, comment, suggest, advise, and

insure that no Biblical principle is violated, but they should not be

permitted to take a more active part than the indigenous brethren.

Shorter says;

> It is, of course, ridiculous to pretend that a European can
> identify completely with the African mentality . . . it is
> possible to be a "marginal African" to possess an attitude
> of mind which disposes one to be actively understanding and
> sympathetic to the African culture and to the aspirations
> of African Christians.[2]

This does not mean that missionaries are not needed during discussion

of issues. They may participate as fellow Christians who are involved

but not affected by the issue.

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[1]Robert R. Powell, Managing Church Business Through Group
Procedures (Englewood Cliffs, new Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 58-
99; compare with Edgar H. Schein, Process Consultation: Its Role in
Organization Development (Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley
Publishing Company, 1969), pp. 31-45.

[2]Shorter, African Christian Theology, p. 33.

Decision

The Relation of "Decision" to the Biblical-theological Principles

Decision making is the next important step after discussion. If decision making is conducted wisely, it can be an effective strategy in resolving an issue. Since some of the Antiochians (15:22) were actually present, we can realize the importance of an adequate representation in decision making and its implementation. Apparently, the Jerusalem Council reached the decision by consensus (or unanimity) as indicated by these words: "it seemed good" (15:22, 25, 28); "with one accord" (15:25). This was possible because their decision making was based on the Biblical-theological principles of equality, unity in diversity, the dignity of man, salvation as a gift, and the universality of the church. And strategies were used that honored these principles.

The decision had three components. First, the Antiochians were asked to kep the Decalogue and some commandments were specifically mentioned (15:20). In matters of culture, no instructions were given to them. The Council respected the Antiochians as their fellow brethren (15:23) and equals; they recognized their dignity as men. They decided not to trouble them unnecessarily (15:19). Second, they decided to send a letter so that they could read for themselves the Council's decision. Third, they sent Silas and Judas, very outstanding men who were prophets, for more details.

The strategy of decision in dealing with issues can become very effective if the Biblical-theological principles are used. The following section will deal with how decision making can be used for settling the issues.

The Relation of "Decision" to the Issues

Following discussion of an issue, a decision must be reached as in the Antiochian issue before the Apostolic Council. The same is true with African issues such as polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration.

After full discussion on an issue, the chair must call for members of the committee to vote according to their understanding of the issue. Missionaries should not outnumber indigenous members as is often the case in some mission committees. There is a little wonder that some major socio-cultural issues such as polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration, though discussed and decided, are hardly settled.

There are several methods of voting. The secret ballot allows each member to cast his written vote in secret.[1] This is the best voting method in major issues because it allows each member to vote his conscience freely without pressure, intimidation, or hypocrisy. It is good for the major socio-cultural issues in Africa.

In a voice vote, all those who favor a motion vote "aye," and those opposed vote "no." This method is most frequently used in deliberative assemblies. The chairman determines the majority by vocal volume. If the voice is too close to determine by voice vote, either a show of hands or a standing vote may be used.

Four Types of Decisions

There are four possible types of decisions which may be reached following discussion. First, decision by authority. "Many groups set

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[1]Harold W. Donahue and Grant Henderson, How to Manage Your Meeting (Indianapolis, Indiana: Droke House, 1955), p. 218.

[2]Schein, p. 53.

up a power structure or start with a power structure which makes it clear that the chairman or someone in authority will make the decisions."[1] This decision by an authority can hardly work in major issues in Africa today, especially if the chairman is a foreigner or a confused national. Usually, the group affected misunderstands the decision or does not agree with the man in power. Such a decision may not be carried out effectively.

Second, decision by majority. A majority decision is reached by a majority of those present and voting. Majority is usually acceptable because the representatives of a majority of the people favor a decision. However, this may not be the best method in resolving major socio-cultural issues because it does not secure full cooperation or total commitment and will result in complaints from the minority if their rights are ignored. It is especially dangerous if the majority from the older, established church dictates policy to the minority from the newer ones.

Third, decision by consensus. A decision by consensus requires that most members share a conviction that a particular decision is the right one. Indeed, "One of the most effective but also most time-consuming methods of group decision making is to seek consensus."[1] Though difficult, it must be promoted. "Where consensus is possible, every reasonable means should be used to encourage it . . . the chairman should encourage consensus."[2] It is far better than majority decision, for it seeks a common agreement, elicits full commitment, and uses or implements resources to bring about the

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[1]Ibid., p. 56.

[2]Henry L. Ewbank, Jr., Meeting Management (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company Publishers, 1968), pp. 46-47.

desired solution. It encourages the minority to join the majority for the common good of individuals, the congregation, and society. It avoids grumbling, competition, and division. It is a commendable method of decision in serious complex issues like polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration which affect many in African extended families.

Fourth, decision by unanimous consent. Unanimity means that all members unanimously concur in a particular decision. "The logically perfect but least attainable kind of decision is where everyone truly agrees on the course of action to be taken. For certain key kinds of decisions it may be necessary to seek unanimity."[1] It is good for Africa.

It is apparent that the Jerusalem Council reached its decisions either by consensus or unanimity for "it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church" (Acts 15:22). "It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord to send chosen men to you. . . ." (Acts 15:25). Thus, "if the words are taken in their official sense, the first part of this verse may be translated: we have voted unanimously. . . ."[2]

The last two types of decisions, concensus and unanimity, are needed in Africa today in dealing with major socio-cultural issues such as polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration which affect the Christian church. When the indigenous members are involved in

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[1]Schein, p. 57.

[2]Francis D. Nichol (ed.), The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957) 6:314.

discussion and decision making, major issues may be solved.

Two Methods of Appeal

If an issue is unresolved following discussion and decision, there are two methods of appeal to higher authority. First, an appeal may be taken by succession to higher levels. When this is done, there must be an adequate representation of the people affected at each level of authority. Second, selected officials from the next highest level may be included in the decision-making process of the lower level. This makes possible a wide representation of people affected by an issue and may reduce transportation expenses. For this to be effective, African leadership is essential for African representation at all levels of administration.

Education

The Relation of "Education" to the Biblical-theological Principles

The Jerusalem Council was interested in educating the Antiochians concerning the issue and the decisions as reached. The following ways were used. First, by letter (15:20, 23) which was possibly circulated in all the churches in Asia Minor. Second, by sending prophet-teachers, Silas and Judas (15:23, 32) to inform and educate the Antiochians about the issue and its decisions in full details. Third, by Paul, Barnabas, Titus (Gel 2:3), and some Antiochians who were present at the Council possibly informed the congregation about their meeting and the decisions in Jerusalem. "Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of God" (15:35, 35).

Likely, they educated the Antiochian Christians that the Council recognized the equality of all brothers whether Jews or Gentiles by re-telling the experience of Peter with Cornelius, that though all believers were united by the common faith, there was diversity as far as cultures were concerned; that they recognized the dignity of man as important for man is a child of God by creation and redemption; that salvation as a gift is offered to any one who accepts God through the grace of Christ, and that the gospel was to reach all peoples.

Africa needs this strategy in dealing with issues such as those discussed in this paper. Education, if established on the Biblical-theological principles, can resolve many issues.

The Relation of "Education" to the Issues

While socio-cultural issues in Africa have been discussed and decisions reached, little has been done to educate people to solve issues. Through education some issues would die naturally without wasting the time of adminsitrative committees. Both Ngeno and Yalew believe that long-range planning in educating the indigenous adult members for issues is essential in Africa.[1]

Educate Church Employees

Church employees such as pastors and teachers ought to be educated for issues which they must discuss and solve at sessions, boards, councils, meetings, and committees. Even some local

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[1]Interview with Alice Ngeno, December 24, 1978. Miss Ngeno, an African, is a Seventh-day Adventist member from Kenya, East Africa. Also mitiku Yalew, December 29, 1978. Mr. Yalew is an African from Ethiopia. He has worked for the Seventh-day Adventist Church for two years.

administrators know little about handling issues. Some even ask
missionaries to do it for them.

> The African church must be provided with a better-trained
> ministry, a ministry capable of showing the meaning of the
> Christian message for the Africa of today and of taking its
> rightful place in the new society. With the rapid growth of
> education, resulting in an emerging intelligentsia, there is
> an urgent demand for such a ministry. If the minister lacks
> a college education, with the accompanying cultural overtones,
> he will be handicapped in capturing the interest of the younger
> generation.[1]

Educate Church Members

Church members must be educated to handle issues. Apart
from the Sabbath School, where people learn mostly Bible lessons and
their implications for Christian living, there is little education regard-
ing socio-cultural issues. Church elders, deacons, treasurers, clerks,
and other officers must deal with issues in their departments or com-
mittees.

Educate Community People

Community people must be educated to deal with issues. These
potential church members, including polygamists and ancestor venerators,
should be educated through programs offered by the church. Some
community officials may be interested in our program and help its
advancement for the good of the community.

Educate Missionaries

Missionaries and overseas workers must be educated for issues.
Often it has been taken for granted that missionaries understand African

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[1]Staples, p. 11.

culture and customs because they passed examinations in Arican sutdies or have personal experience. This assumption may be unfounded. The study of books written by other missionaries does not really prepare missionaries to meet African socio-cultural issues.

It requires qualified African experts and professionals to educate missionaries about African customs and issues. There should be a mission institute in Africa similar to the Andrews University Institute of World Missions. African scholars and theologians such as J. S. Mbiti, E. B. Idowu, C. H. Sawyerr, and Fr-Charles Nyamiti should be encouraged to write more to educate those who come to Africa. Properly educated missionaries, as equals of Africans, will be able to help discuss and settle African issues.

Adventist institutions such as schools, seminaries, colleges, hospitals, and churches are the logical places for educating church employees and members, community residents, and overseas workers. Such institutions with their libraries, facilities, and faculties could become centers for continuing education.

The curriculum of such a program should include several areas. The first is sociology which should include social structure and current issues with their implications. African culture should be contrasted with the Bible. Purely cultural ideals and mores should be encouraged. African history, governments, and anthropology should be studied.

Finally, there should be courses on family planning, marriage counselling, personal finance, and nutrition. Such courses must meet the African needs. In all these proposed courses there must be an

integration of faith and learning. Bible principles often have been taught apart from the real situations of life and seem impractical and fail to attract many Africans.

Educated nationals and dedicated overseas workers can do a great deal for the betterment of Africa. The Second Vatican Council commented,

> The Council asks that indigenous seminaries and expatriate missionaries study local traditions and cultures . . . to be versed in the cultures of their people and able to evaluate it. . . . From the customs and traditions of their people, churches borrow all those things can contribute to the glory of their Creator . . . and Christian life. If this goal is to be achieved, theological investigation must be stirred up in each major socio-cultural area . . . of how their customs, outlook on life and social order can be reconciled with the manner of living taught by divine revelation.[1]

Planning for Education

There must be sound planning for educating African leaders and laymen. There should be short-range planning for a one-year period including short courses, seminars, workshops, and extension schools conducted by Adventist colleges and offering academic credits. Intermediate-range planning may take two or three years. This includes leaves of absence for education for up-grading workers. Long-range planning may involve five or more years for those who attend colleges and seminaries. The proposed Pan African Board of Higher Education should have a master plan leading to University programs in Africa. There should be a socio-cultural studies program to deal with issues caused by the rival of African traditional religions, communism, Islam,

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[1] William Abbott (ed.), "Church Missionary Activity," The Document of Vatican 11 (1966): para 16:22. Compare with Shorter, African Culture and the Christian Church, p. 218.

and other foreign and local forces and pressures in a changing Africa.

> In order to make theology relevant to the changing African
> thought, Christianity must cease to be foreign religion in
> the African soil. . . . This must mean much more than simply
> making it an indigenous religion of the African people. It must
> mean much more than simply localizing its personnel. It does
> not mean Africanising it as called for by some of the African
> scholars, meaning substituting it with the traditional African
> religion; even though this might mean taking seriously some of
> the traditional values and practices which are in harmony with
> the cardinal principles of Christianity.[1]

Some educated African nationals believe that Adventist colleges

and seminaries should be consolidated and modernized to meet the

challenges of Africa today. African higher education should have an

African orientation to meet African issues and needs.

Evaluation

The Relation of "Evaluation" to the Biblical-theological Principle

The term "evaluation" here should be viewed as "reflection" on

the results of the decision and its implementation by the believers in

Antioch.

These are the results. First, the Antiochians "rejoiced" (15:31).

Joy is one of the elements of the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). Peace,

freedom, and joy in Antioch promoted the dignity of the Antiochians

in their setting. They enjoyed the blessings of salvation as a gift from

God through the grace of Jesus Christ to man. Second, they continued

to preach the word of God (15:35) and Christianity continued to grow

in Asia Minor and beyond. What an accomplishment, a success!

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[1]Gershom N. Amayo, "Theological Education for Modern Africa,"
African Theological Journal No. 1, Arusha, Tanzania (19770,44-50.

What if the delegates who were at the Jerusalem Council and
the Antiochians were here today and see how the decisions on the issue
were important for the Christian church in our day and how Christianity
now has become a world religion? This is God's doing.

The Relation of "Evaluation" to the Issues

Decisions reached concerning polygamy, dowry, and ancestor
veneration should be evaluated or reflected upon.

First there is a great need to know how a decision has settled
an issue. Knowledge of whether the desired goal was reached, of pro-
gress or hindrance, and of the major factors contributing to success
or failure could be a stepping stone or spring-board for resolving issues.
Second, evaluation of a decision in order to help leads to finding more
skilled ways and professional methods of problem-solving.

In many developing countries there are people who are skilled
in evaluation. Africa needs such people. Though the church may not
need highly complex and sophisticated evaluation processes and pro-
cedures, simple methods of good quality are useful. Several groups
should participate in evaluating decision.

First, teachers and students in African Adventist seminaries
and colleges can participate if trained to do so. Second, local church
boards may contain enlightened laymen who can assist in evaluation.
University graduates should be utilized. Third, the entire congrega-
tion can be led in evaluating decisions on local church issues. If it
is done wisely, the church members may help in evaluation. Fourth,
local conference or field officials can evaluate decisions by comparing

issues in various local churches. Lastly, officials of the African Divisions of the church, some of whom may be trained in evaluation, can serve an important role in evaluation since they have a continental or international perspective of issues.

Several methods may be used in evaluating a decision. First, a simple questionnaire can be prepared and administered to the group involved in evaluation. Questionnaires are not widely used in African churches. The time for it has come. Second, interviews can be conducted. Third, panel discussions may be used for evaluating decisions on issues in the church. Fourth, members may be organized into groups of three or four and given time to evaluate a decision. Brainstorming techniques can gather much information. Finally, evaluation reports may be printed in the church bulletin so that members can be informed about the evaluation.

When decisions are carefully evaluated or reflected upon, the real picture of socio-cultural issues, such as polygamy, dowry, and ancestor veneration may be revealed, helped, and resolved.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS, SUMMARY, AND
CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the study of the

five Biblical-theological principles, six strategic methods, and three

socio-cultural issues in this paper.

1. The issue of polygamy should be seriously reconsidered at

the local level (local church or conference/field), and at other levels

as called for in the methods outlined in this paper. The General Confer-

ence Actions of November 3 1930 and June 5 1941 on polygamy,[1] and the

Church Manual (Southern African Division Supplement, 1959)[2] should

be restudied and possibly ammended:

    a. if there is no Biblical prohibition or theological hindrance,
       polygamous husbands receiving the gospel light while in
       that state should be <u>baptized</u> into membership in the Seventh-
       day Adventist Church.

    b. In this special case, it may be that these polyga.nous hus-
       bands may be categorized with the believers in God who
       lived during the Old Testament times.

    c. If their wives are baptized and can be members, there is
       no reason why the husbands cannot get this privilege,
       for there is no discrimination between males and females
       in the church.

    d. However, they should not hold church offices such as elders
       or deacons--in compliance with the instructions in 1 Timothy.

2. The Church Manual (Southern African Division Supplement,

1959) section concerning dowry should be rewritten, leaving out such

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[1]See appendix A, pp. 97, 99.   [2]Ibid., pp. 98, 99.

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phrases as "payment of bride price," "old lobola custom a means of making money out of their children," and "enlightened Chris-tians . . . be advised to refrain from asking lobola for their daughters given in marriage."[1]

3. The Church Manual of the General Conference and African divisions use the term "bridewealth"[2] instead of "dowry," for "bride-wealth" permits better interpretations of the true meaning of this African custom. "Bridewealth" is the generally accepted word used by most enlightened Africans today. The word "dowry" is misleading as far as Africans are concerned. Instead of asking enlightened Christians to refrain from practicing bridewealth, which Africans consider marriage gifts, the Adventist church should recognize "toleration which is really the policy of drift in the hope that bridewealth will disappear of its own accord, as economic changes take place,"[3] or when the African people themselves decide to discard this custom which both churches and governments have failed to stop.

4. Should an issue be appealed to higher levels of church ad-ministration (Union, Division, and General Conference), there should be adequate African representation of those affected and involved in the issue. This will insure implementation of decision on the local level. If a decision is not unanimously reached on a major issue, some alterna-tive should be suggested rather than a simple "yes" or "no." To save

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[1]Church Manual, Southern African Division Supplement, 1959, pp. 309-310.

[2]Shorter, African Culture and the Christian Church, p. 167.

[3]Ibid., p. 172.

time and money, it might be better to bring higher level administrators to the local level as advisers and counselors to participate fully in discussions of issues. However, a majority of the voting members of decision-making bodies should be those affected by the issue and not simply those involved. Those who are affected are really the ones who must ultimately implement decisions.

5. Continuing education for church employees, laymen, and community residents is necessary to better orient them to Africa and its socio-cultural issues. Agencies for continuing education should be the Adventist colleges and seminaries and the proposed Adventist University of Africa. This could be implemented through the Pan African Board of Higher Learning which could coordinate such programs. This will enable Adventists to resolve issues more intelligently.

6. There should be professional evaluation on the resolved and un-resolved issues in the Adventist Church in Africa. This could be done effectively under the supervision of an African Division evaluation team.

Summary

In Part One, five Biblical-theological principles based on the fifteenth chapter of Acts were developed as a basis for dealing with socio-cultural issues in the Christian church. These principles are equality, unity in diversity, the dignity of man, salvation as a gift, and universality of the church. It is believed that these principles were used by the Jerusalem Council in successfully resolving the Antiochian issue.

The socio-cultural issues of polygamy, dowry, and ancestor

veneration were described in light of their Biblical background and contemporary practice. The five Biblical-theological principles were applied to the three socio-cultural issues through the use of six methodological steps. These steps were information, consultation, discussion, decision, education, and evaluation. These methods were described and utilized in the analysis of the socio-cultural issues under consideration. Based on this analysis, some recommendations for resolving these issues were presented.

Conclusions

The Jerusalem Council dealt successfully with the Antiochian issue because it had some guiding Biblical-theological principles. These same principles must be applied in dealing with socio-cultural issues in Africa.

The Antiochian-Jerusalem issue may be similar to the Africa-Western World issues discussed in this paper, although there are differences in nature, place, people, and circumstances involved.

On the relationship between older and younger churches, there must be the mutual respect of equals and not a superior-subordinate concept.

Issues will always be present because people have conflicting views. The best method of resolving issues is to train indigenous people and place them in leadership positions. Missionaries and overseas workers may contribute much as advisers, counselors, and consultants, but African issues must be solved by the Africans who will implement the decisions.

In the principles studied, methods presented, and recommendations suggested in this paper are followed carefully, most socio-cultural issues can be dealt with in a more equitable way in Africa with the result that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa will operate within the African context and setting. The church will be more truly African and the mission of the church will be completed sooner.

APPENDIX A

General Conference Committee Action (1913
    1930, and 1941)

Church Manual (Southern African Division
    Supplement, 1959)

The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald (1924)

Five steps in SDA Organization

JUNE, 1913: TAKOMA PARK

Missionary Round Table, "Informal discussion on Polygamous Converts."
Here follows the substance of the discussion:

1. The recommendations were specifically for cases where the heathen who
have been living in polygamous union become converted and wish to join the
church.

2. The recommendation that a man who has practiced polygamy must not be
allowed under any condition to take office in the church, as indicated
by 1 Tim 3:2 and 3:12.

3. Miscellaneous questions and issues discussed:

The advisability of the term "first wife," in the case of inherited wives.
The case for the wives of a converted husband who do not agree to sep-
aration is not adequately dealt with.
The question of what should be done about the bride price of "set aside
wives."
It was uncertain what the method of dealing with Greek polygamists in
the early Church was.
The question of what constituted a legal marriage was not considered
by the committee preparing the recommendations.
The question of whether it is customary for women to marry again under
the conditions stated?
What would be the results of such encouragement?
The difference in treatment of husband and wives within the recommendation,
especially that a woman may be baptised while still within the marriage.
The possible solution of church membership without baptism until matters
settled.
The possible solution of baptism and privilege of Lord's supper partici-
pation without church membership.
Issue--whether there is such a thing as church privelege without baptism.
The problem of the OT records of men of God, blessed of God, gaining
victories with God yet having plural wives.
The teaching of the testimonies that in tangles that are irresistible
of adjustment, we can give such individuals the hope that the Lord Jesus
will accept them into His kingdom, even though we do not feel free to take
them into the church on earth.
The problem of the first wife being childless and the children of the
second wife being left fatherless.
The challenge to present some scripture that warrants a man putting
away a wife.
The question of whether recommendations or counsel is needed at all,
or should, rather, each missionary, within the counsel of his associates,
deal with each case particularly.
On the understanding that in most of the fields the missionary sentiment
(other churches) was against receiving the polygamous wife into church
fellowship, the committee deleted the last phrase of the recommendation.

Heritage Room, Andrews University.

The General Conference Committee of the Seventh-day

Adventist Church took an action on November 3, 1930 on

Polygamous marriages in heathen lands:

> "Whereas, the message finds people in certain
> heathen lands living in a state of polygamy,
> and where tribal customs subject a cast-off
> wife to lifelong shame and disgrace, even to
> the point of becoming common property, her
> children also becoming disgraced thereby, it is,
>
> "Resolved, that in such sections, persons
> found living in a state of polygamy at the
> time the gospel light comes to them, and who
> have entered into plural marriage before
> knowing it to be a custom condemned by the
> the word of God, may upon recommendation of
> responsible field committees be admitted
> to baptism and the ordinances of the church,
> and may be recognized as probationary members.
> They shall not, however be admitted to full
> membership unless or until circumstances shall
> change so as to leave them with only one
> companion.
>
> "This action merely contemplates the
> recognition of a condition which in some places
> cannot be changed without resulting in great
> injustice to innocent persons and is not to
> be construed as indorsing polygamy in any
> way. Anyone entering into a plural marriage
> relation after receiving a knowledge of the
> truth should be regarded as living in
> adultery, and dealt with by the church
> accordingly. A man who has apostatized from
> the truth, and who during the time he is in
> apostasy, enters into plural marriage may
> not be received again into any church relation-
> ship until he puts away the wives taken during
> his apostasy and in every way brings forth
> fruits meet for repentance.
>
> "In countries where separation of families
> can be arranged without injustice being done
> to innocent parties only one wife should
> be retained, but we recognize the right of
> the man to choose the one to be retained."

(Fifty-ninth meeting, General Conference Committee, Nov. 3,
1930, 4:45 p.m. available at the Archives, General Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington, D.C.)

Fifty-ninth Meeting
General Conference Committee
November 3, 1930, 4:45 p.m.

Present: Same persons present as at the 1:30 p.m. meeting

C. H. Watson	Charles Thompson	F. M. Wilxox
E. K. Slade	H. H. Hall	F. H. Robbins
W. E. Howell	H. H. Cobban	H. T. Elliot
F. C. Gilbert	S. A. Wellman	J. O. Thompson
H. J. Sheldon	J. J. Reiswig	A. V. Olson
H. O. Olson	J. E. Fulton	N. P. Neilson
N. R. Nelson	W. B. Ochs	C. A. Russell
Lloyd Christman	E. F. Hackman	J. G. Gjording
J. J. Strahle	W. H. Branson	P. T. Magan
W. H. Williams	W. H. Heckman	C. C. Morris
G. L. Bauer	C. P. Crager	W. C. Moffat
E. E. Andross	J. L. McElhany	M. Lukens
Mrs. L. Flora Plumber	L. A. Hansen	W. E. Kerr
W. E. Nelson	M. B. Van Kirk	

Chairman: C. H. Watson   Secretary: M. E. Kern

Available at the: Statistical Department
Minutes of Meetings of the
General Conference Committee
in Washington D. C. & AU Heritage Room

Note: No Black African Representation (Author).

GENERAL CONFERENCE POLICY, AS VOTED JUNE 5, 1941.

WHEREAS, It is clearly God's plan that man should live in a state of monogamy, that is, that a man should have only one living wife; and,

WHEREAS, Any contravention of this plan results in confusion and the lowering of the moral standards that should govern human society, and especially the church of Christ; and,

WHEREAS, The practice of polygamy on the part of many non-Christian peoples for whom we are laboring is in itself a challenge to Christian principles, and constitutes a ground of compromise if permitted in the Christian Church;

We Recommend, 1. That a man found living in a state of polygamy when the gospel reaches him, shall upon conversion by required to change his status by putting away all his wives save one, before he shall be considered eligible for baptism and church membership.
2. That men thus putting away their wives shall be expected to make proper provision for their future support, and that of their children, just as far as it is within their power to do so.

WHEREAS, The message finds people in certain countries living in a state of polygamy, where tribal customs subject a wife who has been put away to lifelong shame and disgrace, even to the point of becoming common property, her children also becoming disgraced thereby;

We Recommend, 3. That in all such cases the church co-operate with the former husband in making such provision for these wives and children as will provide for their care and protect them from disgrace and undue suffering
4. That we recognize the right of a wife who has been put away by a polygamous husband to marry again.
5. That wives of a polygamist, who have entered into marriage in their heathen state, and who upon accepting Christianity are still not permitted to leave their husbands, because of tribal custom, may upon approval of the local and union committees become baptized members of the church. However should a woman who is a member of the church enter into marriage as a secondary wife, she shall be disfellowshiped and shall not be readmitted to the church unless or until she separates from her polygamous husband.
6. That it is understood that the above policy supercedes all previous policies on polygamy.

re.pect. The bridal pair should not use the opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of their friends.

Because of the large amount of work entailed, weddings should not be solemnized on the Sabbath day.

The Christian Home

The Christian home is the foundation of the church. Ministers and church leaders should foster the instruction given the newly married couple on how to build a home where Christ can dwell. Morning and evening worship should be regularly observed. Parents should be instructed in their responsibility to teach their children the Word of God and the fundamental principles of the church.

The careful observance of the Sabbath is to be stressed, together with the necessity for the completion of all secular duties before the setting of the sun. The commencement and ending of the sacred day should be marked by home or church worship.

Divorce

The Christian home is the heart of the church. Every effort should be made to maintain the homes established on Christian principles. Where it is known that relationships between husband and wife have become strained, due to mistakes by one or both parties, the minister should seek by wise

counsel to remind them of their promises to God and to each other; and by instruction from the Word of God and prayer, endeavour to restore harmony in the home by the spirit of forgiveness.

Where every effort to reconciliation has failed, the matter shall be brought to the church board. Only in cases of proved unfaithfulness to the marriage vow by one or both parties shall the church be free to follow the Bible rule for the dissolution of the marriage and allow the parties to proceed to a civil court.

Polygamy

It is clearly God's plan that a man should have only one living wife. Any contravention of this plan results in confusion and the lowering of moral standards that should govern human society, and especially the church of Christ. The practice of polygamy on the part of many non Christian peoples for whom we are labouring is in itself a challenge to Christian principles, and constitutes a ground of compromise if permitted in the Christian church. The denomination has therefore adopted the following policy:

(1.) A man found living in a state of polygamy when the gospel reaches him, shall upon conversion be required to change his status by putting away all his wives save one, before he shall be con-

sidered eligible for baptism and church membership.

(2) Men thus putting away their wives shall be expected to make proper provision for their full support, and that of their children, just as far as it is within their power to do so.

(3) We recognize that the message finds people in certain countries living in a state of polygamy where tribal customs subject a wife who has been put away to lifelong shame and disgrace, even to the point of becoming common property, her children also becoming disgraced thereby. In all such cases the church is to co-operate with the former husband in making such provision for these wives and children as will provide for their care and protect them from disgrace and undue suffering.

(4) We recognize the right of a wife who has been put away by a polygamous husband to marry again.

(5) Wives of a polygamist, who have entered into the marriage in their heathen state, and who upon accepting Christianity are still not permitted to leave their husbands, because of tribal custom, may upon the approval of the local and union committees become baptized members of the church. However, should a woman who is a member of the church enter into marriage as a secondary wife, she shall be disfellowshipped and shall not be readmitted to the church unless or until she separates from her polygamous husband.

Initiation Rites

While recognizing that these rites gave some instruction into membership in the tribe and prepared boys and girls for their mature duties and relationship to their elders, yet certain debasing practices connected with tribal initiation make it most undesirable for Christian young people to take any part in these ceremonies.

Where it is deemed necessary on physical grounds for our young men to be circumcised, they should proceed to one of our own doctors for the operation.

But in the case of young girls this act is most undesirable and we register our strong disapproval of this practice.

The instruction given to our youth in the classes and programmes of the Missionary Volunteer Society should prepare our boys and girls to take their place in society and regulate their behaviour to each other.

Church Officers

The election of church officers takes place annually. No one is chosen to permanent office.

In order to ensure the efficient operation of the church it is recommended that all newly elected officers be instructed in their duties before taking office. The responsibility for arranging this instruction shall rest with the local conference or mission president.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE CHURCH MANUAL

The following material is prepared in harmony with the decision of the General Conference that overseas divisions set forth matters of special interest to their part of the world field in a *Supplement* to the regular *Church Manual*. It is intended to give help and direction to ministers and church officers in relation to certain aspects of church life as pertaining to Africa.

MARRIAGE

In addition to the statement on page 80 of the *Church Manual*, it is desirable to emphasize the following points in connection with marriage.

Payment of Bride Price (or "Lobola")

The custom of requiring "Lobola" from the prospective husband is an ancient practice with heathen origins. It was a guarantee of good treatment for the wife to be. The higher the lobola price paid over, the more important the wife considered herself to be. With the coming of Christianity times have changed. The foundation of the Christian home is based on love. This love should prove to be of greater value and be more enduring than any amount of cattle or money given as "Lobola". Chris-

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tians who marry because of true love do not need any other guarantee for the safety of the marriage.

It is deplored that many Christians still consider the old "lobola" custom a means of making money out of their children. Very high "lobola" demands are made of the prospective husband. Without the support of his family many a young man is unable to find such a price. The young people take a short cut to their marriage, fail to secure the permission of their parents and the blessing of God and the church. Thus today the old "lobola" guarantee has outlived its usefulness and is producing more problems than it is solving in the church.

We therefore counsel all mature and enlightened Christians that they be advised to refrain from asking "lobola" for their daughters given in marriage.

At the same time the church registers its strong disapproval of young people seeking to solve their marriage problems by elopement. Ministers and church elders are expected to instruct the youth on the high standards of marriage and seek to guide them in right paths by understanding counsel, and, if necessary, dealing with obdurate parents by seeking to remove unreasonable restrictions to the marriage.

Christian Marriage

Recognizing that a church is judged by the moral standards it upholds, and that the generally ac-

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cepted form of Christian marriage is applicable to Christians of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is strongly recommended that all our churches counsel their members to have the recognized civil-religious service in which both parties contract to the principles governing a Christian home.

It is recommended that a church member marrying a member in the baptismal class should likewise use the civil-religious service.

Where members in the Bible class have been married by tribal custom it is recommended that they have the civil religious service prior to baptism.

Marriage Officers

Among Seventh-day Adventists only ordained ministers are authorized to perform the marriage ceremony. There is no exception to this rule.

In many countries the ordained minister is allowed by law to conduct marriages. His name may have to be approved as a registrar.

Every minister is responsible for informing himself concerning the laws of the country in which he resides, making certain, before performing the marriage ceremony, that he is properly registered and legally empowered to officiate upon such occasions. He must see that the proper public notices to the marriage are observed and that there is no known impediment to the marriage.

IN MISSION LANDS

Sept. 25, 1924.

"It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." Isa. 11:11.

Nigeria

WILLIAM McCLEMENTS

The last quarter of the year 1923 was very encouraging to those of us who have been laboring here in Nigeria. During this period it has been the writer's privilege to administer the rite of baptism in different parts of the country, where many of our laborers have been for some time engaged. At these services many souls were openly confessing their Lord by baptism. It is also true that if these souls gathered out from heathenism, with all its dark and harmful practices and traditions, and take fresh courage as we press onward, despite the powers of darkness which are felt and seen on every hand.

It is by no means easy for a man, brought up from infancy in heathen surroundings and initiated into the mysteries of all their old wicked ways, to become a Christian. When the first beam of gospel light and hope penetrates his soul, and awakens within him a desire for better things, a desire to forsake the ways of his pagan ancestors, he finds many heartstrings drawing him back.

Wrong habits begin to make their power felt as the struggle begins. While still a babe on his mother's back, he was initiated into the art of dancing, and all through his boyhood days he entered into the spirit of the heathen dances and carousals. Now it is difficult for him to cut himself quite away from these alluring entertainments. It may be he has smoked his long pipe for many years, or snuffed his ground tobacco, or, in the case of women, chewed the vile weed from the age of three or four. The new believer finds it hard to leave all these things behind.

The gospel is the only power able to work deliverance for these slaves of sin and self. They are not beyond its reach, and often our hearts are made glad as we see such men and women handing over their pipes to be destroyed, thus showing their determination to be freed by the power of Christ from these wrong habits.

The greatest of all hindrances seemingly is polygamy. A man possesses but one wife strictly in a native state. A man, wherever the proud possessor of any five or ten, or two to six wives, as I once looked upon as a most honorable personage, his honor increases as his wives increase in number. The gospel brings a severe test to such people, and many, like the rich young man, turn away. Plurality of wives is the one great African evil, and until women are uplifted and given their proper place, Africa must remain in a low state, socially, morally, intellectually, and spiritually. It is a very hopeful sign, however, as the increasing number of women to be seen in our meetings and baptismal classes.

In Nigeria, with its population of upwards of twenty-five million people, we have as yet only about three hundred baptized members, and a little over fifteen hundred on the Sabbath school roll. One training school is being conducted for the training of native teachers and preachers.

During the year 1923 we had more openings than ever before in the history of our work in this field. Some of these openings are in difficult centers, but we believe the Lord has been going before us, and that He will raise up men and means for the advancement of His work in this needy land.

Ilorin, Nigeria.

ORGANIZATIONAL   STRUCTURE
of the
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST   CHURCH
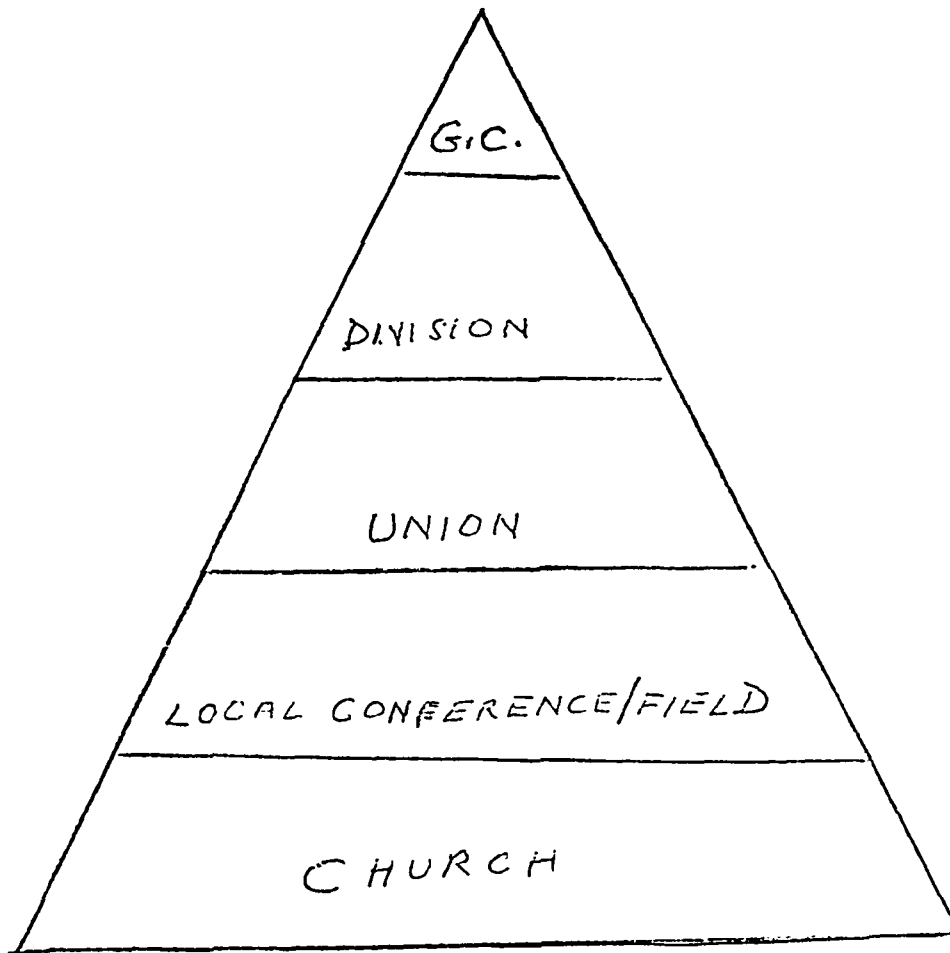
1. The CHURCH, a united body of individual believers.

2. The LOCAL CONFERENCE OR FIELD, a united body of churches in a state, province, or local territory.

3. The UNION CONFERENCE or UNION MISSION, a united body of conferences or fields within a larger territory.

4. The DIVISION, a section of the General Conference, embracing local or union conferences or missions in large areas of the world field.

5. The GENERAL CONFERENCE, the general body embracing the church in all parts of the world.

APPENDIX B

Interviews

Chome Seventh-day Adventist Church

Africa (Map)

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INTERVIEWS

The author interviewed thirteen people in the preparation of this project. All are Africans; four are women. All are Seventh-day Adventists and most have worked in the church as pastors, evangelists, teachers, departmental secretaries, or administrators. All of them are familiar with the African issues discussed in this paper.

Those interviewed represented the major geographical areas of Africa. To insure a more complete overview of the issues, you can see page 110 (Map of Africa).

A list of the interviewees with their national origin and occupation appear below.

Name	Country	Occupation
1. Mitiku Yalew	Ethiopia (North Africa)	Teacher (2 years)
2. Tegete Adugnaw	Ethiopia (North Africa)	Teacher, Church Clerk, College Secretary (3 years)
3. David Babalola	Nigeria (West Africa)	Pastor (some years)
4. Joseph Nkou	Cameroons (West Africa)	Teacher, Evangelist (17 years)
5. Mrs. Joseph Nkou	Cameroons (West Africa)	Housewife
6. Leonard Gashugi	Zaire (Central Africa)	Teacher
7. Mrs. Kacelenga	Malawi (Central Africa)	Teacher
8. Zaacheus Mathema	Rhodesia (Southern Africa)	Pastor (5 years)
9. V. Wakaba	South Africa (Southern Africa)	Pastor, Departmental Secretary (some years)
10. Mrs. U. Kisaka	Tanzania (East Africa)	Housewife

11.	Gado Ongwela	Kenya (East Africa)	Teacher, headmaster (5 years)
12.	Alice Ngeno	Kenya (East Africa)	Student
13.	Justus Bolo	Kenya (East Africa)	Student

CHOME SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

The author has chosen his home church, Chome
Seventh-day Adventist Church, Tanzania, to serve as
an illustration.

A. Polygamy/Monogamy Comparisons:

    1. Non-polygamous husbands   18
    2. Including their wives   18
    3. Youth and Children   70

    1. Polygamous husbands (not SDA) 12
    2. Wives(from polygamous husbands)
       who are baptized SDA members 37
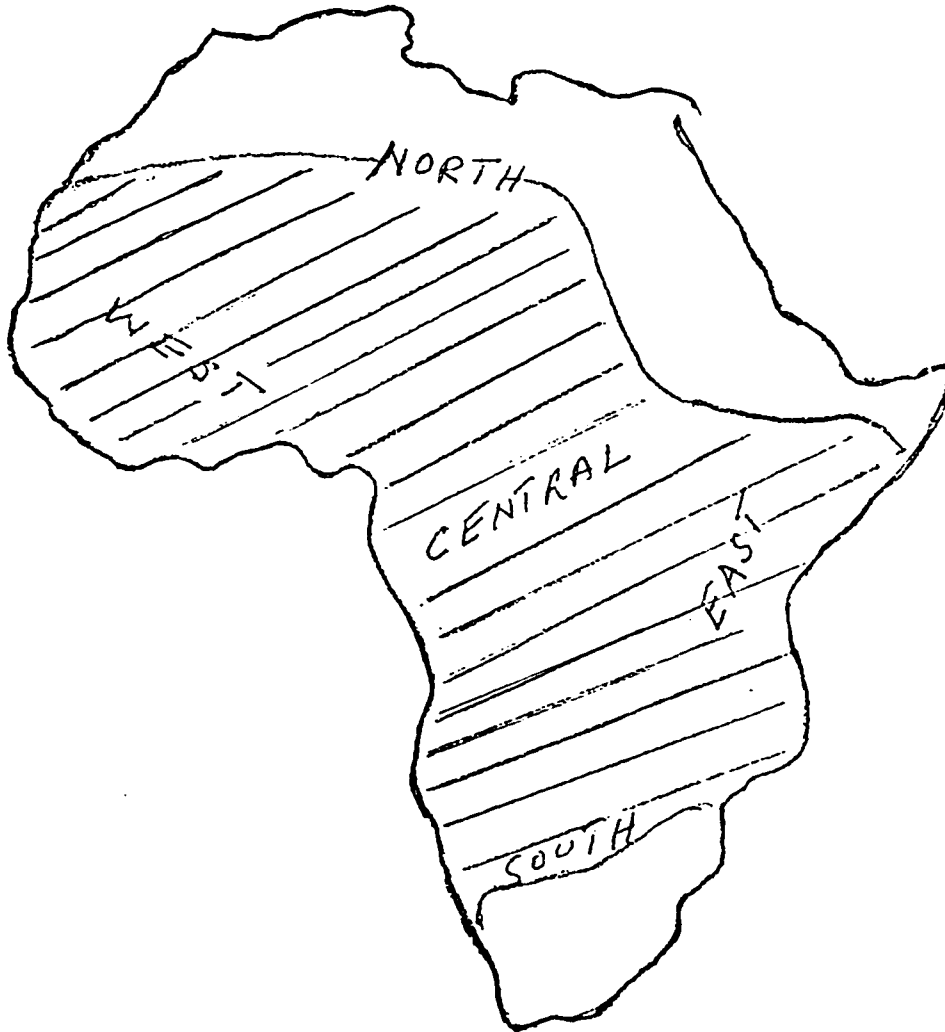   3. Youth and children   109
                               255

B. Dowry

    1. Married families under dowry
       custom   99%

    2. Married families without
       dowry custom involved   1%

C. Ancestor Veneration

    1. Those from homes (parents and
       relatives) connected wit it -
       estimated   60%

    2. Those from non-Ancestor
       Veneration homes   40%

(By the author's investigation and observation, 1974 data)

A F R I C A

Geographical area for the issues discussed in the paper

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Ongwela, Gado. Headmaster, Kenya. Interview. December 28, 1978.

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              Seminary
       1979 Doctor of Ministry, Andrews University Theological
              Seminary

Experiences:

       1953-1958 Teacher, Headmaster, Ntusu Bupandagila Extended
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       1959-1960 School Inspector and Departmental Secretary, Lake
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                    Sponsored by North-East Tanzania Field
       1965-1969 Student, Solusi College, Rhodesia, Africa
       1970-1971 Departmental Secretary, North-East Tanzania Field
       1972-1973 Principal, Ministerial Course, Ikizu Seminary,
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