



“Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink”¹ The disconnect between salvation and sanctification among Protestants in Kenya and its consequences

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Abstract

This article explores the apparent discrepancy that exists between religious claims concerning personal salvation and actual behavior among the many different kinds of Protestant Christians in Kenya and asks the question, how can a religion which seems to make such exalted claims of personal religious experience and status appear to make so little actual difference in how many of these Christians live their lives? And this in spite of the clear moral mandate contained in the Scriptures these churches and their members claim to believe. Hypocrisy, of course, is a reality in every religious system. But what seems to be occurring in Kenya (and throughout sub-Saharan Africa) goes far beyond anything that could be attributed to ordinary hypocrisy. And the question that comes to mind is *Why?* What is going on here? The country where this study has been undertaken is Kenya, and the observations that are made are not scientifically gathered, but rather are self-reported by Kenyan church leaders themselves. Their evidence is thus not determinative, but supportive of the central claim of the article. It is the argument of this article that the core issue facing Kenyan Christians and Kenyan churches behind this discrepancy is a theological and systemic one, namely how salvation is understood and preached by different Kenyan Christian leaders and the role that sanctification plays (if at all) in the contemporary Kenyan Christian understandings of what it means to be “saved” and thus what it means to be “Christian”. The sampled views of Kenyan Christian leaders are explored. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations offered to help Christian leaders begin to address the gap between “salvation” as it is understood and proclaimed and sanctification as it is experienced and lived in the ordinary Christian life.

Keywords: Christianity in Kenya, salvation/soteriology, sanctification, Christian gospel, Christian morality.

Introduction

This article explores the apparent discrepancy that exists between religious claims concerning personal salvation and actual behavior among the many different kinds of Protestant Christians in Kenya and asks the question, how can a religion which seems to make such exalted claims of personal religious experience and status appear to make so little actual difference in how many

¹ From the poem, ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge, Samuel T. (1895). *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, New York, NY: Longmans, Green and Company, p. 12.



live their lives?² And this in spite of the clear moral mandate contained in the Scriptures these churches and their members hold to be authoritative. The country where this study has been undertaken is Kenya, and the observations that are made are not scientifically gathered, but rather are self-reported by Kenyan church leaders themselves. There are undoubtedly many different factors contributing to the discrepancy between profession and practice in any individual Christian, any local Church, and any expression of Christianity in a national population. But it is the argument of this article that the core issue facing Kenyan Christians and Kenyan churches behind this discrepancy is a theological one, namely how salvation is understood and preached by different Kenyan Christian leaders and the role that sanctification plays in the contemporary Kenyan Christian understandings of what it means to be “saved”.

The findings presented in this article can only be suggestive, given the nature of the evidence considered and the extreme diversity of Christianity found in Kenya. But given that evidence to the contrary is in such short supply among national and local Christian leaders and their constituencies, the suggestive nature of the evidence presented below is alarming enough with respect to more orthodox expressions of historical Christianity, that nothing less than the Christian gospel itself and the future credibility, and even viability of Protestant Christian churches may be at stake.³

A Systemic Discrepancy Between Profession and Practice?

But first we must establish that there is a discrepancy between Christian profession and actual practice among the millions of Christians of Kenya. Kenya is an extraordinarily religious country, even by African standards. Recent surveys have indicated 84% of the population consider

² See Balcomb, A. O. (2011). “‘A Hundred Miles Wide, but Only a Few Inches Deep’? – Sounding the Depth of Christianity in Africa’, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 140, pp. 20-33.

³ Because my own story interjects at so many points and for so many years with the object of this study, the danger remains that I might lose perspective, in either positive or negative ways. Duncan Fuller observes that “Writing from ‘marginal’ perspectives, the role of the researcher – the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and between the researcher and the ‘researched-community’ – has increasingly been deconstructed and problematized in recent years, leading ultimately to increased awareness of the need for critical, reflexive thought regarding the implications of any researches positionality and situatedness. A key notion here is that ‘the personal is the political’ and vice versa, epitomizing how, for many researches, personal, political, academic, and often activist identities are one and the same – many researches are always or already natives in the research they are conducting. As such, they occupy a space in which the situatedness of their knowledges and their positionalities are constantly renegotiated and critically engaged with, a space that necessarily involves the removal of artificial boundaries between categories such as researcher, activist, teacher, and person and proposes instead a movement between these various identities to facilitate engagement between and within them. Here there is a continual questioning of researchers’ social location (in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, etc.), in addition to the physical location of their research, their disciplinary location, and their political position and personality. In addition, such questioning is included and made transparent within any commentary on the work conducted, highlighted as an integral (and unavoidable) part of the research process, thereby successfully avoiding any false and misleading presentation of the research (and research itself) as inert, detached, and neutral.” (Fuller, 1999: 221-227). See also the later collection of articles on positionality in research: Lauterbach, K. and Vahakangas, M. (2020). *Faith in African Lived Christianity: Bridging Anthropological and Theological Perspectives*. Brill: Leiden. It is impossible to think, much less write, without a position or a view. I write from within the perspective of Orthodox Christianity, though my formative experiences were all within a Reformed and Charismatic Christian perspective. As with everybody, my ‘position’ makes me sensitive to some issues, and blind to others. Acknowledging this helps one cope with the inevitable mistakes in perspective, for which I take full responsibility.



themselves to be Christian.⁴ Of this number, another survey puts the percentage of Kenyan's who are Roman Catholic at nearly 24%, and the percentage of Protestants and "other Christians" at 60% of the population.⁵ Protestant Christian missionaries made relatively early efforts to penetrate the predominantly Muslim Swahili Coast and reach the various ethnic groups of what was already known by the local inhabitants as Kenya. In the 1840s and 1850s, Johann Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebmann of the Church Missionary Society (CMS – Anglican) had reached both Kilimanjaro and the foothills of Mount Kenya. They were followed by missionaries sent by other Protestant denominations, independent mission agencies, and by Roman Catholics. By the end of the century there were hundreds of missionaries from Zanzibar to Buganda. These early missionary efforts came at a high price for many of the individuals who left home and family to follow God's call, as malaria and yellow fever claimed many almost as fast as they arrived. There were few conversions in the early years. But there were already efforts to train those who did become Christian. In 1875, CMS missionaries established a Christian community for freed slaves in Freretown, near Mombasa.

In 1888, E.A. Fitch began theology classes to train converted freed slaves for Christian ministry. These classes became the genesis of the earliest theological institution in Kenya – St. Paul's Divinity School. St. Paul's moved from Mombasa to the central highlands near a small town called Limuru in 1930. The Presbyterians, Methodist and Reformed churches joined forces with the Anglicans to become a union seminary in the 1949, taking the name St. Paul's United Theological College in 1955. St. Paul's became a university in 2007, with the theological college becoming the Faculty of Theology.⁶ I have mentioned St. Paul's University in some detail because it is both the institution where I have taught, and it is also the source of much of my data for this article.

Thus Kenya has a relatively long Protestant Christian history, and has distinguished itself as welcoming missionary efforts, both during the colonial era and since Independence from British colonial rule in 1963. And given the current statistics, it would appear that these missionary efforts, and subsequent local church evangelism in Kenya have, on aggregate, been a roaring success. Kenya is rightly famous for many things – the wildlife of its national parks, the diversity of its 46 ethnic groups, a fast developing and growing consumer culture amidst the hustle of its burgeoning cities, its wonderful coffee and tea. It is also a place of enormous slums where people live in crushing poverty, while being one of the most corrupt countries on the continent in its politics, its government services, its business and its law enforcement and judiciary, which is saying something.⁷ Petty crime is rife. As is prostitution. Illegal abortions appear to be the normal

⁴ See the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, 'Kenya', which puts the figure at 84%. NA (2016). Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, "Kenya". Retrieved from: http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/kenya#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2010®ion_name=All%20Countries&restrictions_year=2013

⁵ NA. (2021). "Index Mundi: Kenya Religions". Retrieved from: <https://www.indexmundi.com/kenya/religions.html>

⁶ NA. (ND). St. Paul's University: "Our History". Retrieved from: <http://www.spu.ac.ke/new/index.php/about/our-history> . .

⁷ Kenya's ubiquitous corruption is legendary. See, for example, Hope, K. R. (2014). *Kenya's corruption problem: causes and consequences*, Commonwealth & Comparative Politics 52(4), pp. 493-512; Hope, K. R. (2018). *Police corruption and the security challenge in Kenya*, African Security 11(1), pp. 84-108; D'Arcy, M. and Cornell, A. (2016). *Devolution and corruption in Kenya: Everyone's turn to eat?*, African Affairs, 115(459), pp. 246–73, retrieved at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adw002>; Odhiambo, F. O. (2015). *Determinants of corruption in Kenya: Born and bred to bribe*, Social Sciences 4(6), pp. 134-41; Persson, A., Rothstein, B. and Teorell, J. (2013). *Why anticorruption reforms fail—systemic corruption as a collective action problem*, Governance 26(3), pp. 449-71.



way to deal with teen or unwanted pregnancies. Indeed, many parents choose not to know about their children's promiscuity, about the ubiquitous accessing of porn on their phones, just as all levels pretend that alarming levels of domestic abuse simply does not exist.⁸ Sex is traded for better grades or economic advancement, or simply taken as the right of the powerful. Throughout society the ends are universally seen to justify the means, from lawless driving to cheating by students in every level of education, from shoddy and dangerous construction practices to short-sighted government policies that benefit a few, from the seemingly ritual abuse of elections by the already rich and connected to grab and maintain political power (and the access to money that comes with it), to the widespread and regular plundering of government funds by "public servants" at national, county and local levels from their intended use for public projects into personal bank accounts. A mob will form in an instant to beat a suspected thief to death, but graft on an industrial scale by so-called big men is tolerated if not celebrated in some quarters. In addition, the daily papers have for decades carried outraged headlines about one scandal after another, provoking almost no response from anyone. Needless to say, there are challenges here; *and* Kenya is also one of the most religious, most *Christian* countries on the planet. Not only that, but many of the above-mentioned malefactors will likely be at church on Sunday.⁹

Even to the casual observer, the discrepancy between Christian morality as taught in the New Testament and Kenyan Christian reality is stunning.¹⁰ It is a version of Christianity that is in many respects a Western variant of Christianity, brought by Western missionaries concerned more about the bottom line in terms of conversions and church attendance than about any difference

⁸ See my article, Black, J.W. (2017). *Sex, Abortion, Domestic Violence and Other Unmentionables: Orthodox Christian Youth in Kenya and Windows into Their Attitudes About Sex*, in "Inward Being and Outward Identity: The Orthodox Churches in the 21st Century", *Religions*, 8(73), pp. 1-18, doi:10.3390/rel8050073.

⁹ Paul Gifford writes, "Christianity has been an important element in Kenya's personalized patronage system [also known as political corruption]. Around the time of the reintroduction of multiparty democracy, some Kenyan churchmen did play this role of challenging the system – the Anglican bishops, Muge, Okullu, Gitari (belatedly, perhaps Archbishop Kuria), the Presbyterian Njoya, and eventually the Roman Catholic hierarchy. This much-celebrated contribution should not hide the fact that nearly all branches of Kenyan Christianity have been fairly easily manipulated, even co-opted by the political elite." Gifford, P. (2009). *Christianity co-opted*, Religion and Politics in Kenya, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 201-202. See also Gez, Y. N. (2018). *Negotiating Normative Christianity in Urban Kenya*, Traditional Churches, Born Again Christianity, and Pentecostalism, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, pp. 153-97.

¹⁰ This is not a new observation. Joseph Galgalo writes that "such shallowness and contradictions... have earned African Christianity the reputation of superficiality at best, and at worst blatant hypocrisy or double allegiance of sorts. Some of come to the conclusion that the church in Africa has lost the gospel altogether and has built systems and institutions on ethnic bedrocks, and characteristically specialized in legalism, moralism and money matters – busy extorting members, with regard to this last point, if not extending the begging bowl to the West." Galgalo, J.D. (2012). *African Christianity: The Stranger Within*, Limuru, Kenya: Zapf Chancery, p. 2. Others have blamed the poor fit of Christian theology and morality in the African context to the wholesale importation of a Western theological model on top of an already existing African cosmology. One must be careful of overgeneralizing, as an 'African' perspective easily fragments into thousands if distinct cultures with their own perspectives. Even so, there is a fulsome literature of complaint against the Christianity imported uncritically by generations of Western missionaries and the resulting churches and denominations. See, for example, David Tonghou Ngong (2010). *The Holy Spirit and Salvation in African Christian Theology: Imagining a More Hopeful Future for Africa*. New York: Peter Lang, 1-4, 123-126. See also Brand, B. (1999). Salvation in African Christian Theology: a Typology of Existing Approaches, *Exchange* (28:3), 193-223; Pobee, J. S. (1998). An African Anglican's view of salvation. *Anglicanism: A Global Communion*, 78; Adeyemo, T. (1997). Ideas of Salvation. *Ajet*, 16, 67-75.



Christianity in general and Christians in particular might make in their local communities.¹¹ University of Nairobi theologian JNK Mugambi may be addressing African Christianity in general, but its relevance to the Kenyan context is immediately apparent:

The numerical strength of African Christianity does not match its social engagement in any African country. Generally, Christianity has been introduced to the continent as a religion whose aim is to secure eternal life for believers after their death. Anything that the believers do now is not for the purpose of ensuring better livelihood on earth, but insurance for the life to come. The predominance of this other-worldly teaching has led to abdication of social responsibility on the part of clergy and laity, especially with regard to political and economic affairs. Priests have access to the pulpit every week, but the content of their sermons is often so other-worldly that the worshippers cannot relate it to daily life. Consequently ordinary Christians daily have to decide on their own what is in their best interest to do, since there is no relevant guidance from the religious leadership. During social and political crises both the clergy and the laity find themselves unable to distinguish themselves from the rest of society on the basis of their faith... Thus African churches, especially those that are extensions of foreign denominations, remain largely detached from the daily social concerns of the nations to which their members belong. (Mugambi, 2009: 110-11)¹²

Balcomb and others may take exception at the sweeping harshness of Mugambi's criticism,¹³ but Mugambi's observations are not made in a vacuum. (Balcomb, (2011): 21-22). And it is the dissonance between Christian numbers, claims and how Christians in Kenya actually live that has provoked the theological reflection leading to this attempt to understand what is going on. Hence the attempt to listen to Kenyan Christian leaders themselves address the relationship between salvation and sanctification, and the problems that result when faith is not followed by transformation. The source of this concern comes not from the learned debates of African theologians or the deliberations of denominational leaders, but rather from observations of Christianity as it is actually practiced and experienced by the people calling themselves Christians, in this case in places like Nairobi, Nakuru, Kisumu, Eldoret and Meru, and in the rural areas of Kenya that constitute the places where most Kenyans still live. As a result, this is not a formal theological essay concerned with defining soteriological issues and establishing the relative merits of this view over that view. Instead, the purpose here is one of identification. I have come to view that the primary source of the discrepancy between Christian profession and actual behavior is a dysfunction that is theological in its origin. Thus I am concerned here to identify what some Protestant Christian leaders themselves believe and communicate when it comes to the issue of salvation in general, and the relationship between salvation and sanctification in particular in their ministries. To do this I am making use of written answers to questions on the part of Anglican, Presbyterian and Pentecostal clergy. I am also using interviews conducted by my students who were assigned to ask clergy not of their own tradition about their understanding of salvation.

The methodology employed is not scientific. The picture that emerges is by no means complete but rather suggestive. And the conclusions reached are tentative and not final. And yet, that

¹¹ I have written about this elsewhere. See Black, JW. (2023). *The African Trainwreck of the Western Gospel*. Onesimus: Theology, Mission and Life in this World. Retrieved from [The African Trainwreck of the Western Gospel | Onesimus \(onesimusredivivus.blogspot.com\)](https://www.onesimusredivivus.blogspot.com). See also my not yet published book: Black, J.W. (2023). *African Christianity and Its Western Hangover: Recovering the Original Gospel for Africa's Post-Western Christians*. Manuscript available on request.

¹² Mugambi, J.N.K. (2009). *Christianity in Africa, 1910-2010* in Ross, K. ed., *Atlas of Global Christianity*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 110-11.

¹³ Balcomb, *A Hundred Miles Wide*, pp. 21-22.



Christianity makes so little difference in the way so many live their lives in this land of the “saved” starts to make sense when we stop assuming we know what the calls to and claims of salvation mean and instead begin to hear what this “salvation” actually is in the words of the men and women who have spiritual responsibility for their various flocks. We will hear them make their case in their own words. In doing so the contours of the challenge facing the many Protestant Christian denominations begins to take shape. The ones articulating these views are among the most articulate of the rising leaders of the Kenyan churches, as they have received the best education currently available here. Because there is not another group of hidden leaders out there somewhere who will have a more profound understanding of these issues, the views expressed are therefore valuable, as the capacity to understand the issues diminishes the further one is removed from some form of theological education, of which the majority of Kenyan church leaders have little if any..

This is very much an introductory survey, and the hope is that it will provoke others to delve more deeply into the realities of Christianity in Kenya, and why it is appears to be so anemic, feckless and even scandalous when it comes to making a difference in people’s lives and in their communities as well. After reviewing the evidence presented by the questions and surveys, conclusions will be drawn and suggestions made as to a way forward for the men and women called to follow Christ in this challenging place.

What Kenyan Protestant Clergy Have to Say about Salvation and Sanctification

The data for this paper comes from two sources. First, interviews were conducted with pastors from a sample of Kenya’s enormous variety of Protestant and Pentecostal denominations.¹⁴ These pastors were responding to a series of questions about salvation, namely, to explain the gospel as they understand it with a view towards having each one articulate how a person in his/her tradition understand how one is saved. They were also asked to articulate what one is saved from, the way one is saved, the means used to save, and the goal of salvation. Secondly, written answers concerning the relationship between salvation and sanctification were collected from a smaller group of clergy, mainly from Anglican and Presbyterian churches, with several Pentecostal pastors included in the mix. The questions answered by this group include: Explain the relationship between the Protestant understanding of salvation and the Protestant understanding of sanctification; and Should “being saved” make any difference in the lives of a believer, and if so, why and how? And lastly, explain how sanctification is supposed to work in the life of a believer from a Protestant perspective.¹⁵

¹⁴ Interviews were made with clergy from the Full Gospel Church, Winner’s Chapel, Soul Harvest (Independent Pentecostal) Church, Redeemed Gospel Church, Deliverance Church Christian Outreach Worldwide Church, Christadelphian Bible Mission, Church of God, Hosanna Ministry (Anglican breakaway), Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecostal Assembly of God, World-Wide Evangelical Ministries, Four Square Gospel Church, Apostolic Pentecostal Church, Asalph Ministry, and the clergyperson overseeing the Protestant prison ministry in Nakuru. Views were also collected from pastors of so-called ‘mainstream’ or ‘mission’ churches. These more traditional Protestant churches were established mostly during the heyday of the missionary effort in colonial and then independent Kenya. These interviews were given by Anglican priests (Anglican Church of Kenya), Presbyterian pastors (Presbyterian Church of East Africa), Lutheran pastors (Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church), Baptist pastors (Baptist Convention of Kenya), and the Africa Inland Church pastors. (Africa Inland Mission).

¹⁵ I decided not to include interviews with either Roman Catholic priests or Orthodox priests. Allowing representatives from these churches to explain their views on salvation would have been interesting, but it would not have furthered the goals of this paper, which is to explore the diversity of Kenyan Protestant views with respect to salvation, and by extension, the gospel that is preached in their churches. Also, mostly absent from this paper are the opinions of members from Kenya’s AICs (African Initiated



What is Salvation?

In this section we will hear a variety of Kenyan Protestant leaders explain their understanding of salvation. What will become obvious in short order is that, for most, salvation is understood without reference or recourse to any notion of sanctification, that is, without any corresponding obligation for repentance or moral change. But it is best to let the various pastors speak for themselves.

In one of the most articulate responses, an Anglican priest states that being saved is much more than a “get out of jail free card”. He allows that salvation after death is just one aspect of being saved and not the essence of salvation itself. Rather salvation is primarily a new relationship with God, where one loves God above all else. According to this Anglican priest, being saved means we become new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). We also become like lamps that shine the love of Christ into the darkness of the world. We therefore become the means God uses to draw other people back to himself so that they, too can be saved. Being saved also means connecting with a local church, and it means showing love to the people in your local church community. “Just sitting in a Church does not make you Christian, although it is a necessary part of being a Christian”, he states. This salvation is not anything we earn or merit; rather it is a gift from God.¹⁶

There are many things to commend in this Anglican priest’s understanding of salvation. Far from a one-dimensional formula, this perspective views salvation as encompassing far more than just relief from eternal punishment for sin. He attempts to ground his views in what the New Testament teaches. And yet, the impact of salvation on daily life is reduced to one’s participation in a local church. Any sense of repentance or progressive transformation is absent. The resulting soteriology is sophisticated, but the “so-what?” has gone missing.

Another pastor, this one a minister from the Presbyterian Church in East Africa, works hard to ground his understanding in the Reformed theology of his church, specifically under the rubric of “TULIP” (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints), the negatively framed and misleading attempt to summarize Reformed theology. All people are fallen and will naturally look out only for themselves and not for the things of God, according to this pastor. Because no one would choose God’s way of their own volition, God chooses who will be saved and who will not be saved. According to our pastor, there is nothing anyone can do to get saved on his or her own, nor is anyone every good enough to be acceptable to God. Those whom God chooses are saved by the cross of Christ, whose death covers the sins of everyone who will be saved. The Holy Spirit then draws a person to Christ, to conversion and into salvation. And once one is saved, the Holy Spirit will ensure that you will never fall away.¹⁷

Churches). Their views on salvation and sanctification could easily form the basis of an entire study of its own. Given the limits imposed by my circumstances, I have not been capable of the robust research necessary to do their inclusion justice.

¹⁶ Personal Collection, Manuscript 101, pp. 3-6. All of the material obtained from the various participants in this study will be denoted in a similar manner. The Manuscript number refers to a particular individual, known to the author, but who will remain anonymous. There were upwards of thirty different respondents. Those not included in this survey did not differ in content from the main thrust of what the others say. But because they did not say it well, I have limited for the sake of clarity and space the responses used to those who were able to make their points clearly.

¹⁷ Personal Collection, Manuscript 102, pp. 4-7.



There are, of course challenges here, both in the Reformed theology cited and in the way it is communicated.¹⁸ But what is of note for the sake of this article is the complete lack of any personal, ethical, moral or societal impact or responsibility salvation seems to confer on a person's life. Again, this is not meant to reflect on or pass judgment on Reformed theology at its best. But in this expression of Reformed Christianity, becoming a Christian need not (and likely does not) make any difference in how one lives. Especially since there is nothing that one can do that can affect how God views a person.

A Deliverance Church pastor (one of the many different Pentecostal churches in Kenya) felt a need to defend his Pentecostal theology in his answer to the question, "What is salvation?" "Pentecostalism," he states,

adheres to the inerrancy of the Bible and the necessity of accepting Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. It is distinguished by belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit that enables the Christian to live a Spirit-filled and empowered life. This empowerment includes the use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and divine healing – two other defining characteristics of Pentecostalism. Because of our commitment to biblical authority, spiritual gifts, and the miraculous, we Pentecostals tend to see our movement as reflecting the same kind of spiritual power and teachings that were found in the Apostolic Age of the early church. Therefore, salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ and the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, being justified by grace through faith man becomes an heir of God.¹⁹

It is worth noticing that the power of the gospel, in this case, leads to the demonstration of the Spirit's power in one's life, experienced mainly through speaking in tongues, signs and wonders. "Repentance" is mentioned, but not defined. Salvation and the subsequently required "baptism of the Spirit" facilitates a "Spirit-filled and empowered life". This has to do with Spirit-given gifts for ministry. But for all the fulsome description provided, missing is any description of what a Christian's life will actually look like – how is Christian love made manifest? What are Christian ethics and how are they put into practice? What will Christian morality look like in the midst of this culture? How will Christian community be a counterculture to the corruption-culture so deeply rooted in this place? The emphasis instead is on tongues-speaking and personal spiritual experience, the two things that validate Pentecostal religion in the eyes of this and most Pentecostal preachers. For all the spiritual-sounding words, it should surprise no one that this pastor's description of salvation looks remarkably like the reality being lived out in most churches, both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal – to rephrase Shakespeare: full of sound and fury, but signifying not much.²⁰

Another pastor leading an independent Pentecostal ministry in Nairobi says this about salvation:

The gospel is the power. The gospel is power because it brings transformation in human beings. This transformation comes when sinful person changes to a new creature. The gospel also brings empowerment to the believers. This empowerment is through various ways. It is through knowledge, financially, socially and even through leadership. So anyone

¹⁸ Full disclosure: the author was Reformed in his theology before his conversion to the Eastern Orthodox Church.

¹⁹ Personal Collection, Manuscript 103, p. 2.

²⁰ From Macbeth's 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow' speech in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5.



who receives the gospel of salvation is empowered in various ways and this is evident in his/her everyday life.²¹

According to this pastor, a person is saved from “the old way of life”, and from condemnation, as well as from eternity in hell.²² And the goal of this salvation is four-fold: 1) to glorify God; 2) personal liberation to enjoy the promises of God; 3) hope for eternal life; and 4) fullness of life now for those who are saved.²³

Compare these goals with those of another Presbyterian pastor who states that the goal of salvation is 1) to have a good relationship with God; 2) to have the power of God available at all times, especially when one is tempted by the devil; 3) life forever after death; and 4) to receive the blessings today that God has for everyone who is saved.²⁴

What strikes this observer, at least, is that both the Pentecostal and the Presbyterian view the goals of salvation to be remarkably similar. For both the Pentecostal and the Presbyterian, we have a gospel that is full of promises and a salvation that makes much of the power of God and the experience of the Holy Spirit. But neither says anything about how my salvation might affect my life and how I lead my life today. In both cases there is no sense of any ethical dimension to salvation – salvation is meant to be experienced as present blessing and future bliss. That salvation might be a challenge, that it might involve “taking up one’s cross and following” Jesus, of dying to self, of repenting of sins, and a subsequent life of becoming more like Christ is nowhere mentioned.

According a pastor of the Apostolic Pentecostal church, the kingdom of God can only be entered through salvation. This church teaches that through repentance, baptism, and the receipt of the Holy Ghost, believers are saved from their sins. Repentance is defined as an inner conviction and a change of mind that consequently enables a person to live and act according to the word of God. Repentance occurs when one understands what God thinks about their sin. Therefore, this repentance is the first step towards salvation.

The second step towards salvation, according to Apostolic Pentecostal Church, is baptism in Jesus name. Baptism in the name of Jesus is for the forgiveness of sin. Once a person is baptized, his or her sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus. Also through baptism, we believe that we are buried with Christ and raised up in new life.

Thirdly, this APC pastor states that the receiving of the Holy Spirit is the third and final step towards salvation. The Holy Spirit is a supernatural power that enters into people who believes and obeys the word of God. Once the Holy Spirit comes, people are able to speak in tongues – a language only understood by God himself. Therefore, for complete salvation, APC teaches that people must be filled with the Holy Spirit which represents God’s presence in their lives.²⁵

Thus for the Apostolic Pentecostal Church, as with most other Pentecostal churches, the defining evidence for *salvation* and not just Spirit baptism is the ability to speak in tongues, which is seen as a supernatural intervention in one’s life.²⁶ Of course there is no mention of the *fruit* of the Holy

²¹ Personal Collection, Manuscript 104, p. 2.

²² Ibid., p. 3.

²³ Black, J.W., p. 3.

²⁴ Black, J.W., p. 6.

²⁵ Personal Collection, Manuscript 106, pp. 4-5.

²⁶ This corresponds with what Bernard Gechiko Nyabwari and Dickson Nkonge Kagema have outlined in their article. See Nyabwari, B.G. and Kagema, D.N. (2014). *Charismatic Pentecostal Churches in Kenya:*



Spirit, those transformations of character mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22-23, most of which have ethical implications, nor of Jesus' injunction that one will know the tree by the fruit it bears. Salvation here is explained in personal experiential terms and measured by whether one can speak in tongues.

Another Anglican pastor defined salvation as a wholistic action that removes one from the bondage of sin. According to this passage, whoever confesses his or her sin and believes in Christ has escaped eternal death and the tribulation of fire prepared for the devil and immoral people who have not trusted in Christ. The goal of salvation, interestingly, is, in his own words:

based on two things. One, for [a missiological] purpose where everybody is called to bring good news to the world, [and] to send the message of salvation to the all those are in bondage of sin. Therefore, salvation is present action and purpose for the present world. The second goal is for [an eschatological] purpose whereby the people will be taken by Christ to live eternally. Therefore, salvation is for the future to come. Jesus will come for only those who had confessed that Jesus is the Lord here on earth in the present time for the future time to come. In conclusion, salvation is a gift and a gift that God has granted for everybody who needs it. Salvation is assurance to eternal life.²⁷

Thus salvation is expressed in evangelism, in getting more and more people "saved" like me. Church growth and going to heaven would appear to be the goals of this understanding of salvation.²⁸

If "Salvation" is the Solution, What Is the Problem?

An alternative and telling way to look at salvation is to ask what problem is being solved by the solution proffered by the Gospel? Thus according to another Pentecostal pastor:

one is being saved from sin and guilt because this is the main problem. Therefore, God sent Jesus Christ to save us from the consequences of our sin. Because we have broken the law of God and He is angry about it, unless something happens to change your condition one is on his/her way to hell. Only by the grace of God, through our faith in Chris, can our sins be forgiven and we are saved. God's plan of salvation has been to redeem man to him and have good relationship. In this the love of God was made manifested among us. Through salvation we find a love that changes everything. We will also begin to experience a new kind of freedom that comes from the forgiveness of sin. In salvation we discover our true potential and purpose in life.²⁹

Growth, Culture and Orality, International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, 1(3), pp. 27-33.

²⁷ Personal Collection, Manuscript 107, pp. 2-3.

²⁸ A case has been made that Pentecostal 'worship' leads to or facilitates 'transformation'. Such worship 'rituals', it is claimed, are not 'optional or random activities, but constitute a core ritual providing congregants a viable route to a central goal of Pentecostal spirituality: transformation. Transformation is thus both an idea and praise and worship rituals – including the songs sung in worship, constitute a crucial link between the two.' From the abstract. See Prosen, M. (2018) *Songs that Carry Transformation: Pentecostal Praise and Worship Rituals in Nairobi, Kenya*, Mission Studies 35(2), pp. 265-85. I can only wish the author was correct in her efforts to tie praise and worship songs with actual 'transformation.' The Kenyan Church would be on its way to becoming a virtual paradise on earth if that were the case. But 'transformation' can be a very slippery word in these contexts. Moreover, there needs to be a more detailed examination of the actual lives of such participants before such claims could be considered more than aspirational, especially given the low level of Christian content most of such music actually contains.

²⁹ Personal Collection, Manuscript 108, p. 2



A Kenyan Lutheran pastor equates salvation with forgiveness:

[I] believe that God has justified all sinners, that is, He has declared them not guilty for the sake of Christ. They believe that this is the central message in the Bible upon which the very existence of the churches depends. They teach that individuals receive this free gift of forgiveness and salvation not on the basis of their own works, but only through faith. Faith is seen as an instrument that receives the gift of salvation, not something that causes salvation.

An Anglican priest states that confessing Christ is the key to the door of salvation:

one is saved after deep conviction of sin up to where one finds him or her has missed the way. The conviction comes from Holy Spirit where the person acknowledges God who saves everybody from a sinful nature. He said that if any person acknowledges and confesses that Jesus is the Lord, he receives salvation.³⁰

And again: “salvation is...the removal of sin that is to be forgiven any sin one has ever done.” And further, from the same Anglican priest: “Salvation is assurance to eternal life.”³¹

The pastor of an independent Pentecostal church puts it perhaps most clearly: “Any person who is known to be saved, is saved from the death which was brought by sin from Adam and Eve. Sin brought us death but the Lord forgave our sins, therefore, there is no more death we are accounted for. Whereby death is spiritual death.”³²

What is striking about each of these statements is that all of them express in one way or another that the problem being solved by the gospel is a *legal problem*, and that the solution provided by the Gospel is a *legal solution*. In other words, the problem is our sin, our disobedience to God and the consequences of that disobedience. Whether we are now liable to death or to God’s wrath or to hell, human beings are in trouble. The solution comes from access to the forgiveness purchased by Christ through his death on the cross, access gained by believing the Gospel. This resolves our legal jeopardy and enables us to receive the goal of salvation, which is eternal life.

But notice that while we are here confronted with a gospel which may resolve one’s eternal life problem and perhaps one’s need for physical healing and prosperity now, it is a gospel that makes no claims on one’s life or how one should live now. This is but a sample of the statements that were recorded, and in the remainder there is not a single example of any ethical or moral character dimension to the salvation that is proclaimed. The need for forgiveness and for assurance of “going to heaven” is the problem all of my sources are concerned about. There may be an obligatory nod towards the need for “repentance”, but this is almost never defined. Instead there is almost an absence of concern for changing one’s heart and behavior and life. This is true for Pentecostal churches, for non-Pentecostal evangelical and for mission churches.

Anecdotally, this is a sea change from what I remember being preached in Kenyan evangelical and Pentecostal churches in the 1980s, when the focus was so much on private morality that in many cases it tipped into legalism. This, of course, reflected the priorities of the mostly Fundamentalist and culturally conservative missionaries from the US and the UK who were often the ones who responded to the missionary call. But even then, with the focus on sexual mores, drinking and dress issues for the women, matters of public behavior, the prevalence of society-wide corruption and injustice were rarely if ever mentioned much less engaged.

³⁰ Personal Collection, Manuscript 109, pp. 1-2.

³¹ Black, J.W., p. 2.

³² Personal Collection, Manuscript 110, p. 2.



Kenyan Pastors on the Relationship Between Salvation and Sanctification

Having established what is understood, taught and preached as “salvation” in many of Kenya’s different churches, it remains to explore the relationship between “salvation” and “sanctification” in the minds of a further sample of Kenyan clergy. For most pastors, this level of theological sophistication would be beyond their capacity to articulate, as many, especially among the independent and Pentecostal pastors, have not had formal theological education. They get what theology they think they need from the Bible, from the internet or popular books, or from “the leading of the Holy Spirit”.³³ The resulting chaos can be seen by the utter and ongoing fragmentation of Kenyan Protestantism into currently more than 5000 different denominations and independent churches, but exploring the causes and effects of this dysfunction is not the brief of this article.³⁴ The sample clergy consulted here have all had the benefit of either diploma or bachelors-level theological education, and all of them have been serving for at least several years in Anglican, Presbyterian or Pentecostal churches.

I asked the respondents to answer the following series of questions. First, explain the relationship between the Protestant understanding of salvation and the Protestant understanding of sanctification. Secondly, how have Protestants sought to defend themselves against the charge of offering people “cheap grace”, a salvation that requires only verbal assent but no subsequent change in one’s behavior? Thirdly, should “being saved” make any difference in the life of a Christian believer, and if so, why and how? And fourthly, explain how sanctification is supposed to work in the life of a believer from a Protestant perspective.

These questions served to uncover a pervasive confusion when it comes to what sanctification is and how it is supposed to “work” in the life of a believer.³⁵ In one example, one pastor writes “Sanctification is being cleansed and salvation happens when one has believed in Christ and confessed Christ is the Lord. Therefore, for salvation to happen the blood of Christ was shed so for Protestants they have faith in the blood of Christ [and] also work for sanctification as well as the word of Christ.”³⁶ [sic] Another pastor writes that “sanctification is an action of making someone righteous, to belong, or [to be] made pure and accepted in the Christian family. One [must] believe in God [who will] sanctify [you] to be righteous before God, the process which one passes through in living a life of [a] blameless and pure... Christian life.”³⁷ Another example will suffice to demonstrate just how far the mark is missed when it comes to a basic understanding of sanctification and its role with respect to salvation. Writes a third pastor,

Sanctification works in the life of a believer who has genuinely confessed his sins. The saved person needs to begin taking the spiritual food which is the word of God and should also pray. This, with the help of the Holy Spirit, will help the saved person to be rooted in the faith. Besides Bible reading and prayer, the saved person should also join the fellowship of believers where he shall learn from the testimony of others and also be

³³ According to one survey, now several years old, the most popular author read by Kenyans is Joel Osteen. See Emmert, K.P. (2014). *Why it is Hard to Learn from African Christians*, Christianity Today, 58(8). Retrieved at: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/october/christian-books-by-africans.html>.

³⁴ See NA. (2019?). Tuko.com, retrieved at: <https://www.tuko.co.ke/269699-list-registered-churches-kenya.html>; <https://softkenya.com/church-in-kenya/>; and NA. (2021). *Churches in Kenya: An Overview*, Kenya-Advisor.com. Retrieved at: <http://www.kenya-advisor.com/churches-in-kenya.html>.

³⁵ This theological confusion and the practical outcomes have been identified in another study, this of an individual parish in central Kenya. See Mombo, E. and Joziase, J. (2015). *Saved but not safe – a parish discussion on the absence of safety in the church: a case study of Kabuku parish church*, Interkulturelle Theologie, 41(4), pp. 385-99.

³⁶ Personal Collection, Manuscript 101, p. 1.

³⁷ Personal Collection, Manuscript 102, p. 1.



influenced with the lives of those who were saved before. This is the process of sanctification.³⁸

While there is some merit here in terms of elements of intentional discipleship, sanctification itself remains a confusing mystery to this pastor and to his colleagues previously cited.

Another respondent interestingly conflates both salvation and sanctification:

Sanctification is the final stage of the process of salvation.... God is the one who sanctifies his people.... These processes [both salvation and sanctification] are done by the grace of God alone. No [person] has the power to save or to sanctify [himself] at all. There is no good work that can make anyone receive salvation or sanctification.... The great thing is for a Christian to allow and accept Christ Jesus, He is able to do the rest.³⁹

Christian sanctification is thus, for this pastor, a holiness that only God can effect, and it is only God that can accomplish it. Taken at face value, such a view absolves a Christian of any responsibility for his or her Christian life, for his or her becoming like Christ. Since it (seems) to be impossible without God, there is apparently nothing one needs to do and, indeed, nothing one can do. Again the worst possible thing for many Protestant preachers is to be seen as trying to accomplish one's salvation by earning it through "good works". This was, of course, the original Protestant reformers' concern about Roman Catholic constructions of salvation, both official and popular, a concern that continues to inform the heart of contemporary Protestant exhortations about salvation, though both Roman Catholics and Protestants have moved on over the past 500 years. The Protestant reformers, of course, had legitimate theological concerns in their day. But in 21st century Kenya, any notion of theological context or subtlety has been all but lost in the rush to save people from a 16th century problem that may perhaps still be an issue for a minority in Western Christianity, but it has never been a naturally-occurring Kenyan or African problem, existing only as an invasive species, carried from the West by well-meaning but nevertheless theologically arrogant missionaries trying to save people from a theological contagion that never existed here until they brought it with themselves. And here with this pastor's explanations, this same concern bleeds over into sanctification. This allergy to doing anything with respect to salvation, or with respect to any of the "good works" (understood as a bad thing) one might expect to accompany sanctification seems to provide a theological justification, however flawed, to avoid the ethical imperatives of Christian living. Heaven forbid anyone be caught trying to earn one's way to heaven by living chastely, contentedly, uncorruptedly, honestly, charitably, and as a good steward of what one has been given. Evidently, his Protestant "heaven" is not for such people.

There is also the perspective that "sanctification" is something that is *done to* people by God. And so Christians are "sanctified" by God in the past tense. Accordingly, another pastor writes that "one who is sanctified has already received salvation, thus he/she should represent Christ Jesus in their character or behavior. They should not condemn others, [or be envious], [or] angered, all manner of sinful nature [sic] but should be righteous as they resemble Jesus Christ their Savior."⁴⁰ And while the process of how one is sanctified is muddled here, at least this Kenyan pastor has made the connection that for the Christian, sanctification means becoming increasingly like Christ in the way one lives one's life.⁴¹

For another pastor, sanctification does not fit comfortably with what he wants to say about salvation: "One is convicted after hearing the Word of God from the Scripture through...a

³⁸ Personal Collection, Manuscript 103, pp. 4-5.

³⁹ Personal Collection, Manuscript 104, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Personal Collection, Manuscript 105, p. 7.

⁴¹ In more than sixty possible responses by twenty clergy respondents, this is the only time sanctification is connected to becoming like Christ.



preacher...and after believing he or she is led in a confession prayer and [then] declared as having acquired salvation."⁴² Once one is "saved", "other things follows [sic] including baptism, confirmation and some other church rituals.... Protestants believe that salvation comes first before sanctification. Sanctification on the other hand [is] the good deeds that now follow salvation".⁴³ For this pastor, salvation "only requires faith and confession and nothing else." Moreover, salvation "is God-given while works comes from human beings through their own effort, hence to them it is better off to capture and adapt that which comes from God and which guarantees eternal life rather than struggling with good works that do not guarantee anything."⁴⁴ With this Christian leader there is a confusion between sanctification and "works". On the one hand he/she knows that there must be a place for sanctification/works, but if he/she must choose, he/she will opt for "salvation". And the reason for this salvation "was brought about by the fall of man. It is to avoid God's judgment that will come and that faces human beings in their day to day life in different dimensions ranging from diseases, broken marriages, natural destructions like floods, drought and others that God has used to punish mankind."⁴⁵ Equating salvation with deliverance from God's wrath experienced in immediate personal terms (the descriptions of which resemble both the Deuteronomic curses God promises for those Israelites who break his covenant and those tragedies and misfortunes which the different African Traditional Religions sought to mitigate as aspects of being cursed by ancestors, spirits or god himself) leaves very little room for any consideration of sanctification. Salvation is thus rendered transactional, with salvation received by bare faith. And if one receives all the benefits of salvation, whether heavenly or earthly, by being on the receiving end of this transaction, any need for sanctification in any form is obviated.

Another Christian leader defines sanctification this way: "Sanctification is the complete work that Christ has done and finished on the cross and once you accept him as Lord and Saviour of your life you are sanctified from all past sin and you truly belong to God and [are] just waiting [for] his coming to live with him eternally. [True Christians] believe that the grace is enough and therefore now there is no more condemnation [for] them who are in Christ Jesus."⁴⁶ Once this theological road concerning the relationship between salvation and sanctification is taken, it is not a far step to undo altogether any need for a transformed character and life. It is a hyper-amplification of the Protestant reformers arguments against the salvation by works that seemed to them to be a characteristic of Roman Catholic teaching, but without any of the balance brought by their corresponding emphasis on progressive sanctification in the lives of believers who were trusting in Christ for their salvation.⁴⁷ Not all have abandoned a classically Protestant understanding of

⁴² Personal Collection, Manuscript 106, p. 1.

⁴³ Black, J.W., pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴ Black, J.W., p. 4.

⁴⁵ Black, J.W., p. 6.

⁴⁶ Personal Collection, Manuscript 107, p. 1.

⁴⁷ See, for example, M. T. Christ's (2017). *The Relationship Between Justification and Sanctification in the Structure of Calvin's Soteriology: Towards a More Nuanced Approach*, *Evangelical Quarterly*, 88(3), pp. 209-21. Actually, Protestants have struggled throughout their history to maintain balance in their theologies of salvation between justification and sanctification. As Richard Lovelace writes, 'There seemed to be a sanctification gap among Protestants, a peculiar conspiracy somehow to mislay the tradition of spiritual growth and to concentrate on side issues. 'Liberals' sought to commend Christianity to its cultured despisers, and to apply its ethics to social concerns 'Conservatives' specialized in personal witnessing activity, sermons on John 3:16, and theological discussion of eschatological subtleties.' Lovelace, R. (1973). *Abstract, The Sanctification Gap* *Theology Today*, 29(4), PP. 363-69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004057367302900402>. See also Carter Lindberg's article, appropriate here both for its content and its title: Lindberg, C. (1999). *Do Lutherans Shout Justification but Whisper Sanctification?* *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, pp. 1-20. For an overview of Christian views of sanctification, see



salvation, though their voices seem like cries in the wilderness. As one pastor observed in a flash of honesty, “In the Protestant faith [of Kenya], salvation is more amplified as compared to sanctification. Salvation is preached more as compared to sanctification. I can say without hesitation that in the Protestant arena more people know about salvation and how it is attained, but less people even know what [sanctification] is.”⁴⁸ The same pastor goes on to state, “I am afraid that the Protestant faith (that I am a part of) is losing its moral authority because of the many vices that are going on [in our churches]. “Cheap grace” has caused the church to lose its value and weaken its mandate to the world as a mirror of God’s will and purpose here on earth.”⁴⁹ And delving into possible motives for this abandonment of traditional Christian teaching about salvation and sanctification, another pastor writes, preachers that proclaim “a salvation that requires only verbal assent but no subsequent change in one’s behavior by not giving through teachings to their congregation the real Biblical truth but instead offer compromised truth with terms like ‘thy grace is sufficient’ due to pleasing those who fund their endeavors” are simply corrupt.⁵⁰

I could flood these pages with more examples from leaders of Kenyan churches, but they would simply be making the same points again and again. What we have is more than enough to highlight the inability for most Kenyan Christian leaders to find an appropriate place for sanctification in their preaching, teaching and churches about salvation. And if sanctification is missing as a motivating concern among Kenya’s Protestant preachers, it should surprise no one of its absence in their churches and among the “saved”.

Conclusion

Monica Hunter writes,

Statements are frequently made by residents and travelers in Africa about the effects of missions on Native communities, but they are seldom backed by an analysis of concrete facts. The African is subject to the influences of Western European culture in many different ways, and it is extremely difficult to isolate the influence of missions from other contact influences, particularly since African Christians tend, for a variety of reasons, to be more affected by these other influences than their pagan neighbour. By comparing, in one area, the life of pagan and Christian families which are subject to similar non-Christian contact influences it is, however, possible to study specific differences in belief and behaviour. One such observable difference is found in the believed working of religious sanctions. Among the Nyakyusa of South Tanganyika behaviour in the pagan community is directly affected by the belief that certain actions are punished by the ancestors, by witchcraft, or by magic. Christian teachers attack these beliefs. The problem then arises as to how far belief in

Donald L. Alexander, D.L., ed. (1988). *Five Views of Sanctification: Reformed, Lutheran, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Contemplative*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴⁸ Personal Collection, Manuscript 108, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Black, J.W., p. 3. ‘Cheap grace’ is a concept discussed and popularized by the German theologian, pastor and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his *The Cost of Discipleship*: ‘Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like ‘cheap-jacks’ wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. Grace is represented as the Church’s inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?... Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.’” Bonhoeffer, D. (1995/1937). *The Cost of Discipleship*, Touchstone, pp. 45-49.

⁵⁰ Personal Collection, Manuscript 109, p. 3.



traditional religious sanctions remains in the Christian community, how far it is replaced or modified, and how far changes in belief affect behaviour.⁵¹ (Hunter, 1937: Extract)

Hunter's research highlights interesting questions concerning the interaction of an imported western Christian theology and morality with long-held and deeply embedded traditional religious and cultural values in the multitude of different African societies. And while much work needs to be done on the connection between the explosion of Pentecostal versions of Christianity in general and of Health and Prosperity versions in particular and the fundamental issues addressed by many differing forms of African Traditional Religion, our purpose in this article is more narrowly focused on what appears to be an absence of Christian morality in the lives of Kenyans who otherwise claim to be Christians.⁵² In this paper, we have traced through interviews with many Christian leaders not only a lack of consideration of the role of sanctification in the "salvation" preached and experienced by many if not most Kenyan Christians, we have discovered an almost complete lack of any ability to articulate what an historic, traditional Christian understanding of sanctification might be. And while there may be a range of other contributing factors influencing Kenyan Christian behavior (or misbehavior), the absence of a functional understanding of the role of sanctification in one's Christian life surely plays at least a considerable role in the dysfunction of Kenyan Christian morality. With salvation relegated either to the realms of what happens when one gets to "heaven" or the almost opposite extreme of getting access to worldly riches and healing, becoming like Christ as an individual (in terms of His character and agenda) or becoming the "body of Christ" as a community (in terms of becoming the love and presence of Christ to a church's neighbors) are simply absent from any meaningful discussion about what it means to be a Christian or to be the church in this world. There are many suggestive avenues that could be pursued from there, but it is enough for this study to have rung the alarm to alert anyone concerned that for all the impressive numbers and talk of the spread of Christianity on the continent of Africa in general, and in Kenya in particular, we have a problem here, and it's a big one.

This condition will be fatal to a viable Christianity in Kenya, but it need not be irremediable. There are ways forward, but of course as long as Christian leaders are self-satisfied and complacent when it comes to the absence of Christianity's lack of real impact on the lives of Christians and their communities, things will continue to decline until the churches, their hypocrisy and uselessness are finally called out as emperors with no clothes. The old cliché about a church being "in the world but not of it" needs to be recast completely to encompass the reality experienced by too many churches in Kenya, which are not only in the world but almost completely one and the same with it. There are possible remedies, but the patient must be cognizant of his illness and dire situation and thus willing to undergo treatment and change. To this end, a recovery of both a biblical and historical practice of salvation and sanctification will be a challenge, but not impossible. Three initial suggestions come to mind.

First, reacquainting Kenyan Christians with pre-modern forms of Christian "salvation" and discipleship (and best practice in terms of discipleship and stewardship among contemporary churches) will go far towards reuniting the theological ties that long bound salvation with sanctification before Roman Catholic Scholasticism, the Reformation, Modernism and

⁵¹ Hunter, M. (1937). *An African Christian Morality*, Africa 10(3), pp. 265-292. Others are also recognizing the uneasy fit of (Western?) Christian morality in African contexts. See, for example, Odozor, P.I. (2014). *Morality Truly Christian, Truly African: Foundational, Methodological, and Theological Considerations*, South Bend, IN, University of Notre Dame Press.

⁵² See Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, S.W. (2009). *The Challenge of African Christian Morality*, Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary, 7(03), pp. 60-80. Kunhiyop consistently seeks to translate and apply standard Western evangelical solutions to African problems, and I think he comes up short.



individualism began to drive them apart. Secondly, calling out the health and prosperity teaching rampant in both Pentecostal and many Protestant churches for the heresy that it is, especially with regards to its reduction of God to be the slave of one's so-called "faith" (among many other things) will go far to freeing Christians to hear in the Scriptures Christ's call to radical discipleship and stewardship once again.⁵³ And thirdly, raising up a new generation of preachers who are not so much concerned to manipulate the emotions of their hearers as to teach and call them into a life-changing relationship with Christ for the purpose of experiencing Christ's transformative power in one's own life and becoming the conduit of that blessing in the community in which one is found.

Kenyan Protestant Christianity, in the words of many of its leaders, has increasingly become theologically and practically self-centered and self-consumed, a mirror reflecting the world's values, with few interested in discovering the "narrow way" of Christ that leads to life and thereby leaving the broad and crowded road leading to destruction. The vast number of different churches and the overwhelming majority of Kenyans who claim to be Christians give one an initial sense of spiritual vitality. But this is misleading, as the absence of any real impact on relationships and the issues that afflict the people of this country tell a different story. There seems to be water, water everywhere, but for the thirsty there is little if any to drink. When Kenyan Christians are connected with the life transforming power of Christ one sees everywhere in the New Testament, only then will the trajectory towards spiritual irrelevance begin to change. In this article, we have defined this as the need to reconnect salvation with sanctification in the understanding and practice of the churches. And when Kenya's Christians are willing to confront and wrestle with Christ's agenda found in the Gospels and put it ahead of their own, nothing will be able to slow the momentum of the current theological decline. Kenyan Christians have the infrastructure and ability to facilitate these changes; what is lacking are both eyes to see and the will to act.

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⁵³ See my two books written to address precisely this issue in the Kenyan/African churches: Black, J.W. (2021). *Raising Up Good Stewards: God's People Using God's Money for God's Glory*, Oasis International, Ltd., and Black, J.W. (2021). *The Radical Money Manifesto: What Jesus Taught and We Forgot*, Oasis International, Ltd.



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