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***MULTICULTURALISM***

***And the***

***CHURCH in ACTS***

***By***

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2004

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# **MULICULTURALISM and the CHURCH in ACTS**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
M.A., in the School of Religion and Culture, at the University of  
KwaZulu Natal.

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Date Submitted: January 2004

Supervisor: Prof. S.K. Moran

## **DECLARATION**

The Registrar (Academic)  
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**Dear Sir**

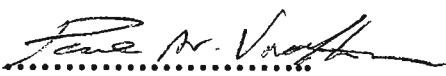
I, PAUL RAJOOGOPAL VARATHAN

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Herby declare that the dissertation entitled,

**MULTICULTURALISM AND THE CHURCH IN ACTS**

Is the result of my own investigation and research, and that, it has not been submitted part or in full for any other degree, or to any other university.

Signed  .....

(Rev. Paul R. Varathan)

January 2004

## PREFACE

This research on Multiculturalism has basically a three-pronged or a multidimensional approach. *Firstly*, the definitions of culture and multiculturalism are discussed. *Secondly*, multiculturalism in relevance to the book of Acts, and how the early church was able to deal with the phenomenon of multiculturalism. *Thirdly*, multiculturalism and the Church in South Africa, in context with the book of Acts are discussed.

The ‘definitions of multiculturalism’, is included, in order that the reader may fully comprehend the aspect of multiculturalism in the early church, and the church of the present day. Without first understanding what is culture is all about, one will not be able to fully understand the nature of multiculturalism as related to the church. Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 deals with some the questions like, cultural diversity, problems and challenges of multiculturalism, race and ethnicity, cultural change, language, and religion. The early church from the time of the apostles, and the church past and present, have all experienced some or most of the challenges with regards to multiculturalism. Thus, in the light of the definitions of multiculturalism and its different challenges, the phenomenon of multiculturalism and the church is hereby discussed.

I have not done an empirical research on the phenomenon of multiculturalism, but a literature survey of what other scholars have written on the subject. Hopefully, in the Doctoral thesis, I shall go to the next level in my research to determine the viewpoint of others, on the phenomenon of multiculturalism, its problems, especially in the ‘post-apartheid’ South Africa and the Church.

I want to place on record my sincere a thanks and appreciation to Dr. S.K. Moran, my supervisor, for his assistance in acquiring a bursary in connection with this research.



To the National Research Foundation (NRF), for the bursary; for without which, this research would not have been possible.

To Dr. J.A. Smit, for his input, guidance, critical evaluation, and helpful suggestions in completing this research.

To my wife, Grace, for her patience and tolerance during the time of doing this research.

My prayer is that we in South Africa, as a multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic society, will begin to understand our 'rainbow nation' a little better.

Rev. Paul R. Varathan

2004

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Research Design**

### **1.0. Introduction**

In defining cultural studies as a language-game, it follows that there is a difference between the study of culture and institutionally located studies. Though the study of culture has taken place in a variety of academic disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and other forms of English literature, and in a range of geographical and institutional spaces, this is not cultural studies. Barker (2000) says that, while the study of culture has no origins, and to locate one is to exclude other possible starting points; this does not mean that cultural studies cannot be named.

Barker further comments that cultural studies is a discursive formation, that is, a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in a society (Barker 2000: 5-6).

This research on **Multiculturalism and the Church in Acts**, first of all defines what is multiculturalism is all about. It then deals with the Church in Acts and how the early Church dealt with the phenomenon of multiculturalism, and finally, the discussion of the Church in South Africa in its multicultural setting.

### **1.1. Autobiography**

My name is Paul Varathan, living in an Indian township, which was created especially for the people of Indian origin during the apartheid years of South Africa. I am a first generation Christian, through conversion from Hinduism. My mother tongue is Tamil, because of my grand-father's origin from the state of Tamil Nadu in South India. Being of Indian origin, not very much of the traditions or customs of the Indian culture is practiced in our extended family or clan.

Even the Tamil language is hardly ever spoken among the modern and younger generation. Mostly the older folks may speak it among themselves, but this also has become very rare. This is largely due to the Western influence and lifestyle. If I were to speak of caste and creed, my grandfather was of the Pillay caste. Although the caste system exists in a very small scale among South African Indians, it is still very prevalent and strong in the land of my forefathers – India. Except for retaining some *Indian* cultural values; the Indian culture in South Africa is slowly being absorbed by Western lifestyles and thought patterns.

South Africa is a country of diverse cultures, each one of them is different from the other. If there is misunderstanding of someone's else's culture and cultural values, there could be problems, such as experienced in the former South Africa.

What was the cause of separate developments (apartheid), and the 'Group Areas Act' of the past in South Africa? I suppose it was through intolerance of 'non-white' cultures. When cultures are not understood, there could be fear, suspicion, division and disharmony with one another. Many lives were literally lost, communities have been moved and broken up because of the system of apartheid and the said 'Group Areas Act'; the 'Act' forbade whites and non-whites living together in a particular community.

Thus we have the present Indian 'townships' of Phoenix and Chatsworth; Kwa Mashu and Umlazi, for the Blacks. Both Indians and Blacks in the country were victims of the 'Land Act' where they were forbidden to own land. Certain jobs were reserved for whites only. Most of the businesses were white owned, and thus had white 'bosses'. Further, whites were more highly paid, even if a non-white did the same job as the white person. This was gross discrimination on the basis of one's colour.

Manipulation, control and imposing of certain laws must also be made in this context. Past laws of the 'dompass' or 'pass-book' during the apartheid era for the

Blacks brought much suffering, and humiliation; many were beaten and jailed for not carrying and producing one (the 'dompass') on demand.

The 'Soweto uprising' was due to the imposing of the Afrikaans language in Black schools. The 1976 riots, is one grim reminder where many schools children were either, wounded or shot and killed, because of their refusal to study Afrikaans as a language. Today we have a public holiday in the South African calendar on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, known as 'Youth Day'. This marks the remembrance of those young people who died in June 1976.

This research deals with the matter of defining what is culture and multi-culture, and its different meanings. The problem of cultural loss and cultural drift is discussed; both of these problems (if we call it a problem) exists in the multicultural settings of South Africa. For example, the Indians in South Africa, and other cultural groups have drifted from most of their cultural patterns.

The main focus is the Church in Acts in its multicultural setting, and the present day church. The church supposed to be an 'house of prayer' for all nations without any prejudice or division of any kind. Unfortunately, this was not the case with the church in South Africa. Even the early church was not exempt from similar problems as we shall see in this study and research.

This research seeks to find out more of this phenomenon of multiculturalism in its different contexts and relevance.

In this context of relevance, this study aims to focus on Multiculturalism, the Church and the book of Acts, and the Church in South Africa in context with Acts.

The THREE main issues will be:-

## **1. Multiculturalism and Educational Theory**

- multiculturalism and socio- political, economical, ideological problems



- interventions

## **2. Multiculturalism and the Book of Acts**

- different groups – socio- history of the groups and language
- ethnicity and ethos – their cultural, linguistic and ethnic background
- the pattern and perceptions of Paul the apostle of the New Testament
- the interactions of Paul and Peter and impact with the Gentiles of their time
- Lukan and Pauline strategies to constructively deal with multiculturalism

## **3. Multiculturalism and the Church in South Africa**

- its diversity
- ethnicity
- multiculturalism and the Church
- challenges
- solutions

### **1.2. Objectives**

1.2.1.to comprehensively describe current scholarship with regards to the phenomenon of multiculturalism,

1.2.2.to comprehensively describe current scholarship with regards to the constructive engagement of the phenomenon of multiculturalism,

1.2.3.to interpret Acts with regards to its multiculturalistic nature,

1.2.4.to analyze the kind of Christianity in Acts as it relates to multiculturalism,

1.2.5.to contextualize the gospel according to Acts in terms of the multiculturalistic constitution of South Africa.

### **1.3. Key Critical Questions**

- 1.3.1. What have current and contemporary scholars have written with regards to the phenomenon of multiculturalism?
- 1.3.2. How have current scholars were able to constructively engage in discussing the phenomenon of multiculturalism?
- 1.3.3. How does Acts interpret the subject of multiculturalism and its nature?
- 1.3.4. How does Acts analyze the kind of Christianity in Acts as its relates to multiculturalism?
- 1.3.5. How can we contextualize the gospel in Acts with multiculturalism in South Africa?

### **1.4. Research Focus**

#### **1.4.1. Chapter 2, Will Deal with the Definitions and Descriptions of Multiculturalism:-**

The word culture is defined in its dictionary meaning and from other authors. Other terms like '*cultured*' and '*refinement*' is described. Who is a *cultured* person? Is he or she a person with culture or a learned person? The differences are discussed. Cultural diversity in its different forms is looked at. There are many cultures diverse form each other. How do we identify these cultures?

The problems and challenges with regards to multiculturalism are discussed. When did the term *multiculturalism* first appear?

This chapter also seeks to describe multiculturalism in society, which deals with class and caste within multiculturalism. Different classes are discussed, for example, high class, low class, middle class and upper class. The caste system of India is briefly discussed.

What distinguishes cultures as far as race, ethnicity and language is concerned? Race and ethnicity has a lot to do with multiculturalism. People feel 'at home' within their own cultures.

What is global apartheid? What has South Africa to do with global society? About two thirds of the worlds population is non-white; being white and belonging to the upper stream tend to go together.

#### **1.4.2. Chapter 3, Will Deal with the Change and Development within Multiculturalism**

This chapter deals with cultural change through modernisation, where cultures tend to become modern, whilst eliminating certain things in their culture.

The process of modernisation is explained. The *first* is technological development, *secondly*, agricultural development, *thirdly*, industrialisation, and *fourthly*, urbanisation.

This chapter also deals with matters relating to cultural loss and acculturation. Further, different kinds of multiculturalism is dealt with according to its sub-headings.

#### **1.4.3. Chapter 4, Deals with Multiculturalism and Language**

Language is a medium through which cultures are communicated. Language plays an important part in one's culture. Whilst language may spoken, this chapter also deal with non-verbal communication, which is through gestures and body language. People living together in large ethnic groups may link language and ethnicity. The importance of language and its diversity is also discussed in this chapter.

#### **1.4.4. Chapter 5, Identifies Multiculturalism and Religion**

This chapter deals with the meaning of religion –its definition; and identifying features in religion, like prayers, songs, dances, offerings, sacrifices. The question of how religion is associated with one's culture. A brief overview is given to African Traditional Religion and Hinduism, and the functions of religion.

#### **1.4.5. Chapter 6, Will Deal with Multiculturalism and the Church in Acts**

This chapter deals with the socio-history of the groups and language in the early church, and especially of the identity of those who were present on the day of Pentecost; ethnicity, ethos, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic background. The socio-economic composition of the church in Jerusalem is looked, and cultural diversity of the Jerusalem church.

Other details of cross-cultural and interactions of the church in Acts, the interactions of Paul and Peter with the Gentiles of their time; Lukan and Pauline strategies to constructively deal with multiculturalism. How did the Church deal with the practice of circumcision and keeping of Jewish Laws and customs? What were the solutions? In what light were the Gentiles looked at? Were they one with the Jewish Christians, as far as salvation in Christ was concerned? These questions are discussed and deliberated.

#### **1.4.6. Chapter 7, Will Deal with Multiculturalism in South Africa and the Church**

This chapter will focus on the gospel in Acts and its context in the South African multicultural society. It also deals with the diversity and identity of some denominational systems in South Africa and the roots of denominationalism. Statistics of some denominations are listed. Some of the ethnic churches, like the African Initiated Churches, the church among the Indians in South Africa, and Pentecostalism and the dawn of a new South Africa is discussed. Some of the

challenges, like, apartheid and racism in South Africa, and its struggles and possible solutions, bring this chapter to a conclusion.

## **1.5. Conclusion**

The chapters that will follow will deal with each chapter in detail, discussing the subject matter with its relevance. The next chapter will focus on the definitions of multiculturalism. What is culture and cultural diversity, and how this affects society? What has race and ethnicity has to do with multiculturalism?

The second part of this research will develop and touch on multiculturalism and the Church in Acts, and finally multiculturalism and the present day Church.

I hope that this research will be in some way will be informative to those who read.

## CHAPTER 2

### Definitions and Descriptions of Multiculturalism

#### 2.0. Introduction

Many have different interpretations of what culture means. Some have the notion that culture is something that we are born with and die with. Others believe that culture is something that we inherit from our parents and forefathers. Still others believe that culture is something that is learnt as we grow up. Some take their cultures too seriously and may even die for its cause, whilst others do not take much heed to it, just as long as they exist or live the day. This chapter will focus on some definitions of culture and its meaning.

#### 2.1. What is culture?

Before we discuss the aspects of multiculturalism, we need to first define what is culture. According to the Oxford dictionary, 'culture' is defined as, '*the customs, institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people or group.*'

Definitions of culture are numerous.

Herskovits (1963) comments that there is a general agreement that culture is learned; that it is greatly variable; that it is manifested in institutions, thought patterns and material objects.

Herskovits quotes E.B. Taylor who described culture as,

That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

A short and useful delineation of the concept is: *Culture is the man-made part of the environment.* It also implies that culture is more than a biological phenomenon. Culture includes all the elements of man's mature endowment that he has acquired from his group by conscious learning or by a conditioning process – techniques of various kinds, social and other institutions, beliefs, and patterned modes of conduct.

Culture in short can be contrasted with the raw materials, outer and inner, from which it derives (Herskovits 1963 : 305-306 ).

Coleman and Watson (1990) describes culture as knowledge and values that are passed on from generation to generation in a social group. Culture has an effect on the way people think, it can also have some influence on behaviour. However, unlike the genetic characteristics of humankind, it is passed on through social rather than biological means (Coleman and Watson 1990: 13-14).

Nutall and Michael (2000) quote Robert Thorton ,

Culture is not seen as narrated side shows to the historical main events. The daily practices, rituals and order of things , space , and time are understood to be related to each other in a complex manifold of meanings and values that is relatively independent of their temporal sequence (Nutall and Michael 2000: 40).

The term '*cultured*' is a term used to describe '*refinement*'. Such a definition implies the ability of a person who has '*culture*' to manipulate certain aspects of our civilization that are principally the possession of those persons who have the leisure to learn them. For a scientist, however, a '*cultured person*', in the popular sense, commands but a specialized fragment of our practice of our culture.

He shares more than he suspects with the farmer, the bricklayer, or professional man. The comparative study of customs shows us this very clearly. In small isolated groups, there is no room for the social stratification that must be present if a person, '*cultured*' in the popular sense, is to have the economic resources essential for his support while he devotes himself to his avocations (Herskovits, 1963:306).

There are some paradoxes regarding culture:

2.1.1. Culture is universally in man's experience, yet each local or regional manifestation of it is unique.

2.1.2. Culture is stable, yet is also dynamic, and manifests continuous and constant change.

2.1.3. Culture fills and largely determines the course of our lives, yet rarely intrudes into conscious thought.

The clearest definition of culture in psychological terms states: *Culture is the learned portion of human behaviour*. All students recognize that whatever forms may compose a culture, they must be acquired by succeeding generations if they are not to be lost (Herskovits 1963: 306, 313).

Rosaldo(1989) in *Culture and Truth*, quotes Clifford Geertz,

I want to propose two ideas. The first of these is that culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behaviour patterns – customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters – as has, by and large , been the case up to now , but as a set of control mechanisms – plans recipes, rules, instructions for the governing of behaviour. The second idea is that man is precisely the animal most desperately dependent upon such extragenetic, outside – skin- control mechanism, such as cultural programs, for ordering his behaviour.

Because human beings have been given ‘incomplete’ genetic programs, our species cannot get its bearings in daily life until we acquire cultural gyroscopes.

Culture of necessity becomes analogous to genetic instructions that tell us how to do the things we do in our workaday lives (Rosaldo 1989: 97).

Today’s world challenges everyone to understand culture. Through radio, television, tourism, foreign relations, and technical assistance programs, we all come up against people whose values, interests, and intentions clash with ours. Occasionally, with unusual insight, we somehow penetrate another culture. Culture is a way of life belonging to a designated aggregate of people (Honigmann 1963: 1,3).

Haviland (1990) defines culture as consisting of the abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that lie behind people’s behaviour and that their behaviour reflects. The members of a society share these, and when acted upon, they produce behaviour, considered acceptable within that society.



Cultures are learned largely through the medium of language, rather than inherited biologically, and the parts of a culture function as an integrated whole. Culture is also learned by experiencing and talking about it with those who live by its rules. Through careful observation and discussion with informants who are particularly knowledgeable in the ways of their culture, the anthropologists abstracts a set of rules in order to explain how people behave in a particular society.

People maintain cultures to deal with problems or matters that concern them. To survive, a culture must satisfy the basic needs of those who live by its rules, provide for its own continuity, and provide an orderly existence for the members of a society. In doing so, a culture must strike a balance between the self-interests of individuals and the needs of society as a whole. And finally, a culture must have the capacity to change in order to adapt to new circumstances or to altered perceptions of existing circumstances (Haviland 1990: 29).

## **2.2. What is Multiculturalism?**

Thomson (1997) describes multiculturalism with three components. *Firstly*, it has something to do with culture. *Secondly*, it points to a plurality of cultures. And, *thirdly*, it refers to a specific manner of responding to that plurality, hence the suffix 'ism' which signifies a normative doctrine.

Just as a society with several religious or languages is multi-religious or multilingual, a society containing several cultures is multicultural. Although cultures cannot be neatly separated, they do have their individuality (Thomson 1997:167). A multicultural society, then, is one that includes several cultural communities with their overlapping but none-the-less distinct conceptions of the world, systems of meaning, values, forms of social organization, histories, customs and practices.

Not all multicultural societies are identically multicultural, says Thomson (1997), they vary both in the range and the depth of their multiculturality. Some might include a larger number of cultural communities than others. The USA has more

cultural communities than Great Britain, and its range of multiculturalism is thus wider.

Again, differences between cultural communities in one society might be deeper than those in another, and then we might say that the depth of multiculturalism in the former is greater. Thus whites and Aborigines in Australia differ far from each other than do the Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, the Serbs and the Muslims in Bosnia, or the English and the Scots in Britain (Thomson 1997: 167-168).

Thomson (1997) goes on to ask the question of societies sharing a common culture but containing several sub-cultures or a wide variety of diverse cultural practices. Thomson uses gays and heterosexuals as examples of having their own life-styles, sexual practices, share the common culture of the wider society including a common system of meanings, history and a view of the world. Since they do not have distinct and autonomous cultural communities, it is not exactly multicultural.

However, it does contain considerable diversity and is not monocultural in a way that a thoroughly homogeneous society is. Just as there are degrees of **multiculturalism**, there are degrees of monoculturalism, and not all monocultural societies are equally and identically monocultural (Thomson, 1997: 168).

### **2.3. What is Cultural Diversity?**

Cultural diversity would mean people of different cultural backgrounds. For example, South Africa is a “rainbow nation” of diverse cultural backgrounds, each with its unique cultural trends, made up of their own language, dress code, food, and customs.

The term ‘rainbow nation’ was coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to describe the ‘variety’ of people living in South Africa. It must be remembered that South Africa has eleven official languages. Although having their own cultures, yet a South African can cross his or her own culture and adopt some of the ‘South African culture’ An Asian family enjoying an evening ‘braai’ at the Blue Lagoon

in Durban , is in some way enjoying his 'South African culture' – 'braai' with 'pap and vleis' .

Note: '*braai*' - a shortened word for '*braaivleis*'. In the Afrikaans language it is grilling (meat) over an open fire. '*Braai*' means to grill and '*vleis*' means meat or flesh.

Culture lends significance to human experience by selecting from and organising it. It refers broadly to the forms through which people make sense of their lives, rather than more narrowly to the opera or art museums. It does not inhabit a set domain, as does, for example, that of politics or economics. From the pirouettes of classical ballet to the most brute of facts, all human conduct is culturally mediated. Culture encompasses the everyday and the esoteric, the mundane and the elevated, the ridiculous and the sublime. Neither high or low, culture is all-passive. The translation of cultures requires one to try to understand other forms of life in their own terms. We should not impose our categories on other people's lives because they probably do not apply, at least not without serious revision. We learn about other cultures only by reading, listening or being there.

Although they often appear outlandish, brutish, or worse to outsiders, the informal practice of everyday life makes sense in their own context and on their own terms. Human beings cannot help but learn the culture or cultures of the communities within which they grow up. A New Yorker transferred at birth to the Pacific island of Tikopia will become a Tikopian, and vice versa. Cultures are learned, not genetically encoded (Rosaldo1989:26).

Honigmann (1963) comments that we are inadequately prepared for cultural diversity. Experts who go abroad technically well qualified to cut down infant deaths, improve nutrition, or increase food production are unequipped to understand how the problems with which they must deal are rooted in a foreign way of life (Honigmann1963:1).

South Africa is a country with cultural diversity, whilst having a common 'South African culture'. We speak of the 'American culture', the 'British culture, the 'Indian culture' or the 'African culture'. Each has its unique characteristics and cultural values and overtones.

Cultural diversity may be manifested in everyday life, in ways of dress, language, customs, religion, fine arts, foods (diet), and general way of life. Various cultural aspects with regards to the birth of a baby, weddings and funerals, all have their own cultural tones and values.

Different members of the same community will give different versions of what is sanctioned by their group, while actual observation will reveal broad differences in behaviour that reflect the variety of accepted sanctions. We may all have our own cultures, but we also recognize and respect the cultures of those around us; for our cultures are all diverse from one another (Herskovits 1963:500).

## **2.4. Problems and Challenges of Multiculturalism**

Before we look at the problems and challenges of multiculturalism, we need to first know what is 'multiculturalism'?

(Joppke & Lukes 1999), as a word or a thing, '*multiculturalism*' first appeared in Canada and Australia in the early 1970's. After belatedly abandoning their 'whites only' immigration policies, these young immigrant societies called an official multiculturalism to the rescue in order to juggle the incompatible claims of defeated homeland minorities( both Aboriginal and settler), newly entering Asian and other non-European immigrant groups, and their old European cores. Interestingly, official multiculturalism was instituted in post- colonial societies that lacked independent nation-founding myths and clear breaks with their colonial past, a l'Americaïne, thus conceiving of themselves as multiple cultures coexisting under the roof of a neutral state. This could not be so in the United States, the next stage of multiculturalism's *tour de monde* where a strong sense of political nationhood and centripetal melting- pot ideology could only clash with multiculturalism's ethnicizing and centrifugal thrust. Accordingly, only in the United States did multiculturalism adopt the oppositional, anti-institutional stance that it would retain in its further march towards Western Europe (Joppke and Lukes 1999:3).

As its name indicates, multiculturalism refers to cultures in the plural, not to culture in the singular. Stemming from the Latin word '*colere*', which means to cultivate or till the soil, the notion of culture has always had a double meaning: a specific activity resulting in explicit artifacts, and the way in which society rises above nature, where culture becomes an implicit dimension of social life as such and defines a collectivity as a 'personality writ large'. Explicit culture (as distinct from other social spheres and practices within a collectivity) is culture in the singular. It is the product of symbol specialists in the arts, sciences, and religions, and endowed with context-transcending validity claims. Evoking a similar concept of culture in the singular, Immanuel Kant, conceived of culture as the mark of human beings as rational agents directing their lives according to universal moral laws (Joppke and Lukes 1999:3).

What are the problems and challenges of multiculturalism?

'*Cultural drift*' is one of the problems. It is a phenomenon of a people group drifting from or losing some of their cultural values and practices through inculturation. A typical example can be of people of a particular national origin living in another country who have drifted from some of the patterns of their own culture. They could have lost some of their own culture and adopted some of the culture of their country of present citizenship.

For example, people of Indian origin in South Africa have lost some of the cultural values of the Indian culture through multiculturalism, and have adopted many 'western' ways of culture. This is manifested in the language, dress, and some of the foods eaten and the way it is cooked.

Herskovits (1963) comments, as a concept, cultural drift follows logically from the idea of a culture as the consensus of the variables in the beliefs and modes of a behaviour of a people. As an instance, we may take the habit of men, Euro-American culture, to wear about their necks strips of cloth, or neckties as they are called. This is the norm. Some of the ties are longer than others, some are tied as

bows and others as slipknots. Some are brightly colored than others. Different kinds of neck ties will be in order on different occasions. A person mourning the death of a relative will wear a dark colored tie in a slipknot, and not a bright-colored one, or a bow tie. On the other hand, a man wearing formal clothes will wear only bow ties, though degrees of formality of the occasion will be indicated by whether the bow is black or white. If a black one, this has no reference to mourning, but denotes a lesser degree of formality than does a white one.

Herskovits (1963) further comments,

Of an inclination towards 'necktielessness' – which incidentally, is part of a wider - dress-reform complex that includes brighter colors and greater significance than another. That is, we see, in this minor and perhaps frivolous detail of Euroamerican culture, a manifestation of *that process of cumulative variation we define as cultural drift*.

The term 'drift' represents an adaptation of Sapir's concept of linguistic drift, a concept that he developed out of his observation of variability in linguistic expression. Every person, he observed, manifests idiosyncrasies in his particular speech habits. Yet in a social class or in a local area, the speakers of a common language form 'a compact relatively unified group' in contrast to other such groups (Herskovits 1963:506-507). The individual variations are swamped in or absorbed by certain major agreements – say of pronunciation and vocabulary – which stand out very strongly when the language of the group as whole is contrasted to that of the other group.

(Herskovits (1963) is quoted as saying,

If we translate this into the terms of our discussion of variability in culture as whole, we would say that the individual differences in belief and behaviour of persons who belong to one sub-group or local community within a particular society are submerged in the consensuses that characterize the sub-cultures of the two groups, and thus make it possible to distinguish them from each other in terms of their typical patterns of thought and conduct. In language as in the rest of culture, however, not all of the idiosyncrasies, the random deviations from the norm, are of the same consequence. Change is brought about by a process whereby certain deviations from established

norms are taken over by a number of people, thus initiating and continuing a tendency that becomes a trend (Herskovits 1963: 507).

Another problem of multiculturalism comments Haviland (1981), is that of *cultural loss*. Most often, we tend to think of change as an accumulation of innovations; new things being added to those already there. We do so because this seems so much a part of the way we live. A little reflection, however, leads to the realization that frequently the acceptance of a new innovation leads to the loss of an older one. This sort of replacement is not just a feature of Western civilization.

For example, the Indians of northeastern North America learned the art of making pottery, which then came into widespread use in the region. By the time Europeans arrived on the scene, this seemingly useful trait had been lost among some of them, and containers were made of basketry and birch bark instead. Actually, pottery is heavier and more breakable than baskets and birch bark containers, a serious draw back of peoples who move about from one campsite to another and must carry their belongings themselves. Basketry and birch bark were better adapted to their way of life than pottery (Haviland 1981: 410).

Looking at our own South African context, Indians who arrived from India, used to grind their own curry powder or chilli powder, using a grind-stone. This art is no more practiced because of *cultural loss*. This is also true of Africans who used to grind their own mealie meal. This is now replaced by buying 'readymade' curry powder or mealie meal from a store or supermarket. This is a true reflection of *cultural loss*. Often overlooked is another facet of the loss of apparently useful traits; *loss without replacement*. This phenomenon constitutes change just as surely as does the acceptance of a new innovation.

Haviland (1981) cites examples of cultural loss among the Itza, a group of people living in the community of Socotz, British Honduras.

The ceremony, known as *primicias*, was a public ritual expression by an extended family in times of illness, with the object of overwhelming the deities by the quantity of offerings and the emotional intensity. For this, the utmost solemnity and propriety was mandatory for 24 hours. Moderation in all things, sexual restrictions, and achievement of a uniform feeling were essential. In short, a kind of mental paralysis through concentration was

necessary to the success of the whole venture. The deities would tolerate no error, and the result of carelessness was death.

In 1942, the Itza became convinced that *primicias* presented an impossible task for human beings to accomplish, and so they abandoned it. This was the result of death apparently due to carelessness; the right attitudes were not maintained without exception for the 24 hours period. For example, in one case the wife of an ill person complained that she was not rich enough. Following this, their food soured, the man died, and his wife followed soon afterward. Shortly after that, a son died, and then the *Ah-men* who had conducted the ceremony died. As a result of this and other cases, public *primicias* are no longer given. As far as the Itza are concerned, it is better to have a sick man die than risk a wider calamity (Haviland 1981: 410-411).

Haviland (1981) speaks of *loss without replacement* can also be attributed to the old Indian cultural practice among certain tribes in India, where the widow of the deceased husband would be burnt alive on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. It was believed that the death of the husband was somehow linked to the wife, hence the practice. This phenomenon is no more practiced in India and elsewhere among Indians (Haviland 1981:412)

Another problem of multiculturalism which is *acculturation*. Acculturation is cultural changes that occur as result of prolonged contact between societies. The process of *acculturation* has received special attention from anthropologists. *Acculturation* results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into intensive firsthand contact with subsequent massive changes in the original culture patterns of one or both groups. Its numerous variables include degrees of cultural difference; circumstances; intensity, frequency, and amiability of contact; relative status of the agents of contact; who is dominant and who is submissive; and whether the nature of the flow is reciprocal or non reciprocal (Haviland 1981:411). It should be emphasized that acculturation and diffusion are totally disparate terms; one culture can borrow from another without being in the least acculturated.



Anthropologists use the following terms to describe what may happen during acculturation:

1. **Substitution**, in which a pre-existing trait or complex may be replaced by one that fills its function, involving minimal structural change;
2. **Syncretism**, in which old traits blend to form a new system, possibly resulting in considerable cultural change;
3. **Addition**, in which new traits or complexes may be added, and structural change may or may not occur;
4. **Deculturation**, in which a substantial part of a culture may be lost;
5. **Origination**, of new traits to meet the needs of the changing situation;
6. **Rejection**, in which changes may be so rapid that a large number of persons cannot accept them, resulting in either total rejection, rebellion, or revitalization movements (Haviland 1981:412).

As a result of one or a number of these processes, acculturation may then develop along several lines. Merger or assimilation occurs when two cultures lose their identities and form a single culture. Incorporation takes place when one culture loses autonomy but retains its identity as a subculture, such as caste, class, or ethnic group; this is typical of conquest or slavery situations. Extinction is the phenomenon in which one culture loses its individual members until it can no longer function, and members either die or join other cultures. In adaptation, new structure may develop in dynamic equilibrium. In this last instance change may continue, but in the slow, 'melting pot' form (Haviland 1981: 411-412)

Using an example of acculturation, we may look at briefly at what happened to the Indians of northern New England following the invasion and colonization of the region by the British. Haviland (1981) says,

Outwardly, the Indians came to look and act much like the colonists among whom they now lived; they wore European – style clothing, used metal rather than stone tools, fought with guns rather than bows and arrows, emphasized

the patrilineal transmission of important property, recognized distinctions of rank, were generally fluent in a European language(French), and even adopted Christianity(Catholicism). Such Indian practices as they did retain – hunting, fishing, the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash, use of tobacco – had long since been adopted by the colonists and were no longer distinctively Indian. Thus, the Indians around them became all but invisible to the non-Indians around them, even though they retained a core of values and traditions distinctively their own. The results that when these Indians in the 1970's began to reassert their ethnic identity, most non-Indians didn't take them seriously; they just didn't look Indian.(Haviland 1981: 412-413)

*Forcible change* is another phenomenon with regards to multiculturalism. Quite logically, instances of the acceptance of change are highest when the element of change results from a need within the society.

This may represent a society's striving to adapt economically to the world-wide technological revolution, even though the ramifications of the change may be felt throughout the society. The changing roles of women in Africa, or, for that matter in the United States, may be considered an example of such a change. However, changes are often imposed from outside a culture, usually by colonialism and conquest. Once primary ties of culture, social relationships, and activities are broken, and meaningless activity is imposed by force, individuals and groups characteristically react with fantasy, withdrawal, and escape.

*Colonialism and conquest* is another factor in multiculturalism. One by-product of colonialism, says Haviland (1981), has been the growth of applied anthropology and the use of anthropological techniques and knowledge for certain 'practical' ends. For example, British anthropology has often been considered the 'handmaiden' of that country's colonial policy, for it typically provided the kind of information of particular use in maintaining effective colonial rule (Haviland 1981: 412-413).

*Revitalization movements* as an added factor in multiculturalism.

Some examples of revitalization are to be found in the United States today comments Haviland (1981), where youth in the 1960's began to turn to drugs in their attempt to deal completely different from those of the preceding generation. Reacting to an overwhelming technology, their 'prophets' call for a return to earth and simpler ways of living. Their reaction is expressed in their use of drugs, outlandish or 'freaky' clothes, hairstyles, music, speech, and their behavior toward authority figures.

Investigators have pointed out that North American young people react not so much against the American dream but against the fact that reality as they perceive it does not reflect the dream (Haviland 1981: 417). These scholars hold that whenever ideal and real cultures are too desperate, revitalization movements are inevitable.

Another problem and challenge that we see in the 'new South Africa' is where one's cultural practices becoming offensive to another. With many people of 'color' moving in to affluent suburbs like Durban's La Lucia or Umhlanga Rocks, has some form multicultural problems and challenges.

For example, Hindus celebrate a festival called 'Diwali' (festival of lights) once a year. This festival is celebrated by lighting of fireworks and firecrackers, which is quite noisy. This scares off pets and other animals. Because they live among people of other cultures who may not like the noise of firecrackers, it becomes a problem. Sometimes one's culture may be entwined in their religious beliefs. The use of religious poles (jhunda) in front yards of homes among Hindus could be offensive to people of other cultures. Some may complain that the bamboo poles and flags spoils the appearance of their surroundings.

Another example of multicultural problems in the 'new South Africa' is the slaughtering of animals in ancestor worship among certain groups of people in the African culture. This may be offensive to people of other cultures, who complain that animals must be slaughtered in an abattoir.

Multiculturalism in schools and churches in the 'new South Africa' has also its own challenges and problems. This will be dealt more in the relevant chapter. Multiculturalism has its problems and challenges, and this must be met with patience and tolerance, which largely, is not easy.

With the repealing of the 'mixed marriages Act' in South Africa, there are many have married across the 'colour line'. This also has its problems and challenges. There has to be the 'blending' of the cultures, and compromise if such a marriage is to be successful. Cultural identities may be lost or there can be 'cultural drift' as

discussed earlier. In other cases, persons marrying from different cultures, may want to retain their own cultural identity and preserve it at all costs, without compromising it.

Possibly, this the major cause of all problems in a 'mixed marriage, is where the wife may be called to identify with all of her husband's religion and cultural practices. In 'mixed marriages', it is not only the question of marrying each other, it is the 'marrying of cultures' also. Children born out these marriages take on a truly 'multicultural identity'.

A typical example is the early 'white' settlers who intermarried or had sexual relations with 'black' women brought about a people of a different and a new culture and identity- the 'Coloured' or the 'Cape Coloured'. This has caused major problem and challenge because the 'Coloured' was classified as a 'non white' in the population register, even though their forefathers were 'white'. In the 'old South Africa', it was children going to their own schools, people living in their own 'homelands', and being among the 'own people'.

Behavioral patterns and life-styles of other cultures may be different from our own. In mixed marriages, the partners may be called to *adapt* to each others cultural patterns and behaviour. For example in the matters of food, dress, language, religious beliefs and customs.

The challenges of multiculturalism is multifaceted, having its effects in society in which we live, work and play.

## **2. 5. Multiculturalism and Society**

Haviland (1990) comments that a *social class* may be defined as a set of families that show equal or nearly equal prestige according to the system evaluation. The qualification 'nearly equal' is important, for there may be a certain amount of inequality even within a given class.

If this is, to an outside observer, low –ranking individuals in an upper class may not seem much different from the highest-ranking members of lower class. Yet there will be marked differences when the classes are compared as wholes with one another.

The point here is that class distinctions will not be clear-cut and obvious in societies such as our own, where there is a continuous range of differential privileges, for example, from virtually none to several. Such a continuum can be divided up into classes in variety of ways. If fine distinctions are made, then many classes may be recognized.

If however, only a few gross distinctions are made, then only a few classes will be recognized. Thus, come speak of our society as divided into three classes: lower, middle, and upper. Others speak of several class: lower, lower-lower, middle-lower, upper –lower, lower-middle, and so forth (Haviland 1990: 308).

A *caste* is a particular kind of social class, one in which membership is fairly fixed or impermeable. Castes are strongly endogamous, and offspring are automatically members of their parent's caste. The classic case is the caste system of India. Coupled with strict endogamy and membership by descent in Indian castes is an association of particular castes with specific occupations and customs, such as food habits and styles of dress, along with rituals involving notions of purity and impurity. Literally thousands of castes are organized into a hierarchy of named groups, at the top which are the priest, or Brahmins, the bearers of Universal order and values, and of highest ritual purity. Below them are the powerful – though less pure-warriors. Dominant at the local level, besides fulfilling warrior functions, they control all village lands. Furnishings services to the landowners, and owning the tools of their trade, are two lower-ranking landless caste groups of artisans and labourers. At the bottom of the system, owning neither land nor the tools of their trade, are the outcastes, or 'untouchables'-'Harijans' or 'God's children' as Mahatma Gandhi called them. These most impure of all people constitute a large

poll of labour at the beck and call of those controlling economic and political affairs, the landholdings warrior caste (Haviland 1990:309).

Although some argue that the term *caste* should be restricted to the Indian situation, others find this much too narrow a usage, since caste-like situations are known elsewhere in the world.

Blacks relegated to a low-ranking stratum in society in the 'old South Africa' during the apartheid years were barred by law from marrying non-blacks, and they were not allowed to own property except to a limited degree in specified 'black homelands'. While 'blacks' performed menial jobs for whites, they were prohibited from living where whites do, or even swimming in the same water, or holding the hand of someone who was white. All of this brings to mind, the concepts of ritual purity and pollution so basic to the Indian caste system. In South Africa some whites still fear pollution of their purity through improper contact with blacks.

In India, the caste system is still very strong and prevalent and the untouchables are categories of landless or near-landless people who constitute a body of mobile laborers always available to those who are in political control. A similar mobile labor force of landless men at the disposal of the state emerged in China as much as 2,200 years ago. Today, social scientists are increasingly aware of the fact that a similar caste-like 'under-class' is emerging in our own society, as automation reduces the need for unskilled workers. Its members consist of underemployed, unemployable, or drastically underemployed people who own if any property and who live 'out in the streets' or – at best urban rural slums. Lacking both economic and political power, they have no access to the kinds of educational facilities that would enable them or their children to improve their lot (Haviland 1990:309).

## **2.6. Multiculturalism, Race and Ethnicity**

Race and ethnicity has a lot to do with multiculturalism. In a multicultural society there may be problems that may cross the different cultures. Major problems are

associated with ethnocentrism. In order to function effectively, a culture must instill the idea that its ways are 'best' or at least preferable to those of all other cultures. It provides individuals with a sense of pride and loyalty to their traditions, from which they derive psychological support, and which binds them firmly to their group.

In societies in which one's self-identification derives from the group, ethnocentrism is that it can all too easily be taken as a charter for manipulating other cultures for the benefit of one's own. When this is so, unrest, hostility, and violence commonly results (Haviland 1990: 456).

A typical example of unrest, hostility, and violence was seen in the 1976 'Soweto riots' in South Africa. The riots were due to over the language of Afrikaans being imposed on black school children, who felt that they were forced to study a language that were not their own. Those who disobeyed such a 'law' were beaten and persecuted. This caused racial tension and bitterness in the country. The ethnicity of the black people were violated. Anti-Afrikaner sentiments were being expressed by blacks. The Afrikaner in turn, expressed the same towards the black. The whites and the Afrikaners were seen as oppressors of liberty and freedom in their (black) own ethnic land of birth and heritage. It was one culture trying to impose their cultural values on another.

During the apartheid era in South Africa, political riots were the order of the day, as blacks were marginalized in the political arena, and had no part in the government of the country. During this time many political activists began to rise and speak out against government policies that marginalized blacks and gave whites better privileges. Many gave their lives for the 'struggle' – political freedom in South Africa; others were tortured and imprisoned, and served long prison sentences, supposedly for overthrowing the then apartheid government. One of the most popular of all men for the 'struggle' was Nelson Mandela, who served a prison sentence for 27 years in different prisons in South Africa. Many saw him (Mandela) as a political 'messiah' who was born to bring political freedom to the oppressed

black people of the nation. Mandela finally emerged with victory from the chains of being a prisoner to the ranks of a president, when he became the first black president of South Africa in 1994.

South Africa is a multi-ethnic, multicultural, multi-linguistic nation and has its own set of problems that may not even be solved even in her lifetime. Even now in South Africa, Blacks are looked upon as criminals engaging in all sorts of crime, from car hijacking, murders, robberies, rapes, house-breaking, and more recently as drug peddlers and 'drug lords' plying their 'trade' in some of the most populated cities of the country.

Baker (2000) comments that of 'criminalization of black Britons'. He argues that in the 1950s anxiety about black criminality within the police, judiciary and press was relatively low, concerning only the alleged association of black people with prostitution and gambling. The idea was that there was something intrinsically criminal about black culture had begun to take hold and the imagery of black youth as dope-smoking muggers and / or urban rioters came to the fore. Police activities were directed to areas in which young black men lived, because they were seen as the perpetrators of crime, confrontation between the police and black youth increased (Baker 2002:210).

Haviland (1990), quotes President James Monroe's view expressed in 1817, of Native American Rights:

The hunter state can exist only in the vast uncultivated desert. It yields to the ... greater force of civilized population; and of right , it ought to support the greater number of which it is capable; and no tribe or people have a right to withhold from the wants of others, more than is necessary for their support and comfort.

This attitude is, of course, alive and well in our world today, and the idea that no group has the right to stand in the way of 'greater good for the greater number' is frequently used by governments to justify the development of resources in regions occupied by subsistence farmers, pastoral nomads, or food foragers – irrespective of the wishes of those peoples. But is it the great good for the greater number?



A look at the world as it exists today as a kind of global society, in which all the world's peoples are bound by interdependency, raises serious questions.

Haviland (1990) uses the 'old South Africa' as a typical example of ethnocentrism. Apartheid, which was the official policy of the government of South Africa, consisted of programs or measures that aimed to maintain racial segregation. Structurally, it served to perpetuate the dominance of a white minority over a nonwhite majority through the social, economic, political military and cultural construction of society. Non-whites were denied effective participation in political affairs, and were restricted as to where they can live and what they can do, and were denied the right to travel freely. Whites by contrast, controlled the government, including, of course, the military and police. Although there were 4.7 nonwhites for every white; being white and belonging to the upper stratum of society tended to go together. The richest 20 percent of South Africa's took 58 percent of the country's income and enjoyed a high standard of living, while the poorest 40 percent of the population received but 6.2 percent of the national product. Haviland (1990) continues and speaks about global apartheid.

What has South Africa to do with global society? Structurally, the latter is very similar – almost a mirror image of South Africa's past society, even though there is no stated policy of global apartheid. In the world society about two-thirds of the population is non-white and one-third white. In the world as a whole, being white and belonging to the upper stratum tend to go together.

Although this upper stratum is not a homogeneous group, including as it does Communist and non-Communist peoples, neither was the upper stratum of South African society, where there was friction between the English, who controlled business and industry, and the Afrikaners, who controlled the government and military. In the world, the poorest 40 percent of the population receive about 5.2 percent of the world product, while the richest 20 percent take about 71.3 percent of world income. Life expectancy, as in South Africa, is poorest among non-whites. Most of the world's weapons of mass destruction are owned by whites: the United States, Russia, France, and Britain. Death and suffering from war and violence are distributed unequally, in the world. In the world, the poorest 70 percent of the population suffer over 90 percent of violent death in all categories (Haviland 1990:456-457).

We may sum up global apartheid as a *de facto* structure of the world society which combines socio-economic and racial antagonisms and in which,

- (1) Minority of whites occupies the pole of affluence, while a majority composed of other races occupies the pole of poverty;
- (2) Social integration of the two groups is made extremely difficult by barriers of complexion, economic position, political boundaries, and other factors;
- (3) Economic development of the two groups is interdependent; and
- (4) The affluent white minority possesses a disproportionately large share of the world society's political, economic, and military power. Global apartheid is thus a structure of extreme inequality in cultural, racial, social, political, economic, military, and legal terms, as in the past apartheid regime of South Africa (Haviland 457-458)

Race and class distinctions in Britain have marginalized people of 'color' on the job market comment Bob Cock and Thomson (1992):

In the 1950's, the New Commonwealth (NC) immigrants were induced to come to Britain to offset the labour shortages which accompanied post-war economic reconstruction and expansion. Black immigrants took jobs that whites rejected, for example, in London Transport and the National Health Service. Such 'dirty jobs' were characterized by low pay, poor conditions and unsocial hours. Black Britons are still concentrated in shift-work. Decades later black workers are still clustered in many of the same industries: textiles, transport, the NHS, hotels and catering. Although some black male workers gained access to better-paid skilled work in engineering and car factories, these are the areas of British manufacturing which have been particularly hit by recession, leading to high unemployment among black groups. Black women often perform low service work.

When the first NC immigrants arrived, they found themselves openly excluded from access to better quality housing by estate agents and landlords.

It was quite common to see notices displayed reading 'no coloreds here'. Rules and procedures governing council house allocation also discriminated against immigrants.

This drove the newcomers to purchase cheap housing in cheap inner-city areas which had been vacated by affluent whites as they moved into the suburbs. Later immigrants moved into the same areas, wither to be near relatives or friends, or to rent accommodations from their compatriots. Inexorably, black ghetto areas began to form. Not only was the housing in these areas was of poor condition, but resources and facilities, such as schools, were poor and rundown. Crime and unemployment made the ghettos into 'problem areas, and problems were exacerbated when the remaining white residents vented their frustrations for their own deprivations in hostility towards their black neighbours.

Tensions between blacks and whites exploded in the riots which took place in Notting Hill and Nottingham on 1958, and these events consolidated the view of race relations as a problem. The riots led to the passing of the 1962 Immigration Act, followed by several others enacted in the next two decades.

The Acts limited rights of entry to black immigrants by various, work permit and quota system and by confining automatic rights to citizenship to 'patrials', that is those with British parents or grandparents. This latter move was seen as an attempt to cut down on black immigrants without restricting the movements of white ex-Commonwealth members such as Australians Canadians (Bobcock and Thomson 1992: 44-46).

Almost this same scenario is displayed in the South African communities and workplaces, but changes are coming fast. With the implementation of 'affirmative action', there is coming some form of 'equalization'. Jobs once reserved for the whites, are now being given to the 'previously disadvantaged' section of the community. Blacks are now holding some top positions in the social, political, economical, educational, industry and commerce. On the other hand blacks are in the majority when it comes to labourers, maids and other menial tasks. .

Barker (2000) comments that, ethnicity is a cultural concert centered on the sharing of norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices.

The formation of 'ethnic' groups relies on shared cultural signifiers which have developed under specific historical, social and political contexts and which encourage as a sense of belonging based at least in part on a common mythological ancestry (Barker 2000:195). Ethnicity is formed by the way we speak about group identities and identify with signs and symbols which constitute ethnicity.

Ethnicity is a relational concept concerned with categories of self-identification and social ascription. However, the concept of ethnicity is not without its problems of usage and it remains a contested term. For instance white Anglo-Saxons frequently use the concept of ethnicity to refer to other people with different skin pigmentation, so that Asians, Africans, Hispanics and Afro-Americans are ethnic groups but the English or white is seen as a taken for granted universal while anyone else is held to have been constituted ethnically (Baker 2000:195-196).

## **2.7. Multiculturalism in Relation to the Church in Acts**

Having discussed the meaning of culture, multiculturalism, race and cultural diversity, we shall now look at what will be discussed in the chapters that will follow. The main focus will be the Church in the book of Acts in its multicultural setting, as already mentioned in the preface.

Unger (1962) comments that the Christian Church came into existence in Jerusalem as a result of the events of the day of Pentecost narrated in Acts chapter 2. The Gospel privilege based upon a crucified, risen, and ascended Messiah was introduced to Jews only, or at the most to proselytes of Judaism. The first seven chapters of Acts give the history of this Jerusalem church, tracing its progress through persecution. Only indirect hints are given of the spread of the church to

Judea in general. But Luke assumes this wider outreach of the message in the announced scope of his historical sketch (Acts 1:8) (Unger 1962: 146)

The church in Acts began with a 'multicultural spirit' and with a 'multicultural witness' of the event on the day of Pentecost - 'Jews from every nation' (Acts 2: 5)

Haenchen (1971) comments on Acts 2:9-11: -

Instead of interrupting the scene with an historical report, Luke makes the diaspora Jews themselves enumerate the long series of countries and peoples which represent 'every nation under heaven'. The countries named possessed a considerable Jewish minority. Broadly speaking, the list moves from east to west, naming in its middle section first the northern and then the southern lands. In those days the Parthians were known particularly through their raids on the eastern boundaries of the Roman Empire. Luke may have taken the Medes and Elamites from the Bible, '*Elamitai*' (Isaiah 21:2 LXX), for the name 'Medes' had long been past history, as had also the country of 'Elam', north of the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, these names convey to the reader the impression that the Christian mission was already reaching out 'to the ends of the earth'! (Haenchen 1971: 170)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, each ethnic group wants to be identified with its own cultural traditions and nationality. They do not want to lose their cultural identity. They may prefer to marry and live with their 'own kind', without looking down on or disrespecting other cultures. As we have seen from the other writers above, one particular ethnic group may not live and work compatibly with other ethnic groups.

Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan (1958), comment that the Jews deeply resented the way in which Paul the apostle, as it seemed to them poached on their preserves by visiting the synagogues and enticing away those Gentiles who attended worship there, and who, the Jews hoped, would one day become full proselytes. The bulk of the Jews, in city after city to which Paul went, would not have Jesus as the Messiah themselves, and were enraged when the Gentiles accepted Him. While Acts records the steady advance of the gospel in the great Gentile communities of the Empire, it

records at the same time its progressive rejection by that nation to which it was first offered. (Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan 1958:899)

## **2.8. Summary and Conclusion**

- ❑ Culture is defined as manifestations of thought patterns, beliefs and codes or conduct of a particular nation or people group;
- ❑ Multiculturalism points to a plurality of cultures;
- ❑ Cultural diversity would mean people of different backgrounds each with its unique cultural trends, made up of their own language, dress code, food, and customs;
- ❑ Culture involves race and ethnicity;
- ❑ Culture also has to do with class and caste.

The problems of multiculturalism can be challenging when it comes to race, ethnicity, and environment where one lives and work. One of the worst is rejection, which may result in total rejection or rebellion. The persecution of the early church, both by Jews and Romans of that time bears this out.

The next chapter will take us to the aspect of how cultures can change, how cultures can be developed, and how certain cultural values can be lost.

## CHAPTER 3

### Change and Development In Multiculturalism

#### 3.0. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the system of cultural change in a multicultural society. We are living in a changing society. There are changes in the social, political, and in the financial world nearly all the time. Cultural change may come through development through many factors as we shall learn in this chapter. Some cultures are forced to change their cultural practices because of 'modern influence' and sometimes through 'pressure' of certain 'circumstances'. A typical example in South Africa is regarding the question of cremation. It is understood that all African cultures do not practice cremation, but burial. Some sectors within Christianity and the church, never practiced cremation, because of the resurrection of the body. But we are living in a time in this country, where there is a practical problem: the cemeteries are becoming full, and there is a lack of burial space. Those cultures, which never practiced cremation, are forced to do so because of 'pressure' and 'circumstances'.

This is only one of the reasons of 'cultural change'. There are other reasons why cultures go through change. We shall now look what other writers have to say in this chapter on cultural change and development.

#### 3.1. Cultural Change

Haviland (1990) says that one of the most frequently used terms to describe social and cultural changes as these are occurring today is **modernization**. This is most clearly defined as an all-encompassing and global process of cultural and socio-economic change, whereby developing societies seek to acquire some of the characteristics common to industrially advanced societies. If one looks very closely at this definition, one sees that 'becoming modern' really means 'becoming like us' with the very clear implication that being like us is to be antiquated and obsolete. Not only is this ethnocentric, but it also but it also fosters the notion that these other societies must be changed to be more like us, irrespective of other

considerations. It is unfortunate that the term modernization continues to be so widely used (Haviland 1990:429).

The process of modernization, which may be best understood to be consisting of four sub-processes, of which one is **technological development**. In the course of modernization, traditional knowledge and techniques give way to the application of scientific knowledge borrowed mainly from the West. For example, the use of the computer for so many tasks that formerly was done through traditional methods.

Another sub-process is **agricultural development**, represented by a shift in emphasis from subsistence farming to commercial farming.

The third sub-process is **industrialization**, with greater emphasis placed on placed in inanimate forms of energy- especially fossil fuels – to power mechanics. (Haviland 1990:429). Human and animal power become less important, as do handicrafts in general.

The fourth process is **urbanization**, marked particularly by people moving from rural settlements unto cities.

**Cultural loss** is another factor within multiculturalism, says Haviland (1990). Cultural loss occurs when we think of change as an accumulation of innovations; new things being added to those already there. For example, back in biblical times, chariots and carts were in widespread use in the Middle East, but by the sixth century A.D., wheeled vehicles had virtually disappeared from Morocco to Afghanistan. They were replaced by camels, not because there was a reversion to the past, but because camels, used as a pack animals, worked better, and was able to ford rivers, cross deserts and mountain terrains (Haviland 1990:419).

**Acculturation** has an effect on cultures. It is a process when major changes that occur as a result of prolonged contact between societies. It is cultures losing their



cultural identities and form a single culture; one culture can borrow from another culture without being in the least acculturated. Sometimes, though one of the cultures loses its autonomy, but retains its identity as a sub-culture, such as caste, class, or ethnic group (Haviland 1990: 419).

Thomson (1997) states different forms of Multiculturalism:

The first is, **Isolationist multiculturalism**. This refers to a vision of society in which different cultural groups lead autonomous lives and engage in minimum mutual interaction necessitated by their having to live together. The Millet system under the Ottoman Empire in which different religious communities led self contained lives and ran their affairs themselves was this kind of society. In modern times such groups as the Amish in the USA and a small group of Black Muslims in the USA prefer a society that makes no or minimal demands on them and leaves them alone to pursue their ways of life (Thomson 1997:184).

**Accommodative multiculturalism** refers to a society which rests on a dominant culture but makes appropriate adjustments and provisions for minority cultural needs. It interprets and applies its laws, formulates and implements its policies, in a culturally sensitive manner, and gives its minorities freedom and sometimes the resources to maintain their languages and cultures. Multiculturalism in Britain, France, and several European countries has taken this form. As we saw, it is also the form of multiculturalism generally preferred by the old and new, mainly non-Muslim, Asian immigrants to the USA, Europe and elsewhere (Thomson 1997:184). These groups do not challenge the dominant culture of the wider society either because they admire several aspects of it, or because they generally take an instrumental view of it, or because as immigrants do not think it right to question the way in which the wider society is organized. They accept it as a fact of life, learn to negotiate their way around in it, and build their autonomous cultural lives within it.

**Autonomist multiculturalism** refers to a vision of society in which major cultural groups seek equality with the dominant culture and aim to lead autonomous lives within a collectively acceptable political framework. Their primary concern is to maintain their ways of life, which they think have as much right to do as the dominant cultural group, and to enjoy the maximum possible degree of self-government, they challenge the hegemony of the dominant cultural group and seek to create a society in which they can all exist as equal partners leading their self-contained lives (Thomson 1997:184).

This form of multiculturalism is favoured by the indigenous peoples all over the world- the Quebecois, the Basques, the Bretons, and others. Although it is both possible and popular when the cultural minorities are territorially concentrated, it is also demanded by some groups of Muslims migrants in children in Muslim schools, to have their own self-governing national bodies.

**Critical or interactive multiculturalism** refers to a society in which cultural groups are concerned not so much to lead autonomous lives as to create a collective culture that reflects and affirms their distinct perspectives. Since the dominant culture is reluctant to do so, cultural minorities challenge it both intellectually and politically, It is also often the case that the dominant culture has taken, and enforced by all means at its disposal, a demeaning view of the capacities, cultures and histories of the minorities, which the latter often internalize with obvious damage to their self-respect, self-confidence and capacity to compete as equals. Their view of themselves is closely bound with the dominant culture's view of them, the latter in turn is but a converse of its view of itself, and that view both expresses and legitimizes the prevailing structure of power. Cultural minorities therefore have an additional reason to question the dominant culture's political and intellectual hegemony and to create a climate conducive culture. As discussed, this form of multiculturalism is much favoured by black leaders and intellectuals of the left in the USA, Britain and elsewhere (Thomson 1997: 184).

**Cosmopolitan multiculturalism**, comments Thomson (1997), is breaking through the bounds of cultures altogether and to create a society in which individuals, now no longer committed to specific cultures, freely engage in inter-cultural experiments and evolve a cultural life of their own. According to its advocates, human beings, who are reflective and self-determining agents, are neither determined or constituted by nor under any obligation to maintain and transmit their culture. They should therefore view all cultures including their own as a resource, as a range of opinions, and either freely choose or, better still, evolve one that appeals to them most.

In extreme form, cosmopolitan multiculturalism sees cultures as articles in a global supermarket. In its more moderate form it loosens up cultures and encourages critical self-reflection and intercultural dialogue. Cosmopolitan multiculturalism is much favoured by diasporic intellectuals and some groups of liberals, and has a distinct post-modernist orientation (Thomson 1997:183-185).

Thomson (2000) comments of multicultural movements in Britain.

When the Afro-Caribbean and Asian immigrants began to arrive in the 1950s, there was a widespread view that they should – and would indeed want to – assimilate British culture. Their languages were not taught in schools; they were discouraged from speaking them on school premises; and if their number exceeded a certain percentage, they were bussed to schools where there were fewer of them. Sikhs refusing to wear helmets were not allowed to ride on motor-cycles, and the courts of law often refused to take account of cultural differences. Several surveys and the 1958 riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill showed that black and Asian assimilation was rendered difficult by two factors: widespread discrimination against them in such areas as employment and housing, and white anxiety about the presence of too many immigrants. Successive governments therefore settled upon the dual strategy of anti-discrimination legislation and restricted immigrants as ways of facilitating minority assimilation.

From the 1960s onwards, as in the US, the debate took a cultural turn. As the second generation of Asians began to go to school, their dietary habits, dress, reluctance to attend religious assemblies and to take part in certain sports, attracted attention. Like their US counterparts, their parents feared for the stability of their family and communal structures, and began to demand greater respect and some institutional provision for the teaching of their languages and cultures. The prolonged Sikh agitation for the right to wear

turbans when riding motor-cycles or working on building sites, the Asian women employees' refusal to wear required uniforms in preference to the their cultural beliefs and practices, forced the country to start taking account of Asian cultural needs. The fact that this was a period when liberal thinking was quite strong in Britain also helped.

So far as the Afro-Caribbeans were concerned, it was initially believed that they were culturally British. They spoke the same language, shared the same religion, dressed similarly, regarded Britain as their mother country, knew and generally identified with its history, played cricket, loved sports, shared British popular culture. Gradually this view began to change.

Creole was acknowledged to be not corrupt English, but a distinct dialect; Afro-Caribbean Christianity had a distinct character and content, their family structures, lifestyles and patterns of social relation were different. Due also to the racism they were experiencing in British society, many Afro-Caribbeans felt alienated from it and sought to redefine their identity in non-British and largely cultural terms.

Britain began to realize that its immigrants were not just 'black' or 'coloured' but distinct communities with their own cultural identities, and that it was now a culturally diverse or plural society. Increasingly it came to be described, especially in liberal circles, as multiracial, multi-ethnic, multicultural and, in the aftermath of the Rushdie affair, as multi-faith. Although the terms were rarely defined and distinguished, the contemporary usage indicated that the first term was preferred when the Afro-Caribbeans were in mind, the second when both they and the Asians were intended, the third when both of them and white subcultures were in mind, and the fourth when the reference was to religious groups. Since the term 'race' was increasingly seen to be problematic, and since the term culture was too wide, the term multi-ethnic became most popular. It is striking that blacks and Asians were described as ethnic *minorities* rather than as ethnic *groups*, a term widely referred in the USA and Canada, and sometimes as *minority communities*, a term rarely used in any other western country (Thomson 2000 :174-176).

In South Africa, similar terms are used to describe minority groups. For example in the apartheid years, Indians were supposed to live in their own townships. Today, the vast Indian townships like Phoenix and Chatsworth are reminiscent of 'group area' laws of separate developments within the apartheid structure of the 'old South Africa', until the said laws were scrapped. Today the cry from political groups is to protect the interests of 'minority groups'. Although Indians

have been in some ways been influenced by Western cultures, they have their own identities as far as religion, language, diet, and manner of dress.

Unlike the USA and Britain, multiculturalism in Canada had a relatively easy birth with the government acting as an obliging midwife. Over the years the country had attracted large bodies of immigrants, some of whom retained their culture but many abandoned it in favour of assimilation into the mainstream Canadian society. In 1961 Canadians of British ancestry made up just under 40 percent of the population, those of French ancestry just over 30 percent, native peoples just over one percent, and 'others' – a rapidly growing group of immigrants and a ready constituency for multiculturalism-just under 25 percent (Thomson 2000: 180).

When Quebec demanded greater cultural and political autonomy and equal recognition in the country's self-definition, the federal government set up in 1963 the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Faced with these objections, the Trudeau government replaced biculturalism with multiculturalism and only insisted with bilingualism. To declare Canada bicultural would have come close to accepting that it consisted of two distinct territorially based communities and that Quebec was the ethnic homeland of the Francophones. (Thompson 2000:180-181). Trudeau announced a policy of 'multiculturalism within a bilingual framework' and officially committed the country to it in 1971.

According to the above information, we see that multiculturalism is more prevalent in western countries like the USA, Britain and Canada to name a few. This is because of immigrants to these countries who settled there took their cultures with them.

On the other hand a country, for example, Saudi Arabia, is predominantly mono-cultural in nature, because it is an Islamic country governed with Islamic laws and with cultures that are Middle-Eastern and Islamic. With a exception of different religious sects in Saudi Arabia, the country is said to be mono-cultural in its nature.

Herskovits (1963) who quotes Linton, says that there are certain degrees of similarity and difference in behaviour to be found in culture. The first of these he

calls 'universals', which are those beliefs and forms of behaviour to be expected of any normal member of a society: language, types of clothing and housing, the way a group orders its social relations. The second category comprises the 'specialties', which are composed of those particular aspects of behaviour that characterise the members of specialised groups within the larger social whole. (Herskovits 1963: 50)

### **3.2. The Bible and Culture**

Whilst there may be change of culture and cultural patterns in some cultures of the world, biblical cultures may have or not have changed at all.

Stambaugh and Balch (1986) commenting on the subject of *ancient economy* say that the cultures of the ancient world were based on in a tradition that was older than money. Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews all looked back to a time when wealth and status was measured in terms of family allegiances. By the time of the New Testament, money and movable wealth had become much more important. Still, the basic social fabric of these civilisations was woven of the familiar fiber of personal contacts; of favours done, returns expected, and allegiance vowed (Stambaugh and Balch 1986: 63).

David and Pat Alexander (1983) in speaking of the *Law* comment that,

Comparisons have been made with other ancient Near Eastern law-codes, especially the Code of Hammurabi, and many similarities noted. This illustrates the fact that Israel was a part of Eastern Mediterranean culture and shared in the ideas and experience of her neighbours. But what is so significant is not so much the similarities as the differences which made Israel's laws distinctive. These may be summarised as: -

- ❑ Their uncompromising monotheism (belief in one God),
- ❑ Their remarkable concern for the underprivileged: slaves, strangers, women, and orphans;
- ❑ Their community spirit, based on the covenant relationship shared by all Israel with the Lord (Pat and Alexander 1983: 124).

Religious practices and traditions may have not changed in many cultures of Bible lands. A typical example is the offering of animal sacrifices during the Passover on Mount Gerizim, by the Samaritans, is still practised today. At the time of Jesus they were despised as a heretical sect. Today, though they are a tiny minority, they in turn despise the secular state of Israel for not practising the ancient sacrifices.

The Jews stood their ground as far as cultural change was concerned. Stambaugh and Balch (1986) comment that the societies of the Greco-Roman world expected certain behaviour from their members. Whether free or slave, male or female, citizen or non-citizen, all people were expected to respect the sovereign (whether king emperor or law), to contribute services according to their means. This involved military duty, financial contributions to pay for some public work, and to participate in the society's common cults. The Jews who lived by the Torah could not behave in the normal way. Some of the things that came against their culture was: -

- ❑ They could respect the sovereign and pray on his behalf, but they could not offer incense to his image;
- ❑ They did not participate in any of the sacrifices of the state cults;
- ❑ It was not easy for them to serve in the armies because that would interfere with their observance of the Sabbath, and because soldiers were expected to take part in the sacrifices;
- ❑ At public ceremonial occasions they could not join everybody else in consuming meat sacrificed to pagan gods, a practice that violated Jewish scruples on several counts.

Religious Jews, therefore, had to hold back from much commonly accepted and expected behaviour. In order to avoid trouble, they often petitioned the authorities for specific exemptions, arguing that although their Law forbade certain specific observances, they were loyal members of society and prayed for the sovereign in

accordance to the ways of their fathers. With the respect for other gods and for local traditions that was usual in ancient society, and perhaps in recognition of proven loyalty, the exemptions were often granted- by the Persian king in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., by individual cities, by the Hellenistic Ptolemies and Seleucids, and by Roman governors, and emperors. Among the specific privileges granted were the right to observe the Sabbath and send each year a half-shekel tax to Jerusalem for the maintenance of the temple. They were exempted from participating in civic cults and from making the usual contributions to their celebrations and autonomy to exercise legal jurisdiction within their own community, which formed a politeuma, as we have seen (Staumbaugh and Balch 1986: 51-52).

### **3.3. Social Transitions**

For the Jews to make cultural change was difficult because their culture was entwined with their religion. Conversion to Christianity made a decisive impact, both in terms of the individual's self-perception and in the social context of a new fellowship. Christian fellowship itself experienced certain transitions in the generation following Jesus' death and resurrection, most significantly from a Jewish movement to a Gentile one and from a rural to an urban environment.

The book of Acts portrays an early opposition between Hellenist Jews and the more traditional ones. (Acts 6:1) Many Jews refused to accept the Gospel; and Jewish audiences in the temple and in synagogues rejected many preachers. This led Paul's decision finally to go to only the Gentiles.

The book of Acts records a few controversies over the preaching of the gospel in relation to change and development: -

1. Hellenists widows being neglected by Jewish believers; the problem was resolved by appointing of the seven (deacons) to attend to the problem. (Acts 6)



2. Peter's vision on the house- top to go the house of Cornelius. The vision led Peter to go the Gentile home because he was a Jew with Jewish customs and beliefs, that one should not go Gentiles and associate with them. (Acts 10):
3. The issue of whether the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved and to be accepted by the Jewish Christians, was discussed and resolved at the Jerusalem conference. (Acts 15)
4. The transition from a Jewish to a Gentile movement was principally owing to the admission of the Gentiles into the church without requiring them to become Jews first (See Galatians 2:11-13).

### **3.4. Summary and Conclusion**

Cultural change occurs through modernisation, which is expressed in technological development, agricultural development, industrialisation, and urbanisation. Cultural loss occurs through innovations, from the old to the new. Acculturation occurs through loss of cultural identities, where cultures lose some or most of their cultural identities through influence of other cultures.

On one hand we see change and development through conversion to Christ. Those who converted, experienced a certain change and development in their religion and culture. Those who refused to accept the gospel experienced little or no change. Thus we see that the gospel in Acts brought about certain cultural and social changes and development.

The next chapter will deal with multiculturalism and language; how language and communication plays an important part in one's culture; and how through the medium of language people can learn the cultures of others.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Multiculturalism and Language**

#### **4.0. Introduction**

Barker (2000) says that the significance of language, for an understanding of culture, and the construction of knowledge has risen to the top of the agenda within cultural studies and the 'human social sciences'. This is for two reasons: -

- ❑ Language is the privileged medium in which cultural meanings are formed and communicated.
- ❑ Language is the means and medium through which we form knowledge about the social world and ourselves.

Language is not a neutral medium for the formation and transfer of values, meanings and knowledge that exists beyond its boundaries; rather, language is constitutive of those very values, meanings and knowledge. That is, language gives meaning to material objects and social practices, which are brought into view and made intelligible to us in terms of the intentions of language users. Rather, language constructs meaning. It structures which meanings can or cannot be deployed under culture is to explore how meaning is produced symbolically through the signifying practices of language. This has been the domain of semiotics, broadly understood as the study of signs, and developed from the pioneering work of Saussure. (Barker, 2000: 66)

#### **4.1. How Language and Culture**

Herskovits (1963) defines, language as the vehicle of culture,

It is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which members of a social group co-operate and interact; and that as a series of symbols, its meanings must be learned as must all other cultural phenomena. It stresses the social functions of language. (Herskovits 1963: 287)

Haviland (1990), comments that languages are spoken by people, who are members of societies; each of which has its own distinctive culture. Social variables, such as class, gender, and status of the speaker will influence people's use of language.

Moreover, people communicate what is meaningful to them, and what is and what is not meaningful is defined by their particular culture. In fact, our use of language affects, and is affected, by, our culture. (Haviland 1990:93) South Africa is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country. It has within its nation eleven official languages.

(Cavendish 2001), says that, African civil rights campaigner Archbishop Desmond Tutu, has called South Africa, a 'Rainbow Nation' because of the many different peoples of many different origins live there. Until the end of apartheid, knowledge of English or Afrikaans was essential for anyone wishing to attend college or aiming for a professional career. Nine of the most widely spoken African languages have been recently been national language status. Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu. This means they can be used in schools, government offices, and law courts. In urban areas people speaking different African languages live side by side. People who speak languages belonging to the same "family" may be able to understand one another; for example people who speak Swazi can often understand Zulu (Cavendish 2001: 481).

Language is also a medium through which culture is communicated. Sometimes it may not be the language itself, but the lifestyle of one's culture can 'cross pollinate' other cultures. A typical example is that if one is in touch with a person of another culture and language, this gives an opening and an opportunity to learn one another's language and culture. An English speaking person may easily learn to speak and understand the Afrikaans culture and language if he or she is living with or married to a person who is 'Afrikaans'. This is typical in the South African culture.

Again we see that this also true of the South African Indian, where almost all modern South African Indians use English as their home language, although their mother tongue may be some Indian language. This is purely because of the influence of Western culture. Thus there is a loss of the mother tongue to a great extent.

Anthionissen and Kaschula (2001), comment that,

One cannot learn language in a vacuum. It will become clear that communicative competence implies both cultural as well as grammatical competence. A practical example is used. If you attended a Xhosa beer drink at Qunu near Umtata in the Transkei, you would not only have to know the rules governing the Xhosa language, but also the rules governing the ceremony. It would be necessary to know certain cultural rules such as where to sit, who may use which *bekile* 'beaker', and who may drink first. However, it would also be necessary to know certain cultural rules which dictate the use of language in such a situation. There will include what to say and to whom, how to address individuals who are older or younger than yourself (Anthionissen and Kaschula, 2001:26).

Beliefs and values as well as the needs of a particular society are therefore reflected in the language. The vocabulary of a language provides us with evidence of what is regarded as culturally important in a particular society. Misunderstandings can occur where one society regards something as culturally important and another thinks of it as meaningless. Such misunderstandings mostly result from the way cultural notions are coded in language.

It is vital to be beware of this scenario in order to enhance cultural understandings and tolerance in a country such as South Africa. Part of other tongue speakers' knowledge of their language includes such cultural knowledge. In cross-cultural communication participants have to be aware of the fact that certain cultural norms are conveyed in language (Anthionissen and Kaschula 2001: 26-27).

#### **4.1.1. Language and Ethnic Group**

For a long time in South Africa, we were taught that our language related to our particular ethnic group. On this basis the previous governments granted certain groups, such as the Xhosa people, their 'independence' in what was formerly 'independent' Transkei.

This was part of a **divide and rule** policy. But if we look closely at the situation we find that the link between language and ethnic group was never as direct as former policy makers preferred to believe. People do not speak the way they do because

they are black or white; rather it is because of learned behaviour . People take on the linguistic characteristics of the people they live in close contact with.

There is no racial basis for the differences in accent or language use. Everything comes down to the environment in which a person has learnt the language. In the past we have been led to believe that there is no connection between language and race. But this perception was falsely created in order to serve apartheid policies of keeping people apart on the basis of their so called cultural and linguistic differences. There are many in South Africa whose mother tongue is Xhosa or Zulu who have been educated in an environment where they learnt to speak 'standard' English without interference of their mother tongue accent. There are also English mother tongue speakers who have grown up in rural areas where their parents were for example , missionaries , traders or farmers who have acquired Xhosa and who speak it without an accent. Men and women speak differently , mostly as a result of social processes, and this differs from culture to culture.

Clearly though , where people are living together in large ethnic groups there may be link between language and ethnicity. However, there is no inherent link between language and race. It is important to point out that no one variety or accent is superior to any other (Anthoniessen and Kaschula 2001:34-35).

In a research conducted by Kaschula (1989), it was found that the role playing attitudes and different traditions which existed between English speaking farmers and their Xhosa workers in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, encouraged the farmers to speak a specific farming register. This language variety was limited to topics and conversation types related to farming . Such restrictions appeared top be necessary in order to keep relations professional rather than personal and so to discourage familiarity with the workers.

The limited verbal repertoire of the farmers and limited more natural acquisition which would enable them to speak about other issues such as religion or politics in Xhosa (Anthonissen and Kaschula (2001:34)

## **4.2. Language and its Diversity**

### **4.2.1. The Communication Process**

Wederspahn (2000) explains the word 'communication' which comes from the Latin word, '*communicare*' meaning, 'to share or make common'. Sharing a common cultural background with another person makes communication relatively easy. Cross-cultural communication is far more challenging. A major part of the difficulty is that the focus and style of communications are strongly influenced by deeply held cultural perceptions and values. The parties communicating with each other take much for granted and rely on mutually shared assumptions about what to communicate to whom and when, where, and how. In the absence of a common set of cultural values and assumptions, miscommunication is frequently the result.

Wederspahn (2000), comments that, a person from one culture conceives an idea and 'encodes' it in a verbal and nonverbal message, and then transmits it to a person who has a different cultural background. The second person receives and 'encodes' the message in order to grasp the thought intended. The encoding process includes considering the status and background of the recipient (friend, parent, boss, child) and selecting the words or gestures most likely to be understood accurately. This process is normally done without consciously thinking about it. Often people are not aware of all the messages they are sending, especially the non-verbal ones (Wederspahn 2000:46)

When the message is sent across the cultural boundary, a communication breakdown is likely because the message is 'filtered' through a different set of beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions. Both the encoding and decoding are done in reference to one's own culture.

Therefore, the message frequently is distorted during transmission. The communication challenge is identical when a message is sent in the opposite direction, which usually goes on simultaneously. Two of the most basic barriers to

cross-cultural communication include differences in context versus content focus and the use of non-verbal language. (Wederspahn 2000: 47)

#### **4.2.2. Context versus Content Focus**

The differences in the focus of communications have important implications for communications between people from different countries. For example, in the United States, communication tends to be relatively low-context. Common expressions and sayings such as, 'Don't beat around the bush', 'Get to the point,' and 'Say what you mean, and mean what you say' reveal the US emphasis on content above context. In contrast, Mexico, which has a relatively high context focus in communication, has a proverb, 'Only drunks and small children always tell the truth.' This saying implies that unless one is in an uninhibited condition or childishly naïve, it is normal to avoid being totally candid (Wederspahn 2000: 51).

The other major barrier, in cross-cultural communication is due to cultural differences in 'body language'. It is important to understand the impact of nonverbal communications on cross-border roles and relationships because a great deal of valuable information is sent and received on nonverbal channel, especially in high-context societies. In these, cultures, how people feel about themselves and others, how they reveal their emotions, motivations and intentions, and how they signal their status and power are mostly transmitted nonverbally. To understand their status these messages, and respond to them appropriately, you need to be aware of the nature of nonverbal communications, have adequate observation skills for detecting the unspoken cues, and know the meaning of the culturally specific signals and gestures (Wederspahn 2000: 51).

Nonverbal communication, can be called a language because it has a structure and set of rules analogous to a grammar and a 'vocabulary' like words, the structure of nonverbal language consists of categories that may be used to observe and analyze nonverbal interactions, as illustrated in the examples that follow: -

- ❑ **Eye contact** : Avoidance of eye-contact in Japan is used to show respect and deference . However , Arabs often establish and maintain intense eye-contact as a sign of interest and respect.
- ❑ **Facial expressions** : Venezuelans may squint and wrinkle their noses to indicate lack of understanding . Filipinos raise their eyebrows to signal “ yes”. Smiles in Japan may express embarrassment and discomfort rather than happiness.
- ❑ **Hand/arm gestures**: In many cultures, it is impolite to point with the index finger. The OK sign made by forming a circle of the thumb and index finger is obscene in Brazil, as is their to fingered victory gesture in England and Australia.
- ❑ **Posture** : The Japanese have an elaborate ritual of bowing to display status and acknowledge relationships. Crossing one’s legs in a way that allows the bottom of the shoe to be seen by others is offensive in Saudi Arabia.
- ❑ **Interpersonal physical distance**: In the Middle East, people tend to stand very close to one another in face-to face conversations. Northern Europeans need a lot more space.
- ❑ **Touching and body contact**: In Latin America and the Middle East, touching others while talking to them is sign of acceptance and friendliness. Men and men and women and women often walk arm-in-arm. Touching another person with the left hand is taboo in parts of Asia and the Middle East.
- ❑ **Use of space**: The location of desks in an office and the seating arrangement in meetings in Japan indicate hierarchy. In many counties in Europe and the United States, the size and location of one’s office display status
- ❑ **Personal appearance, dress, and grooming**: Wearing of shorts in public, except at the beach, is considered in-appropriate in many countries in Asia. Women in much of the Middle East show virtue by dressing modestly. Beards are an indication of radicalism in some cultures and conservatism in others.



- ❑ **Time-related signals:** High –level Latin American officials or executives may arrive late to a meeting to indirectly demonstrate their importance. In Scandinavia, strict punctuality is a requirement sign of responsibility and respect in social and business situations.
- ❑ **Meanings of symbols, objects, and colors:** In Japan and Korea, the number four is considered unlucky and the color white represents death. The Chinese consider letter openers or scissors in appropriate gifts because they would symbolize severing a relationship. Some cultures use only certain kinds of colors of flowers to express romantic intentions condolences, or congratulations.
- ❑ **Use of silence:** In the United States, long silences in conversation are awkward and uncomfortable. During meetings in Japan, silence may be a positive sign of reflection and concentration (Wederspahn, 2000: 51-52).

#### **4.2.3. Nonverbal Business Interactions**

Wederspahn (2000), describes that, situations involving greetings and business protocol inevitably have many nonverbal gestures and cues. There may be elaborate rules for the order of introductions, shaking hands, bowing embracing, the seating arrangement, the exchange of business cards, and the giving and receiving of gifts. Other important areas of business such as conducting negotiations, selling, interviewing, making presentations, and giving feedback also require cross-cultural nonverbal communications awareness and skill (Wederspahn 2000:52).

‘Language is a most important aspect and perhaps the best examples of culture’ (Malina 1981:12).

#### **4.3. The New Testament and the Semitic Languages**

There were four primary languages used in Palestine in the first century A.D. namely, Latin, Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew. John mentions that Pilate put a sign on Jesus’ cross ‘in Hebrew, in Latin and in Greek’ (John19: 20). However, little Latin was spoken in Palestine.

Koester (1980) comments that,

All the books of the New Testament without exception were originally written in Greek; there is no early Christian Greek writing which can be shown to have been translated from Hebrew or Aramaic. It is necessary to keep in mind when discussing difficult and much disputed problem of Semitism in the New Testament. We cannot doubt that there are Semitisms in the New Testament, in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, and in the Apocrypha. Some writings contain more Semitisms than others, but on the whole their number is relatively high (Koster 1980: 110).

It used to be thought that Aramaic was on the wane in the Seleucid pre-Maccabaeon period, but more evidence for Aramaic has accumulated recently. The findings at Qumran reveal that literature was still being composed in Aramaic in the first century before and after Christ (Stambaugh and Balach 1986: 87).

#### **4.4. The Identity of People and Languages Spoken on the Day of Pentecost**

Acts 2: 9-11 records at least 14 different languages or dialects that were spoken on the Day of Pentecost. Luke records the names of the various people group that were represented on the day of Pentecost. Bryant (1976) further identifies the different groups of people on the Day of Pentecost.

- ❑ **Parthians:** These were all the Jews and proselytes who lived in the old Parthian Empire to the East, known today as Iran. The earliest dispersion of the ten tribes took place in the eastern countries. Later they were augmented by immigration and colonisation, so that by the first century A.D. the number of Jews in the eastern territories ran into millions. Known for their prowess in war, instead of arts and sciences, they never developed a literature of their own. Bt it is certain that the apostles of our Lord preached the Gospel among them.
- ❑ **Medes:** There are more than twenty references to these people of their land in the scriptures, which show their importance. 2 Kings 17:6 refers to their cities. They spoke a Persian dialect. The book of Esther tells us of their

binding character of their laws, which cannot be changed or altered. (Esther 1:9). Isaiah and Daniel tell of their power against Babylon (Isaiah 13:17 and Daniel 5:28). The last Scriptural reference to them is in Acts 2:9 where representatives are in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost.

- ❑ ***Elamites:*** They were the descendants of Shem, the son of Noah, (Genesis 10:22). Elam was also a country situated on the East of the Tigris river opposite Babylonia. Its population was made up of a variety of tribes. Elam was one of the earliest civilisations. It was one of the nations forced to drink the cup of God's wrath (Jer. 49:34-39). Ezra 4:9 refers to Elamites as among their peoples brought over to Samaria by the Assyrians. Acts 2:9 includes the Elamites as one of the tongues being spoken by visitors at Jerusalem.
- ❑ ***Mesopotamians :*** The name Mesopotamia means 'middle river.' The name applied in particular to the area between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, a region which in the Hebrews called Aram, Aram-Naharaim, or Padan-Aram, along with various other names for localities or peoples of this region. In present day application the term is used of a territory practically coextensive with modern Iraq (Gen. 24:10; Deut. 23:4; Judg. 3:8-11; 1 Chron. 19:6; Acts 2:9; 7; 2)

In the New Testament, the mention of Mesopotamia as one of the regions from which the Jews of the Diaspora had come to Jerusalem (Acts 2:9, 'residents of Mesopotamia' RSV) probably has reference to that part of the Near East included in modern Iraq and may refer to the fact the call of God came to Abraham, 'while he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran'(Acts 7:2). This definitely puts southern Iraq in Mesopotamia, for Abraham was then in the city of Ur (Gen.11:31). The southern part of Mesopotamia, including Ur and a number of other city-states, was known as Sumer; the central section was called Akkad and later was named

Babylonia, after the city of Babylon gained the ascendancy; the northern division, along with Tigris, was Assyria, the land of Asshur.

- **Judeans, Judaea:** Judea is a geographical term that first appears in the Bible in Ezra 5:8, where it designates a province of the Persian Empire. The land of Judea is also mentioned in the apocryphical books 1 Esdras (1:30) and 1 Maccabees (5:45; 7:10). Since most of the exiles who returned from the Babylonian exile belonged to the tribe of Judah, they came to be called Jews and their land Judea.

Under the Persian empire, Judea was a district administered by a governor who was usually a Jew (Hag.1:14; 2:2). With the banishment of Archelaus, Judea became annexed to the Roman province of Syria; but its governors were procurators appointed by the Roman emperor.

- **Cappadocians:** Cappadocia was a province in the East of Asia Minor; its people were Aryans (Acts 2: 9). The Aryans spoke an Indo-European language who invaded northern India in the second millennium B.C. (In Nazi ideology) Aryans were of the Caucasian race, and not of the Jewish descent. The apostle Peter in his first epistle addressed the Cappadocians as well as the others.

- **People of Pontus:** Pontus means 'sea', which was a large province of northern Asia Minor which lay along the Black Sea (Acts 2:9). Luke mentions in Acts 18:2 that a certain Christian Jew named Aquila was born in Pontus. So far as we know, Pontus and the other northern provinces were not evangelised by Paul. The Holy Spirit did not permit him to preach in Bithynia (Acts 16:7), which was in the region of Pontus. However, the apostle Peter addresses his first letter to 'the strangers scattered throughout Pontus; it lends to the credence to the tradition that Peter preached in Northern Asia Minor rather than in Rome after Pentecost.

□ **Asians:** There are at least 3 references to Asia.

1. It spoke of the great continent East of Europe and Africa.
2. It refers to Asia Minor, otherwise Anatolia, the great western promontory of Asia partially bounded by the three seas, Black, Aegean and Mediterranean.
3. It also means the proconsular Asia, the Roman province in New Testament times, which contained the South West part of Asia Minor. The Lord Jesus Christ had a message for the “seven churches of Asia Minor” in the first three chapters of Revelation.

The Asians were also representatives on the day of Pentecost; they possibly spoke an Aryan dialect or one of the Indo-European languages.

□ **Phrygians:** Phrygia was a province in South West Asia Minor which once included the greater part of Asia Minor; obtained by Rome in 133 B.C. Paul preached there on his second and third missionary journeys (Acts 16:6; 18:23)

□ **Pamphylians:** Pamphylia was a small Roman province of southern Asia Minor extending along the Mediterranean coast about 100 kilometers and 50 kilometers inland to the Taurus mountains, at the time of St. Paul. The tiny country is first mentioned in the New Testament in Acts 2:10 where it is said that some of the people at Pentecost were from Phrygia and Pamphylia. The apostle Paul visited the territory on his first missionary journey when he preached at Perga, its chief city (Acts 13:13; 14:24). It is said that most of the inhabitants of Pamphylia were backward and illiterate. Christianity never flourished there as in other places of Asia Minor.

□ **Egyptians:** Egypt lies in the North East of Africa. It is also called the country of Ham (Ps 105:23, 27). The Egyptians were one of the people groups mentioned by Luke in Acts 2:10. Egypt was watered by the river

Nile which one of the longest river in the world (4000 miles long). The annual overflow is of greatest importance to the country because of the almost complete absence of rain. The country is divided into the Upper and Lower Egypt. The Lower Egypt includes the delta area. The Nile valley and the delta is bounded by desert. It was called Mizraim by the Israelites. The Ruler was called Pharaoh. They had a polytheistic religion- belief in many gods. Some of their gods were Ptah, Ra, thum, and Amon. The history began about 3000 B.C. It was a powerful empire in Old Testament times; it was known as the 'granary of the world' and of the Roman Empire. It was a cultural centre in New Testament times. It held Israel in bondage until the appearance of Moses. (See Exodus 1-14)

- ❑ **Libyans:** Libya is situated in Northern Africa, West of Egypt. Libya is mentioned in Ezek. 30:5; 38:5; Jer. 46:9; Dan. 11:43. Cyrene was one its cities (Acts 2:10). They spoke a North African dialect.
- ❑ **Cyrenians:** Cyrene means 'a wall'. It was a Libyan city. In the New Testament, a native of Cyrene, Simon by name helped to carry the cross of Christ (Luke 23:26). Thus Simon immortalised his city. There were also representatives present of this city in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Its Jewish population warranted a synagogue (Acts 6:6). Lucius of Cyrene receives mention in Acts 11:19-20.
- ❑ **Romans:** Luke makes mention of 'visitors of Rome'. (Acts 2:10). These are Roman- born Jews now living as foreigners in Jerusalem and considered to have Latin as their mother- tongue.
- ❑ **Cretans:** Crete is an Island in the Mediterranean, forming a natural bridge between Europe and Asia Minor. It was the legendary birthplace of Zeus. Paul and Titus founded a church there (Titus 1:5-14). The Cretans in the Old Testament are Cherethites (1 Sam.30:14; Ezek. 25:16). Cretans were in

Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11). According to Paul they were not of a high moral character (Titus 1:12)

- **Arabians:** Arabia originally the Northern part of the peninsula between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf (Isa. 21:13; Ezek 27:21, but later the entire Peninsula (Neh. 2:10; Acts 2:11; Gal. 1:17 4:25). Its ill-defined border, proximity, and plundering population made it a major factor condition the history of Israel. Their mother tongue was Arabic.
- **Jews :** Originally it denoted one belonging to the tribe of Judah or to the tribe of Judah or to the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25), but later its meaning was extended, and it was applied to anyone of the Hebrew race who returned from the Captivity. As most of the exiles came from the main historical representatives of ancient Israel, the term Jew came finally to comprehend all of the Hebrew race throughout the world (Esth. 2:5; Matt 2:20). As early as the days of Hezekiah the language of Judah was called Jewish. In the Old Testament, the adjective only applies to Jews' language or speech (2 Kings 18:26, 28; Neh. 13:24; Isa. 36:11, 13). In the Gospels "Jews" (always plural) is the usual term for Israelites; and in the New Testament (Israelites) and Gentiles are sometimes contrasted (Mark 7:3; John 2:6; Acts 10:28). Paul warns against 'Jewish fables' in Titus 1:14, and speaks of the 'Jews' religion in Gal. 1:13, 14.
- **Proselytes:** A proselyte was a foreign resident, often rendered 'stranger' (Ex. 20:10; Deut. 5:14). The word occurs only four times in the New Testament. Jesus on one occasion made mention of 'compassing sea and land to make one proselyte' (Math. 23:1-39).

The other three references to 'proselyte' in the New Testament occurs in the book of Acts. In the long list of places and people represented in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost were 'Jews and proselytes' (Acts 2:10). Of the 3000 who were swept into the Christian movement that day, and the hundreds more who

soon joined them, the probability is that there were many hundreds of proselytes. When it came to the selection of the first diaconate (Acts 6:1-6) one of the seven was Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. (Acts 6:5)

After Paul's great sermon in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14-41), we read that many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas. From this point on in the record, we cannot distinguish the proselytes. 'The Gentiles' came in great crowds, and 'the Jews' became jealous and hostile (Acts 13:44-52).

A distinction was apparently made between uncircumcised proselytes, that is, those who did not fully identify themselves with the Jewish nation and religion; and circumcised proselytes, and, those who identified themselves fully with Judaism (Bryant 1967: 476, 478).

Haenchen (1971) comments that instead of interrupting the 'Pentecost scene' of Acts 2:9-11, with an historical report, Luke makes the diaspora Jews themselves enumerate a long series of countries and peoples which represent 'every nation under heaven'. The countries named, possessed a considerable Jewish minority. Broadly speaking, the list moves from east to west, naming in its middle section first the northern and then the southern lands. In those days the Parthians were known particularly through their raids on the eastern boundaries of the Roman Empire. Haenchen further argues that, Luke may have taken the Medes and Elamites from the Bible (Is.21:2 LXX), for the name 'Medes' had long been past history, as had also the country of 'Elam', north of the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, these names convey to the reader the impression that the Christian mission had at that time had already been reaching out 'to the ends of the earth.' Judea has long been acknowledged a late insertion, as is *a priori* obvious from the fact that its vernacular is not foreign to Jerusalem. Instead of Pontus, perhaps Armenia stood in Luke's model for this list, but Pontus was the homeland of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2), likewise Cyrene was that of Lucius (Acts 13:1). A further argument is



that the phrase 'Jews and proselytes' does not refer to any specific group with its own language, but covers all the preceding groups with respect to religious affiliation: there were no pagans, for the Gentile mission did not (according to Luke) begin until Peter baptised Cornelius (Acts 10). Such a general description has meaning only at the end of the list, which shows that the 'Cretans and Arabians' are a later addition. When these two and Judea have been set aside, there remain exactly twelve different peoples (Haenchen 1971: 169-170).

Haenchen's (1971) research study on Acts 2:9-11 and of the astrological list, noted that some writers try to relate the symbols of Daniel 8:20f of the ram and he-goat with the people group found in Acts 2: 9-11. One of the writers he quotes in this regard is Harald Fuchs. Haenchen further makes mention that another writer by the name, Reicke, was stimulated by Fuchs of the astrological list. Haenchen further elaborates...

This stimulated Reicke to advance the hypothesis that around the year 50 A.D., the community at Antioch had, for the training of future missionaries, drawn up a table of its main missionary areas, using the astrological list; this compilation was later used by Luke. In this form, this hypothesis is untenable. It should not be assumed either that missionary-training at Antioch was run on the lines of a modern missionary society or that the Antiochan community at that time planned missions in all these areas. Nor may one seriously maintain that the Medes and Elamites (mere historical names by then) were more feasible missionary objectives than the Greeks. In its original form it must have contained twelve names:

- 1.Parthians
- 2.Medes
- 3.Elamites
- 4.Mesopotamia
- 5.Cappadocia
- 6.Pontus
- 7.Asia
- 8.Phrygia
- 9.Pamphylia
- 10.Egypt
11. Libya Cyrenaicia and
12. Rome.

It is no accident that the list ends, like Acts itself, with Rome, for Luke did not just write the list down 'anyhow,' but adapted it to his purposes. In place of the Persians he introduces the Parthians, whose name was at that time on

everyone's lips. It is likely, on the other hand, that he took the Medes and Elamites, those erstwhile Great Powers, from LXX, in order to name the remotest possible people's 'from the ends of the earth.' But all the twelve people must speak *foreign* languages: thus the Greeks and the Jews themselves( hence Hellas, Palestine and Syria) were ruled out as usable names. Further supposed alternations are discussed in the text. We do not know where Luke found this list; presumably his source contained names only of countries, not of signs of the zodiac. It is therefore advisable, when seeking to understand Luke's list, not to think exclusively in terms of a tradition, but to make due allowance for a theological writer's sense of effective 'composition'(Haenchen 1971:170).

In sharp contrast, the experience of Babel in Genesis 11 brought a confusion of tongues; the day of Pentecost brought edification and revelation. Biblically speaking, the phenomenon of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was a prophetic fulfillment of Joel 2:28, '*I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh*'. It was very significant that nations of the then known world should be represented to witness this great event – the magnifying of God in other tongues or language. The gospel is for all nations and for all times. Its wonderful to note that God used the medium of language to communicate his most important message to the world, and that is faith in Christ alone for salvation.

#### **4.5. Summary and Conclusion**

In this chapter we have discussed that: -

- ❑ Language is the medium in which cultural meanings are formed and communicated.
- ❑ Each culture has its own distinctive language through which their cultural values are communicated.
- ❑ Communication may not only be verbal, but also non-verbal. The use of signs and gestures becomes important in one's culture.
- ❑ Acts chapter 2 is a typical example of how the first Christian message came to the world – through the medium of languages.

Language does play an important part in one's culture; whether verbal or nonverbal or gestures. It is through language that cultural values and beliefs are transmitted from generation to generation.

The next chapter will deal with multiculturalism and religion. It will focus on the definitions of religion and the origins of religion. Some of the religions that will be discussed will be African and Indian Religious Customs, and their rites of passage. This chapter will also deal with the question of the functions of religion – how does it operate? What are the contrasts between Jewish Religion and Christianity? What is the relation between the Jewish diaspora and the Hellenists? There are different religious groups within the Jewish religion; a brief overview of these groups is given. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the beginnings of early Christianity, and particularly its growth to the Hellenistic world.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Multiculturalism and Religion**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

In introducing this chapter, Elion and Strieman (2001) comment that, we come from different cultural backgrounds; we follow different religious practices; we hold different perceptions about issues such as politeness, social correctness, generosity and time; we speak different languages; we celebrate our rites of passage according to our ethnic or religious roots; we have different dietary laws, dress codes and cultural taboos; our children attend school together; we conduct business with people from all walks of life and we celebrate our humanity together. And without knowing we may offend the very same people with whom we wish to co-operate or include in our business dealings because we are ignorant about peoples social, religious and dietary customs (Elion and Strieman, 2001:11).

Religion may mean different things to many people; it may be defined in different ways; it may be interpreted in different ways. To understand one's culture, we may have to understand one's religion also. We shall look at some of the different definitions of religion.

#### **5.1. Definition of Religion**

Haviland (1990) defines religion as the beliefs and patterns of behaviour by which humans try to deal with what they view as important problems that cannot be solved through the application of known technological or techniques of organisations. To overcome these limitations, people turn to the manipulation of supernatural beings and powers (Haviland 1990:355).

Mugambi (1996) writes that religion can be defined in many different ways:

5.1.1. Religion is the 'fabric' with which human beings as individuals and communities, weave their web of their social existence.

5.1.2. Religion is the 'compass' with which human beings as individuals and communities, steer the ship of their social existence.

5.1.3. Religion is the radar through which human beings as individuals and communities monitor the starting points and the destinations of their search for personal and social identity.

5.1.4. Religion is the 'stethoscope' with which human beings, as individuals and communities diagnose the pathological condition of their social environment.

5.1.5. Religion is the 'slide rule' with which human beings as individuals and communities identify their relationships with the rest of entities in the cultural and natural environment.

5.1.6. Religion is the thermometer with which human beings as individuals and communities measure the heat generated by social and psychological tensions.

5.1.7. Religion is the barometer with which human beings as individuals and communities measure the pressure generated by social and psychological tensions.

5.1.8. Religion is the 'means' by which human beings define their sense of belonging within the cultural and natural environment.

5.1.9. Religion is the set of beliefs and practices through which human beings as individuals and communities, affirms the ultimate origin, ultimate purpose and ultimate destiny of all aspects of reality.

5.1.10. Religion is what human beings do in the expression of their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, failures and achievements; frustrations and expectations

These analogical definitions indicate that religion as an aspect of human life, is indispensable as a pointer to individual and communal self-orientation. In scriptural religions, the authority for resolving doctrinal conflicts invested in the sacred texts. However, this authority does not eliminate all difficulties, because controversies remain over the principles of interpreting those texts.

There are many of defining religion. The most common definition associates religion with belief in a god or gods. However, this definition overlooks the fact that there are many social movements which are similar in most respects to god-centered religions, but whose focus is not the belief in a god (Mugambi 1996:6-7).

## **5.2. Religion's Identifying Features**

Haviland (1990) comments that religion consists of various rituals – prayers, songs, dances, offerings, and sacrifices – through which people try to manipulate supernatural beings and powers to their advantage. These beings and powers may consist of gods and goddesses, ancestral and other spirits, or impersonal powers, either by themselves or in various combinations. In all societies there are certain individuals especially skilled at dealing with these beings and powers, who assist other members of society in their ritual activities. A body of myths rationalises, or 'explains', the system in a manner consistent with people's experience in the world in which they live. Research, observance, and experience has proven that almost every religion in the world is entwined with the culture of the particular people group. Religion is not divorced from their cultures (Haviland 1990:355).

## **5.3. The Origin of Religion**

According to Brown in Alexander (1983) he gives a few assumptions of how religion originated: -

- *Firstly*, The first creatures that stood erect must still have been animals at heart. We know that animals do not have religion. We also know that two thousand years ago, the time of Christ, man had attained a very

high form of religion. Therefore in between there must have been a gradual evolution of religion upwards to the higher forms.

- *Secondly*, Lower forms of religion must have been something like that of stone-age tribes which are untouched by modern civilisations. Such tribal people are afraid of the spirits of the dark jungles, they rely on witchdoctors to practice magic, and they think that the souls of the dead hover around for a time and then come back in other forms. It is then an obvious guess that witchdoctors eventually become priests, with their sacrifices and temples and books of ritual.
- *Thirdly*, It eventually dawned on people that loving one's neighbour is the main thing in religion, and the one that first taught clearly was Jesus Christ, who founded the Christian or higher form of religion (Brow in Alexander 1983: 25-26).

From a Biblical perspective, religion began with man responding to God's voice. In the Genesis account, we read the first account of man communicating God (Adam and God) and bringing an offering to Him (Cain and Abel). There was nothing barbaric about animal sacrifices- God required it, in order that sins be atoned for.

Religion began with monotheism, but gradually man began to drift into polytheism, believing in many gods. The Bible therefore illustrates the historical process of the degeneration of religion, and the sending of the prophets to restore and reform true religion (Brow in Alexander 1983: 29).

#### **5.4. African Religious Customs**

Elion and Strieman (2001) comment that, contemporary African religious custom embraces many different belief systems. African Traditional Religion (ATR) is clan-based, practiced on its own terms; independent of a Western understanding of religion.

The primary corner-stones of ATR, according to Icamagu Institute, include:

- **Creation myths** - accounts of how natural phenomena and social customs came into existence
- The role and reverence of the **ancestors**.
- **Rituals** - in particular, the speech associated with rituals. Certain prayers are chanted to the ancestors on certain occasions.
- The meaning of **sacred places**.
- The **moral code**.
- Respect for life – as demonstrated through the practice of *ubuntu*.

Many Africans believe that missionary colonialists forced Christianity upon them.

Because ATR is basically a clan based religion, the home or (family homestead – usually in the rural areas) is the site for practice.

For general purposes the religious leaders are the clan elders –as well as the aunts and uncles and those who have inherited religious duties through birthrights. Diviners play a complimentary role in giving direction to (or overseeing) certain rituals (Elion and Strieman, 2000: 36).

The ATR believe in a genderless God known by the name *Quamata* (isiXhosa). Amongst the Zulus, the Creator seems to be a male figure, known by the name *uMvelinqangi*. The system views the entire universe as a living system trees, rocks, rivers and soil are all filled with a living spirit. One of the holiest substance known to Africans is salt. (Elion and Strieman 2000:37). The African religious custom centres on the belief in God the Creator through the power of appeasement of the ancestors. For the African Traditionalists, there is no recognition of Christ as God.

A *Sangoma*, is a spirit medium through whom the spirits of deceased family members communicate with the living. They are recognised by their long, white, bearded head dresses, worn as a symbol of their association with the spirit world. A person receives the calling to become a **Sangoma** through a specific dream or a



vision. When this call of the spirit manifests, the person has to accept the calling, otherwise punishment (illness) will befall him or her .

*Inyangas* are herbalists (naturopath), whose medicine is known as *muthi* (sometimes spelt *muti*). *Muthi* is mainly of vegetable origin, although animal dung and other substances may be used. Ancestral spirits are spirits of the dead forefathers, and they are responsible to protect and discipline their descendants. Animal sacrifices (goats, sheep or cattle) are carried out to mark special occasions, like weddings and funerals. The ancestors require that the slaughter take place at the home of a family member. These sacrifices are also used to mark the change of status of the departed spirit, approximately 2 years after the funeral. For this ritual, an ox is slaughtered. After this ritual (*akubiyisa*), the spirit of the deceased changes status from that of an *izithunzi* (literally a 'shadow') to an *amadhlozi*. (Elion and Strieman 2000:37-38).

The animal sacrifices provide for the sharing of food at a communal level. The distribution of food brings members of the extended family together and reinforces their ties with one another. This practice applies more to rural life than to urban existence. The African societies ancestry is traced through the father's bloodline.

Elion and Strieman (2000) explain that the concept of *ubuntu* within African culture is perfectly understood as expressed in the Zulu saying: *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu* , which implies that a person is only a person through his interaction with other people. It is an intuitive practice, done without any intellectual forethought or premeditation. *Ubuntu* lies in caring for others - acting kindly towards others; being hospitable, compassionate and fair and above all, having sound morals. Through the practice of *ubuntu* an individual can accelerate his or her spiritual growth. Through the practice of *ubuntu* in traditional African society – is demonstrated through:

- Holding weddings open to the community

- Absorbing orphans and problem children into family life
- All adults taking on parental/ brotherly / sisterly roles top others in the community

Other customs and rituals in the form of :-

- **Traditional rites of passage** – the birth ritual is performed.
- **Male initiation ceremonies.** This involves circumcision and counselling on the responsibilities of adulthood. Previously, the ritual spanned three to six months and took place infrequently. Ideally, initiation takes place in the mountains or a forest (near a river) in specially built huts.
- **Female initiation ritual** - traditionally, at the time of a young girl's puberty, between 12 – 18 years. This ceremony takes place to mark her transition from childhood to womanhood. After the ceremony, she is expected to assume house-hold duties (Elion and Strieman, 2000: 37-38).

### 5.5. Indian Culture – The Rites of Passage

Elion and Strieman (2000) comment that the Indian culture, like our African counter-parts, is rich with many customs, traditions and rituals. Here again religion has much to do with culture. The following can be related with both religion and culture:-

- The naming of a baby by the Hindu priest
- Preparation for a wedding - this begins two months before . An auspicious day is set aside to honor the gods. The prospective bride and groom bring a wedding invitation to each other's home, where it is pasted in a visible area for visitors to see. In the final days of the week leading up to the wedding, each side organises a day for the respective *Tilak* and *Hurdee*- ritual ceremonies. The couple is married with a great religious ceremony (Elion & Strieman 2001:39- 45).

Other customs and religious practices are observed as it appears on the 'sacred' days on the religious calendar. Religious festivals like the well

known *Diwali* or *Deepavali* – “festival of lights” is celebrated towards the latter part of each year.

- Dietary laws - beef and pork may not be eaten. It is taboo.
- Greetings - with both palms held together and with a bow. No shaking of hands, as the Westerner does.
- Temple laws – wearing of shoes at worship places is forbidden

## **5.6. The Functions of Religion**

Whether or not a particular religion accomplishes what people believe it does, all religions serve a number of important psychological and social functions. They reduce anxiety by explaining the unknown and making it understandable, as well as provide comfort in the belief that supernatural aid is available in times of crisis. They sanction a wide range of human conduct by providing notions of right and wrong, setting precedents for acceptable behaviour, and transferring the burden of decision making from individuals to supernatural powers. Through ritual, religion may be used to enhance the learning of oral traditions. Finally religion plays an important role in maintaining social solidarity (Haviland 1990:355).

## **5.7. Religion and Culture**

Mugambi (1996) explains that religion is a social phenomenon which always to be found fully blended with the way of life of individuals and communities. It is impossible to find an individual who practices religion in isolation from culture. If we wish to find out how people are culturally distinct from others, religion will be a very significant indicator of distinction. Rather curiously, it happens that the most prominent cultural achievements of every community, are religious artifacts – places of worship; ritual practices and paraphernalia; clothes of religious hierarchy; religious art; religious music and religious organisation (Mugambi, 1996: 25).

(Mugambi (1996) says that it is impossible, therefore, to study any religion without studying the cultural contexts in which the religion is manifested. Conversely, it is

impossible to conduct a comprehensive study of any culture, without including its religious component. Religion is both an individual and a corporate affair.

The same could be said of culture. Whatever is manifested as the culture of people, it can be found at the micro level in the lives of the individuals that compose that society. For example, the Portuguese monuments along the East coast of Africa are manifestations of the Portuguese culture of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Mugambi 1996: 25).

For the first time in the South African history, we have a constitution that recognises the cultural and religious diversity of our national society, and no one religion enjoys privilege above all others – as was the case in the past. South Africans now enjoy freedom of religion, belief and opinion, which means that, as moral beings, we are free to follow the dictates of our conscience. This state of affairs, of course brings with it enormous responsibility. It means, for one, that those who practice their religion or observe their cultural rituals must do so with due regard for the rights of others, in order to do so, they must learn about and come to understand the significance of the religious (and cultural) lives of their neighbours. Cultural diversity is best practiced in an environment – where there is tolerance and mutual respect (Elion And Strieman 2001:9). A further responsibility entails being conscious of the fact that all rights and practices must be observed and undertaken in the context of the values enunciated in our Constitution.

The Constitution affirms that South Africa is a state founded on the values of *human dignity, the achievement and the advancement of human rights and freedom...*. The relationship between values and religious beliefs has to be mutually reinforcing. Religion often brings with it certain ethical values and norms. In other words, religion cannot simply be confined to the performance of rituals. It is pre-eminently a matter of lifestyle as well (Elion and Strieman 2001:9).

According to Mugami (1996) religion has a prominent place as the norm-setter in the long term project of social reconstruction. Africa particularly needs the services of the churches and other religious groups, because they are among the social institutions having the facilities and resources for leadership development. At a time when state apparatus in many African countries seem desolate, the churches and other religious agencies can, and should, provide a stabilising and catapulting influence, on African societies (Mugambi 1996: 46).

We are also living in the days where religious cults are springing up, some strange and very different and even where bizarre rituals and ceremonies are conducted. For example, some people group of Madagascar dig up a grave of a loved one after about five years. The remains are exhumed and washed, and after a religious ritual, it is buried again.

### **5.8. Jewish Religion (Judaism) and Jewish Christianity**

It must be noted that the religion of the Jewish believers before the beginning of the church was predominantly Judaism, which goes back to the time of Abraham, the spiritual father of the Jews; Christianity has its roots in Judaism. To this, Freedman (1997) says that, in its earliest and dominant form, Christianity was a Jewish phenomenon. Its leaders were Jewish and they shared with their compatriots a common background, common Scripture, common attitudes, hopes, and expectations. They had more in common with Pharisees than Sadducees, with Essenes than Zealots. Judged in that light, primitive Jewish Christianity was an authentic component of contemporary Judaism. Community and continuity were the hallmarks of Jewish Christianity. They clung to the Jewish community and claimed it permanently as their own, working from within to persuade others to their special convictions. Furthermore, they held that their faith was continuous with Jewish tradition and consistent with it. The Jewish Bible was their Scripture and they obeyed the Law of Moses along with their fellow Jews. Led by Peter and the Twelve and later by James, the brother of Jesus, the prestige and authority of the

Jerusalem circle could hardly be questioned in the Christian world; even the radical Gentile churches of the empire recognised its position. (Freedman 1997:246)

The early church was Jewish, whilst holding on to the Christian faith. The Church in Jerusalem believed that it was imitating the practice of its Lord as well as obeying his instruction. By his life of piety and good works, Jesus had set an example which the disciples would endeavour to follow. In his teaching he set forth a model for them to emulate.

Freedman (1997) further comments that,

Jewish Christianity, which had authority in one communion and status in the other, lost both in the course of time. The Jewish Christians of a later day were unacceptable to both Christians and Jews, being regarded as heretics by the former and apostates by the latter. How far these latter-day Jewish Christians had diverged from the position of earlier Jewish Christians is difficult to determine; or even whether they were in direct succession; but it is clear that by the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Gentile Christianity and Orthodox Judaism had themselves changed considerably, and in all likelihood, would have rejected the original Jewish-Christian group on the same grounds. By the time the breach between Judaism and Christianity was permanent and irrevocable, and no trace of the ancient linkage was allowed to survive.

The surviving representatives of Biblical Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, proved eminently viable and adaptable, as their careers through nineteen centuries and in scores of countries demonstrate. They also proved incompatible with each other and, to date, irreconcilable. (Freedman 1997: 247)

The apostolic preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and of Stephen and Paul in the book of Acts, all make reference to Old testament Scriptures; especially in reference to Christ, the Messiah. They proved to Jewish audiences that Christ

indeed was their long awaited Messiah who was to come, as spoken in the Scriptures.

Initially, the Gentiles were not in the picture, so to speak. The primary aim of the apostles' preaching was to reach the Jews – 'the lost sheep of Israel' as stated by Jesus. To this Freedman (1997) comments that, the Christian mission to the Gentiles was an almost accidental but inevitable consequence of its eschatological messianism. But the unexpected and overwhelming response of non-Jews to the gospel produced the first major crisis in the early Church, as well as serious theological adjustment of traditional schemes to the new reality. After a brief, but vigorous debate, Gentiles were admitted to full communion directly without further obligation to become Jews as well. Paul's ingenious and effective exegesis created a single citizenship in the Christian commonwealth; it was divided into two classes, equal but separate: Jews and Gentiles. Jews who became Christians would continue to be Jews, while Gentiles would become Christians without also becoming Jews. (Freedman 1997:246). All would share the same promises and perquisites, receive the same status and rights, but each community would order its own polity and practice.

### **5.9. The Jewish Diaspora and Hellenism**

The history of the Jews in Palestine is but a small segment of their history of the Jewish people in the Hellenistic period. Beginning with the Babylonian exile, a large part of the Jewish people, or at least its upper class, lived outside of Palestine. There was little change in this situation when some of the exiled were permitted substantial migrations of peoples from many nations. The portions of the Jews living in the dispersion grew even further, so that the Jewish diaspora became increasingly important and began an independent and cultural development.

The Babylonian diaspora began with the exile to Babylon. Only a small portion of the Jewish population in Babylon seems to have taken advantage of the first

opportunity to return to Jerusalem, and even those who returned later with Nehemiah and Ezra still left a substantial Jewish population behind in Babylon

The bond between Babylon and Palestine was particularly intimate, since in both places the majority of the Jews spoke Aramaic, while the diaspora in Egypt, Asia Minor, and the west used Greek as their common language. The Babylonian Jews were, as a whole, not hostile to the Seleucid and Parthians rulers. They seem to have been much less positive, however, in their feelings regarding Rome. Alexandria was the place of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. Since Alexandria was a significant port of transfer for exports to the Western Mediterranean, it is quite possible that the Roman diaspora owed its beginnings to Alexandrian Jews (Koester 1982: 223-224).

The Greek language was known in Palestine, but it did not replace Aramaic as the commonly spoken language; religious literature continued to be written into Aramaic while the Bible was still being copied in Hebrew and translated into Aramaic for use in the synagogue services. On the other hand the language of the Jews in Alexandria, Asia Minor, and Rome was Greek. The translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek began as early as 3 B.C., and Greek readings from the Bible as well as the use of Greek as the language of liturgy became the rule in the synagogue services. As Greek became the language of the Bible, of liturgy, preaching, and literature, so did Hellenistic concepts and ideas invade Jewish thinking and bring fundamental changes in the tradition and reception of Israel's literary inheritance. Traditional prayers used Stoic formulations in their translated Greek form. Hellenistic Jews utilised the forms of Greek literature for their writings and sometimes published their books under pseudonym of a famous Greek author from classical period. In its missionary activities in the Greek-speaking world, Christianity was able to take its starting from this Hellenisation of the Old Testament inheritance (Koester 1982: 224). Within the Jews, there existed a few religious sects who differed greatly in their religious beliefs and patterns.



### **5.8.1. The Essenes**

The Essenes were a sect of the Jews in Palestine during the time of Christ, not mentioned in the New Testament. Josephus, Philo, Pliny the Elder, and Hippolytus describe them.

The Essenes lived a simple life of sharing everything in common, and they practiced strict rules of conduct. Mostly unmarried, they were reported to number about 4000. The number of them lived together in settlements, but some resided in the cities of the Jews. Apparently they kept their ranks filled by the adoption of other people's children. They did not participate in the temple worship, but had their own purification rites. They observed the Sabbath day very strictly and greatly venerated Moses. They would take no oaths, but new members, after going through a three-year probationary period, were required to swear a series of strong oaths they would co-operate in every way with the organisation and would never reveal to outsiders anything about the sect.

The Essenes have come into public attention in later years because of the study of the Dead Sea scrolls, and the excavation of the monastery called Khirbet Qumran, where the scrolls were written. This literature and building give evidence of an organisation very similar to what is known about the Essenes. Many of the Essenes perished in the wars against Romans. Some survived and probably became Christians. The Pharisaic school, which led in the rebuilding of the Jewish community after the destruction of Jerusalem, did not share the special teachings of the Essenes. But Pharisaic Judaism and Christianity to an even greater degree, took over many elements of the Apocalyptic expectation which the Essenes, in the tradition of the Hasidim, had cultivated and further developed during the Hellenistic period (Bryant 1967: 159).

### **5.8.2. The Sadducees**

The Sadducees were a Jewish religious sect in the time of Christ. They believed only the Law and rejected oral traditions. They denied the resurrection, immortality

of the soul, and the spirit world (Mark 12:18, Luke 20:27, Acts 23:8). They supported the Maccabeans. They were a relatively a small group, but generally held the high priesthood. They denounced John the Baptist and Jesus, and the apostolic church ( Math. 3:7, Math. 21:12, Acts 5:17, 33). Their hostility, first to the Lord and then to the Church, was due to their careful policy of collaboration with the occupying power, and consequent dislike of popular movements or disturbing political events. Pharisaism led to a breakdown of morality under the sheer burden of formalism (Tasker 1973:41). The beliefs and preoccupations of the Sadducees provided little basis at all for morality, and encouraged cynicism, place-seeking and materialism. They made the temple ‘ a den of thieves’, and in a sense removed Christ in the interests of expediency, and represented in their setting, the worst vices of hierarchy and corrupt religion.

### **5.8.3. The Pharisees**

Of the three prominent societies of Judaism at the time of Christ- Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes – the Pharisees were by far the most influential. The origin of this most strict sect of the Jews (Acts 26: 5) is obscure, but it is believed the organisation came out of the Maccabean Revolt (165 B.C). There was, however a group of Jews resembling the Pharisees as far back as the Babylonian Captivity.

The name ‘Pharisee’, in its Semitic form means ‘the separated ones’. This term first appeared during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135 B.C.). The Pharisees were found everywhere in Palestine, and not only in Jerusalem. They wore a distinguished garment which was easily recognised by others. They played a significant role during the time of Jesus and the apostles in New Testament times. They became a closely organised group, very loyal to the society and to each other, but separate from others, even their own people. They pledged themselves to obey all facets of the traditions to the minutest detail and were sticklers for ceremonial purity. They even vowed to pay tithes of everything they possessed in addition to the temple tax. They would not touch the carcass of a dead animal or those who had come into

contact with such things. They had no association with people, who had been defiled through sickness. They despised those whom they did not consider their equals and were haughty and arrogant because they believed they were the only interpreters of God and His Word.

The doctrines of the Pharisees, included predestination, and they laid much stress on the immortality of their soul, and had a fundamental belief in spirit life. These teachings usually caused much controversy when they met the Sadducees who just as emphatically denied them (Acts 23: 6-9). Being people of the Law, they believed in the final reward for good works, and that the souls of the wicked were detained forever under the earth, while those of the virtuous rose again and even migrated into other bodies (Josephus, Antiq. 18:1, Acts 23: 8). They accepted the Old Testament Scriptures and fostered the usual Jewish Messianic hope which they gave a material and nationalistic twist. It was inevitable, in view of these factors, they bitterly opposed Jesus and His teachings. If they despised the Herods and the Romans, they hated Jesus' doctrine of equality and claims of messiahship with equal fervor (John 19:16,22).

The picture of the Pharisees painted by the New Testament is almost entirely black, but the discriminating Bible student should bear in mind that not everything about every Pharisee was bad. It is perhaps not just to say all Pharisees were self-righteous and hypocritical. Many Pharisees tried to promote true piety. What we know as Pharisaism from the New Testament was to some degree a degeneration of Pharisaism. Jesus condemned especially their ostentation, their hypocrisy, their salvation by works, their impenitence and lovelessness, not always Pharisees as such.

Some of the Pharisees were members of the Christian movement in the beginning (Acts 6:7). Some of the great men of the great men of the New Testament were Pharisees, namely, Nicodemus (John 3:1), Gamaliel (Acts 5:34), and Paul ( Acts 26:5; Phil. 3:5). Paul does not speak the name 'Pharisee' with great reproach, but as title of honour, for the Pharisees were highly respected by the masses of the Jewish

people. When Paul said, *In the matter of the law, a Pharisee*, he did not think of himself as a hypocrite, but claims the highest degree of faithfulness to the Law (Bryant 1967: 453-454).

### **5.10. Early Christianity**

The writings which are now included in the 27 books of the New Testament are the product of early Christianity and history of the Christian Church in the eastern countries of the ancient Mediterranean world and, eventually, in Rome. In addition, numerous other writings from this early Christian period belong to the same historical developments.

Although Christianity emerged from the ministry of Jesus and in the first communities in Palestine, it soon spread to other parts of Syria and to Egypt, its most significant literature, which was to determine the future of this religious movement, developed in the urban culture of the eastern Mediterranean, particularly the cities around the Aegean Sea. The church then spread to major economic centres of the Hellenistic world, namely, Ephesus, Antioch, Corinth and even in Rome.

The oldest written documents of early Christianity that are preserved as such are the letters of the apostle Paul, which are written in the 50s of CE. These letters are not occasional writings, nor can they be classified as 'literature'. Rather, they are instruments of ecclesiastical policy, which functioned alongside the political and propagandistic medium of oral communication because this was required in an organisation of churches distributed over a wide geographical area. The literary form of the letter which Paul used is certainly related to older Greek and Jewish prototypes, but was primarily fashioned through the demands of the Pauline missionary situation, which gave its essential imprint (Koester 1982: 1-2)

### **5.11. Summary and Conclusion**

Of all the definitions of religion that was stated in this chapter, the most common is, religion is the belief in a god or many gods. Religion can contain belief in spirits, magic of all forms and myths.

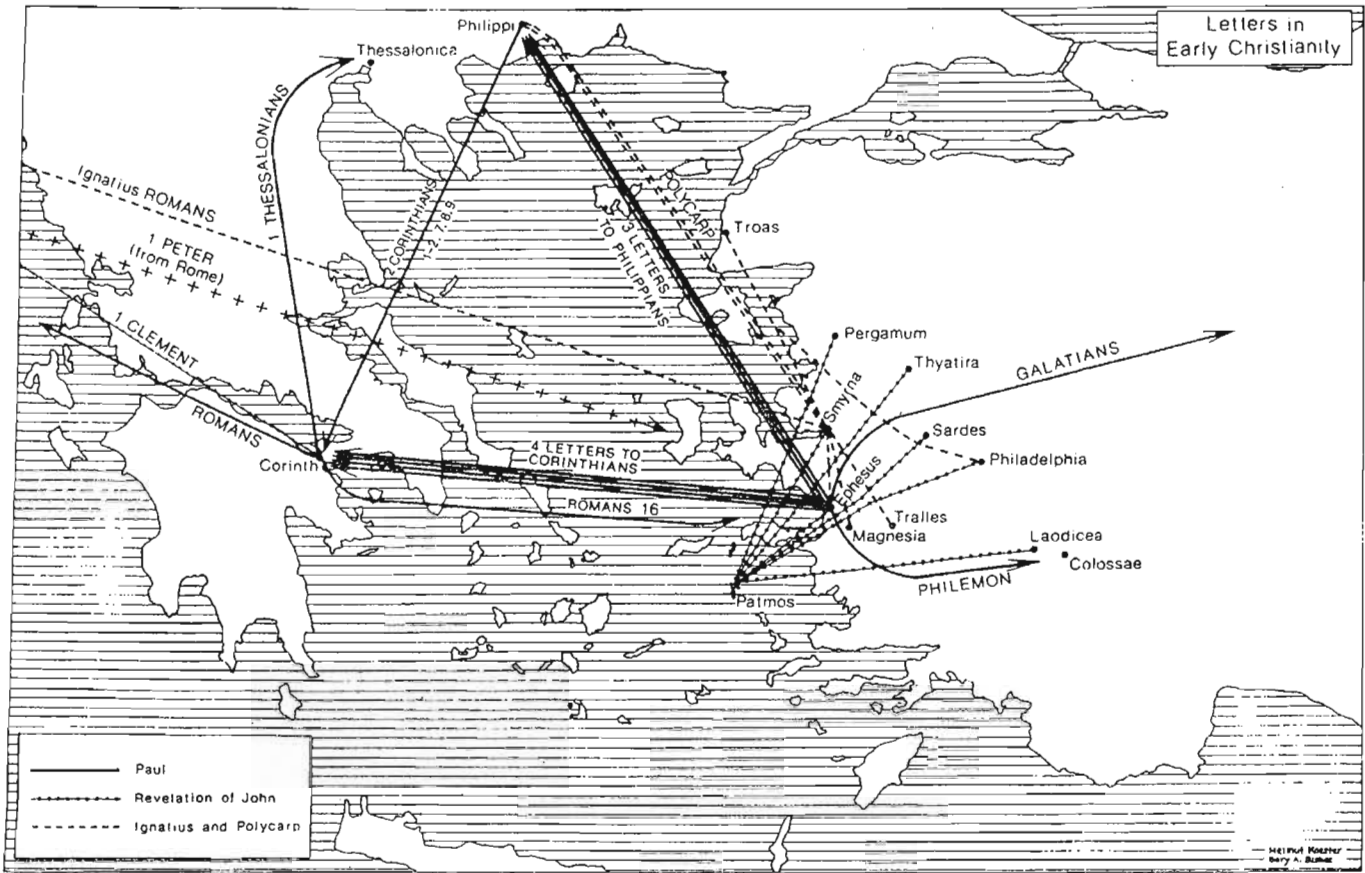
African religion may differ widely to Western religion or Indian religion. Every religion has its own distinctive features by which it expresses itself, and may function differently.

We learned religion is a social phenomenon which always to be found fully blended with the way of life of individuals and communities. Religion is both an individual and corporate affair.

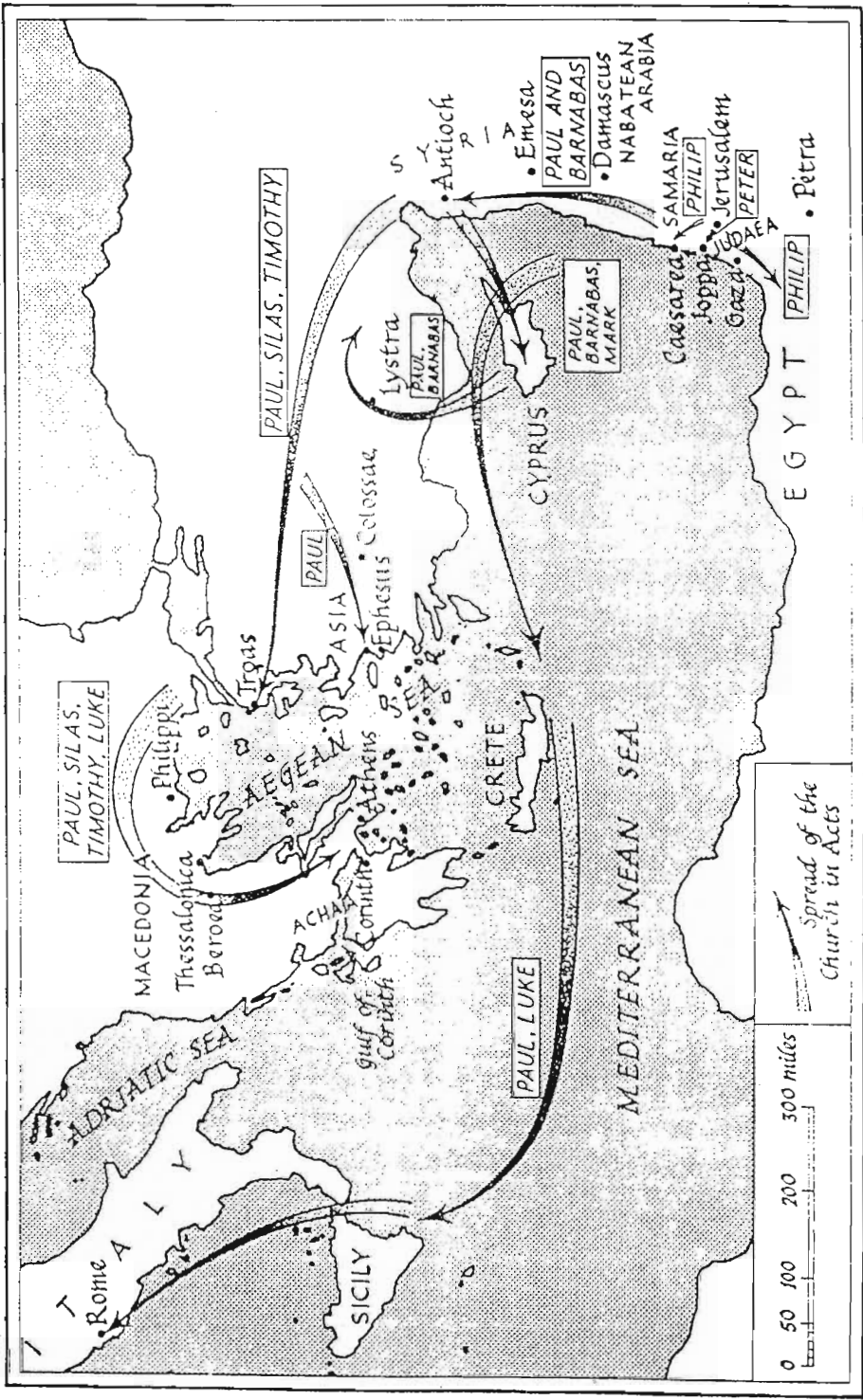
The difference between the religions of the world and Christianity is that, there were many things that were common to both Jewish Christians and the Jews of the Old Testament. Christianity had its roots in Judaism, with beliefs that may be similar, with monotheism, one common Scripture and values.

The next chapter will deal with multiculturalism and the Church in Acts. It will mainly deal with cross cultural evangelism; the socio-history of the groups and language; the composition of the church in Acts, and Lukan and Pauline strategies to constructively deal with the phenomenon of multiculturalism.

**Map Of**  
**Early Christianity in the Time of Acts**



# Map Of The Mediterranean World In The Book of Acts



*The Mediterranean world in Acts*

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Multiculturalism and the Church in Acts**

#### **6.0. Introduction**

Thus far we have dealt with multiculturalism in different contexts. This and the chapters that follow will take us into multiculturalism in the realm of the church in the book of Acts and multiculturalism in history and the present day church.

We shall look at the interactions of Paul and Peter with the Gentile believers and the church of their time, and how they were able to deal with the problems of multiculturalism within the early church.

#### **6.1. The Book of Acts And Its Background**

Before we look at all the facts surrounding multiculturalism in the book of Acts, we need to first look at the background of the book in its multicultural setting.

The book of Acts covers a period of some 30 years, from the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost to the close of Paul's imprisonment at Rome. It describes the spread of Christianity around the northern Mediterranean- through present -day Syria, Turkey and Greece, to the heart of the Roman Empire. The 'acts' related are mainly those of the apostles Peter and Paul. Though the book might well be called the 'acts of the Holy Spirit'. It is under his direction, that the new-born church bursts through the national frontiers of Israel to become an international world-wide movement (Alexander 1983: 549).

The Acts of the apostles is one of the most important and influential books of all time. It forms an essential link between the four records of ministry of Christ, and the documents which interpret that ministry to the world at large. It begins in the strange and moving afterglow of the Gospels, and the closing events of the divine intervention in the history of mankind. It shows those who had known and watched that great event emerging from the ordeal which concluded it, filled with a triumphant faith, touched with new power, and realising with exultation the role



they had to play, the task they were called upon to undertake, and the message with which they were charged (Tasker :1973).

Both Greeks and Jews feature prominent in the book. The Greeks have no part in the Gospels, but rise to full view in the Acts of the Apostles. Like the ancestors of the Romans and the Italic tribes, the Greeks, too, came to their Mediterranean peninsula in the days of the great 'folk wanderings', which brought the Indo-European stock to Europe.

## **6.2. Its Authorship**

Most modern scholars agree that the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were written by Luke, the physician. Luke was a friend and companion of Paul, the apostle. Church tradition uniformly identifies Luke as Paul's companion, and the data of Acts support this tradition. Both the books were dedicated to a certain Theophilus. Theophilus appears to have been a person of some distinction, as he is accorded the title, 'most excellent.' Some scholars believe that Theophilus may have been a Gentile covert to Christianity, and Luke wrote to him to give him a greater knowledge of Christian origins than he already possessed. Luke and Acts are not really two works, but two parts of one work. Acts was written about 62 A.D.

Harrison (1962) comments that neither the Gospel (of Luke) nor the Acts names their author, but was most probably Luke. Some have suggested Luke used his travel document as a source for the book of Acts. Some have suggested that Acts was written by an unknown companion of Paul and incorporated into Acts by a later unknown author. But the uniformity of style between this travel document and the rest of Acts and the retention of the first person plural make this most unlikely (Harrison 1962: 1123).

Clarke and Winter (1993) confirm that, 'There is also the fact that Luke presents himself as having participated personally in some of the episodes in Acts' (Clarke and Winter 1993: 182).

Koester (1982) writes that the author of Acts intended to write a historical work, which is visible in the conception of the whole book. It has a historical development which begins in Jerusalem and extends as far as Rome (Koester (1982: 52).

### 6.3. Socio-History of the Groups and Language

Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan (1953), comment that,

The day of Pentecost, the festival of the weeks, which fell on the fiftieth day after the passion Passover found the little community gathered together on one place. Suddenly, they were seized by the Holy Spirit from heaven, while visible and audible signs accompanied the effusion of the promised heavenly gift. There was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind ( Acts 2:2); *cloven tongues like as of fire* appeared, and sat upon each of them ( Acts 2: 3). But more impressive was the outburst of *glossalalia* (speaking with tongues) as the disciples were heard praising God in languages and dialects diverse from their native Galilean Aramaic, but recognizable by visitors to the feast as those which some of them spoke. Most of the visitors would speak the common Greek dialect (koine'), except those from eastern parts ( Parthia, Media, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria), who would speak in Aramaic dialects.

*There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven* (Acts 2:5 ) according to rabbinical tradition, the feast of weeks was the anniversary of the giving of the law at Sinai , and on that occasion, the voice of God was heard by every nation on earth (seventy in all, by rabbinical reckoning). But Gentiles are not in view here; even if with Codex Sinaiticus, we omit Jews from this verse, the word devout is used in the New Testament only of Jews; it is Jews from every land of the Dispersion that are intended. *We do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God* (Acts 2:11) ( Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan 1953:902).

#### 6.4. Cultural Tensions (Acts 6: 1-7)

One of the first signs of *cultural tensions* in the then bi-cultural society in the early church, is recorded in Acts chapter 6 ; the widows of the Hellenists were 'left out' in the daily ministering of food; the apostles came together to solve the problem.

Evidently the Jerusalem church members were murmuring against the apostles, who received relief money and were therefore expected to distribute it equitably. The complaint concerned the welfare of the widows, whose cause God had promised in the Old Testament to defend. The two groups in the Jerusalem church, one called the Hellenistai and the other Hebraioi, and the former complained against the latter *because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food*. It is not suggested that the oversight was deliberate, more probably the cause was poor administration or supervision (Stott, 1990:120).

What exactly were the identity of these two groups? It has usually been supposed that they were distinguished from each other by a mixture of geography and language. That is the Hellenistai (Hellenists) came from the diaspora, had settled in Palestine and spoke Aramaic. This is an inadequate explanation, however. Since Paul called himself Hebraios (Hebrew), in spite of the fact that he came from Tarsus and spoke Greek, the distinction must go beyond origin and language to culture. In this case the Hellenistai not only spoke Greek but thought and behaved like Greeks, while the Hebraioi not only spoke Aramaic but were deeply immersed in Hebrew culture. This being so, Grecian Jews is a good rendering, while the Aramaic speaking community is not, since it refers to language only and not culture. There had always, of course, been rivalry between these groups in Jewish culture; the tragedy is that it was perpetuated within the new community of Jesus who by his death had abolished such distinctions.

The issue was however, more than cultural tension. The apostles discerned a deeper problem, (namely that social administration both organising the distribution and

settling the complaint) was threatening to occupy all their time and so inhibit them from the work which Christ had specifically entrusted to them, namely preaching and teaching. The problem, however, was solved with the appointing of the seven deacons (Stott 1990: 120-121).

Attempts have been made to interpret the tension between Hebrews and Hellenists as tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians or at any rate to see in the Hellenists a kind of preparation for the Gentile mission. Munck (1967) says this is wrong. Hebrews and Hellenists are groups inside Jewry, to be found also in that section of it belonging to the church. It has not been possible to give a definite explanation of what is behind the two names. A possible explanation has been suggested based on the differences in language and customs between the Aramaic-speaking and the Greek-speaking Jews. But this does not explain the contrast between Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity. The church in Jerusalem was a Jewish Christian church with the salvation of Israel as its sole concern. The conflict between the two groups arose from differences over the support given to the widows.

As mentioned above, the establishment of a committee made up of members of the congregation, who were to take over the duties of the social services, thereby relieving the apostles, who had admitted that they could not cope with both the service of the word and with their task as well, resolved the tension

According to Munck (1967) it has been supposed that the seven men with Greek names were all Hellenistic Jews, in this case Greek-speaking Jews who had settled in Jerusalem and that the congregation had chosen in order to avoid further difficulties. But too much importance should not be attached to the names. At the same time, there were many Jews with Greek names- there are two among the twelve apostles. An examination of Jewish tombs excavated in Jerusalem and its vicinity shows a considerable number of Greek names in Jewish families who other members bear Semitic names. No conclusion about the persons' language and

customs can be drawn from their Greek names. Surely, to assume that the primitive church would choose a committee for social services in which only one of the feuding parties was represented would be to underestimate its efficiency in practical matters. Such a procedure would probably have given rise to complaints from the Hebrews. There were presumably representatives of both groups among the seven, of which the best-known members, Stephen and Philip, may very well have been Hebrews (Munck 1967: 56-57).

### **6.5. The Palestinian Cultural Context of Earliest Christian Community of Goods**

Capper in Bauckham (1995) helps us to understand and gives us more insight into the matter of Luke's account of the community of goods. The earliest community in Jerusalem is clearly idealised with popular philosophical catchphrases. Instances of formal community of property were a feature of Palestinian Jewish culture, and had persisted for approaching two centuries amongst the sect of the Essenes prior to the events which Luke purports to describe. Features of Luke's account suggest linguistic usages and organisational forms employed in the legislation for Essene Community of goods revealed in the Rule of the Community discovered in Qumran cave 1. Other elements of Luke's account are illuminated by the practicalities of Essene property-sharing arrangements revealed in the accounts of the Essenes given by Philo and Josephus. These clues point to the probable Palestinian origins of the tradition and suggest that a group within the earliest Jerusalem Church practised formal property-sharing. Luke's portrayal of earliest Christian community of goods can be taken seriously as a historical account (Bauckham 1995: 323).

Caring for the widows according to Acts 6:1-6 was an issue. This underprivileged group remained identifiable and permanently dependent upon the community, in need as it were of perpetual 'dole'. Hence, it is argued there was no common ownership of property, merely a structure which provided care for the indigent. The widows of the 'Hellenists' complained that they were being 'overlooked' in their daily ministrations. This is sometimes taken to imply that the organisation of the

community was rudimentary, suggesting that no well-organised of property existed, but only badly run charity.

Community of goods in its Palestinian cultural context did not mean that all had direct access to funds and resources, but rather that resources were controlled by a limited number of officers. Hence mention of an 'underprivileged group' does not contradict organised community of the 'Hebrews' because they had right to receive resources without bringing any daily financial contribution from work outside the community.

Commentators frequently cite certain instances of organised care for the poor attested in Rabbinic literature as analogous to the process of 'daily distribution' mentioned amongst early Christians at Acts 6:1. The Rabbinic system administered a 'weekly money-chest' (literally 'basket'), from which the local resident poor received money for the purchase of the week's meals each Friday, when the alms-collectors made their rounds to the houses of the district to collect money. A daily collection of food was also taken, in the 'tray', but money from the 'basket' was restricted to the better-known resident poor.

This system is hardly close to Luke's description in Acts. The continual neglect of the Hellenistic widows suggest that resident poor seek to avoid being neglected in a daily distribution. Capper In Bauckham (1995) says that in the Rabbinic system they would receive a weekly dole, not daily food. The information is given in two phrases, the 'daily ministry' (Acts 6:1), and the apostles' refusal to 'serve tables' (Acts 6:2) shows that the widows were provided for in the context of *daily meal fellowship* (Acts 2:46). This is a fundamental difference between the Rabbinic and Christian systems, suggesting that the Rabbinic system has little to tell us about the ethos of the 'daily distribution' of Acts 6:1. Care for the poor of the community was always associated with table-fellowship in early Christianity. This was a continuation of Jesus' characteristic meal fellowship with 'tax-collectors and sinners' (Bauckham 1995: 351).

Begging poor are frequent in the Gospels, where the attitude towards begging was much more positive than in later times, when the system of poor-care made begging suspect.

Before we can understand the relation of the dispute of Acts 6:1-6 to the community of goods, we must first gain a picture of the social relations between the 'Hellenists' and the 'Hebrews'. The distinction between these two groups was probably linguistic in the first instance. All Jews in Palestine in the New Testament period would know at least some Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Eastern Mediterranean since Alexander's conquests. The 'Hellenists' were probably those Jews who knew only Greek, but no Aramaic or Hebrew. These Greek-speaking Jews appeared to have been a part of the synagogue communities with clear links with the Diaspora which appear in Acts 6:9. We may also assume a degree of cultural divergence from the community of the 'Hebrews'. There has been an increasing appreciation of the penetration of the Greek culture in Palestinian Judaism. The 'Hellenists' probably found participation in the (Aramaic) worship of the original disciple-group difficult, and started to develop as a more independent community, based in their own synagogues. Hence they rapidly came in to conflict with those in the Greek-speaking synagogues who did not share their views, and a persecution resulted which scattered them from Jerusalem (Acts 8:4). The apostles and by implication the community of Hebrews, Aramaic-speaking Christians, were able to remain in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1).

The solution to the dispute over care for the Hellenist' widows was the appointment of the seven officers (Acts 6:5). All seven had Greek names and appear to have been drawn from the Hellenist community alone. This implies that the solution to the dispute was not the integration of the Hellenist' widows into the 'daily distributions' of the Hebrew congregation, but rather the establishment of officers to organise care within the Hellenist community itself, which clearly had no arrangements of any kind for the care of its poor. They probably instituted a looser form of care based on charitable giving alone. With this move, community of goods

was left behind as something sometimes found within Palestinian Christianity, but not found in the wider church to which most of the New Testament writings bear witness.

The churches of the Pauline mission attest an interest in mutual support, without formal community of goods, comments Capper in Bauckham (1995). Paul's mission was based in Antioch; we have no evidence that community of goods arrangements were ever instituted in Antioch as they had been in Jerusalem. The founding of the church at Antioch was the work of believers driven out from Jerusalem (Acts 11: 19-21). Acts specifically states that these preachers were originally from Cyprus and Cyrene; they were probably Hellenists driven out from Greek speaking synagogues such as those of Acts 6:9. Thus the social form instituted by the Hellenists had probably never in themselves been part of the community of goods arrangements of the Hebrew group; their communities had grown separately from the start in the Greek-speaking synagogues. They faced the issue of caring for their poor with the looser structure based on charitable giving which became the pattern for later Christianity. The dispute over economic arrangements in Acts 6:1-6 is thus a record of the point at which community of goods was programmed out of the social form of the developing wider church.

In conclusion, the ethos of community of goods in its Palestinian cultural context was as a practice appropriate for the leading section of a community of common belief, but not for all. The Christian community appears to have developed an analogous two-level structure. In creating a looser social form, the Hellenists probably had a Palestinian model, and acted with full approval of the Jerusalem apostles. The secondary communities which they created were the Christian counterpart to the Essene *Damascus Document* communities, in which community of goods was not practised. The Hellenist communities probably organised charitable care for the poor as found in later Christianity. They also probably began the of occasional, rather than daily, fellowship meals, also the community of goods, which as we have seen depended on the daily gathering and sharing of all members



of the community. In Jerusalem, community of goods extended over a section of the community of the Hebrews. It was not binding on the whole group, and was probably not reproduced not in the Hellenists community at Antioch and beyond in the Pauline mission (Bauckham 1995: 353-354).

## 6.6. Ethnicity and Ethos

Rajak, in Bauckham (1995), comments that,

The reader of Acts can scarcely fail to notice the abundance of attributions of ethnic, cultural and religious identities present in the text, a linked phenomenon might also strike him or her, the book's marked interest in Greeks and Hellenism, as a means of constructing a contrast both with Hebrews and with Christians. When Paul preaches on the Areopagus at Athens, the Athenians' self-identity as deep thinkers is overtly brought into association with a less flattering characterisation in terms of obsession with novelty; the contrast is with the message Paul is proclaiming, of a strikingly non-Greek God, without images, who yet exists in the heart of Greeks (Acts 17:16-34). It is noteworthy that, in his Areopagus speech, Paul draws the attention of his hearers to the racial variety of human beings in the world (*ethnos*), when he tells them that all races were created by God from a common origin (Acts 17:26) (Bauckham 1995:2).

Who is Jew and who a Gentile is of prime importance throughout Acts, theologically and anecdotally. Thus Timothy's delineation as a half-Jew, child of a Jewish-Christian mother and a non-Jewish father (Acts 16:1) is made with unparalleled precision for the literature of the period, and constitutes one of our rare pieces of evidence for inter-marriage. Nor is the situation any different in those early parts of narrative which are set in Palestine. There we find striking display of attention to ethnicity and provenance, with a variety of labels assigned to individuals. At the Jerusalem Pentecost, the speakers in tongues, referred to as people from Galilee, are allocated a remarkable list of native languages from across the near East (Acts 2: 2-12). The congregation of the synagogue of the freedmen, which disputes with Stephen, is said to originate in Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia (6:9) (Bauckham 1995: 3).

A eunuch going home to Ethiopia from Jerusalem is won over by Philip (8: 27-39). The convert Cornelius, a Judaising Roman centurion in the Italic cohort, is a man admitted by the entire *ethnos* of the Jews ( Acts 10: 1-2, 22).

It is from the scenes set in Jerusalem that comes the unique evidence for a split between the group known as 'Hellenists' and the group known as 'Hebraists' in the earliest church (Acts 6:1), evidence which has given rise to much theorising over the centuries. This evidence is supplemented by a later statement that Saul in Jerusalem debates exclusively with the Hellenists ( Acts 9:9 ) (Baukham 1995: 3).

These are concerns which belong, of course, to the author of Acts, writing perhaps in Antioch, and possibly well after AD70. Yet they purport to describe the situation on the ground in pre-70 Palestine, and, to make sense of them, we need to understand that situation. This study of the cultures of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine has such understanding as its purpose, and the way ethnic and cultural distinctions operated there. The exercise is not to draw a map of cultures: indeed, it would be hard to so, since on many crucial matters we have no information. Any description of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine which does not allocate a prominent place to Josephus' perceptions misses golden opportunity (Baukham 1995: 2-3 ).

Reisner in Baukham (1995), further writes that, studies on the theology and practice of the Jerusalem church are legion. These studies usually point out that early Christianity was closely tied to Judaism, practised some kind of voluntary communism, had the twelve apostles and later the Seven as leaders and, of course, proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah.

This undertaking will examine the composition of the primitive Christian community. What sort of people were these sociologically and culturally? Did the Christian movement, the 'Way', attract only the poor or other classes as well? Were these people culturally diverse?

We shall maintain below that although the early Jerusalem church was entirely Jewish, it was nonetheless socially and culturally pluralistic.

Indeed, the primitive church reflected to a great extent the rich diversity of Jerusalem itself, the most influential city of the east. A city of 60,000 or more inhabitants, Jerusalem in the early Roman period contained the fabulously rich as well as the unbearably poor. Further, most of the inhabitants were probably Palestinian natives, but the city also had a sizeable minority of Jews from the Diaspora ( and of course some Gentiles as well) (Bauckham 1995:214).

The predominantly Jewish city, writes Fiensy in Bauckham (1995) that Jerusalem was bicultural. Most of the residents spoke and understood only Aramaic; some were bilingual; still others could probably speak only Greek. Certainly the mother tongue of most Palestinian Jews was Aramiac. The native languages tended to remain strong even under the cultural assault of Greek in the eastern part of the empire and Latin in the west.

Yet many, especially the educated and educated and merchants, did learn Greek either out of an interest in Greek literature, a desire to appear sophisticated, or for business reasons. The incursions of the Greek language and culture into Jewish Palestinian society is quite evident on many fronts. Coins were minted in Palestine with Greek inscriptions; the Hebrews and Aramaic languages adopted numerous Greek loan words; many Palestinian Jews had Greek names; the architecture of the residences and the pottery show Greek influences; the government-as far back as Herod the Great – was Hellenized; there was a gymnasium; numerous inscriptions – papyri and ostraca in Greek have been found (Bauckham 1995: 230-231).

In excavating the houses of the wealthy, the pursuit of things Hellenistic was not uncommon in Jerusalem, particularly among the Hellenistic nobility. The same pursuit existed in most cities and towns in the eastern empire . To be Greek to some was highly desired by the wealthy. But others were Greek culturally, because they grew up in Greek centres of the Diaspora. Even their tomb and ossuary inscriptions were chiselled in Greek.

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Most of the rest are in Semitic language only , but some are bilingual. The Greek speaking population numbered about 10% to 20% of the total population. There is evidence that many if not most of these Jews grew up in the Diaspora. The New Testament refers to other Jerusalem residents that came from the Diaspora: Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21), Barnabas of Cyprus (Acts 4: 36), Nicolas a proselyte from Antioch (Acts 6:5). Therefore, we conclude that a considerable number of Diaspora Jews had immigrated to Jerusalem by the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

In addition to the residents of Jerusalem that spoke Greek, there were thousands from the Diaspora that came to the feasts. Estimates vary as to the number of pilgrims that came to Passover and other feasts. Some estimate between 300,000 to 500,000. Of these tens of thousands were from the Diaspora and the rest from Palestine.

These pilgrims had to stay somewhere, and it appears that they stayed in community centres built especially for them. Archaeologists have discovered several buildings south of the Temple mount with a large number of rooms, ritual baths and many cisterns. There was also an inscription found that indicated that one Paris, a Jew from Rhodes, had donated a pavement in the vicinity evidently for community centre for pilgrims.

The Lower City, especially the City of David and the Ophel, was the locus for Greek-speaking Jews. The noble proselytes had palaces there; evidence of hospices; one of these hospices was connected to a synagogue for Greek-speaking Jews; archaeologists have uncovered what could be guest rooms (Bauckham 1995: 232-233).

## **6.7. The Socio-Economic Composition of the Jerusalem Church**

Fiensy in Bauckham (1995) further writes that the Jerusalem church was probably fairly representative of the city's population . There were well- to- do members, though one cannot say they were among the wealthy elite . Simon of Cyrene owned

a farm in the vicinity of Jerusalem.( Mk. 15: 21 ). Barnabas sold his lands and gave the proceeds to the poor. (Acts 4: 36f). Ananias and Sapphira ( Acts 5:1 ) also possessed lands. We cannot be certain that the fields referred to in these texts were medium –sized estates or larger, but the sale of property in the cases of Barnabas and especially Ananias seem to have involved a not inconsiderable sum of money. Therefore, we would suggest that the latter two landowners, Ananias and Barnabas, owned medium-sized estates. In addition, Mary the mother of John Mark, owned a house large enough to serve as a place of assembly for the primitive church and owned at least one domestic slave. (Acts 12:12-17). She, like her kinsman, Barnabas (Colossians 4:10), was wealthy. Manaen, the foster- brother of Herod Antipas (Acts 13: 1), became later a leader in the Church at Antioch. He was obviously from Palestine and probably a sometime resident of Jerusalem .

Finally, one of Jesus' close disciples may also been wealthy. Levi, the tax-collector (Mark 2:13-1, may been rich since he could give banquet in which many people reclined at their meal . Such a banquet suggests a large house.

The lower class was certainly represented as well in the Jerusalem church. The occupation of some Jesus' twelve disciples is reported in the Gospels . James and John's father, Zebedee, was the owner of somewhat prosperous fishing business in Galilee which could employ day labourers .

Whether James and John still lived *in absentia* by this income or were mainly supported by the gifts of others we do not know. Peter and Andrew had also been fishermen (Mark 1:16). James, one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church, was presumably a carpenter by trade like Jesus (Mark 6:3 ).

We would reasonably expect that most of the members of the Jerusalem church were craftsmen or small merchants, but the sources do not clearly indicate this (Bauckham 1995: 226-227).

## 6.8. Cultural Diversity in the Jerusalem Church

That the Jerusalem church was distinguished by its two groups: the Hebrews and the Hellenists (Acts 6:1). The traditional view since John Chrysostom was that these groups were differentiated by language. The former group spoke a Semitic language and the latter spoke Greek. Various other views have been advanced, mainly that the Hellenists were Gentile Christians, that the Hellenists were related to the Qumran Essenes, that the Hebrews were Essenes, and other suggestions. Fiensy in Bauckham (1995) comments that,

Yet since C.F.D. Moule's important article, a consensus has been building in favour of the traditional view of Chrysostom. This view has been strongly supported by Hengel, C.C. Hill and others. Moule concluded that the Hellenists were Jews who spoke *only* Greek, and the Hebrews were those who, while able to speak Greek, knew a Semitic language also. As Hill remarks, the second part of this conclusion may be suspect- it is doubtful that most 'Hebrews' could speak Greek, although surely some could – but Moule's language-based distinction between the two groups is surely correct.

Thus the Jerusalem church had two factions separated by language and culture (Bauckham 1995: 234-235).

The Hebrews were of Palestinian origin. Some of them had possibly been pilgrims for the feast of Pentecost and had remained after conversion, but we should expect that most were inhabitants of Jerusalem. Likewise the Hellenists could have been in part pilgrims from the Diaspora. The simplest explanation, however is that most of them came from the ranks of the Greek-speaking Jews of Jerusalem who lived and worshipped in the Lower City, especially in the City of David. This location contrasts with the traditional sites of the Upper Room, both of which are in the Upper City.

Thus we see at least three locations for the activity of the Jerusalem church: the Upper Room in the Upper City, the Hellenistic synagogues in the Lower City, and of course the Temple. The evidence indicates that sociologically and culturally the church was quite diverse.

The Jerusalem church, almost from the very beginning if not actually from Pentecost on, was culturally pluralistic. One cannot speak of an Aramaic stage followed by a Hellenistic Jewish stage. These 'stages' were always contemporaneous. The two subcultures within the early church – the Aramaic and the Greek – were two springs flowing from the same source and in turn nourishing together the subsequent Gentile Christianity.

Likewise, one cannot determine that a portion of the New Testament (for example, a periscope of the Gospels) originated outside Palestine because of 'hellenistic' influences. To consider Palestine and earliest Christianity only in terms of the Aramaic culture is now quite impossible (Bauckham 1995:235 –236).

### **6.9. Communal Life Of The Early Church**

Acts 2:42 describes that there were FOUR characteristic features of the early church: -

*Firstly, The apostles' teaching.* This may be the supposed teachings of Jesus, and the study of the Old Testament Scriptures, with special reference to Christ – the Messiah.

*Secondly, There was Fellowship (Koinonia).* There was fellowship with the apostles and with the wider circle of all believers. They were a group of people who shared a common life together, particularly those who united to share a common Passover meal.

*Thirdly, There is reference to table fellowship which becomes more explicit in the **Breaking of Bread**.* This had a religious significance. Again, this fellowship found practical expression in experiments in Christian communism.

*Fourthly, They devoted themselves to prayers.* They met regularly in the temple and the homes of believers. There was no idea of establishing separate places of public worship at this stage.

Commenting on '*and all that believed were together*' (Acts 2:44), Harmon (1982) says,

There were no intellectual snobbish here! No social superiority, no racial intolerance, no temperamental privileges here! They were all together, bound into a fellowship by the same ideas (apostles teaching), by the same practices (breaking of bread), the same religious habits (prayers), and by the same economic rights and responsibilities (*and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need*) (Acts 2:45).

All this was done with joy and gladness. There was nothing drab about it. *They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart* (Acts 2: 46). For there is nothing that gives greater joy to a man than the sense of belonging to a community the life of which he shares. Scores of men, drafted to into the military service, find for the first time in their lives, even under the pressure of combat, the joy of living in close association with those whose lives are bound up with theirs. How much more the joy of a man who lives as a member of the community that centres in Christ Jesus (Harmon 1982: 51).

According to Bruce (1969), the community of goods which was practised in the earliest days of the Jerusalem church, was in part, a continuation of the practice of the twelve, in the days when they went about with Jesus. They shared a common purse, and Judas Iscariot was its custodian. It was also the spontaneous response of many of the new converts to the forgiving grace which they had experienced. Many handed their property over to the apostles, who put the proceeds into a common pool from which a daily dole was distributed to the poorer members of the community. In contrast, the community of goods practised at Qumran was highly organised and obligatory, this was unsystematic and voluntary (Bruce 1969:211).

Many factors indicate that at first the Christians in Jerusalem understood themselves as a special group within the Jewish religious community. They participated in the temple cult, practiced circumcision, and observed the Jewish dietary laws. They were radically different, however from other Jews in Jerusalem because of their enthusiastic consciousness of the possession of the spirit; this was the Spirit of God which was to be poured out at the end times, which brought the gift of tongues and of prophecy, worked miracles, and granted assurance to the members of the community that they belonged to God's elect people. In its original form, the



narrative of Pentecost (Acts 2:1) derives from community in Jerusalem, and is the most important witness for its consciousness of possessing the Spirit.

Koester (1980) says that the common meals which Jesus celebrated with his followers during his life-time were regularly celebrated as eschatological meals of the community. In these meals the community reassured itself of the coming communion with Jesus when he would return in glory. This meal, which was of course a full regular meal, therefore became a messianic banquet, quite analogous to the meals of the Essenes (Koester 1982: 86-88).

According to Kapper in Bauckham (1995), community of goods goes back to the Scythians in connection with the real philosopher. And according to a Greek proverb, 'friends have all things in common.' It is therefore clear that Luke presents the early Christians in Jerusalem in the dress of Greek thinking about ideal political organisation or state of detachment from possessions realised by the ideally pious (Bauckham 1995: 324).

#### **6.10. Cross-Culturalism and Interactions of the Church in Acts – The Gospel Spreads to the Samaritans**

The early church began to make in-roads into other cultures and finally to other nations. Acts chapter eight records the persecution that came to the church in Jerusalem. The disciples fled the city; except the apostles. Philip goes down to the city of Samaria, and preaches Christ unto them (Acts 8:5). Many are healed, delivered and embrace Christ as their Savior.

Stott (1990) comments, it is hard for us to conceive the boldness of the step Philip took in preaching the gospel to Samaritans. For the hostility between Jews and Samaritans had lasted a thousand years. It began with the break-up of the monarchy in the tenth century BC when the ten tribes defected, making Samaria their capital, and only two tribes remained loyal to Jerusalem. It became steadily worse when Samaria was captured by Assyria in 722 BC, thousands of its inhabitants were

deported, and the country was re-populated by foreigners. In the sixth century BC, when the Jews returned to their land, they refused the help of the Samaritans in the rebuilding of the temple. Not till the fourth century BC, however, did the Samaritan schism harden, with the building of their rival temple on Mount Gerizim and their repudiation of all Old Testament scripture except the Pentateuch.

The Samaritans were despised by the Jews as hybrids in both race and religion, as both heretics and schismatics. John summed up the situation in his statement that 'Jews do not associate with Samaritans' (John 4:9). Jesus' sympathy for them, however, is already apparent in Luke's Gospel (Luke 9: 52-56). Now in Acts 8, Luke is obviously excited by the evangelisation of the Samaritans and their incorporation in the Messianic community (Stott 1990:147-148).

The Samaritan schism had lasted for centuries, says Scott (1990): -

But the Samaritans were evangelised, and were responding to the gospel. It was a moment of significant advance, which was also fraught with great peril. The gospel was welcomed by the Samaritans, but would the Samaritans be welcomed by the Jews? Or would there be separate Jewish Christians and Samaritan Christians in the church of Jesus Christ? The idea may seem unthinkable in theory; in practice it might well have happened. There was a real danger of tearing Christ apart, or at least of forming a new and separate church for themselves. At all events, the action of the apostles appears to have been effective. Henceforth, Jews and Samaritans were to be admitted into the Christian community without distinction. There was one body because there was one Spirit (Stott 1990:157-158).

### **6.11. Cross-Culturalism through the Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch**

Another example of cross-culturalism, and presumably the founding of the 'first church of Ethiopia' is found in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. The church was becoming more and more cross-cultural and multicultural in its approach. After Philip's successful campaign at Samaria, he is directed by the Spirit to minister to an Ethiopian eunuch going home to Ethiopia after his worship at Jerusalem.

Stott (1990) comments, the Ethiopia of those days correspond to what we call the 'Upper Nile', reaching approximately from Aswan to Khartoum. The man from that region to whom Luke introduces us was not only an eunuch, but an important official in charge of all the treasure of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. The Ethiopian official was presumably a black African *had gone to Jerusalem to worship*, a pilgrim at one of the annual festivals, and now *on his way home was sitting and in his chariot reading the scroll of Isaiah the prophet* (Acts 8: 28).

This may mean that he was actually Jewish, either by birth or by conversion, for the Jewish dispersion had penetrated at least into Egypt. It seems unlikely that he was a Gentile, since Luke does not present him as the first Gentile convert; that distinction he reserves for Cornelius. It is especially significant that this African, who had gone to Jerusalem to worship, was now leaving it and would not return there (Stott, 1990: 160).

## **6.12. The Interactions of Peter with the Gentiles**

It was easy for Peter to boldly challenge sickness and death in his ministry, but how was he respond to the challenges of racial and religious discrimination? Jesus had given Peter the 'keys of the kingdom', and he used it wisely in his ministry to open the kingdom to Jews on the day of Pentecost and then to the Samaritans soon afterwards. Now he is to use them again to open the kingdom to the Gentiles; by evangelising and baptising Cornelius at Caesarea (Stott 1990:185).

Cornelius was a religious figure and God-fearing, possibly, not a full proselyte in every sense of the word. He was still a Gentile, an outsider, excluded from God's covenant with Israel.

According to Stott (1990) God had a purpose for the Gentiles:

It is difficult for us to grasp the impassable gulf which yawned in those days between the Jews on hand and the Gentiles (including the 'God-fearers') on the other. Not that the Old Testament itself countenanced such a divide. On the contrary, alongside its oracles against the hostile

nations, it affirmed that God had a purpose for them. By choosing and blessing one family, he intended to bless all families of the earth. So psalmists and prophets foretold the day when God's Messiah would inherit the nations, the Lord's servant would bring their light, all nations would 'flow' to the Lord's house, and God would pour out his Spirit on all humankind.

The tragedy was that Israel twisted the doctrine of election into one of favouritism, became filled with racial pride and hatred, despised Gentiles as 'dogs', and developed traditions which kept them apart. No orthodox Jew would ever enter the home of a Gentile, even a God-fearer, or invite such into his home. On the contrary, all familiar intercourse with Gentiles were forbidden and no pious Jew would of course have sat down at the table of a Gentile.

This, then was the entrenched prejudice which had to be overcome before Gentiles could be admitted into the Christian community on equal terms with Jews, and before the church could become a truly multi-racial, multicultural society. Acts 8 records the special steps God took to prevent the perpetuation of the Jewish-Samaritan schism in the church; how would he prevent a Jewish-Gentile schism? Luke regards this episode as being so important that he narrates it twice, first in his own words (Acts 10), and then in Peter's when the latter explained to the Jerusalem church what had happened (11:1-18) (Stott, 1990: 185-186).

In summary, Acts 10, contains the vision of Cornelius seeing an angel, who instructed him to send for Peter at Joppa. Peter also sees a vision of a sheet of *four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air*. Peter was asked in this vision to kill and eat. While thinking what this vision meant, three men stood outside his door, asking him to come to the house of Cornelius. Peter then goes with them to the house of Cornelius. At the house of Cornelius, Peter preaches the gospel, and the household of Cornelius, a Gentile centurion, embrace Christ and the Christian faith. He is ultimately accepted in the 'family of God'.

Stott (1990) says that this initial incident set the stage for what followed. For the primary question was how God would deal with Peter. How would he succeed in breaking down Peter's deep-seated racial intolerance? The principal subject of this chapter is not so much the conversion of Cornelius as the conversion of Peter.

Peter thereafter went to Jerusalem to give a report of the whole incident of the vision and the conversion of Cornelius and his house-hold (Stott, 1990:192).

On arrival in Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticised Peter for having entered the house of uncircumcised men and having eaten with them. Some have suggested that Peter's critics were 'the circumcision party', that is, 'the right -wing Jewish Christians,' 'the extremists' or the rigorists'. But the Greek phrase need only mean '*those who were of Jewish birth*' (NEB), namely the whole Christian community in Jerusalem, all of whom up to that time were Jews (Stott 1990:192). Recent events in Caesarea had naturally disturbed them (referring to Peter's interactions with Cornelius). Peter explained everything to them precisely as it happened (Acts 11: 4-17).

Peter was quick to draw the inevitable deduction. Since God had accepted these Gentile believers, which indeed he had (Acts 15: 8), the church must accept them too. Since God had baptised them with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11: 16). How could the sign be denied to those who had already received the reality signified? Chrysostom expatiated on this logic. By giving the Spirit to Cornelius, and his household before their baptism, God gave Peter an *apologia megale* (a mighty reason or justification) for giving them water-baptism. Yet in a sense their baptism 'was completed already', for God had done it. Peter was clear that 'in no one point was he the author, but in every point God.' It was as if Peter saying to them: 'God baptised them, not me'

In recounting Peter's vision, the whole vision, including the order and the rebuke was repeated three times, so that the heavenly voice addressed him six times altogether with the same basic message. In consequence, Peter grasped that clean and unclean animals, were a symbol of clean and unclean, circumcised and uncircumcised persons. As Racham in Stott (1990) puts it, 'the sheet is the church', which will contain all races and classes without any distinction at all, even though the full import of this dawned on Peter only later (Stott 1990: 192, 194).

## **6.13. The Mission To The Gentiles**

### **6.13.1. Conversion of Cornelius**

Luke records a very important and final step in the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles in Act 10. Its importance is indicated by Luke's twice recording of Peter's visit to Cornelius. This step raised some difficult problems as to the terms of social intercourse between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians and the terms of admission of the Gentiles into the church. This question became the theme of the conference in Jerusalem in Acts 15.

Acts 10 records the conversion of Cornelius, who was a Roman army officer who commanded a hundred men of the Italian band or cohort. A few Gentiles became converts to Judaism and accepted all Jewish practices, including circumcision. A larger number stopped short of circumcision but accepted the Jewish belief in God, synagogue worship, the ethical teachings of the Old Testament, and some of the Jewish religious practices, these people who were called God-fearers, were familiar with the Old Testament in the Greek version as it was read in the synagogues. Devout God-fearers provided the most fertile soil in which the Gospel took root. Cornelius was such a 'semi-proselyte'. His devout character was manifested by his liberal alms to the people and his regular prayers to God.

Cornelius had an angelic visitation confirming his reward for almsgiving and direction regarding his encounter with Peter and finally his conversion to Christ. Cornelius was asked by the angel to send for Peter in Joppa, who was going to explain to him the meaning of his conversion to Christ (Acts 10:1-8). Meanwhile, God was preparing Peter to receive the men from Cornelius. About twelve noon, Peter went up to the 'flat-roofed-house-top' to seek a quiet place pray.

Whilst his lunch was being prepared, Peter fell into a trance (ecstasy). It was during the prayer, that he saw a vision. In the vision he saw some kind of object, like a great sheet, lowered by the four corners from the opened heavens to the earth. This happened three times. In the sheet he saw four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds. When commanded to kill some of these animals and eat, Peter replied that to

so would mean violating the Jewish ritual law against eating unclean foods. Leviticus 11 contains these laws. Animals that did not chew the cud and did have cloven hooves were designated as unclean and were not to be used as food. Furthermore, clean animals had to be prepared in such a way that the blood did not remain within the carcass. Although Peter was a Christian, he was good Jew, who did not violate Jewish dietary laws.

The voice from heaven told him that God had now abolished these regulations about clean and unclean foods (Mark 7:14-23). The apostle was learning the true meaning of Jesus' teaching.

The next day Peter set out with the men that came from Caesarea and six Jewish Christian from Joppa (Acts 11:12). At the house of Cornelius Peter found that the centurion was expecting him, and had gathered together his relatives and close friends. Peter explained to Cornelius and his company that Jewish law made it 'taboo' for a Jew to associate with or visit people of another nation. However, God had now so lifted Peter out of his Jewish scruples that he could no longer look upon any man as ceremonially common or unclean and therefore unfit for social fellowship. God had made his will so clear to Peter that he had accompanied the servants of Cornelius without any objection, a thing he would not have done as a Jew (Acts 10: 9-23).

The apostle understood the significance of the vision given to him on the rooftop. He realised that the distinction between the clean unclean foods had an application to human beings, and that, contrary to Jewish belief, no people were to be thought of as unclean in the sight of God. God shows no partiality to any one group of people; He has no prejudice. God accepts a person, who fears God and does what is right, whether he be Jew or Gentile. This was a great lesson for a Jew to learn, and it marks a definite step in the extension of the church from a Jewish fellowship to a universal basis.

Peter's sermon is our first example of preaching to the Gentiles. The coming of the Holy Spirit, with the gift of tongues ('speaking in other tongues')\*, was given on this occasion that there might be no doubt whatsoever that God had given to the Gentiles the same gift he had bestowed upon Jewish believers (Acts 10:47-48). Peter at once recognised that the Gentiles should be brought into the fellowship of the church, and he therefore commanded that Cornelius and his family be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism in water followed baptism in the Spirit or ('filling of the Holy Spirit'). Peter did not immediately return to Jerusalem but remained with Cornelius for some time, probably instructing him in the things of the Lord.

Acts 11 records Peter's actions to the brethren at Jerusalem. It is surprising that in a short book like Acts, Luke would devote so much space to a second recital of the conversion of Cornelius. This indicates that Luke considered this event one of the most important in the life of the early church. News of the reception of the Gospel by the Gentiles reached the apostles and the Jewish Christians in Judea. Peter was apparently called to Jerusalem, and some of the Jewish Christians there disputed with him over the propriety of entering into such fellowship with the Gentiles as to eat with them. The conservative party criticised Peter, for they recognised that a Jew who had table fellowship with Gentiles was in effect setting aside Jewish practices, and thereby ceased to be a Jew.

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NOTES: One of the phenomenon of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was the speaking with other tongues or 'glossalalia'. Most Pentecostals believe that speaking with other tongues is a sign of the coming of the Holy Spirit on a Christian believer. The term 'baptism in the Spirit' is another term for being filled with Spirit of God. The Greek word ' baptizo' means to 'dip' or 'immerse'. In this sense the believer when filled with the Spirit is said to be 'baptised in the Spirit.'



They were not prepared to approve such a course action; they believed that Jewish believers should not give up their Jewish practices. Peter's experience at Samaria prepared him for the ministry to the Gentiles. The same gift of 'tongues' and the Spirit that was bestowed on Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost was now bestowed upon the Gentiles. To refuse the Gentiles baptism would have been to refuse to accept God's work and would in effect have been to withstand God, and all that He wants to do with people of another race or nation (Acts 11: 15-18).

God has always willed in principle that Israel's blessing should be extended to the Gentiles (Luke 2: 32, Acts 1:8). In the narrative, of Acts, however, the Gentile mission proceeds in a more haphazard fashion than the prophecies might suggest. Although Gentiles are preached because of Jewish rejection, Luke as total never portrays that rejection. Some Jews in the Diaspora, convert to the Way. Believing Jews and Gentiles together make up the authentic Israel, the people of God (Freedman 1992: 416).

Luke regards the conversion of Cornelius as an event of supreme importance. He even adopts the literary device, common in epic writing. He twice reported every detail in the story. Everything that the narrator tells in Acts 10:9 is repeated by Peter in his defense in Acts 11:4. The vision of the centurion in Acts 10:3 is described again by Cornelius himself, on Peter's arrival at Caesarea. (Acts 10:30.) Luke stresses the point because this was the first case of the admission of the Gentiles into the Church through water baptism. This initiative is ascribed to Peter and not to Paul. A further argument is that many scholars summarily dismiss the incident as unhistorical, and use it against the Lukan authorship of Acts. It is alleged that the visions and angelic appearance gives the whole narrative a legendary colouring. Harmon (1982) speaks about the Petrine and Pauline parties within the Church.

Had Peter been enlightened in so un-mistakably a manner about the lack of distinction between clean and unclean food, he could have been guilty at Antioch of the equivocal conduct described in Galatians 2:11-13. Such a vision and the experience that followed, must have been regarded as

conferring on Peter not only the right but the duty to evangelise Gentiles, and Peter, rather than Paul, would have to be considered as God's chosen instrument for the pioneering missionary work among pagans. If the whole question of the legitimacy of admitting Gentiles had already been settled in the case of Cornelius (Acts 11:18), the later discussions at Jerusalem (Galatians 2 and Acts 15) could never have taken place. On the contrary Acts 11:20 appears to record the first genuine case of preaching to Gentile Greeks, and it cannot have been anticipated by this incident. Finally, a motive for the insertion of this 'legend' is ready to hand: From Acts 15:7-9 it is clear that our author actually did think it important to show that it was not Paul but Peter who was the pioneer of Gentile missions. This assumption is the reverse side of his over emphasis upon the Judaistic aspect of Paul (example, the circumcision of Timothy in Acts 16:1-3, and his compliance with James in the matter of fulfilling temple vows in Acts 21:17) – both being due to his desire to gloss over any suggestion of conflict between the Pauline and Petrine parties within the church (Harmon 1982: 131-132).

Luke tells the story of the conversion of Cornelius with great dramatic skill. But has it any abiding significance? There are no Roman centurions in the world today, and Gentiles have been full members of the church for centuries. So this incident any more than a historical – even antiquarian – interest? Yes, it speaks directly to some modern questions about the church, the Holy Spirit, non-Christian religions and the Gospel (Stott 1990:196).

The fundamental emphasis of the Cornelius story is that since God does not make distinctions on his new society, we have no liberty to make them either. Yet tragic as it is, the church has never learned irrevocably the truth of its own unity or of the equality of its members in Christ. Even Peter himself, despite the fourfold divine witness he had received, later had a bad lapse in Antioch, withdrew from fellowship with believing Gentiles, and had to be publicly opposed by Paul. Even then, the circumcision party continued their propaganda, and the Council of Jerusalem had to be called to settle the issue (Acts 15). Even after that, the same ugly sin of discrimination has kept reappearing in the church, in the form of racism (colour prejudice), nationalism ('my country, right or wrong'), tribalism in Africa and caste-ism in India, social and cultural snobbery, or sexism (discriminating against women). All such discrimination is inexcusable even in non-Christian society; in the Christian community it is both

an obscenity (because offensive to human dignity) and a blasphemy (because offensive to God who accepts without discrimination all who repent and believe). Like Peter, we have to learn that 'God does not show favouritism' (Acts 10: 34) (Stott 1990: 197-199).

When Peter and Cornelius finally met, it was though a great wall was once and for all finally removed. Here was a Jew and a Gentile standing face to face with nothing between them (Harmon 1982: 136).

Luke has now recounted the conversion of Saul and Cornelius. The differences between these men were considerable. In race Saul was a Jew, Cornelius a Gentile; in culture Saul was a scholar, Cornelius a soldier; in religion Saul was a bigot, Cornelius a seeker. Both were welcomed into the Christian family on equal terms. The church must do the same.

#### **6.13.2. The First Gentile Church of Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)**

Acts chapter 11 marks a new stage in the extension of the Church from a Jewish fellowship in Jerusalem to a universal community. Previously, Luke related the inclusion of the Samaritans in the church and the conversion of the single Gentile family of Cornelius. Now he describes the beginning of the first independent Gentile congregation in Antioch, which was to become the 'mother church' of the Gentile mission in Asia and Europe. The preaching of the Gospel was still limited to Jews, for the early church was very slow in realising the universal character of the Gospel mission (Harrison 1962: 1144).

Some of the believers who had come from the island of Cyprus and Cyrene in North Africa (cf. Acts 13:1) came to Antioch and launched the Gospel in a new direction. Antioch was the third largest city of the Roman Empire and the residence of the Roman Governor and the province of Syria. While a large Jewish colony existed in Antioch, the city was primarily Gentile and Greek. The cult of the pagan deities, Apollo and Artemis, whose worship included ritual prostitution, had head-quarters

near by. Antioch was notorious for its moral degradation; but it was also the place where the disciples were first called 'Christians'(Harrison 1962:1144).

### **6.13.3. Antioch: A Multicultural and Mission Church (Acts 13)**

Antioch became the first Gentile church with a missionary vision. It was from here that the first mission was carried out by Paul and Barnabas.

The Gentile evangelisation, according to which had already been undertaken was not only confined to Antioch itself, but was carried on in various parts of the double province of Syria and Cilicia. But there were territories further West to which the Gospel must also be carried, and Paul and Barnabas were released by the church in Antioch to evangelise these territories. Luke ascribes this action to a prophetic utterance at a meeting of the principal teachers of that church, which directed that these two men should be set apart for the work to which the Spirit had called them. This was the work of the Gentile evangelisation in which they were already actively engaged, but the recent conference with the Jerusalem leaders encouraged them to prosecute it even more energetically and over an even wider area than before. Accordingly Paul and Barnabas set sail for Cyprus (Bruce:1969: 272).

The cosmopolitan population of Antioch was reflected in the membership of its church, and indeed in its leadership, which consisted of five resident prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1-5). Luke explains neither how he understood the distinction between these ministries, nor whether all five men exercised both or (as some have suggested) the first three were prophets and the last two teachers. The first was Barnabas, whom he has earlier described as 'a Levite from Cyprus' (Acts 4:36). Secondly, there was Simeon (a Hebrew name) called Niger ('black') who was presumably a black African, and just conceivably none other than Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross for Jesus and who must have become a believer, since his sons Alexander and Rufus were known to the Christian community. The third leader, Lucius of Cyrene, definitely came from North Africa, but the conjecture of some early church fathers that Luke was referring to himself is extremely

improbable, since he carefully preserves his anonymity throughout the book. Fourthly, there was Manaen, who is called in the Greek the *syntrophos* of Herod the tetrach, that is, of Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. The word may mean that Manaen was 'brought up with him' in a general way, or more particularly that he was the 'foster-brother' or 'intimate friend'. In either case, since Luke knew a lot about Herod's court and family, Manaen may well have been his informant. The fifth leader was Saul, who of course came from Tarsus in Cilicia (Stott 1990:216). These five men, therefore, symbolised the ethnic and cultural diversity of Antioch.

#### **6.14. Jewish Christianity**

Mention must be made of the kind of Christianity that existed in the first generation of the Church, and why there was such a 'dogmatic spirit' on the part of some of the Jewish Christians. The keeping of the Law, Sabbath observances, circumcision and dietary laws were some of the contentious issues that were debated in the Jerusalem Council. Almost all the first generation of Christians were 'Jewish Christians' comments Koester (1982), and their missionaries being Jewish; some came from the diaspora (Barnabas, Paul and others). For all of them the Old Testament was Holy Scripture. The theology of Judaism provided all the categories, terms, and concepts for the formation of Christian theology. The code for moral and pious conduct from Judaism became binding for the Christians, and the legislation of the Old Testament was used as the basis for the development of generally valid ethical rules (Koester 1982:199). Thus if we are to treat the phenomenon of Jewish Christianity in the narrower sense, it is necessary to define criteria which describe more specific forms of adherence to the tradition of Judaism.

When Paul came to Jerusalem with the collection from the Gentile Christians, the Jerusalem Church was obviously continuing in obedience to the law. There were some difficulties in the collection's delivery that were related to this attitude of the Jerusalem Christians. It can also be assumed that Jesus' brother James was the advocate of this church's faithfulness to the law. For the future development of

Jewish Christianity, the Jerusalem community, with its adherence to ritual law and circumcision and its apparent faithfulness to the cult of the Jewish religious community, would doubtlessly have had a commanding role.

### **6.15. The Council Of Jerusalem and the Church of Antioch In Dealing with the Problem of Circumcision and Jewish Laws.**

This chapter has raised more problems than any other in the book of Acts. Every kind of error and confusion has been attributed to the author, perhaps the least culpable being that he has misunderstood completely the nature of the dispute.

As recorded in Acts 15:1-2, representatives of the ultra-Judaistic party, who insisted that the new Gentile converts should be circumcised before admission to the church, had arrived at Antioch from Jerusalem. These converts had been treated much the same way, as were the so-called 'God-fearing' Gentiles in the Jewish communities of the Dispersion: they were admitted to worship without being circumcised. In addition the Gentile Christians were being baptised, as also were Jewish proselytes. But this baptism was coming to be regarded as a complete substitute for circumcision, as Jewish proselyte-baptism was not. Not unnaturally the Judaistic party, whose members, in spite of Paul's bitterness, may have been quite sincere men, regarded this as an innovation that would denationalise the Jewish Gospel; turn the Messiah into a non-Jewish 'Saviour' or *Kyrios*; and make salvation an individual matter instead of being the privilege of Israel. On the basis of the Galatian theory we may suppose that this trouble arose not only at Antioch, but extended also to Paul's newly founded Galatian churches (Harmon 1982: 195).

Multiculturalism in the early church, and more especially, the Church at Antioch, was not without its own set of problems and challenges. Wycliffe (1962) says that the success of the Gentile mission now brought to a head the most important problem in the early church—that of the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers and the terms of admission of Gentiles into the church. In the earliest

days, the church consisted of Jews, and the Gentile mission was not foreseen in spite of our Lord's commission. Philip took the gospel to the Samaritans, and Peter, after being prepared by God, overcome his Jewish scruples and took the gospel to the Gentiles, entering in to full fellowship with Gentiles. The establishment of a Gentile church in Antioch and the success of the Gentile mission in Galatia now focused attention upon a problem that had to be solved (Wycliffe 1962:1150).

In the Jerusalem church existed a party which insisted that unless Gentiles were circumcised after the custom of Moses, they could not be saved and received into the church. Verse 5 indicates that these were converts from among the Pharisees, who were the strictest sect of the Jews. This party looked upon Christianity as a movement within Judaism, they retained all of the practices and customs of the Law, simply adding the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the promised Messiah (Wycliffe 1962:1150). It is apparent that no Jewish believers gave up their Jewish practices when they became Christians. However, Pharisees converts insisted that Gentiles must also become Jews in order to become Christians.

Galatians 2:1-10, describes an aspect of the council meeting of Acts 15. The leaders in Jerusalem had approved Paul's mission to the Gentiles and did not insist upon circumcision for Gentile converts. Peter was in agreement with its policy, for some time later, when they came to Antioch, he showed that he had learned the lesson taught him by his vision from heaven, and freely entered into the table fellowship with Gentile converts (Galatians 2:11,12).

In order to understand the Apostolic Council, it is important to reconstruct the situation in the expansion of Christianity at that time. There were two centres of Christianity at that time, Antioch and Jerusalem, each representing a very different position and orientation. After the expulsion of the Hellenists, the church in Jerusalem was composed of the Law-abiding, Aramaic-speaking Christians. It did apparently engage in any missionary activity among Gentiles (Acts 10). The reason

behind this was that they believed that the coming of the Lord was very imminent; they self designated themselves as being very 'poor'.

On the other hand the Antioch church consisted for the most part of uncircumcised Gentile Christians; thus the Law was not considered there as binding for Christians. Greek was the language of this church and of its missionary activities, which went far beyond the boundaries of Antioch itself. If Antioch shared the eschatological expectation with Jerusalem, this did not imply that the eschatological ideal of poverty was also accepted (Koester 1982: 104-105).

The contrast between Jerusalem and Antioch in the question of the law certainly was the reason for the Apostolic Council. But it cannot be assumed that the authorities in Jerusalem convened the conference in order to decide this question because the apostles in Jerusalem never had such powers of jurisdiction. Furthermore, Galatians 2:1 clearly shows that the initiative came from Antioch. The Christians in Antioch desired a clarification, and they apparently had a particular reason, most likely the activities of the people called 'false brethren' in Galatians 2:4. Jewish-Christians (not simply Jews) were raising a stir against the Gentile Christians' freedom from the law and caused serious difficulties for the Antiochian mission. (Paul had to face similar Judaizing propaganda in Galatia which seriously endangered his missionary activity there).

According to Koester (1982), Paul and Barnabas, as emissaries of the Antiochan church, wanted to establish unanimity with the Christians in Jerusalem. The goal was to create an ecclesiastical unity in which Jewish and Gentile Christians would be bound together in spite of their differences in the question of the Law. In this way the so called 'trouble-makers' could no longer appeal in defence of their cause to the faithful observance of the Law among the Christians in Jerusalem. The main question was whether the Gentile Christian, Titus, whom Paul had brought to Jerusalem, would be accepted as a Christian brother without being circumcised first. In spite of the opposition of the 'false brothers', the leaders of the



Jerusalem church, James, the Lord's brother, Peter, and John, recognised the independence of the Gentile mission; the church in Antioch had freedom from the Law, and its ecclesiastical integrity.

Paul and Barnabas assured the Christians in Jerusalem that they would remember the special role to the 'poor' in Jerusalem. This included the obligation of intercession for them in prayer and a collection of money for their benefit. Galatians 2:1-10 demonstrate that the agreement was a contract between two equal and independent partners. Nothing is said about a recognition of the Jerusalem authorities as kind of church government. Peter's right to be active as a missionary was explicitly recognised, but only among the Jews (Gal. 2:7). Whoever was concerned with the creation of law-abiding Christian communities- and Paul does not question their legitimacy- should stay away from missionary activity among the Gentiles. Nonetheless this agreement opened the way for future conflicts, as became clear very soon in Antioch. The obligation to collect money for Jerusalem would become a significant ingredient of Paul's missionary activities (Koester 1982:105).

Two different churches now existed, the Jewish church in Jerusalem, in which Jewish Christians were free to the practice of the Old Testament Law, but as Jews and not as Christians; and the Gentile church in Antioch, where none of the Jewish ceremonial requirements were practiced. Peter approved of Gentile freedom from the Law; and when he was in a Gentile environment, he laid aside his Jewish practices for the sake of Christian fellowship (Wycliffe 1962:1151).

The 'right wing' party in Jerusalem saw something which was not evident to Peter: that the growth of the Gentile church must mean the inevitable end of the Jewish Church. As intercourse increased between the two churches, Jewish Christians would have to follow Peter's example and lay aside their Jewish practices. Therefore, when certain men came from James to Antioch (Galatians 2:12), they accused Peter of forsaking the Law and pointed out to him that his course of action meant the end of Judaism. Peter had not realised the consequences of his action .

Therefore he withdrew from table fellowship with the Gentiles to reflect upon the situation. This immediately caused a breach in the church at Antioch. Paul recognised at once the implication of Peter's withdrawal ; it meant nothing less than two separate churches – one Jewish and the other Gentile. Whether Jewish Christians would have to lay aside Jewish practices and eat with Gentiles, or gentiles would have to accept the entire law of Moses; otherwise there would be a divided church. Paul was willing for Jews as Jews to practice the law of Moses. But he insisted that when Jewish Christians came to into a Gentile church they must lay aside their Jewish scruples and enter into free fellowship with Gentiles. A divided church was unthinkable, and for Gentiles to accept the Law meant the end of salvation by grace (Wycliffe 1962: 1151).

Paul's viewpoint apparently prevailed, but those of the Jewish party in Jerusalem were not satisfied. They came to Antioch again and insisted that Gentiles be circumcised to become Christians. This caused such dissension that the church at Antioch found it necessary to have the issue decided in Jerusalem. Therefore a delegation was appointed to go to the apostles and elders and achieve a settlement of the question. We know nothing about the churches in Phoenicia. It was not Luke's purpose to relate a full history of the early church but only to trace the main lines of its rise and development (Wycliffe 1962:1151).

The church in Jerusalem welcomed the delegates and listened to their story of the success of the Gentile mission in Galatia. The criticism was voiced by from the Pharisees, who maintained their position that Gentile converts must become Jews and accept the law of Moses. This led to a formal conference of the apostles and elders with the delegation from Antioch. Verses 12, 22, however show that the church as a whole participated in the decision.

Paul's rebuke of Peter in Antioch (Galatians 2:11) had been effective. So now Peter as leader of the apostles, reverted to the position taken after his mission to Cornelius – that God had accepted the Gentiles as Gentiles by faith alone and not on Jewish

terms. Peter spoke about a yoke put on Gentiles. Here Peter asserts that Jewish legalism was an obligation and a burden that the Jews were unable to bear. In contrast to the burden-someness of the Law, salvation is through grace both for Gentiles and for Jews. When Jews keep the Law, it is not as a means of salvation. After much discussion, James, the brother of the Lord, gave the last word that they should no longer trouble the Gentiles by demanding that they accept circumcision and the law of Moses.

Wycliffe (1962) comments on the Jew and Gentile fellowship:

There remained another problem, that concerning fellowship between Jew and Gentile. Gentile practices were strongly offensive to Jews and to Jewish Christians. Therefore, as a *modus vivendi* and an expression of Christian charity, James recommended that Gentile Christians abstain from certain practices that would offend their Jewish brethren. Pollution from idols is described in Acts 15:29 as meats offered to idols. Often meat purchased in the market in the market places had been sacrificed in pagan temples to heathen deities. The eating of such meat was offensive to sensitive Jewish consciences, for it smacked of taking part in the worship of the pagan deity. Fornication may refer either to immorality in general or to religious prostitution in pagan temples. Such immorality was so common among Gentiles that it merited special attention. Meats from which the blood had not been properly removed. Such meat was considered a delicacy by many pagans. Blood refers to the pagan custom of using blood as food. The last requirements involved the same offense for the Jew who believed. The decision of the Jerusalem church and the letter to Antioch apparently solved the problem (Wycliffe 1962 : 1150-1152).

For several years the Gentiles had been brought to faith in Christ and welcomed into the Church by baptism. It began with Cornelius. Not only – in quite extraordinary circumstances- did he come to hear the good news, believe, receive the Spirit and be baptised, but the Jerusalem leaders, once the full facts were presented to them, instead of raising objections, ‘praised God’ (Acts 11: 18). Next came the remarkable movement in Syrian Antioch when unnamed missionaries ‘began to speak to Greeks also’ (Acts 11:20), a great number of whom believed. The Jerusalem church heard about this too and sent Barnabas to investigate who ‘saw the evidence of the grace of God’ and rejoiced (Acts 11: 23) (Stott 1990:240).

The third development which Luke chronicles was the first missionary journey, during which the first complete outsider believed (Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cyprus) and later Paul and Barnabas responded to Jewish unbelief with the bold declaration 'we now turn to the Gentile' (Acts 13:46) (Stott 1990:241). Thereafter, wherever they went, both Jews and Gentiles believed (Acts 14: 1), and on their return to Syrian Antioch, the missionaries were able to report that 'God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles' (Acts 14:27).

After the conversion of both Cornelius and the Antiochene Greeks, the Jerusalem leaders had been able to reassure themselves that God was in it. How would they now react to the even more audacious policy of Paul? The Gentile mission was gathering momentum. The trickle of Gentile conversion was fast becoming a torrent. The Jewish leaders had no difficulty with the general concept of believing Gentiles, for many Old Testament passages predict their inclusions.

Stott (1990) adds that the Gentiles were becoming Christian without becoming Jews:

But now a particular question was forming in their minds: what means of incorporation into the believing community did God intend for Gentiles? So far it has been assumed that they would be absorbed into Israel by circumcision, and that by observing the law they would be acknowledged as *bona fide* members of the covenant people of God. Something quite different was now happening, however, something, which disturbed and even alarmed many. Gentile converts were being welcomed into the fellowship by baptism without circumcision. They were becoming Christians without also becoming Jews. They were retaining their own identity and integrity as members of other nations. It is one thing for the Jerusalem leaders to give their approval to the conversion of Gentiles: but could they approve conversion -without -circumcision, of faith in Jesus without the works of the law, and of commitment to the Messiah without inclusion in Judaism? Was their vision big enough to see the gospel of Christ not as a reform movement within Judaism, but as good news for the whole world, and the church of Christ not as Jewish sect, but as the international family of God? These were the revolutionary questions which some were daring to ask. (Stott, 1990: 240-241)

The tranquility of the Christian fellowship in Syrian Antioch was shattered by the arrival of a group Paul later dubs 'trouble makers'.

We need to be clear what they were saying, and what the point at issue was. They were insisting, in Luke's tell-tale summary, that without circumcision converts could not be saved. Of course circumcision was the God-given sign of the covenant, and doubtless the Judaizers were stressing this; but they were going further and making it a condition of salvation.

They were telling Gentile converts that faith in Jesus was not enough, not sufficient for salvation: they must add to faith circumcision, and to circumcision observance of the law. In other words, they must let Moses complete what Jesus had begun, and the law supplement the gospel, the issue was immense. The way of salvation was at stake. The gospel was in dispute. The very foundations of the Christian faith were being undermined (Stott 1990: 241-243).

#### **6.16. The Jerusalem Council and the Solution to the Problem**

The apostles and elders including Peter, Paul, Barnabas and James met at the 'Jerusalem Council' to deal with the issue at stake. After much discussion James gave forth the proposal that *'we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food offered to idols and from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.'* (Acts 15: 20). Letters were sent to the different churches including Antioch with the above proposal and guideline.

The apostle James was saying that they must recognise and embrace Gentile believers as brothers and sisters in Christ, and not burden them by asking them to add to their faith in Jesus either circumcision or the whole code of Jewish practices. At the same time, having established the principle that salvation by grace alone through faith alone, without works, it was necessary to appeal to these Gentile believers to respect the consciences of their Jewish fellow-believers by abstaining from a few practices which might offend them (Stott, 1990: 248).

The Jerusalem Council dealt with two questions, comments Bruce (1969). The major one was, 'Must Gentile Christians be circumcised and under take to keep the Mosaic Law?' The second question was, 'What are the conditions with which Gentile Christians should comply if Jewish Christians are to have an easy social relations with them?' Bruce (1969) comments that the second question would not have been raised had the first question been answered in the affirmative. If Gentile Christians had been required to follow the example of gentile proselytes to Judaism, then, when these requirements were met, table-fellowship and the like would have been followed as a matter of course (Bruce 1969:288).

The whole matter of the Jerusalem Council concluded with James' giving a final word on the matter. It was decided that the table-fellowship might be allowed if Gentile converts abstained from certain practices which were specially offensive to Jews, and to the majority of Jewish Christians. Such practices which were particularly relevant to the matter of table-fellowship were the eating of food which had been 'contaminated' by idolatrous associations and laxity of much contemporary paganism was also highly offensive to Jews (Bruce 1969:288). Ordinary social intercourse between Jewish and Gentile Christians would be promoted if the latter conformed to the Jewish marriage code.

### **6.17. The Pattern and Perceptions of Paul**

Acts 21: 15-30, declares that, when the delegates called on James and the leaders of the Jerusalem church they were welcomed; but these good men were clearly troubled because of the exaggerated rumours that had reached Jerusalem about Paul's attitude to the law. They admitted that the position with regard to Gentile believers had been defined at the Apostolic Council (Jerusalem Council), but they wished Paul to give the lie in a practical manner to the report that he was dissuading Jewish Christians from keeping the law and from circumcising their children .

Paul himself so far as we can tell, continued to observe the law throughout his life , especially in Jewish company, and his consent to take the advice of James on this

occasion and share the purification ceremony of four men who had taken a temporary Nazarite vow and pay their expenses was entirely in keeping with his settled principle: 'to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews'(1Corinthian 9:20). We may compare his own vow of Acts 18:18, which involved the shearing of hair. He has been quite unnecessarily castigated for such actions by people whose ideal seems to that lower brand of consistency which has been called 'the virtue of small minds'.

The carrying out of this duty involved his presence in the temple, and there he became the object of a hue and cry raised by some Jews from the province of Asia who recognised him. Having seen him with a Gentile Christian from Ephesus, they imagined that he had taken this man to the temple. A riot broke out at once, the mob dragged Paul out of the temple, beating him all the time, and as soon as they were outside, the gates were shut. (Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan 1958: 929)

In commenting on Acts 21:20 which says, *You see brother how many thousand of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law*. To this, Fraser (1966) comments that the speech has two parts. *Firstly*, the elders call to mind how many there are of the Jews who have been converted to Christ, who, since they are devoted to the Law, are badly disposed towards Paul, because they think that he is devoting himself entirely to the object of abolishing the Law. In the second place they urge him to clear himself by taking a solemn vow, so that no further suspicion might cling to him. They put the multitude of believers before him, so that he may give in to them more easily. For if there had been a few inflexible men he would not have been moved so much. Now he certainly cannot ignore an immense number of people and the whole body of the Church.

There is absolutely no doubt that the zeal for the Law was corrupt; and the presbyters certainly make it plain enough that it does not seem right to them. For although they do not condemn it openly, yet because they distinguish themselves from the attitude of those men, they are tacitly acknowledging them to be in the

wrong. If zeal had been in accordance with knowledge, then it ought to have begun with themselves. But they are not fighting for the Law itself, and they are not pleading due reverence for it by way of an excuse, and they are not approving of its so-called zealots. Therefore they are hinting that they have a different attitude of mind, and do not approve of the superstition of the people. The opposite impression is given by their saying that Paul has been burdened with a bad reputation, false though it was.

*Secondly*, when they require him to make amends they seem to be supporting that zeal. Fraser (1966) argues that, even if the rumour, which had offended the Jews, was true in some respect, yet it was stained by calumny. Paul was teaching the abrogation of the Law, so that in this way, nevertheless, its authority might not only remain intact, but also that it might be more sacred (Fraser 1966:200).

Another version of Acts 21:20 is, *You see how strong the Jewish Christian community is*. Haenchen (1971) comments that the unfavourable reports about Paul made a very bad impression upon them. It is not known by whom these reports were coming from. Paul is accused of leading the Jewish church to apostasy about the statement that they heard: that they ought not to circumcise their children or live according to the 'customs' (= legal prescriptions). That the Jewish-Christian members of the Antiochian community felt themselves exempted from the regulations of the law concerning food is evident from Galatians 2:12. That Paul advises against the circumcision of Jewish children is unlikely; if he had not circumcised Timothy, such conduct could have become the occasion for a rumour of this sort (Haenchen 1966: 609).

Paul is advised by James and the elders in Jerusalem, about four men concerning a Nazarite vow. Paul was to join these men in their purification rites, and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaven. By doing this, everybody will know that there is no truth in the reports about Paul, and that he lived in accordance to the law (Acts 21: 23-24).



After James and the elders have spoken of the way on which Paul is to prove his conformity to the law, they pass to the question of Paul's converted Gentile Christians: here there is no hesitation, since observance of these four commands has been imposed upon them. Formally these words are directed to Paul, but in reality they are designed for the instruction of the reader. A summary of Henchen's (1966) argument of Acts 21:20-26 is that:

1. According to Luke, Paul and 'we' negotiated with James and the elders. As in Acts 15:12, so here Paul first describes his missionary successes, which are indeed really God's successes. Despite the fact that the Jerusalemites praised God for these. They are distressed about what the numerous and zealot Jewish-Christians of Jerusalem have heard about Paul (apparently without rejecting it as slander): that he taught the diaspora Jews not to circumcise their children and no longer to live according to the old customs. That the elders do not believe this is clear: but it does not concern them alone. To convince the Jewish-Christians of his fidelity to the law, Paul is to redeem four poor Nazarites. (Luke seems to assume that for this, Paul himself had to become a Nazarite until the time of their absolution.) Thereby the accusations against him will be proven groundless; there are no difficulties because of the Gentile Christians converted by Paul, since they have been directed to follow the Apostolic Decree, which here is communicated by way of reminder, apparently to Paul but in reality to the reader. Paul follows the advice, takes the four men, purifies himself with them and reports to the Temple the 'fulfillment of the days of purification', until the necessary sacrifice is presented for each of them.

This text contains two great difficulties. Verse 24 *purify yourself with them* and verse 26 *purifying himself with them* describe an action which Paul undertakes in association with the Nazarites and which is connected with his taking over of their expenses. Neither of the two meanings fits here: Paul

cannot have become a Nazarite with others because the minimum time necessary was thirty days and not seven; but is also not simply a question of deliverance from Levitical impurity, since the 'days of consecration' (verse 26) indicate the absolution from the Nazarite vow.

If however we take the Lucan text by itself, without consideration of the actual Jewish regulations, then it can be explained without any contradiction: Paul by an act of consecration or purification, undertaken in association with the four Nazarites, enters into their Nazarite for the duration of seven days, hence for the minimum period within which the rites of absolution could be completed. This must be taken as Luke's understanding of the matter, and Luke will have taken it from the itinerary (and LXX). For that Luke caught out of thin air the requirement that Paul should assume the expenses of the four Nazarites contradicts everything we have learned about his work so far. Also, the manner in which the seven days are mentioned as something familiar indicates the utilisation of a source. Finally it is not easy to see why the itinerary should cease with the entrance into Jerusalem, and should not also have described the crucial period up to the arrest.

The source lies before us in Luke's reproduction. We can however seek to reconstruct it by admitting only statements which do not contradict the Jewish regulations. Then the following picture results: at that time there were four poor Nazarites in the Jerusalem Christian community. The period of their Nazarite had already elapsed. The expense, which they could not afford, was to be assumed by Paul; he had only to report this to the priest concerned and agree upon the time of absolution. Since Paul had come from abroad, he was however considered as Levitically unclean. He had therefore first to regain Levitical purification ritual. This consisted of being sprinkled with water of atonement on the third and seventh day after reporting to the priest. Only when he was Levitically clean could Paul be

present at the absolution ceremony of the four, which took place in the 'holy place'. Paul accordingly, when he had accepted the proposal of the elders, went with the four Nazarites to the temple and there reported first his own purification, and secondly of the Nazarite four. The date could then be fixed on which the appropriate sacrifices- for which Paul paid – were to be presented; it was the seventh day, on which he himself was to be cleared from guilt.

In this way all the difficulties hitherto presented are resolved. We need assume neither a – seventh-day!- Nazarite vow for Paul, nor the improbability that the four men still lacked seven days of their *Nazriate*, or finally that all four had just at this point incurred Levitical impurity.

It was not possible for Luke to envisage quite correctly these connections which were reflected. Only in the passing itinerary. The manner of purification was not explained by Luke. Hence, Luke apparently identified the two: thus he came to the idea that Paul for the duration of seven days entered the *Nazirate* along with the four. The Lucan presentation can thus be obtained without difficulty from what- using Jewish statements not available to Luke – we have put forward for the itinerary. The first great difficulty of our section ( so far as it is at present possible) is thereby resolved.

2. The second difficulty is not so clear, but even more important. From the Apostolic Council on, Luke has not mentioned Paul's great collection. He is silent also about its delivery, which must have been mentioned in the itinerary. Even in Acts 24: 17, the word 'collection' does not occur; no reader who knew only Acts but not the Pauline epistles could deduce from this verse the great Pauline work of the collection. This silence of Luke's is extremely surprising. We ought to consider that Luke should have especially welcomed this intervention of Paul and his congregations on behalf of the

mother community. He must have had a very important reason for keeping silent about it.

To discover this reason, let us begin with Romans 15:31. Here Paul speaks of the dangers that threaten him when he comes to Jerusalem with the collection. First, he has to fear the fanatical Jews themselves. Secondly, there is also the possibility that his collection may not be to the 'saints,' i.e. that they may flatly refuse to accept it. Since Paul accepted responsibility for his collection, his quarrel with the Judaisers had flared up. If now, for example, what Paul had written to the Galatians in this quarrel had become known to the Palestinian church leaders- and why should they not have heard about it? – then it was difficult to predict whether people in Jerusalem would have anything to do with him at all. The Jerusalemites were not to be bought. But if James and the elders refused the Pauline collection, then the collection between the Pauline Gentile Church and the Church of Jerusalem would be severed. Paul would be disavowed before the representatives of his own congregations, and thereby morally most grievously stricken. The mission he planned in the western Mediterranean regions was then conceivable – if at all- only against the opposition of the mother community in Jerusalem and probably the fear he had already expressed in Galatians 2:2 would then be realised: *he would run in vain.*

We must however view the situation also from the standpoint of the leaders of the Jerusalem Church. If anyone taught the law occasioned only wrath and was given only to multiply sins, they could strictly no longer recognise such a man as 'brother'. But even if they were prepared to regard such expressions as exaggerations, such as occur in the heat of debate, there was still the relationship to Jewry to consider. Paul's visit fell a few years before a few years before the murder of James the Lord's brother by the Jews. The Jerusalem community at that time was already striving for the last possibility of a mission in Israel. If they accepted the Pauline collection, then

in the eyes of the Jews they would proclaim their solidarity with Paul. By so doing they threatened to destroy their own possibilities of mission. This is overlooked by every exegete who makes James and the elders accept the Pauline collection joyfully.

The leaders of the Jerusalem community wanted to avoid the break with the Pauline mission Church and that with Palestinian Judaism. This could only be attained if Paul consented to an act which would take the wind out of the sails of the accusations against him. On the other hand Paul could not be expected to sacrifice the basic principles of his own mission. The Lucan account allows us to recognise in which direction the solution was sought. It was suggested to Paul that he assume the relatively considerable cost of redeeming the four poor Nazarites. If he agreed to this – and he had already earlier declared himself ready to support the poor saints- then the collection could be accepted, because such a redemption of Nazarites was considered as particularly pious by every Jew. Paul agreed to this proposal.

This also explains why Paul remained longer in Jerusalem. if this collection had been accepted without further ado, he could have left the dangerous area immediately. The unity of the church was reserved, he himself recognised before the representatives of his congregations, his further mission threatened by no veto from Jerusalem. but the purification to which Paul had to submit in order to participate in the absolution of the four Nazarites held him fast in Jerusalem for week, and compelled him on the third seventh days to seek out the 'holy place'. On the second visit- immediately before the happy outcome – catastrophe struck.

Perhaps Luke knew about the collection. But that people hesitated to accept it must then have been for him a dark enigma which he did not know how to solve. His entire portrait of the relationship of Paul to the primitive community would have been destroyed had he taken up the negotiations

about the collection in his work. So he decided not to mention the collection at all. For the apparently easy way out, to report only its reception, was likewise precluded.

In conclusion, how was Luke to make it comprehensible to the reader of Acts, that the primitive community further required Paul to pay for the four Nazarites, when he had just handed over a considerable gift of love from his congregations (Heanichen 1966: 611-614)?

In depicting Paul and James face to face, Luke presents his readers with a dramatic situation, fraught with both risk and possibility. For James and Paul were the representative leaders of two churches, Jewish and Gentile. This was not their first meeting, but the fourth. Then they both had been prominent figures at the Jerusalem Council. Some people were doubtless asserting that the doctrinal positions of James and Paul were incompatible, as they had done before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15: 1-2), Paul's teaching on salvation by grace, and James, on salvation by works. So when Paul and James faced each other in Jerusalem, there could have been a painful confrontation.

But both apostles were in a conciliatory frame of mind. When Paul reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. James and his elders not only heard this, but praised God together. No murmur or disapproval was heard. The joyful praise of James and the elders was not even grudging; it was spontaneous and genuine (Stott 1990: 340).

Luke concentrates, however, on the second example of Paul's conciliatory spirit, namely the positive way in which he responded to the proposal James put to him. This arose because of the existence of both Jewish and Gentile believers. The question was how they could be helped to live together in amity, especially in view of Jewish Christian scruples about law observance. James and the elders said to Paul : *'You see brother how many thousand of Jews have believed , and all of them*

*are zealous for the law. They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children to live according to our customs' (Acts 21: 20) (Stott 1990: 340).*

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, the responsible leader of the church was James, the brother of Jesus; Peter had long since left Jerusalem, and John is no longer mentioned. The Jewish-Christian church of Jerusalem is depicted as strictly law-abiding, while Paul had the reputation of having seduced Jews in the diaspora away from circumcision and observance of Jewish customs. Because of such widespread rumours, James persuaded Paul to give a demonstration of his faithfulness to the law; he should redeem four men who had taken a Nazarite vow and pay for the expenses of this redemption, including the necessary sacrifices. Such a demonstration of a pious and law-abiding act would end all malicious rumours about him. It has been rightly assumed that this is direct reflection of the difficulties that resulted from the delivery of the collection from the Gentile Christians for the law-abiding Jewish-Christian church in Jerusalem. Paul had indeed expected difficulties, as Romans 15:31 demonstrates. He must have known that the offer of a considerable amount of financial aid from the Gentile Christians for the Jerusalem church would constitute an over-exacting encumbrance on the relationship of the Jewish Christians to the other Jews in the city. But in spite of this fear, Paul had insisted on making the collection, and devoted considerable time and effort to this enterprise during his missionary activities, and had even decided to make the journey to Jerusalem, although his primary concern had been to go to the west as soon as possible.

All this shows how highly Paul valued this demonstration of the unity of all the churches. It is also the clearest proof that Paul had no interest whatsoever in documenting the unity of the churches through unified doctrines of beliefs. Unity could only come into being through mutual loving care and aid. It was exactly Paul's desire to document this concept of ecclesiastical unity that caused difficulties for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and finally determined Paul's

personal destiny as well. The church in Jerusalem insisted that Paul visit the temple, which was necessary for the redemption of the Nazarites. Otherwise they could not have accepted the collection. While in the temple, Paul, was recognised and accused of having brought a Gentile into the temple. (We ask ourselves, was this a false accusation?). A controversy broke out, the Roman soldiers who appeared to break up the tumult arrested Paul. Thus the consistent pursuit of the one and most important goal of the Pauline mission, that is, the documentation of the universality of the gospel and of the unity of the church of the Jews and Gentiles, led to Paul's final arrest, and this in turn seems to have resulted in his martyrdom (Koester 1982:143-144).

In analysing Acts 21:20, what exactly was James was saying?

*Firstly*, It was not about the way of salvation (James and Paul were agreed that this was through Christ, not through the law), but about the way of discipleship.

*Secondly*, It was not about what Paul taught Gentile converts (he did teach them that circumcision was unnecessary, and James and the Jerusalem Council had said the same thing), but what he was teaching the Jews who live among the Gentiles.

*Thirdly*, It was not about the moral law (Paul and James were agreed that God's people must live a holy life according to God's commandments), but about Jewish 'customs'. In a word, should Jewish believers continue to observe Jewish cultural practices? The rumour was that Paul was teaching them not to (Stott1990: 340).

So *what shall we do?* James asked Paul. The law –zealous Jewish Christians ' *will certainly hear that you have come , so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made avow. Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses , so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law, or a practicing Jew ( Acts 21:22-24).*



The reference to the four Jewish Christians shaving their heads indicates that they taken a Nazarite vow; James' proposal in relation to them was double.

*Firstly*, Paul should 'join in their purification rites'. Stott (1990) comments that, commentators are not agreed about what James had in mind. Perhaps he wanted Paul to identify himself with the four, either at the conclusion of the thirty day period of their vow or in some special ritual necessary because they had contracted defilement during the same period. Or it may mean that Paul had a seven-day purification ceremony of his own to undergo, because during his long absence from Jerusalem the Jews regarded him as having become levitically unclean.

*Secondly*, James proposed that Paul should pay their expenses, which should have been quite substantial. Paul agreed with James' proposal and began as soon as possible to comply with it. *The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them ( Acts 18:26) (Stott: 1990: 341).*

We can only thank God for the generosity of spirit displayed by both James and Paul. They were already agreed doctrinally (that salvation was by grace in Christ through faith) and ethically (that Christians must obey the moral law). The issue between them concerned culture, ceremony and tradition. The solution to which they came was not a compromise, in the sense of sacrificing a doctrinal and moral principle, but a concession in the area of practice. We have already seen Paul's conciliatory spirit in accepting the Jerusalem decrees and circumcising Timothy. Now, in the same tolerant spirit, he was prepared to undergo some purification rituals in order to pacify Jewish scruples. James seems to have gone too far in expecting Paul to live 'in obedience to the law' in all matters and at all times, if that is what he meant. But Paul was certainly ready to do so on special occasions, for the sake of evangelism for example or –as here–for the sake of Jewish- Gentile

solidarity (Stott 1990:341). According to his own conviction, Jewish cultural practices belonged to the 'matters indifferent', from which he had been liberated, but which he might or might not himself practice according to the circumstances.

According to Bruce in Stott (1990):

The truly emancipated spirit such as Paul's is not in bondage to its emancipation. But James manifested a similarly sweet and generous mind both by praising God for the Gentile mission and by accepting the offering from the Gentile churches. It was not a *quid pro quo*, almost a bargain, as some commentators have represented it ('We will identify with you by accepting the Gentile offering, if you will identify with us by accepting Jewish observances'). The unbending prejudice and fanatical violence of the unbelieving Jews, which Luke describes next stands in ugly contrast (Stott 1990:341-343).

Luke's 'Jewish Paul' has been regarded by many scholars as seriously at odds with the radical Paul of the epistles who denounces the Jewish-Christian moves to have Gentiles circumcised as 'another gospel', who sides with 'the strong' in their insistence that they are free to eat anything rather than with the weak, even though he advocates charity towards the weak, and who says openly that *to those outside the law I became outside the law* (1Cor.9:21).

Other scholars have been unpersuaded that there is a serious discrepancy. In the first place, although Acts does describe Paul observing certain Jewish practices, he is at the same time portrayed as a controversial missionary to the Gentiles, whom zealous Jews crossed repeatedly and suspected intensely, not least because of the attitude of the law. It is at least implied that he was a liberal so far as the law and eating with Gentiles was concerned.

In the second place, Paul's letters make clear his uncompromising commitment to the Gentile freedom, but also, *firstly*, his respect for 'weak' Jewish Christians who maintain their dietary customs. *Secondly*, his deep concern for and involvement with Jerusalem and Jewish Christians. *Thirdly*, his willingness to identify with Jewish customs. Thus in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 he not only speaks of his freedom not to keep the Jewish law, but equally of his freedom to keep the law: *To the Jews*

*I became as a Jew in order to win the Jews* (Bauckham 1993:254-255). It is argued that this Paul could well have circumcised the half-Jewish Timothy in order to facilitate his ministry among the Jews, and that he might have gone a long way towards appeasing his Jewish critics in Jerusalem in a time of considerable personal danger.

### **6.18. Paul on Trial**

Acts 24 records that Paul was a 'trouble maker' by Tertullus. Paul then defended himself before Felix the Roman governor, against the accusation, that he was no trouble maker as remarked, but a peace-loving citizen. He confessed that he believed in the way of salvation which they referred to as a sect; that he followed a system of serving the God of his ancestors, and believed in the Jewish law and everything written in the books of prophecy; and that he believed in the resurrection of both the righteous and the ungodly. Because of this he always tried to maintain a clear conscience before God and man. He defended that it was not him that started a riot, but those men that saw him at the temple when he went to offer the sacrifices and pay his vows.

And again in Acts 25: 7-8, Paul defended himself before Festus of the same accusations against him. Paul denied the charges: 'I am not guilty, I have not opposed the Jewish laws or desecrated the Temple or rebelled against the Roman government.'

Jerusalem and Rome were the centres of two enormously strong power blocs, according to Stott (1990). The faith of Jerusalem went back two millennia to Abraham. The rule of Rome extended some three million square miles round the Mediterranean Sea. Jerusalem's strength lay in history and tradition, Rome's in conquest and organisation. The combined might of Jerusalem and Rome was overwhelming. If a solitary dissident like Paul were to set himself against them, the outcome would be inevitable. His chances of survival would resemble those of butterfly before a steamroller. He would be crushed, utterly obliterated from the

face of the earth. Yet such an outcome, we may confidently affirm, never even entered Paul's mind as a possibility. For he saw his situation from an entirely different perspective.

He was no traitor to either church or state, that he should come into collision with them, although this is how his accusers tried to frame him (Stott 1990:358).

The enemies of Jesus had followed the same ploy of accusing Jesus in threatening to destroy the temple, and of blaspheming while before Pilate. They had represented him as guilty of sedition - subverting the nation, opposing taxes to Caesar and claiming to be himself a king. Now Paul's enemies laid similar charges against him, namely that he had 'offended against the law of the Jews, against the temple, and against Caesar'. (Acts 25: 7-8) But Paul was as innocent in these areas as Jesus had been. He had no quarrel with God-given status of either Rome or Jerusalem. On the contrary, as he had written to the Roman Christians, he recognised that the authority given to Rome came from God and that the privileges given to Israel came from God also. The gospel did not undermine the law, whether Jewish or Roman, but rather 'upheld it'. To be sure, the Roman might misuse their God-given authority and the Jews might misrepresent their law as the means of salvation (Stott 1990:358). In such situations Paul would oppose them. But that was not the issue now. Paul's contention, while on trial, was that in principle the gospel both supports the rule of Caesar and fulfils the hope of Israel. His defence before his judges was to present himself as a loyal citizen of Rome and a loyal son of Israel.

Paul's double denial treason and double insistence on loyalty is the thread which runs through these chapters. So far he has defended himself before Jewish crowd and the Sanhedrin. Now he will stand trial before the procurators Felix and Festus, and king Agrippa 11. In each of these five trials, in which the charge was now political (sedition), now religious (sacrilege), the judging audience was part Roman and part Jewish. Thus, when Paul spoke to the Jewish crowd and the Jewish Council, Claudius Lysias, the Roman tribune, was present and listening, while when

Paul stood before Felix and Festus, the representatives of Rome, it was the Jews who were prosecuting. Then in the fifth trial, which was the grand finale, King Agrippa 11 combined both authorities within himself, for he had been appointed by Rome but was also an acknowledged authority on Jewish affairs (Stott 1990:358-359).

### **6.19. Lukan and Pauline Strategies to Constructively Deal with Multiculturalism and the Practice of Circumcision and Observance of Jewish Laws**

The focal point of the above will deal with how Luke and Paul dealt constructively with the aspect of multiculturalism, especially the practice of circumcision, and whether this was really necessary for Gentile salvation or not. Paul's theology was that circumcision was the 'works of the law'. The matters relating to the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15) and Paul's letter to the Galatians, from which the writers argue, is discussed at length. This is to show that multiculturalism had its own challenges in the early church as it is today.

Living in the Spirit, or being in Christ, is the central fact of Pauline community. If that central experience is maintained, however, Paul appears to take a moderate view about a number of critical issues that divided the early church. The controversy at Antioch and the Jerusalem conference clarify Paul's statement on circumcision in Galatians.

In Galatians 2:1, Paul states that he took Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, to Jerusalem fourteen years after his conversion, where the issues of circumcision and food laws were discussed and settled (Galatians 2: 1-10).

Paul goes on to discuss the issue of dietary laws, which he sees as directly pertinent to this conference. Circumcision and dietary laws are both special laws incumbent for the Jews, but they are different bodies of law with different implications for the new Christian community, warranting separate discussions. Acts 15: 1-29 and

Galatians 2: 1-10 are apparently discussing the same incident, the so –called Jerusalem Conference (Segal 1990:187).

There are several important differences in the two accounts: -

1. In Galatians 2:1, Paul says that he went to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus. Luke reports that the community in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas as well as others to Jerusalem.
2. Paul says that he went by “revelation”, while Luke says that the reason was a theological controversy in Antioch instigated by some Jerusalemite Christians. Paul describes some false brethren who sneaked in to spy out Antioch’s freedom and bring them into bondage ( Galatians 2:4)
3. The Jerusalem Conference, in both Galatians and Acts, is about Gentile Christians’ legal responsibilities and is focused on circumcision. Luke expresses this by relating that the visitors in Antioch and the Pharisaic party at the conference claimed that circumcision was necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1,5). Paul says that he lay the gospel to the Gentiles before them and that not even Titus, a Gentile, was compelled to be circumcised (Galatians 2:2,3)
4. Both Paul and Luke distinguish between the Jerusalem disciples and a more conservative faction (Galatians 2:4 and Acts 15:5).
5. Luke portrays the conference as involving the entire Jerusalem leadership(Acts 16:6).Paul says that he explained his preaching before a larger group and then privately to those of repute( Galatians 2:2).
6. Paul refers to his recognition by the pillars( Galatians 2:9). Luke says only that they related what God had done through them among the Gentiles ( Acts 15:12).

7. According to both, the conference ends in agreement. Paul speaks of the right hand of fellowship extended to him and Barnabas (Galatians 2:9). Acts portrays Peter and James as speaking in favour of the law-free gospel in Antioch, bringing a letter of consolation back to them (Acts 15:7b-29).

8. Paul agrees to remember the poor (Galatians 2:10) and speaks about the acceptance of his apostolate to the Gentiles, but Luke makes no reference to either.

9. Luke narrates the imposition of a set of restrictions on Gentile Christians, known as the decree (Acts 15:20,29), whereas Paul claims that nothing was imposed on him (Galatians 2:6).

10. In Acts the decree is promulgated at the conclusion of the conference. In Galatians 2 the conference is followed by Paul's brief discussion of Peter's behaviour in Antioch. Thus, it is not clear whether Paul's letter to the Galatians precedes or succeeds the conference (Segal 1990: 187-189).

In approaching the problem, Paul agrees to a position in Jerusalem that is not fully consonant with his private opinion because he feels that the Jerusalem conference does not explicitly contradict his opinion. Paul's private opinions are expressed in Galatians, where he says that the experience of faith overrides the ceremonial Torah by making circumcision unnecessary for anyone. As opposed to the extremist Judaizers, whose position is known by their proselytes in Galatia, Paul finds the unity of the church more important, so he can compromise with the opposition, though he disagrees with them.

Luke's perspective of the Jerusalem Conference has a different view. According to Acts 15, the issue of circumcision arises at Antioch before the Jerusalem Council, because emissaries from Jerusalem maintain that one cannot be saved unless one is circumcised in to the people of Moses. Luke's chronology can be questioned because he is writing after the fact (Segal 1990:191).

It is possible that the conservative members of the church do not go along with the Jerusalem church's decision. The restrictive understanding of salvation is characteristic of Pharisaic and later rabbinic Judaism, but it is certainly not a universal doctrine within Jewish community. Paul's opinion that Gentiles do not need to be circumcised to be saved is, in turn, characteristic of Pharisaic and later rabbinic Judaism but emphatically not true of apocalypticism. In this case, the church issue reflects the spectrum of Jewish as well as Christian opinions (Segal 1990: 191-192).

*Firstly*, Segal (1990) goes on to argue the point that, it is not clear that Luke understood fully or reflects clearly these distinctions, since he equates the idea that there is no salvation without circumcision with the party of the Pharisees who say, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.' (Acts 15:5). The two positions that Luke mentions in this passage are not identical. In the first instance, salvation is discussed; in the second, only proper conversion is being considered. Rabbinic Judaism allows that some Gentiles can be saved qua Gentiles, but it requires that all converts to Judaism be strictly charged to keep the law of Moses.

Luke also maintains that, though some Christians spied on Paul, they were acting on their own initiative (Acts 15:24). According to Luke, the Jerusalem church agreed that circumcision was not necessary for the salvation of the Gentiles and outlined a series of more lenient food laws for them. Then Paul returned as one of the emissaries of the agreement. Although the principle that circumcision of the Gentiles is unnecessary for salvation is accepted in Luke's account, whether it is necessary for the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians is ambiguous.

Further, no one says that Gentiles cannot be circumcised if they want to be. Only Paul himself has said that he does not advise it, because it tends toward a confidence in the flesh instead of the Spirit. No one says that Jews should not be circumcised.



*Secondly*, That after Paul was converted and preached the crucified Christ to the Gentiles, he concluded in Galatians that circumcision was not important to salvation, for the (special) acts of Torah were no longer essential for salvation. Waving circumcision for Gentile was not in itself a startling conclusion, for not all Jews insisted that conversion was necessary for Gentile salvation. There were a variety of opinions within the Jewish community concerning ritual observations and Gentile salvation. Jewish Christians, because they were primarily Jews, must have had a similar spectrum of opinion.

*Thirdly*, That, from a legal perspective, Paul did not startle the Jewish Christian community by saying that circumcision was unnecessary for Gentile salvation *per se*. His claim that the saved Jews and Gentiles could form a single new community and freely interact was more innovative. The issue was not how the Gentiles could be saved but how to eat with them and marry them and live with them.

*Fourthly*, Membership in the people of Israel was available through conversion to any who desired it. It was necessary for a person to become Jewish to be righteous and thus have place in the world to come, as it was not necessary to be a priest to be righteous. Instead, special laws were a special responsibility attendant on any Jew for the privilege of being part of Israel. But purity rules prevented the observant Jews from intimate contact with the impure. Several Christians, reacting from their previous understandings of purity in Judaism were afraid to allow Jews and Gentiles to form a single community, even Christianity, because such actions would violate the purity laws.

*Fifthly*, Paul desired that not only that the Gentiles be among the community on earth. This was a step that many Jewish Christians could not accept. The concept of the Noahide Commandments is more antique and more widespread in Judaism that can be proved from the midrash, as the New Testament once again shows us. The lack of specifically Jewish customs was appropriate for a group of Gentile Christians loving alone, but it became a problem for the unified group of faith,

made up of both Jews and Gentiles, as Paul envisioned. Such a group existed at Antioch where Paul and Barnabas eventually assumed church leadership. Paul's understanding of the status of Gentiles proved to be controversial when discovered by the flourishing Jewish Christian community, which assumed that all new converts to Christianity would become Jews as well, since that was the only way for Jewish Christians to eat with them, to celebrate the Eucharist, to intermarry with them.

*Sixthly*, The effect of Paul's preaching and his vision of a new, unified Christian community was the destruction of the ritual distinction between Jew and Gentile within the Christian sect. Paul was breaking down a ritual boundary in Christianity, not a boundary between saved and unsaved. The same ritual boundary existed in Judaism (Segal 1990: 191-202).

O' Neill (1970) makes a further argument in connection with what Segal has commented: -

*Firstly*, Luke was correct in stating that the church authorities at Jerusalem did not at any time demand that Gentiles who believed in Jesus Christ should be circumcised. In this they were following a possible, if disputed, contemporary Jewish practice concerning proselytes. The epistle to the Galatians provides good evidence of this, because Titus was not circumcised. Not only was Titus not circumcised, but it could be argued, from the form in which Paul reports the fact to the Galatians, that he would have allowed Titus to be circumcised had that been required.

*Secondly*, Luke does not mention Titus - something impossible to imagine if he had known the epistles of Paul - but he does report that Timothy was circumcised, Acts 16:1-3. Is this a mistake? Paul continuously and resolutely opposed agitators who tried to persuade Gentile Christians to be circumcised, but Timothy was a legitimate exception, being by Jewish Law a Jew.

We could only conclude that nevertheless Paul would not under any circumstances have circumcised Timothy if not to circumcise any Christian were for Paul a matter of principle. Circumcision was no empty sign for Paul, but there is no evidence, in the parts of the letters ascribed to him that are genuine, that he ever argued that Jewish Christians should give up the observance of the Law. Timothy need not have been circumcised when he became a Christian, but he could have been circumcised, before becoming a partner in Paul's mission to the Gentiles, for the sake of the Jews, Luke's source said.

*Thirdly*, Acts does however report that, the question of whether or not Gentile Christians should be circumcised was a matter of dispute. Again, there is no reason to doubt that Luke is historically accurate. Paul had to oppose Christians who came in to the Galatian churches from outside to persuade the Galatian Christians that they needed to be circumcised; he faced similar trouble at Philippi; and the epistle to the Romans perhaps shows that the issue was not dead even then. Luke reports that the advocates of circumcision who troubled the church at Antioch were Judeans (Acts 15:1), and further reports that a group of converted Pharisees in Jerusalem proposed for discussion the proposition that it was necessary that they should proclaim the keeping of the Law of Moses (Acts 15:5). Paul is not specific about the origin of the agitators who were troubling the Galatian churches, but we may deduce from his insistence that the Jerusalem leaders fully approved of his course of action, even though he had adopted it quite independently, that he was opposing men who claimed to represent in some way the best thought current in the cradle of Christianity.

The 'false brethren' mentioned in Galatian 2:4 might be assumed to parallel the believing Pharisees of Acts 15:5, but the mysterious vagueness of the whole reference makes this a difficult piece of evidence to handle.

*Fourthly*, there are good reasons for relying on Luke's reports that the early churches had discussed how best to enable Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians

to eat together, and that the Decree transcribed in Acts 15 was in fact made by the Jerusalem Council at some stage in the discussion (O'Neill 1970:103).

Before bringing the above discussion to a close, mention must be made what Paul had to say in Galatians:

*All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law. Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith.' (Galatians 3:10)*

*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3: 26-28).*

To the above, Tasker (1965) comments, what does *hupo kataran*- 'under a curse' mean. There are times in the New Testament when Paul almost seems to give *orge* (wrath) and *katara* (curse) independent existence. This is not a theological concept of hostile powers warring against God, or of abstract forces. This is purely a Jewish form of expression; and in many cases, the reason for the apparent 'abstraction' can be found in some passages from the Old Testament (Tasker 1965:95-96). Faith brings blessings, but the Law produces a curse because of the requirement that one must continue to meet its demands faithfully (Deut. 27:26). Because it is practically impossible to be justified by the Law, there is another truth that God adds – *the just shall live faith*.

What is the position of the Gentiles in Christ in relation to the Jews and keeping of Jewish Laws? Is there any difference? To answer these questions, Gentiles as well as Jews are welcomed into the family of God *by faith*. Water baptism brings a person into the fellowship of the Church, but behind this rite lies the more

significant aspect of baptism – being set apart by the Spirit for living in union with Christ. There is one new man in Christ. The ordinary distinctions and divisions of life are swallowed up in this relationship. Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan (1958) quote from a Jewish Prayer Book, with regards to the words of Paul, *‘there is neither Jew nor Greek’*. We find these words:

*Blessed are thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a heathen. Blessed art thou, who hast not made me a bondman. Blessed art thou ...who hast not made me woman.*

Duncan in Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan (1958) is quoted: ‘We might say today that there is no white man and coloured man, master and servant, capitalist and wage-earner, man and woman. Such distinctions, of course, exist in the natural world, but they can now be longer regarded as ultimate. One heart beats in all: one mind guides all: one life is lived by all’ (Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan 1958: 1008).

## **6.20. Jews, Gentiles, and Table Fellowship**

Luke gives two different accounts of the terms in which the issue was discussed. The first is the story of Peter’s vision, which is embedded in the narrative of Cornelius’ conversion (Acts 10), and which Luke explicitly reports as deciding the question about eating with Gentiles: no meats are unclean, and therefore a Jew may eat with a Gentile without hesitation.

In the context of the narrative of Cornelius and his conversion, the vision is meant to show that Gentiles have a full and equal place with Jews in the company of those who hear and receive the word of God. Historically it is doubtful whether the issue of fellowship at the table had to be settled, before Gentiles could be admitted to the congregations. Cornelius, who was already a pious man, feared God with all his house, who gave alms liberally to the people, and who continually prayed to God, may well have been known already how to entertain a Jew without causing offence (O’Neill 1970:103 -107).

All three requirements would have a bearing on whether or not Jewish Christians could invite Gentile Christians to their houses for a meal and whether or not they could accept invitation to dine with Gentile Christians. The Jewish Christians would shrink not only from eating food or drink that might have been offered to idols, or meat not kosher killed, but they would be reluctant to allow their dishes to be touched by Gentiles whose lips might have tasted such food. They would also find it difficult to dine with Gentile married couples who were related within one of the forbidden degrees. Admittedly, the Decree does not explicitly ask Gentile Christians to abstain from unclean meats, but in practice it is unlikely that pork, the main unclean meat, would be kosher killed, so that the provision against eating blood would probably cover the either case. Possibly Gentiles in this region did not normally eat unclean animals. We know that the Egyptians did not eat pigs except at the Dionysian feast, and the practice of abstaining from pork may have been general. In other words, the Decree may not have needed to take not account the possibility that Gentile Christians might eat unclean meats, as little as the regulations about strangers living in Palestine in Leviticus 17:10-16, the ultimate source of the Decree, had to (O'Neill, 1970:105-10).

### **6.21. The Period of Foreign Missions**

Mention must be made of this period of foreign missions, because through missions the church was able to spread beyond Jewish cultures.

The Jerusalem Church was the opening and the centre of the first Christian Church and operations. The Church began here in Jerusalem. Because of persecution, the Church began to 'spill out' to other territories and regions, and of course, to the Gentile world. The preliminary events leading up to Paul's missionary journeys and foreign missions were: -

- ❑ The ministry of Philip in Samaria, in association with Peter and John (Acts 8: 5-25).

- ❑ The conversion of Paul, who become the great missionary, and the leading figure in the Church during this period (Acts 9:1-30).
- ❑ The broadening of Peter's views by his vision at Joppa, resulting in his ministry among the Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts 10: 1-43).
- ❑ The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles at Caesarea, and the vindication of Peter's ministry there (Acts 10:44-11:18).
- ❑ The sanction of the work at Antioch by Barnabas, the representative of the Church at Jerusalem (Acts 11: 22-24).
- ❑ The bringing of Paul from Tarsus to Antioch by Barnabas, and the co-operation of the two men in establishing the Church in the place of where the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:25,26).
- ❑ Parenthesis, The persecution of the Church at Jerusalem by Herod. The death of James and the imprisonment and deliverance of Peter (Acts 12:1-9).

In Acts 13, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the first 'foreign missionaries' were sent forth. Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Church at Antioch; they were accompanied by John Mark (Acts 13: 1-5). The church through the missionary activities of the apostles began to penetrate new frontiers and extended to the other cultures and nations of the then known world. From Acts 13, Paul takes the leading role in the rest of the book. Luke records the apostle's three missionary journeys.

## **6. 22. Paul's First Missionary Journey**

Missionaries Paul, Barnabas and accompanied by John Mark. Some of the places visited and outstanding events are summarised:-

- ❑ In the island of Cyprus where the proconsul was converted and Saul's name was changed to Paul in the record ( Acts 13:4-12).
- ❑ At Pamphylia, John Mark deserted the party (Acts 13: 13).
- ❑ In Antioch in Pisidia, Paul preached his great sermon in the synagogue (Acts 13:14-41).
- ❑ The Jews opposed the work among the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-49).
- ❑ Driven from the city by the Jews, the missionaries went to Iconium. Here they worked for some time, but persecution arose and they fled to Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 14:6).
- ❑ The healing of the lame man at Lystra, resulted in the people proposing to worship Paul and Barnabas, but the missionaries forbade them to do so. The Jews then stirred opposition and Paul was stoned. Undaunted, the two heroes escaped to Derbe, and where they preached the gospel and taught many (Acts 14:8-20).
- ❑ From this point the missionaries retraced their steps, revisiting and organising the churches, and returned to Antioch in Syria, where they made a report of their journey (Acts 14:21-28).

It was during the interim before the second missionary journey, the Jerusalem Council was convened, and the question at issue was discussed (Acts 15:5,6). Peter's argument was in favour of Christian Liberty, (Acts 15:12). Paul and Barnabas then related their experiences to the Council. The speech of James and the decision of the Gentiles from the rules of the ceremonial law. Judas and Silas were sent to Antioch to deliver the letter from the Council to the church and Antioch (Acts 15: 13-30).



### **6. 23. Paul's Second Missionary Journey**

After the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas parted, with Paul taking Silas on second missionary journey. At this time also they recruited Timothy in Lystra. Their journey took them through Turkey, and then on to Greece: Neapolis, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth, where they stayed for some 18 months. The second missionary journey is summarised as follows:-

- ❑ Disagreement between Paul and Barnabas concerning John Mark. Silas was chosen by Paul to accompany him on the journey (Acts 15:36-40)
- ❑ The Spirit guided Paul to Troas, where they were called in to Europe by the 'Macedonian call' or vision (Acts 16:7-10).
- ❑ At Philippi Paul and Silas were imprisoned, and the jailer was converted, and a church was established (Acts 16: 12-34).
- ❑ The next important event was the founding of the Thessalonian church, where persecution arose and they departed to Berea. Here the missionaries found some candid students of the Word of God who became ready converts (Acts 17:1-12).
- ❑ A further persecution broke out again, and Paul went to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy behind to establish the church ( Acts 17:13-15).
- ❑ At Athens, Paul found a city filled with idols, and he preached s sermon on Mar's Hill, but secured only a few converts to the faith (Acts 17: 15-34).
- ❑ At Corinth Paul soon joined Silas and Timothy, and a church was founded. The work was carried on for 18 months with great persecution (Acts 18:1-17).

- ❑ After a considerable time, Paul bid farewell, and set sail for Syria, making a brief stop at Ephesus, and closed his journey at Antioch (Acts 18:18-22).

## **6. 24. Paul's Third Missionary Journey**

Paul's third missionary journey is focused on Ephesus. Acts speaks of Paul having an extra-ordinary effective ministry there over two years or more and comments that 'all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.' (Acts 19:10). The impression is confirmed by 1 Corinthians, where Paul comments that 'I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me' (Acts 16:8,9. (Wenham in Baukham 1993: 250) A summary of this third journey is as follows :-

- ❑ At Ephesus, there arose a great uproar among the silver-smiths, fearing that Paul's doctrine would destroy their business of idol making (Acts 19:23-41).
- ❑ After leaving Ephesus, Paul visited the churches of Macedonia, and then to Greece, and then returned to Macedonia, and to Troas (Acts 20:3-12).
- ❑ From Troas he went to Miletus and sent for the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38).
- ❑ From Miletus, Paul left for Jerusalem, although he was warned by the Spirit of the sufferings that awaited him (Acts 21:1-17).

Paul reported to the Jerusalem church of his ministry to the Gentiles. To silence suspicion, he was urged to take a Jewish vow, which he did. Acts portrays Paul as someone who respects Jewish customs and scruples, accepting the requirement of the Jerusalem Council that Gentile converts should respect Jewish dietary practices, circumcising Timothy 'because of the Jews'. Paul himself observed vows and the

Jewish festivals of unleavened bread and Pentecost (Acts 15, 16:3; 18:18; 20:6, 16). This picture of Paul comes most sharply into focus in Acts 21:20-25, where Paul is told by James that, there were many thousands of believers among the Jews, and that all of them were zealous for the Law.

Paul submitted in going through certain Jewish ritual as stated previously. While Paul held that no Gentile should observe the Mosaic Law, and that no Christian Jew was bound to observe it, yet he saw no fault in Jews who chose to observe it. As far as he himself was concerned, he felt himself free to observe its regulations or not, as circumstances might seem to make expedient. According to Paul, it was not following certain rituals that meant any thing, or circumcision or un-circumcision, but being a new creation in Christ.

## **6. 25. Paul's Arrest and Imprisonment for His Faith In Christ**

Paul was falsely charged with bringing Gentiles into the temple when he spotted attending Pentecost by some Jews from Ephesus who regarded him as a renegade from Judaism and a man whose ministry was devoted to undermining the Jewish Law, which they so venerated. They raised a cry against the apostle, which quickly incited a riot in the inflammable atmosphere of their city.

These Asian Jews recognised Trophimus among Paul's Gentile friends who had come with him to Jerusalem. Later when they chanced upon the apostle in the 'court of Israel' in the inner precincts of the temple, to which only Jewish men who were not priests or Levites were admitted, discharging the ritual obligations which he had assumed, they became obsessed with the notion that Trophimus was still with him.

Unger (1962) says that, had the Jewish charge been true, it would have constituted a capital offense. On this point Roman authorities were so conciliatory of Jewish religious scruples that they even condoned and permitted the death penalty for this offense when infracted by a Roman citizen. The Asian Jews saw a way to trap him and destroy him whom they counted as a dangerous enemy, and so raised such a

tumult that Paul would have been lynched on the spot had not the Roman garrison from the castle, observed the disturbance and summoned the guard. Immediately the tribune Claudius Lysias with his soldiers came swiftly down, who thought of Paul being an insurrectionist, placed him under arrest (Unger 1962: 295-296).

From the moment the Roman tribune intervened and rescued Paul from certain lynching at the hands of the mob in the temple area at Jerusalem (Acts 21:33) to the close of the book of Acts, the apostle was a prisoner at Rome. The law and the legal aspects of the Roman Empire reveals two problems. One is the limited knowledge of the Roman law of this period, which however is alleviated along certain lines by the witness of the papyri from Egypt. They shed light on such legal matters as arrests, imprisonments, and imprisonment, and examination by flogging; it offers similar parallels to the Acts account.

The other difficulty affecting the legal aspects of Paul's imprisonment under the Empire is the simple untechnical nature of Luke's account. He does not appear to have had access to official legal records such as appear in the Egyptian papyri and later Christian *acta*.

Since no persecuting Jews appeared in Rome against Paul (Acts 28:21), there is reason to conclude that the case against him came to naught and that after two years (Acts 28:30) he was released. During this two-year period his lodgings, doubtless in one of the *insulae* or large apartment houses of the city were the scene of writing, preaching, and teaching.

As regards to his trial, one view is that when Paul was released he was enabled to realize his desire to evangelise Spain (Romans 15:4). Another hypothesis is that Paul was imprisoned only one and that this ended in his execution, of which Luke does not write, in order not to have defeated his purpose of commending Christianity to the Roman world, which claimed he would have done by telling how the chief exponent of the Christian message was put to death, as an enemy of the

Roman state. But his theory must assume that the epistles to Timothy and that to Titus are pseudonymous, but incorporate experiences that properly belong to Paul's earlier experiences.

To the compiler of this research, it does not matter how Paul died, whether by execution or natural death, but the main thing is that, his epistles and writings live on, bringing instruction, edification and hope to millions of Christians all over the world.

We shall now discuss the problem of the Jewish and Gentile Church in the light of what was discussed thus far; what were the dangers that faced the early Church as far as Church unity was concerned, and what were the solutions.

## **6. 26. Relationship Between Jewish and Gentile Christians**

Among the threats to the unity of the early Christian community, concerned the relationship between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. There was a two-fold problem, one hand the problem was the loss of Jewish identity on the part of Jewish Christians, and the problem of their ongoing relationship with those Jews who sought to maintain the ancestral religion without bringing down upon themselves the wrath of the Roman Empire. On the other hand, there was the division of the Christian community into Jewish and Gentile parts, with the subsequent danger that, should that division become permanent any pretense that the Church was able to unite in itself all peoples, would be irrevocably lost.

Achtemeier (1987) comments that, Paul's concern was for the Gentile Church with the Jewish Church and their relationship with each other; that it be not divided should certain demands be made on the Gentile Church.

Despite the evident desire of both parties- those who found their leaders in Paul and missionaries like him, and those who looked to Jerusalem for their Christian leadership – to find an acceptable *modus operandi*, the root difficulty

may well have been that each side was preoccupied with a different aspect of their relationship. The preoccupation of the leadership of the Jerusalem Church may well have been with one aspect of that problem: remaining in contact with the non-Christian Jews, whatever that might require of the Gentile converts. Paul's overriding concern, on the other hand, may well have been with the other aspect: the problem of a division within the Church into mutually exclusive Jewish and Gentile parts if the demands imposed upon Gentile Christians by such continuing contact with non-Christian Jews were to be theologically unacceptable (Achte-meier 1987: 4-5).

### **6.27. Acts and the Jewish Heritage of Christian Worship**

Through the preaching of the early apostles, many churches were planted in the cities of the Roman Empire. The early Christian churches were similar to other institutions in the Greco-Roman cities. The Christians were careful to distinguish themselves from the standard religious institutions of their social environment. The Christian group called itself the *ekklesia*, meaning 'assembly', a word borrowed from the political assembly in the Greek cities. The Christians met in 'house-churches' well as the temple.

Socially and religiously, the existence of Jewish synagogues in Greco-Roman cities was crucial for the success of the early Christian mission. Christians appropriated many of the activities of the synagogues; scripture reading and interpretation, prayers and a common meal. Jewish communities in the Hellenistic cities were legally constituted as *collegia*, and Christians claimed this same legal status. Both synagogue and church provided charity to the poor, the widows, and the orphans among their members, and both synagogue and church had the sense of belonging to a broad international entity, the people of God. The synagogue loosed Jewish ties to a temple cult, and the Christians in turn proclaimed their independence of temples and priests. Furthermore, Christians seldom forgot their origin as a Jewish sect. Even when the Christian sect had developed its own identity, and observation of the Jewish Law became optional (Staumbach and Balch 1986: 140-141). Some Christians apparently continued to observe their traditional Jewish customs; in the second century there is evidence that many Christians were observing kosher restrictions in their food.

The prayer practices of the Jerusalem Christians according to Acts can be compared in following elements: -

- ❑ The temple and the home were regarded as places of prayer. There were some public prayer in synagogues on fast days and Sabbath assemblies, and some individual groups and prayer on weekdays. It is probably this factor which enables the Christian community to maintain a distinctive presence;; they habitually assembled for prayer at one or more possibly both times of sacrifice. The early practice of prayer among Jewish Christians owed more to the temple and home than to synagogues.
- ❑ The Temple was a particular focus for public prayer (Acts 3:1);
- ❑ Prayer at the time of the sacrifice was a common pattern;
- ❑ There is silence concerning the synagogues as a place of regular, public prayer;
- ❑ The style of prayer was similar as that of Judaism.

The framework of Christian prayer as portrayed by Luke in terms of locations, times, and content is Jewish, and authentic to the pre-70 period. Luke is silent concerning the *Shema* and prayer in course of the sun. On the other hand, the Christian prayer in homes which he describes is communal and expresses the distinctive identity of the Christian community. The early Christians in Jerusalem substantially retained their heritage of Jewish prayer, and the distinctively Christian elements were primarily additions. Therefore, where it corresponds to other sources, Acts may be used as corroborative evidence for Jewish prayer practice at the end of the Second Temple period (Falk in Bauckham 1992:298).

## **6.28. Acts and Jesus of Nazareth**

I do not think that this subject of 'Multiculturalism and the Church in Acts' will be complete if no word is said about Jesus Christ of Nazareth without whom, there would have been no Christianity or even this research on this topic. Jesus Christ is the central figure and the hub in which everything hinges and evolves on. We will briefly look at the life and ministry of Christ from a Jewish perspective and a Jewish background and heritage.

Jesus came from the Galilean town of Nazareth, that is, from the north of Palestine, which also boasted a fair number of Hellenistic cities. His family was Jewish, which is clear from the names of his parents (Joseph and Mary) and his brothers (James, Joses, Judas, and Simon). Jesus' father was a building artisan or a carpenter (Math. 13:55), as was perhaps Jesus himself (Mark 6:3). According to Justin, he made yokes and ploughs. Jesus' mother tongue was Galilean Aramaic, or perhaps even a Hebrews dialect that had survived in Galilee. Presumably Jesus could also speak Greek. Many of his sayings, which were preserved in Greek derived from an Aramaic original. Aramaic must therefore have been the language of his proclamation. No reliable information about Jesus' education has been preserved. But it must be assumed that Jesus was by no means uneducated; he was certainly able to read and write.

At some point after he had joined the sect of John the Baptist, Jesus parted from them and began his own ministry as an itinerant preacher and teacher. His ministry was marked by many outstanding miracles. Some of them were: the turning of water into wine; the raising of Lazarus from the dead; walking on water; the feeding of the five thousand. Miracles of healings and the casting out of demons were common in Jesus' ministry. He lived a simple life and illustrated his teachings with many parables. He was known in many Jewish circles as a 'Rabbi' (teacher). Some believed that he was the promised Jewish Messiah who was to come, whilst others took him as a prophet; still others, especially the religious leaders, saw Christ as an



impostor and a blasphemer. His famous 'Sermon on the Mount' spoke about love, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The places where he was active are not known with any certainty, because most of the specific place names in the gospels were added to the tradition at later date. But it is striking how strongly Galilee stands out as the place of his activity, and how completely the most important Hellenistic cities (Caesarea, Sephoris and Tiberias) are missing in the tradition. But the essentially non-Jewish areas in the north (Caesarea Philippi) and east of Galilee (Gadara east of the Galilean Sea) are occasionally mentioned. It can therefore be concluded from the outset, that Jesus never visited pagan countries. How often Jesus travelled to Jerusalem must remain uncertain; since according to the Synoptic gospels it was only once, while according to the Gospel of John he did so several times (at least three times). Jesus certainly did not exclude Judea from his ministry. Jesus was arrested while in Jerusalem for the Passover, probably in the year 30, and that he was executed.

As for the question of who was primarily responsible for Jesus' execution, it attempts to shift the major responsibility further and further onto the Jewish authorities. In Matthew, Pilate even washed his hands in innocence (Matt. 27:24), and a later tradition claims that Pilate had already come to believe in Jesus in his heart, but that the Jews had forced him nevertheless to go ahead with the execution.

There were two reasons says Koester (1982) which led to the execution of Jesus: - *Firstly*, The Jewish authorities did not have the right of capital punishment, which was the exclusive reserve of the Roman prefect. The only two cases which seem to suggest that the Jewish court could sentence a person to death are the stoning of Stephen and the murder of Jesus' brother, James. But the former was a case of mob lynching, while the latter occurred during a vacancy in the prefect's office. This means these two cases cannot prove the point. The Jewish authorities were indeed not permitted not to put anyone to death (John 18:31). They certainly would never

be able to do so in the presence of the Roman governor, who regularly came from Caesarea to Jerusalem on the high holidays in order to prevent any possible unrest.

*Secondly*, The reason for Jesus' condemnation was not the blasphemy that is reported in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 14:64). All the gospels agree in reporting the inscription on the cross: 'Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews' (Mark 15:26; John 19:19). This inscription says only too clearly that there was a substantive reason for Jesus' condemnation by the Romans. Whatever Jesus' own claims might have been, in the eyes of Pilate he was an actual or potential political agitator. One may, assume that the leading circles in Jerusalem were usually interested in cooperation with the governor, as they may have done in the case of the proceedings against Jesus. But Pilate would have exercised his legal authority in any case, however interested he might have been in the cooperation of the Jewish authorities. Executed by the horribly cruel method of crucifixion, Jesus died a painful death; he was buried in a tomb, but rose again from the dead on the third day (Koester 1982: 75-76).

## **6. 29. Summary and Conclusion**

In summarising this chapter, Luke, in Acts, gives an account of the beginnings of the Christian Church, starting from the day of Pentecost, to the imprisonment of Paul. The identity of the groups on the day of Pentecost were mainly Hellenists-Greek speaking Jews from the Jewish diaspora. The Jerusalem Church in its initial setting were predominantly Jewish Christians of the diaspora. The early apostles were originally from the Jerusalem Church. Some of the prominent leaders were James, and Peter. James seemed to be the 'resident apostle'.

There were cultural diversities with the fact that there were Jews and Gentiles. Cultural disputes were settled, especially with the widows of the Hellenists being neglected in their 'daily ministrations'. Seven officers were chosen to 'serve tables', whilst the apostles gave themselves to the spiritual ministry of prayer and preaching. The early church lived in community- 'koinonia', and they practiced community of goods.

Because of persecution, the church began to spread to other communities. The Church began to spread to the Gentiles. An Ethiopian eunuch embraces the Christian faith through the preaching of Phillip. At first, Peter is seen as the one who first took the gospel to the Gentiles. This came about when Peter saw a vision on the house-top in relation to the evangelising of the Gentiles. The house of Cornelius, a Roman from the 'Italian band' embraces the Christian faith. Later, it was Paul, the apostle who is seen as the 'apostle to the Gentiles'

The first Gentile Church is established in Antioch by those disciples who were scattered abroad, because of the persecution. Antioch also becomes the first 'multicultural church' in the book of Acts. Not long, cultural, religious and doctrinal issues began to spring up within the early Church. Acts 15 and Galatians 2, gives some insight to the problems that were dealt with. The main issue was whether Gentiles must be circumcised and observe Jewish laws and customs, for them to be truly 'saved'. The Jerusalem Council, sometimes referred to as the Apostolic Council, through James, advised the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia of their decision. The letter was taken by Paul and Barnabas to the churches mentioned.

In Acts 21, the account of Paul's visit to Jerusalem, and the meeting with James, brings out some very controversial issues. Paul is taken to task by James of his alleged attack against the Jews. It was alleged that Paul taught that believing Jews ought not to circumcise their children, and not to keep Jewish customs. James then asks Paul to prove what he taught was false, to take a vow with four men and pay for their purification as well; Paul submits to this instruction. After this, Paul is almost killed by a lynch mob, but the Roman tribunal comes in time to save Paul from the hands of the mob.

The period of foreign missions is especially attributed Paul, through his missionary journeys. Some of them who accompanied Paul in his journeys were, Barnabas,

Mark John, Silas, Timothy who was circumcised by Paul 'because of the Jews', and Luke the author of Acts.

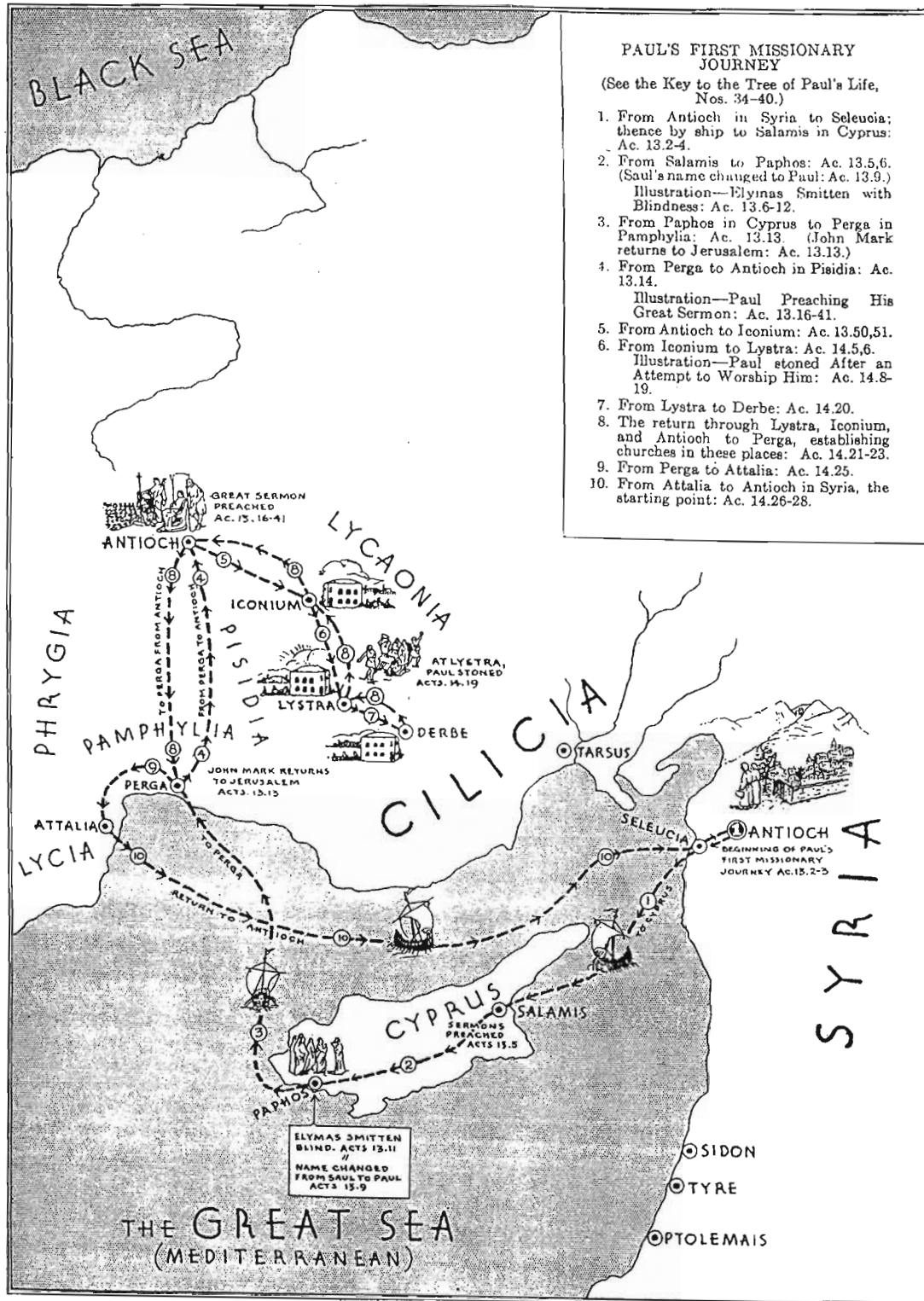
In conclusion, the Church in Acts which began with predominantly Jewish believers, was not meant to be just a Jewish Church. God intended the Church to be a Church that reaches out to other cultures and nations of the world. The Church was meant to cross cultural boundaries, overcome racial intolerance and be the Church God intended it to be – a church that embraces all cultures and nations, irrespective of race, colour, language, or social status. If cultural differences should exist, it must be overcome by meaningful fellowship, interaction and dialogue, just as the Jerusalem Council was able to resolve its cultural problems and through wisdom was able to bring about peace and harmony.

The early Church thrived amidst persecution from the religious leaders, and cultural differences of its day. The Church made an impact and a difference in the fabric of the then known society, and made inroads into other cultures and ethnic groups. Nothing was able to divide the Church, not even cultural differences. The words of the apostle Paul ring out, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for we are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:10).

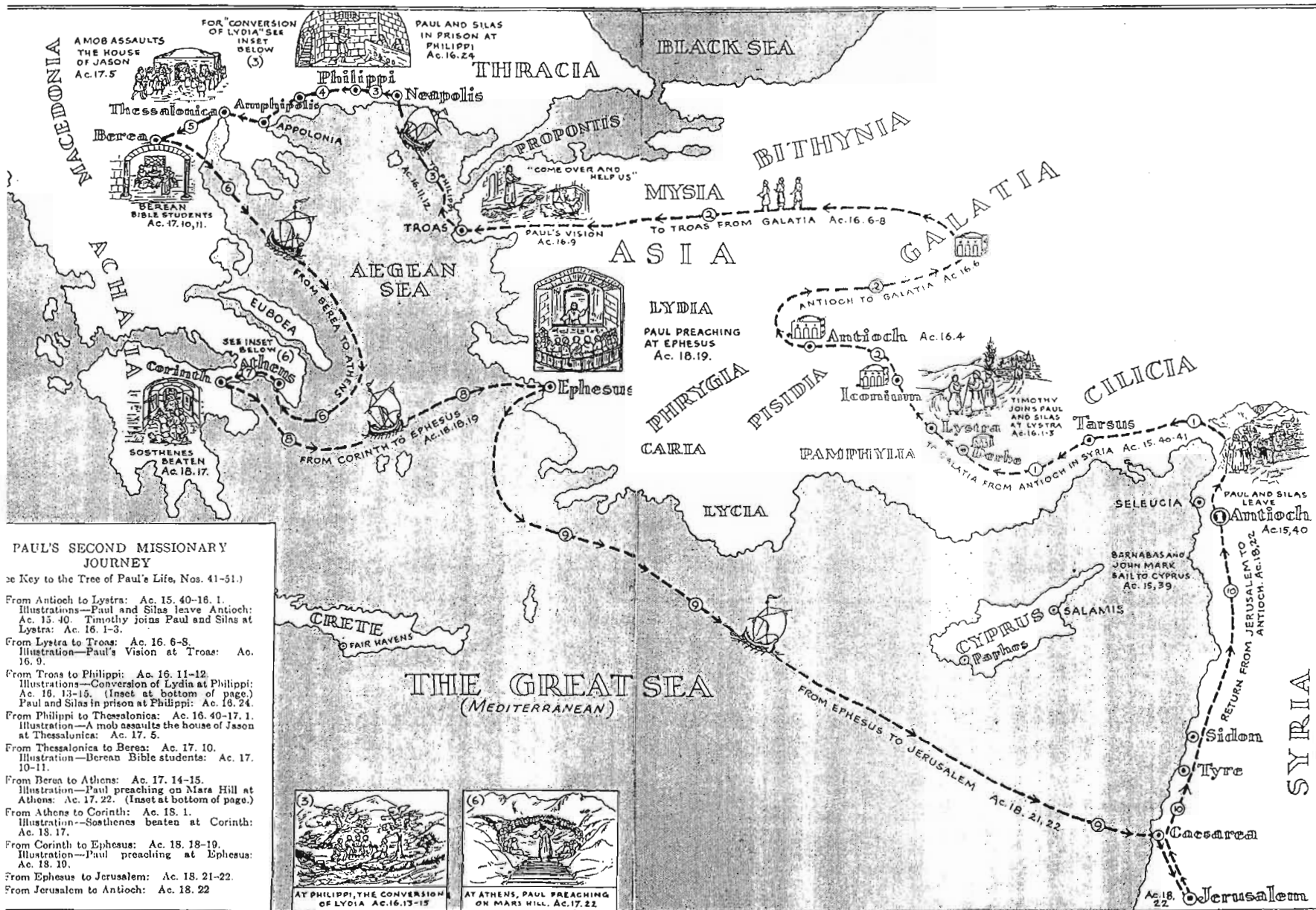
In the light of what has been discussed in this chapter, we can ask ourselves, how did the 20<sup>th</sup> century Church fare? What were the challenges it faced, and how did it overcome these challenges? How can we contextualise the Gospel in Acts with multiculturalism and the Church in South Africa?

The next chapter will feature multiculturalism and the Church in South Africa, in the light of the book of Acts. It will focus on the different denominations of the Church in South Africa, and its cultural and multicultural context, its diversity, ethnicity and challenges.

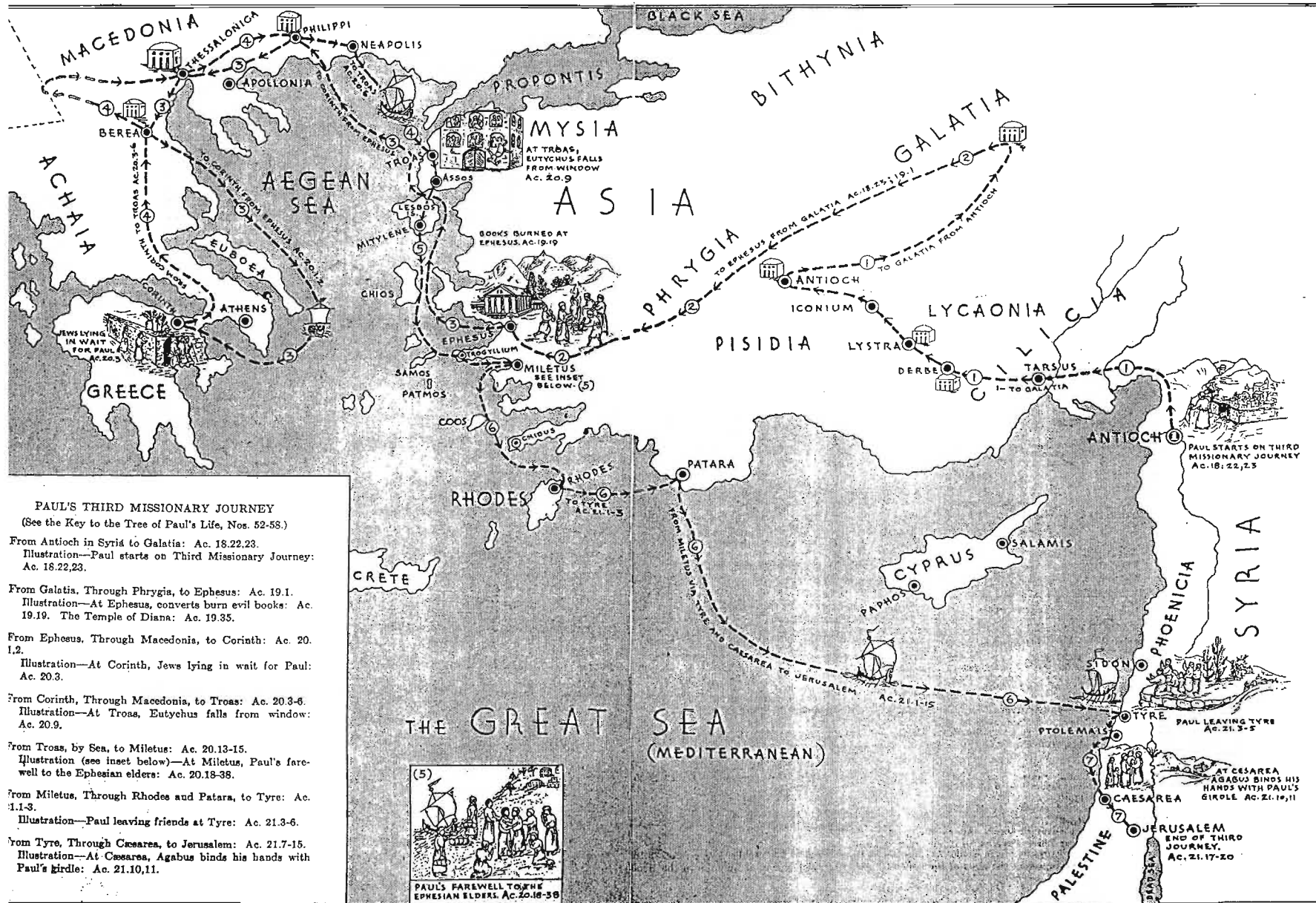
# Map of The First Missionary Journey of Paul



# Map of The Second Missionary Journey of Paul

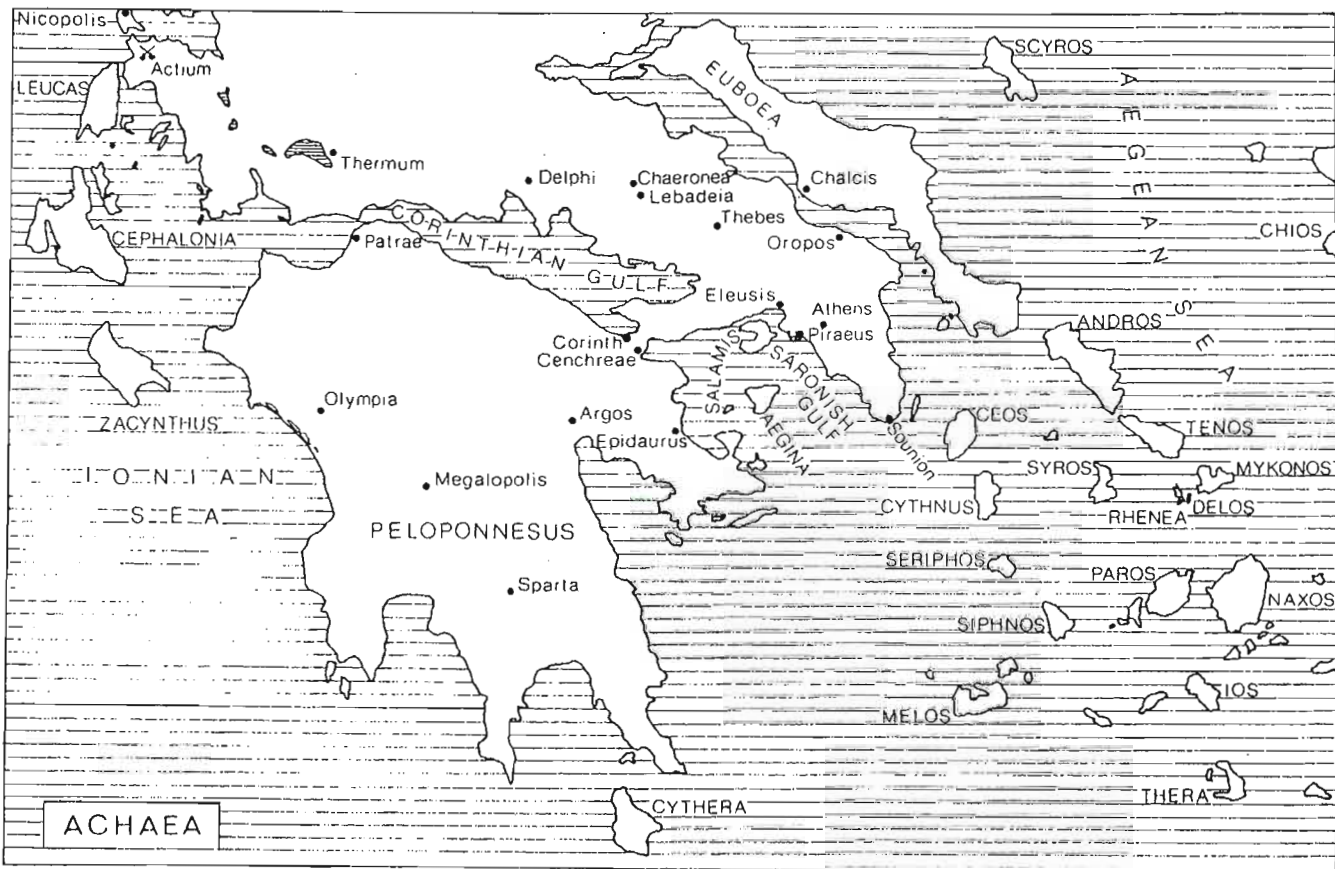


# Map of The Third Missionary Journey of Paul





# Map Of Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome





## CHAPTER 7

### Multiculturalism and the Church in South Africa

#### 7.0. Introduction

This chapter will focus on the church and its context in a multicultural society. It will deal with how multiculturalism is prominent in the different denominational systems of the church in South Africa. South Africa, supposedly, a 'Christian country' has more than two thirds of its population who profess to be Christians. The church in South Africa is definitely multicultural in its composition within its many denominational affiliation.

We shall look at its diversity and identity, ethnicity, challenges, and finally, suggested or possible solutions to the problems of multiculturalism within the church.

#### 7.1. Multiculturalism - Its Diversity and Identity

All of us have some denominational affiliation and our understanding of the Christian faith has been nurtured and shaped by particular ecclesial traditions. We rightly treasure the spirituality which has helped us to become who we are. Yet there is an important difference between such loyalty and a spirit of denominationalism, between a recognition of enriching diversity of Christian faith and practice and that disunity which hinders witness and mission. Our primary loyalty as Christians should be to Jesus Christ and the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic church,' - not to our denominations (Pityana and Vincencio 1995:15).

Pityana and Vincencio (1995) say that, the complex nature of the problem of denominationalism in South Africa becomes obvious when we reflect on the range and variety of denominations present amongst us. Consider the different sets of issues which face us in relating the Roman Catholic and the various Protestant churches to each other; or the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, the *Ned. Hervormde* and *Gereformeerde Kerk* with each other, with the Uniting Reformed Church, or with the so-called English speaking churches with each other and the

historic mainline churches; or the new independent charismatic churches with each other and the rest of us.

Even within denominations there is much diversity, and charismatics, evangelicals, liberals and social activists often find more in common with others outside their denominations than within them. What is clear in seeking to help the rebirth of the ecumenical church diversity which is present within the churches. The question is how to do this in fulfillment of the ecumenical mandate rather than in opposition to it (Pityana and Vincencio 1995:15-16).

People need a sense of belonging not just to 'the universal church' or 'the church in South Africa', but to particular local congregations, particular movements, and organisations within the church. In this sense, belonging to a denomination help provide people with a sense of identity and loyalty to which they can relate. This is one of the problems facing united congregations in which several denominations participate. Pityana and Vincencio (1995) comment that many people find it difficult to cope with diversity in expressions of faith and worship, often preferring the tested ways of their own background rather than the attempt to create new ecumenical forms of life and worship. There is greater certainty and security in denominationalism especially in times of social transition such as we are experiencing. Church leaders in particular find it easier to retain control and provide direction when they can function within their own structures without any real need to consult or co-operate with others (Pityana and Vincencio 1995:16).

The roots of denominationalism are often more sociological than theological. If we trace the origin of each of our denominations, we will soon see that social and political forces played a major role in bringing them into being. What was and is at the heart of the rise of denominationalism is the question of identity. The Protestant Reformation was bound up with a growing sense of what it meant to be German, Scottish or English. In England, denominationalism has also been closely related to the class structures of society, just as North America it was often bound up with race. The African indigenous church movement began as part of the Ethiopian

reaction to European colonisation, and seldom actually changed the theology which they had learnt from the missionaries (Pityana and Vincencio1995: 16-17).

Denominationalism came to South Africa with colonialism. All of the historic confessional divisions amongst us are imported, and most of the reasons for these divisions have little significance for a large segment of the membership. But whatever the reasons for the divisions – now often long forgotten and in any case usually not understood – the reality of denominational identities is very strong, having taken on new characteristics and dynamics within our context. Pityana and Vivencio (1995) say that, the irony is that while we have rightly rejected the way in which the missionaries gave their support to colonialism, many of us have accepted uncritically the denominational divisions which is also part of their legacy. Thus, for many people, denominational loyalty is now an essential part of their identity as Christians, and there is strong resistance to anything which might change it (Pityana and Vincencio1995 :17).

Denominations that exist in South Africa are many; it gives an idea of denominational identities of churches. Johnstone (2001), presents some interesting statistics of denominational figures of which the Zion Christian Church is the largest.

<u>Churches</u>	<u>Affiliates</u>
Zion Christian Church.....	4,200,000
Catholic .....	3,372,492
Anglican (Church of Province).....	1,500,000
Methodist .....	1,462,379
Dutch Reformed(NGK).....	1,227,621
United Reformed Church in S.A.....	1,205,943
Apostolic Faith Mission( AFM).....	1,000,000
Assemblies of God .....	1,000,000

Evangelical Lutheran Church in S.A.....	769,000
12 Apostles Church in Christ.....	650,000
Full Gospel Church of God.....	400,000
Presbyterian Church of Africa.....	350,000
New Apostolic Church.....	345,589
Dutch Reformed ( NHK).....	300,000
International Fellowship of Christian Churches.....	300,000
United Congregational.....	270,253
Pentecostal Protestant.....	160,000
Jehovah's Witnesses.....	155,000
Presbyterian Church of S.A. ....	150,000
Seventh Day Adventist.....	140,000
Baptist Union of S.A.....	112,402
Reformed ( GK).....	101,159
Moravian.....	100,200
Church of England in S.A.....	100,000
Reformed Presbyterian.....	90,000
Africa Evangelical.....	60,000
Baptist Convention.....	55,000
Pentecostal Holiness.....	49,900
Salvation Army.....	45,000
Church of the Nazarene.....	37,162
Evangelical Bible.....	35,000
Zulu Congregational.....	23,000
Other Denominations.....	9,332,000

<b><u>Religion</u></b>	<b><u>Adherents</u></b>
Christian .....	29,684,861
Traditional Ethnic.....	6,606,487
Non- Religious / Other.....	3,462,428
Muslim.....	585,460

Hindu.....	505,707
Baha'i.....	201,883
Jewish .....	68,640
Buddhist, Chinese.....	12,113
(Johnstone 2001: 577)	

Elphick & Davenport (1997) comment that, because Christians have been so numerous and so politically influential, Christian doctrine, language, and sentiment are also interwoven in the social and cultural history of South Africa. Starting with the missionary campaign to Christianise African societies, some of the most intimate matters of white and black culture in South Africa – initiation, marriage, divorce, sexuality, association with people of other races, and even dress and drinking patterns – have been debated at length and with passion ,largely in Christian terms. Also ,until the 1950’s, churches and missions controlled almost all schools for Africans, and, to this day, many private schools for largely white elite. So, too social work, medicine, and nursing all were, to varying degrees, sponsored by Christian missions and churches. And the literature of Afrikaners and Africans was, until, the Second World War, largely shaped by churches, missions, and publishers with Christian agendas; both literatures, like that of English-speaking whites, were replete with Christian motifs and allusions.

Because Christianity has become the religion of the vast majority of South Africans, including the rulers, it might be well have contributed a common language, aspirations, and, a common rituals to the integration of a highly divided society. Yet its integrative role has, so far, been slight, partly because it has so successfully adapted its message to many cultural traditions and to many social settings. Most South African Christians conduct their religious life within tightly bounded enclaves of race, of ethnicity, or of class – and sometimes of gender. One encounters, for example, highly distinctive Afrikaans, Sotho, Zulu, English, German, Coloured, and Indian Christianities, each with further male and female nuances. This capacity to be ‘translated’- first into another language, then into

another culture – which the Gambian mission theorist Lamin Sanneh sees as the striking feature of Christianity worldwide, has, in South Africa, been in tension with the universalism of the Christian proclamation that ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 1, 11).

## **7.2. Multiculturalism -Its Ethnicity**

In looking at the multiculturalistic nature of the church in South Africa, we shall survey some of the ethnic churches that exist in South Africa. A history of each church will not be a possibility, but we shall look at the kind of liturgy, doctrine and general structure of their churches, in context with the church in Acts. As the church of Jerusalem was predominantly a Jewish Christian church, was different in cultural and ethnic settings from the Antioch church, which was a Gentile church.

## **7.3. African Initiated Churches (AIC)**

Elphick & Davenport (1997) comment that alongside the churches planted by missionaries in South Africa runs a remarkable strand of African Christian churches born of the interchange between Africa and the West. An indigenous contribution to Christianity in South Africa, these diverse churches by 1991 embraced at least 9.2 million people and 47 per cent of all black Christians, up from 40 per cent in 1980, a dramatic increase compared to all other religious groups. More people in South Africa belong to AIC churches, than to churches originating in European and American missions.

The AICs do not regard mainline churches as standard or ideal churches and find their own norm in early Christianity, as the frequent use of Biblical church names demonstrates: for example, the Apostolic Nazareth Jerusalem Corinthians Church in Zion, Bethlehem of Judea (*sic*) Church of South Africa, Ephesians Missions Church, Cush Nineveh Church. The AICs number at least 6000 churches. The term ‘African Initiated Churches’ is used to focus on the churches’ distinctive African

origins. An AIC church means a purely black-controlled denomination with no links in membership or administrative controls with any non-African church. The AICs have completely broken the umbilical cord with the western missionary enterprise. These are 'self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating churches' (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 211-212).

Elphick and Daveport (1997), inform us that, some of the churches that come under the AIC churches are the 'Zion' churches that are in Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal. A whole series of Zion City churches emerged from the first group of black Zion leaders around Le Roux at Wakkerstroom. One of these leaders, Daniel Nkonyane, was responsible for the local work of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, and, before he broke away, he introduced certain elements in worship: white robes, bare feet, holy sticks, and Old Testament symbolism, all visible hall marks of Zionism today (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 219).

Some of the notable churches founded at this time are: Church of Christ (1910) ; Church of the Light (1910); Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa (1911); AmaNazaretha ( 1911); Church of the Spirit (1916); Church of the Saints (1919) ; Christian Apostolic Church in Zion (1920); and the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission (1920), from which the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) seceded. This church was led by Engenas Lekganyane. Few of the founders and leaders were well-educated, but like the Ethiopian leaders, they were eager to maintain close connections with traditional royalty. The early leaders were predominantly male.

The ZCC at Moria near Petrusburg has developed into the largest best known , but by no means typical indigenous church in South Africa, financially self reliant and exceptionally strong. Its spiritual life is not separated from its successful business enterprises, the two conceived together as facets of the wholeness of Christian life. Church funds bought farms, provided loans to business people to build shops run by the church, and bought gifts for secular authorities.

The AmaNazaretha (Church of the Nazarites) also has mass following, but unlike the ZCC, did not spread throughout the whole country. Isaiah Shembe was the founder of this movement. It is organised hierarchically along the lines of Zulu social structure, its leader or high-priest addressed and treated as *Inkosi* (chief or king) or as *Ubaba* (father), and assisted by well-trusted ministers who form a council, among them, evangelists, preachers, and leaders of groups for people of different gender, marital status, and age.

This church encourages distinctive Zulu modes of dress and dance in worship, and accepting polygamy, its aim, like that of the order of Zion City churches, is 'the founding of a new society, and the inculcation of new social and economic values.'

In Zion-Apostolic churches, female prophets are common. One of them is Ma Kku who supposedly had visions and predictions and visitations from God. One visitation instructed her to build a church with twelve doors, at Evaton, near Vereeniging, which was an urban area reserved for whites, but later, in a rare decision, set aside as an African freehold area. The mission Ma Nku built in 1939 became a huge undertaking, and is today the fourth-largest indigenous church in all South Africa (Elphick and Davenport 1997:220).

#### **7.4. Liturgy and Dress Code**

The services of the indigenous spiritual churches have much livelier liturgy than mainline denominations, another source of their vitality. Their liturgical forms are not imposed from above, or from foreign to the worshippers. Extempore prayers, the wearing of uniforms, the use of drums, dancing, and symbolic instruments, and innovation in worship are central to their life.

Indigenous spiritual churches are rich in symbolism, varying from church to church according to the availability of natural and manufactured resources, such as water, trees, mountains, stones, clothes, and candles. Symbols are meant to enrich spiritual experience and to point beyond the visible to the invisible.



Elphick and Davenport (1997) comment that almost all the indigenous spiritual churches use uniforms that also have symbolic meanings. Khaki symbolises that human beings are dust and to dust shall they return. White is a symbol of purity, red of the blood of the Lamb. Christian identity is most often symbolised by cloth crosses, worn by members, or wooden crosses carried in processions.

Rituals are also symbolic. In some churches purity is exemplified by the act of taking off one's shoes, as God instructed Moses to do when approaching a sanctuary. In healing, *imphepho* (incense) and candles are used; incense is also used by the prophets to symbolise the presence of God.

The ministry of healing, common in most of these churches, is probably the most profound aspect of their spirituality. The Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion (CCACZ) offers healing services twice each week. In healing, the spiritual and material dimensions of religion are brought together: while the head of the healer is in the spiritual world, his or her feet are deeply rooted in the natural world, especially in the use of water, mixed with green (or sometimes dry) plants, leaves salt, or lime as medicinal resources (*iziwasho*).

The healing ministry is conducted within the traditional African view of the world as permeated by both good and bad spirits. The *iminyama* (bad spirits) are believed to attack innocent individuals constantly. Faith-healers counter-attack these bad spirits through prayer and *iziwasho* (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 219-220, 223).

### **7. 5. Pentecostalism and the Dawn of a New South Africa**

South African Pentecostalism, despite denials of some, has its roots in a marginalised and underprivileged society struggling to find dignity and identity. It expanded among the oppressed African people who were neglected, misunderstood, and deprived of anything but token leadership by their white Pentecostal 'masters', who had apparently ignored biblical concepts like the priesthood of all believers and the equality of all people in Christ. And yet the ability of Pentecostalism to

adapt to fulfil African religious aspirations was its principal strength (Elphick and Davenport 1997:240).

African Pentecostalism, of which the indigenous Pentecostal type-churches are its predominant demonstration, has grown in the past thirty years to such an extent that it has become the major force in South African Christianity. The indigenous Pentecostal-type churches, in turn, made their own distinct contribution to African theology, having developed along quite different lines from the more Western Pentecostal churches. These churches demonstrate what happens when Pentecostal pneumatology encounters the traditional spirituality of Africa, and what African people, when left to themselves, do with Pentecostal pneumatology. The overriding African concern for spiritual power from a mighty God to overcome all enemies and evils that threaten human life, results in an extensive ministry of healing and exorcism. African Pentecostalism created a Christian liturgy in a free and spontaneous way that does not betray its essential Christian character, but liberates it from the foreignness of European forms (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 241).

Holistic, ecstatic, and experiential religious practices are still found in Pentecostal liturgy throughout the world, because they were borrowed from the 19<sup>th</sup> century African-American Holiness movement, which in turn, had some of its roots in traditional African religion – the shout, antiphonal singing, simultaneous and spontaneous prayer, and dance. Early Pentecostals emphasised the freedom, the equality, the community, and the dignity of people in the sight of God. Later Pentecostals acquiesced in the societal forces that tended to divided them, finding spiritual comfort in separate spiritual spheres. Whether the egalitarian or separatist tendencies of Pentecostalism will triumph in the new South Africa is a major question for the next century (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 240-241).

## **7.6. The Church among the Indians in South Africa**

Elphick and Davenport (1997), say that, Indians may not be the indigenous people of South Africa, but the church among the Indian Christians is part of their Christian heritage in which they can be proud of.

The beginnings of the church among the Indians in South Africa has its roots in the coming of the indentured labourers to South Africa in 1860. The vast majority of the 152,184 Indian migrants to Natal between 1860 to 1911 were labourers, who spoke, Tamil, Hindi or Telegu; others were Muslims and Gujarati -speaking Hindu traders. Among the 350 Indian immigrants who arrived aboard the *Truro* in 1860 were 50 Catholics and only about 4 Protestants.

Indian Christians brought with them forms of Christian worship new to Natal. During the celebration of Christmas midnight mass in 1861, for example, Indian Catholics processed through the streets beating a large drum and accompanying an ornate crib, as they would have done in an Indian Village. Many of the Indians returned to India after 1872; others stayed behind, and made South Africa their home-land.

Churches were then started by the Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Baptists and Pentecostals. Churches were not only founded, but schools and hospitals were built to minister to the educational and social needs of the community.

(Elphick and Davenport 1995:286)

## **7.7. The Growth of the Pentecostal Churches Among the Indian Christians**

G. Pillay in Elphick and Davenport (1997) state that,

Pentecostal churches emerged during the 1920s and early 1930s, as Indians left the rural areas to find work in the cities. Urbanization inevitably brought with it new and difficult problems. The joint-family system (*kutum*), as it is called in Tamil, which had provided communal stability, though still dominant up to the mid-1920s was 'visibly diminishing' and well established customs were either changing or falling into neglect. The Indian elite was becoming

entirely urbanised. Young Indians forced to cope in a Western context , were slowly becoming alienated from their traditional culture.

Relocated families formed new communities in and around Durban and Pietermaritzburg , and here Pentecostalism first took root. For example ,Indians working for the Durban Corporation or in the railways lived in barracks north-east of the city centre, where Bethesda , destined to become the largest in church among the Indian South Africans, began. So, too, the Apostolic Faith Mission spread among mill-settlements on Natal's North Coast (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 286-291).

### **7.8. Liturgy and Dress Code**

With the emergence of Pentecostal churches, the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, prophesying, seeing visions were prominent among many believers. The singing of hymns and choruses from an hymnal or 'chorus book' was also another feature in the worship services. Singing in the 'vernacular' ( Hindi or Tamil) was also popular in the early days. Certain churches were identified by the language used for worship services, example, 'Telegu Baptist or Tamil Baptist'. This was necessary in the early days because many of the older folks did not understand English, and furthermore they preferred to worship in their own mother tongue, and wanted to retain their cultural heritage, as far as language was concerned.

Some Pentecostal churches emphasised 'tarry meetings', which is praying and waiting for the filling of the Holy Spirit, with the emphasis on speaking with other tongues.

Exorcism, healing and deliverance from unclean habits, besides preaching and teaching, is also practiced. Most converts are won to Christ through this kind of ministry or through the influence of family members, friends, or relatives who embraced Christ.

Most of the local Indian churches had no 'full-time pastors' or ordained clergy, but 'elders', senior lay-men, who did the preaching, visitation of the flock and the general oversight of the church, together with other members of the church council.

Later as the church grew, more men were trained . Sound doctrinal principles were also taught as it is today.

As far as dress code is concerned, men wore suits with neck ties, whilst women wore *sarees* (female Indian apparel) or long skirts with modesty being the watch-word. The wearing of pants or 'pants-suit' among women were not allowed – it was taboo, among the Indian Pentecostal churches. At present the wearing of such apparel is acceptable in most churches. This was vastly through Western influence and life-styles.

In the early days of Pentecostalism, within the Indian church, great emphasis were placed on 'head-covering' for women. The wearing of 'mantellas' – a small apron like cloth, (mostly made of lace) were used by women to cover their heads during times of worship. In some Pentecostal churches, 'mantellas' were supplied at the entrance of the church hall to women , if they did not come with one. Other women wore hats, instead of the 'mantella'. This was mostly in historical or 'main-line' churches.

The emphasis on 'head-covering' became almost a doctrine, because it was preached and taught from time to time . The feeling of guilt was always there if a woman did wear one; because a 'law' was being broken. This 'doctrine' of 'head-covering' was taken from Paul's letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:1-16). It seemed that this issue of 'head-covering' was very a contentious one in the church of Corinth. The apostle Paul in his letter gave counsel with regards to this matter and concluded his exhortation with the words, '*we have no such custom, neither the churches of God ( 1Cor. 11: 16).*

In later years as 'more revelation' came to the church, the custom of wearing 'mantellas' became less important in the Indian church. It is now believed (among most Indian churches in South Africa) that the doctrine of 'head-covering' (the

veiling of women) was a social custom, and a Jewish cultural issue which was imposed on women worshippers of the present day church (see 1Cor. 11:16).

It must also be noted that some Indian Pentecostal churches still believe and practice in the biblical social custom of 'head-covering'.

The present-day 'Indian' church in South Africa, has undergone a radical change as far as cultural patterns, and the style of Christian worship, is concerned. Hymns are very rarely sung, except in weddings and funerals. At the present day, most songs that are sung are mostly short choruses or songs that are sung in contemporary style, with spontaneous worship.

### **7.9. Multiculturalism and the Church**

Elphick and Davenport (1997) comment that, the churches of European descent differed from one another in ecclesiology and in politics. Each brought to the Cape some practices, aspirations, or fears derived from European history, most notably from the Reformation and the French revolution. Each strove to reproduce at the Cape its characteristic form of organisation – Episcopal, Presbyterian or Congregational – and to establish the relationship with the state it had advocated in Europe. In retrospect it seems that it was inevitable that, since no church had clear majority among the white settlers, the Cape would reject an established church and adopt instead a pluralist and voluntarist form of church organisation, as did the United States, Canadian, and Australian colonies in the same period. The outcome was not so apparent to contemporary South Africans (Elphick and Davenport 1997:3).

### **7.10. Cultural and Linguistic Differences**

The early church among South African 'whites' were composed of the NGK, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics and Lutherans.

Inter-racial contact within churches was a different matter; it was of great importance for South African Christianity. In the nineteenth century relationships developed which would later provoke a world wide denunciation of religious apartheid. Yet the origin of segregated worship varied.

Methodists, who straddled the two racial cultures over a wider geographical area than any other denomination, were accustomed to separate white and indigenous congregations from the start, although they commonly considered it only a temporary expedient.

Cultural incongruity, linguistic differences, and residential separation contributed to the general practice of segregated worship. Methodists, like almost all whites, assumed that white culture was radically superior to black culture. Most missionaries considered African converts should abandon undesirable cultural practices. Methodists set up different circuits for black and for white churches but without sufficient integration at the clerical level. In the end, they paid the price for this, being subject more than other denominations to the turmoils of black separatism. Although the Methodists ordained African ministers beginning in 1871, Nehemiah Tile's Thembu Church broke away in the 1880s, followed by Mangena Mokone's Ethiopian Church. The unifying trends of shared spiritual experiences in South African Methodism were overwhelmed by blacks' desire to attain higher status than their white colleagues in nominally non-racial church would allow, linked to a growing conviction that were proven resources in African Christianity which allowed blacks to pioneer new directions of their own (Elphick and Davenport 1997:65).

For the Anglicans too, racially separate worship was customary if not mandatory. All dioceses had both predominantly white parishes, but all were represented in the same synods. This structural unity at the top discouraged secessions, and, by strange irony, provided flexibility sufficient both to absorb the prejudice of some believers against mixed worship and to enable the Church to incorporate the

Ethiopians in their fold in 1900 as a separate religious order. Episcopal structures, it could be argued, safeguarded the unity of the Anglican – as well as the Roman Catholic – under circumstances that might otherwise have resulted in an ethnic divide.

In Baptist circles the maintenance of common worship across the colour line appears to have been relatively unimportant, at least for the Afrikaanse Baptiste Kerk. A mixed congregation was established at Stutterheim in 1867, but the Kerkraad (church council) minutes of 1924 make it clear that over a period of time separation had occurred because it was ‘necessary that general public opinion on race relations be taken in account’ if an effective ministry among whites was to continue.

Elphick and Davenport (1997) comment that, it was not a foregone conclusion that worship in the NGK would be segregated. In Boer homesteads early 19<sup>th</sup> century travellers found the farmer’s (Coloured) *volk* (people), often participating in the routines of family worship, although conversions were rare and those who did convert gained little status. Thus the NGK’s synod’s decision in 1857 to legitimise the custom of separate churches for the races ‘on account of the weakness of some’ had a more decisive impact than it would have had in other denominations. It had arisen out widespread, and fairly longstanding, discomfort within white congregations at the presence of black worshippers. Thus principle came to be abandoned. The decision was not based on language differences or on the inconveniences caused by residential segregation. In the Dutch Reformed tradition of ‘internal holiness’, infant baptism was considered to bestow ‘covenantal holiness’ only on children of believers. Christian and non-Christian communities were, in consequence of this theological distinction, regarded as two static groups between which no movement was likely, if even possible. An additional rationale, which the NGK shared with English-language churches, especially the Presbyterian, argued that blacks feel more at home in their own churches than as subordinates in white churches.



Presbyterians' original premise was that the races should not be segregated, and they were not in fact segregated in the early Cape Town congregation. The movement leading to a separate Bantu( subsequently, Reformed) Presbyterian Church of South Africa in 1897, began in the year when the Presbyterian Church of South Africa (PCSA) founded to bring together of the separate Presbyterian congregations on the subcontinent. The missionaries of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland joined the new body; but those in the Free Church of Scotland were divided.

A minority of the Free Church missionaries opting for the new multiracial church, the majority for an autonomous African church. James Stewart, principal of Lovedale, feared that whites would have leave the new united church if blacks gained control; also that a predominantly black membership would stymie a possible union with the NGK; and again – in conformity with a prevalent view in the Scottish church- that the function of the mission was to support new Christian communities until they could stand on their own feet, and then let them go. Others who were in favour of separation argued in favour of cultural autonomy for black and white ( Elphick and Davenport 1997: 66).

In quoting Elphick and Davenport (1997) they say that ,

... opposition from leaders, often for status reasons, reached a climax after the Ethiopianism among Methodists, and Pambani Mzimba's movement out of the PCSA in 1898 caused a rift that did not easily heal. A proposed compromise of 1914, which included a decision by the PCSA to continue to organise 'Native Presbyteries' linked to an autonomous Kaffrarian synod whose members could participate in proceedings of the General Assembly, failed to remove the taint of subordination for blacks who wanted real freedom; nor did it satisfy whites who saw the proposal as racist. When the Bantu Presbyterian Church (BPC) was set up in 1923, the debate had not been resolved: whether to stand by the unity of the church at all costs, and risk further splits, or rationalise the position and let the BPC go (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 67).

The story of how the various churches wrestled with cultural cleavages in a society that found it hard to apply the doctrine that ' in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor

Gentile, rich nor poor, bond nor free' thus betrays a tension between the pull of ethnic preferences on the one side and a sense of ethical obligation on the other. This tension was more painful in southern Africa than in most parts of the world, because when big issues had to be faced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the debates over racial party and human freedom, the starting point was clouded by ambiguous assumptions about the meaning of baptism and notions of individual rights inherited from the earliest days of contact (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 65-67).

### **7.11. Political Challenges of Multiculturalism in South Africa**

The church within its multicultural setting in South Africa faces cultural, moral, spiritual, socio-economical, and political challenges. We suppose one of the greatest challenges that South Africa faced and still faces, is the struggle against the most demeaning of all evils – the system of apartheid and racism, that brought so much misery, heart-ache, pain and death. Apartheid may be dead, but the spirit is still around, manifesting itself in many ways.

Pityana and Vicencio (1995) quote Goba, who says that, one of the stumbling blocks is the ongoing legacy of apartheid which continues to express itself in many different ways. This legacy has engendered human values that have promoted racism, sexism, ethnic chauvinism, economic exploitation, breakdown of family values and disregard for the sanctity of life. It has created a culture of violence, encouraged avarice, greed and corruption, and false religiosity.

Goba says that, as a young boy growing up in Westonoria, near Randfontein, he discovered that there were serious differences between black and white people; the worlds were separate and little or no communication took place between the two; that the basic relationship was one of suspicion, antagonism, hostility and, in most instances, extreme violence. In this context the dominant value system was shaped by the idea of racial separation or racial formation. Today we do not want to speak about racism, but the reality shows its ugly face everywhere. We see it in campus

conflicts, in cinemas, on the highways, and even at shopping malls. It is seen in the system of education and the economic arrangements that have affected the life of so many of our people (non-whites).

Some groups among South Africans were socialised to accept racism as a way of life – hence we have those who clamouring for Volkstaat. Those amongst us who think being ‘Zulu’, ‘Sotho’ or ‘Xhosa’ is more important than being ‘human.’

Here we see the ugly face of ethnic chauvinism. The system of separate development which was part of the policy of apartheid re-inforced false ethnic pride and encouraged exclusive cultural values. Culture became a vehicle of promoting intolerance especially amongst non-whites

Although we have nine new provinces, we see ethnic enclaves which in the name of regional autonomy promote ethnic chauvinism. We see old ethnic division used by politicians to encourage tribalism. Hence for those who are Zulu it is sometimes dangerous to be heard speaking Zulu in certain areas of Gauteng. This is part of the legacy of apartheid – reinforcing exclusive cultural and ethnic values.

Elphick and Davenport (1997) write the struggle against apartheid in South Africa was theological, as well as political. When prophetic Christianity confronted segregation and the apartheid state, challenging the passivity of the diverse denominations and their *de facto* acceptance of the *status quo*, the Christian church itself became a site of political struggle.

Signs of prophetic Christianity emerged in the early twentieth century as South Africa’s black political culture began to articulate a vision of a just, non-racial society. Among African political leaders there was a strongly reactive response to racist measures such as the colour-bar clause of the South Africa Acts (1909), and the territorial segregation of the Natives Land Act (1913).

The African National Congress (ANC), founded in 1912, offered an alternative to this racially based system of oppression. In 1936, the All African Convention, a united-front organisation, which included the ANC, protested against the Representation of Natives Act and its destruction of the Cape common voters roll. Then, in the Defiance Campaign of ANC and its allies offered passive resistance to apartheid's racist legislative programme. Black political organisations also strove against the economic interests that under-girded white racism, rejecting migratory labour and the colour bar on the mines and in industry, and calling for recognition of black trade unions, adequate housing, improved educational, medical, and welfare services, workman's compensation, and pension.

The failure of the white churches to confront racism in any effective way had, however, by the 1920s produced an under-current of disillusionment and even cynicism among some black activists. The racist constitution and the injustices of the Natives Land Act contradicted the vision of human equality embodied in Christianity. In 1927, Clements Kadalie, founder of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), engaged in a public correspondence with Bishop Carey of Bloemfontein. In response to Carey's request that Kadalie control the provocative speakers, Kadalie retorted that throughout history and in every denomination the church had strayed from Christ's teaching, siding with the rich against the poor, and opposing every effort towards social and economic freedom for the masses.

After the apartheid government had begun implementing its policies without resolute opposition from churches. Albert Lutuli, a devout Congregationalist and president of the ANC during the 1950s, writing after the Sharpeville massacre and the banning of the ANC and other anti-apartheid organisation in 1960, issued a warning :

The Churches simply submitted to the secular state for far too long ; some have supported apartheid. While it is not too late for white Christians to look at the Gospels and redefine their allegiance . I warn those who care for Christianity , who are to go to all the world and preach the Gospel , that in South Africa the

opportunity is three hundred years old. It will not last forever. The time is running out (Elphick and Davenport, 1997: 383-385).

### **7.12. The Blacks and the Church During the 'Struggle' against Apartheid**

Elphick and Davenport (1997) comment that, in the wake of the slaughter of black school-children in 1976, and the banning of the Black Consciousness Movement in 1977, the Roman Catholic Bishop Mandlenkosi Zwane repeated Lutuli's warning. Some black Christians, whom he termed 'rejectionists of concern' were turning their backs on institutional Christianity, and an increasing number, particularly among the younger generation, were rejecting Christianity altogether – he called them 'rejectionists of anger' the large number of black Christians whom you might call good cultic Christians, consoled themselves with escapist liturgies accepting an unchangeable *status quo*.

The 'rejectionists of concern' could not follow Christianity 'as projected by whites and their church institutions...yet they are deeply committed Christians'. Cultic practices alone no longer impressed them; they could no longer 'be won over by pious and sanctimonious platitudes'. Young blacks from high schools, universities, seminaries, and colleges totally rejected God as revealed by what they saw as the 'white man's Christianity.' For them the church in South Africa has been and continues to be a part of the oppressive system. Christianity was used as a means to colonise, suppress and alienate the blacks. They view every white man's institution as an instrument of oppression – his industry, his education, and his Christianity. Writing in 1979, shortly before his death, Bishop Zwane predicted that apartheid would 'eventually conscientise all blacks in South Africa to a violent rejection of the entire system and those who benefit from it.' At the same time he was pessimistic about reversing the drift of blacks from organised Christianity, 'given the kind of church we have in Southern Africa.' Politically conscious Africans were not taking parish life seriously; in turn they were often labelled, even by fellow Christians, as communists, anarchists or agitators. Zwane argued that for the church to undertake the struggle for justice as an integral part of its mission, a

miracle would have to occur, but, as 'God is present even in such a situation , miracles could still happen' (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 385).

### **7.13. The White Churches in Response to the 'Struggle' of the Apartheid System**

Elphick and Davenport (1997) say that, the Dutch Reformed churches supported segregation. The English-speaking churches, on the other hand, failed to offer a prophetic, alternative voice: they condemned apartheid at annual conferences and in pastoral letters, but, in practice these churches were part of the racially oppressive system. Long-established custom, reinforced by the Urban Areas Act of 1923 and the Group Areas Act of 1950, led to be segregated parishes, church schools, and hospitals. In 1957 the Roman Catholic bishops told their flock that it was 'a blasphemy to attribute to God the sins against charity and justice which are the necessary accompaniment of apartheid.' ( Elphiock and Davenporrt 1997: 386).

It was a ringing declaration, but not until 1979 were Catholic seminaries integrated, and then only after the bishops (overwhelmingly white) were confronted by black seminarians and priests, who were a small minority within the clergy of a church whose membership was overwhelmingly (80 per cent) black.

Some of the outstanding individuals challenged the pervasive passivity. Father Trevor Huddleston of the Anglican Community of the Resurrection joined the Defiance Campaign, and stood in the forefront of resistance to the destruction of the African townships of Sophiatown under the Group Areas Acts. He went on to play a principal role in the Congress of the People, which, in 1955, produced the Freedom Charter. In consequence, he was recalled to England the next year by his order.

A second Anglican priest, Michale Scott, was imprisoned in 1946 for joining Indian passive resisters in Durban in their protest against the Smuts government's Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Acts; and, soon thereafter, he was declared

a prohibited immigrant. Scott continued to fight in exile against apartheid and South Africa's occupation of South West Africa. The Rev. Arthur Blaxall, the Anglican General Secretary of the Christian Council, developed a support network for political detainees during the Treason Trial of the late 1950s. The Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg Ambrose Reeves, visited the wounded after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, took affidavits from witnesses, and published his expose', *Shooting at Sharpeville*.

Both Blaxall and Reeves were deported. Although more cautious than these personalities and focussed on ecclesiastical concerns, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Geoffrey Clayton, and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Durban, Denis Hurley, in 1957 led ecumenical opposition to a bid designed to enable the Minister of the Interior to bar Africans from attending churches in white areas.

Elphick and Davenport speak of the defiance campaign:

The white led denominations themselves in contrast to such courageous individuals, were out of touch with anti-apartheid movements. Members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy were conspicuously absent from the non-violent Defiance Campaign of the 1950s. In the words of Helen Joseph, 'the Church turned its back on the ANC, the ANC never turned its back on the Church'. She described going into homes during the Defiance Campaign, where they would find '15 or 20 people bunched in the house waiting for us. And we started with prayer' (Elphick and Davenport 1997: 386).

#### **7.14. The Un-banning of the ANC and the Release of Nelson Mandela**

By the 1980s colour-bar had been dismantled in certain public places, and in 1979, African trade unions had been recognised in law. Yet the principal foundations of the apartheid remained firmly in place. Comparable struggles were underway within a number of South African denominations. The South African Council of Churches, now under black leadership, functioned as an ecumenical vanguard for prophetic Christianity.

Some the prominent people involved with the struggle against apartheid were, Rev. Frank Chikane, Rev. Allan Boesak, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, Beyers Naude', to name a few.

By 1989, most the political prisoners were released, and many returned home to South Africa from their exiles. In the same year F. W. de Klerk, was installed as President, succeeding P.W. Botha. In February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years.

Looking back now at the emergence of a prophetic Christian church voice in South Africa, we can discern its early articulation in African politics, particularly after the formation of the ANC in 1912.

Two issues may be of vital importance for South Africa's future comment Elphick and Davenport (1997). The first is whether prophetic witness will renew its strength and contribute to sustaining the country's predominantly black political culture if racial tolerance and non-racial ideals- in a time when whites experience a loss of power and the redress of black communities' grievances about inequality and economic exploitation are slow in coming. The second and related issue is whether the prophetic church, having experienced the compromises of a relatively peaceful political transition, will be able to articulate a theology critical of the continuing structural injustices( social sin) of South African society. Whites will be inclined to cling to their economic privilege, while assertive, increasingly powerful black elites will tend to defend their military, police, the professions, and trade unions. Who will further the vision of a more just society? Who will empower the poor? In the words of Jean-Marc Ela, who drew upon his experiences among the poverty-stricken Kirdis of north Cameroon: 'How to speak about God in the living conditions of the poor in African societies torn apart many forms of neo-colonial violence, is the question which should mobilise African churches.'(Elphick and Davenport 1997:396-399).



Other challenges within multiculturalism is economic exploitation, poverty, AIDS, breakdown of family values due to complex social problems, the culture of substance abuse and a high level of crime and violence.

### **7.15. Solution and Evaluation of Multiculturalism in the South African Church**

Strassberger (1971) writes that there can be no Christianity without forgiveness, and history shows that South African churches much to forgive and also much for which to be forgiven. As a member of the body of Christ each Church needs to recognise the gifts, loyalties and sincerity of others and in recognising and acknowledging these, as well as the weaknesses and failures, each Church will gain a new insight into its own strength and weakness. Opposing loyalties have prevented many Christians in South Africa from achieving full loyalty to Jesus Christ. The constant remembrances of past grievances, injustices and the faults and failures of others have, amongst other things, hindered those who were honestly striving to achieve unity or even only co-operation.

The criteria in evaluating the situation is found in the New Testament testimony to the mission of Jesus Christ, and that which he entrusted to his church, with the gift of the Holy Spirit. His mission of making God known to man as One who loves, heals, restores, forgives and cares was fulfilled in His incarnation, life, death and resurrection. His life as shown in His very existence, words, and deeds revealed in terms man could understand. He was in deed Emmanuel: God with us. Through His death, resurrection and ascension the Holy Spirit came into the world to continue Christ's mission through His Body, the Church. Therefore the church is there where God in Christ, ministering through the Holy Spirit, assembles and marshalls His own people.

The inspiration, vision and power which the worshipping members of a community receives as a new, free gift from God, as they gather together, send them out into the world of which they too form part, to be the church wherever they live, work, think, play, pray, serve, suffer and struggle.

There are no barriers of natural affiliation which transcend the fellowship of believers. Wherever love appeared, the separation of race, nationality, language and individual self-concern were overcome and a very special kind of community ('koinonia') came into being. In this community there was a glad participation in the blessing of God and a powerful urge to extend His sharing fellowship to include others (Strassberger 1971: 246-247).

## **7.16. Conclusion**

The Church in South Africa is composed of a multiethnic, multicultural and multiracial people, and the Christian faith has been nurtured and shaped by particular ecclesial traditions. There is a range and variety of denominations among us, each promoting its own 'brand' of Christianity. Pentecostals, Catholics, Charismatics, and Liberals all make up the Church in South Africa. It may be divided through denominationalism, but it is one, and is seen as one.

The Church in South Africa, mostly the non-Pentecostal churches, played a very prominent role in its struggle against the giant of apartheid and finally won. But the 'spirit of racism' is still prevalent in many sectors of the country and even in the Church.

In closing, the church must be able to forgive past failures, and recognise the gifts, loyalties and sincerity of others, as well as the failures and weaknesses of each. The Church is where God in Christ ministers through the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 8

### Conclusion

#### 8.0. Introduction

In dealing with the definitions and descriptions of culture. One of the clearest definitions that we have learned is that 'culture is the learned portion of human behaviour'. It also implies that culture is more than a biological phenomenon. Culture includes all the elements of man's mature endowment that he has acquired from his group by conscious learning or by a conditioning process- techniques of various kinds, social and other institutions, beliefs, and patterned modes of conduct.

Multiculturalism on the other hand, *firstly*, has to do with culture; *secondly*, it points to the plurality of cultures; *thirdly*, it refers to the specific manner of responding to that plurality. A multicultural society is spoken of including several cultural communities with their over-lapping but none-the-less distinct conceptions of the world, systems of meaning, values, forms of social organisations, histories and customs, and practices.

Cultural diversity would mean people of different cultural backgrounds. For example, South Africa is spoken of as being a 'rainbow nation'.

#### 8.1. Current Scholarship and the Phenomenon of Multiculturalism

With regards to multiculturalism, '*cultural drift*' is one of the challenges that faces some cultures. For example, people of Indian origin who have adopted Western cultures have in a sense drifted from their own culture.

*Cultural loss* is another factor that has affected some cultures in losing their cultural identities, whilst *cultural loss without replacement* and *acculturation* has been still another factor, where there has been massive changes in the original culture patterns of one or both groups. *Forcible change* is another phenomenon with regard to multiculturalism, where societies have to go through forcible change in cultural

patterns because of the world-wide technological revolutions. For example, the changing roles of women in Africa or for that matter in the United States, and the United Kingdom, may be considered an example of such a change.

One of the factors discussed was modernisation and the introduction of modern technology and its effect in bringing cultural change. For example, the fields of media and modern means of communication, technology, fashion, and apparel, has radically changed the lifestyles of some cultures. The primitive 'cultures' are being changed by 'modern' culture. Thus the process of 'inculturation' had taken place.

*Colonialism and conquest* was another factor that affected certain cultures around the world. As Haviland (1981) mentioned that, one of the by products of colonialism was the growth of applied anthropology and the use of anthropological techniques and knowledge for certain 'practical' ends. He used British anthropology as an example and made mention that 'British anthropology has often been considered the 'handmaiden' of that country's colonial policy, for it typically provided the kind of information of particular use in maintaining effective colonial rule' (Haviland 1981: 413). South Africa has been under colonial rule from the British for many years, where 'colonialism' was evident in many sectors in the country. This was evident in the social, political, economical, cultural and educational policies of the country.

As stated in our study, *class, and caste* also plays an important part in one's culture. There may be some positive outcomes of such distinctions, but negatively, it divides people, cultures and communities. For example 'apartheid' was a system, in South Africa, that divided whites from blacks, the rich from the poor, the 'haves' from the 'have-nots'. Blacks were marginalised and relegated to low-ranking stratum of society. They were barred from marrying non-blacks, and were not allowed to own lands except in specified 'black homelands'. Blacks performed menial jobs for whites, they were prohibited from living where whites do, or even were not allowed to swim in the same swimming pool used by whites. They were

not allowed even to hold the hand of a white person all of this brings to mind, the concepts of ritual purity and pollution so basic to the Indian caste system in India, where untouchables are still the lowest of all castes. In South Africa some whites still fear pollution of their purity through improper contact with blacks.

According to social scientists, a caste-like under class is emerging in our own society, as automation reduces the need for unskilled workers. Its members consist of underemployed, unemployable, or drastically underemployed people who try to live out their means in the streets and urban slums. They lack both economic and political power and educational facilities to improve their lot.

As stated in chapter 2 of this research, race and ethnicity has a lot to do with multiculturalism. If one was born a white, especially in the 'old South Africa', it gave some hope that life would not be so hard, as compared to be born a black. It seems as though being born a white brought more privileges, recognition and status in society. Everything was based on which race and ethnic group one belonged to.

In speaking of the 'old South Africa', the apartheid policies of the government consisted of programs and measures that aimed to maintain racial segregation. It served to perpetuate the dominance of a white minority over a non-white majority through social, economic, political, military and cultural construction of society.

However, change is coming fast in many South African communities and work places. With the implementation of 'affirmative action', there is coming some form 'equalisation'. Jobs once that were reserved for whites, are now being given to the 'previously disadvantaged' section of the community. Blacks are now holding some top positions in the social, political, economical, educational and commercial sectors of the country.

*Cultural change* is defined as 'becoming modern' and also 'becoming like us'. This also fosters the notion that these other societies must be changed to be more like us,

irrespective of the other considerations. This also implies that sometimes cultures change because they are forced to, because of certain advantages in their favour. For example, a woman marrying across her culture can bring about certain advantages and privileges that she may have not enjoyed in her own culture. This 'forced change' for her may be good as far as raising her 'status' is concerned. A woman from a disadvantaged people group marrying a wealthy man definitely raises her status – this 'forced change' is in her favour. On the other hand *cultural loss* is another factor that can have bring about both advantages and disadvantages in cultures.

*Language* is so significant in cultures that through language, cultural meanings are formed and communicated. Yet, we do not just learn another's culture just through language alone, but through interactions with people of other cultures. We interact through fellowship and constant communication in different forms. Thus language may not only be spoken, but also demonstrated through action.

Looking at the Bible and language, the communication of the Gospel in Acts chapter 2 was very significant because, through the medium of the different languages spoken on that day, the gospel reached different cultural and linguistic groups. 'We hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God' (Acts 2:11). Language does play an important part in one's culture- whether verbal or non-verbal or gestures. It is through language that cultural values and beliefs are transmitted.

## **8.2. Religion and Culture in Relation to the Church**

In multiculturalism and religion, Mugambi (1996) commented that one cannot study any religion without studying the cultural contents in which the religion is manifested. Conversely, it is impossible to conduct a comprehensive study of any culture, without including its religious component. Religion is both an individual and a corporate affair (Mugambi 1996: 25). What Mugambi (1996:25) says that it is impossible to find people practicing religion apart from their culture. Religion and

culture goes hand in hand. For the first time in South African history we have a constitution that recognises the cultural and religious diversity of our national society, and no one religion enjoys privileges above all others. Of all the definitions of religion that was stated, the most common is, 'religion is the belief in a god or gods'. Religion can contain belief in spirits and magic of all forms and myths.

African religion may differ widely to Western religion or Indian religion. Every religion has its own distinctive features by which it expresses itself, and may function differently.

In speaking of Jewish religion, Christianity has its roots in the Jewish religion. Its leaders were Jewish and they shared with their compatriots a common background, common Scripture, common attitudes, hopes, and expectations. Community and continuity were the hallmarks of Jewish Christianity. They clung to the Jewish community and claimed it their own, working from within to persuade others to their special convictions. Furthermore, they held that their faith was continuous with Jewish tradition and consistent with it. The Jewish Bible was their Scripture and they obeyed the Law of Moses along with their fellow Jews. The early Christian (Jews) met in the temple (Acts 3:1) and synagogues.

What we see here is that the early Church was Jewish, whilst holding on to the Christian faith. The Church in Jerusalem believed that it was imitating the practice of its Lord as well as obeying his instruction. The Jewish Christian of the latter day were unacceptable to both Christians and Jews, being regarded as heretics by the former and apostates by the latter.

If we refer to the New Testament, the apostolic preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and of Stephen and Paul, all make reference to Old Testament Scriptures, especially in reference to Christ as the Messiah. Gentile conversion brought with it some problems as far as keeping Jewish customs and laws were concerned. There was this 'clashing' of cultures. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), had to decide

whether the believing Gentiles had to follow Jewish customs if they needed to be Christians. In as sense it was decided that Jews who became Christians would continue to be Jews, while Gentiles could become Christians without also becoming Jews.

We also learned that some the great men of the New Testament belonged to certain Jewish sects and religious groups. To mention a few, Paul, Nicodemus, and Gamaliel were Pharisees. The Pharisees were held in high esteem in Jewish circles.

The difference between the religions of the world and Christianity is that, there were many things that were common to both Jewish Christians and the Jews of the Old Testament. Christianity had its roots in Judaism, with beliefs that may be similar, with monotheism, one common Scripture and values.

### **8.3. Analysing the Kind of Christianity in Acts in Relation to Multiculturalism**

The church in Acts is diverse in culture and practice. Two prominent cultures stand out; the Greek and Hebrew speaking Christians. The apostles, Peter, James and Paul are seen as key figures and leading men in the early church dealing with the phenomenon of multiculturalism. The cultural problem and the neglect of the Grecian widows in Acts chapter 6 is solved with the appointing of the seven deacons. Acts chapter 10 speaks of how God dealt with the apostle Peter in overcoming racial and cultural prejudice; the household of Cornelius is converted to Christ. In Acts 13, the first multicultural church with apostles, prophets and teachers send the apostle Paul and Barnabas on their apostolic and cross-cultural missionary journeys. The ministry of Paul from then on takes on a prominent role. The focus is on him in the remainder of the book of Acts. Cultural problems of circumcision, and observance of Jewish laws are dealt with.



The main issue that became prominent was whether Gentile Christians must be circumcised and keep Jewish dietary laws in order to be saved and accepted into 'Jewish ranks' of fellowship.

According to Luke the Jerusalem Church agreed that circumcision was not necessary for the salvation of the Gentiles and outlined a series of more lenient food laws for them. Then Paul returned as one of the emissaries of the agreement. The principle that circumcision of Gentiles is unnecessary for salvation is accepted in Luke's account. Further, no one says that Gentiles cannot be circumcised if they want to be. Only Paul himself has said that he does not advise it, because it tends toward a confidence in the flesh instead of the Spirit. No one says that the Jews should not be circumcised.

Paul wrote in Galatians that circumcision was not important to salvation. Waving circumcision for the Gentiles was not itself a startling conclusion, for not all Jews insisted that conversion was necessary for Gentile salvation. There were a variety of opinions within Jewish community concerning ritual observations and Gentile salvation. Jewish Christians, because they were primarily Jews, must have had a similar spectrum of opinion.

From a legal perspective, Paul did not startle the Jewish Christian community by saying that circumcision was unnecessary for Gentile salvation *per se*. His claim that the saved Jews and Gentiles could form a single new community and freely interact was more innovative. The issue was not how the Gentiles could be saved but how to eat with them and marry them and live with them.

Concerning circumcision, the epistle to the Galatians provides good evidence that Titus was not circumcised. Not only was Titus not circumcised, but it could be argued, from the form in which Paul reports the fact to the Galatians, that he would have as allowed Titus to be circumcised had that been required.

Luke does not mention Titus being circumcised, but he does report that Timothy was circumcised (Acts 16:1-3). Was this a mistake? Paul continuously opposed agitators who tried to persuade Gentile Christians to be circumcised, but Timothy was a legitimate exception, being by Jewish Law a Jew.

How do we reconcile the keeping of Jewish Laws and Paul taking a Jewish vow (Acts 21: 20)? It seemed as though Paul still held on to Jewish laws and customs. As some scholars have commented that in this there is serious discrepancy. In the first place, although Acts does describe Paul observing certain Jewish practices, he is at the same time portrayed as a controversial missionary to the Gentiles, who zealous Jews crossed repeatedly and suspected intensely.

We can sum by saying what Paul said in 1 Cor.9:2-22), *To the Jew I became a Jew that I might gain the Jews, to them that are under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without the law as without the law, that I might gain them that are without the law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

According to Paul's teaching he says in 1 Cor. 7: 18-19, *Is man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in un-circumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.* It is not whether one is circumcised or not; it whether a person is saved; that is the main issue.

#### **8.4. Contextualising the Gospel in Acts with Multiculturalism in South Africa**

In Acts the phenomenon of cultural diversity in the church, and its cultural problems were addressed. The Church was not divided, but looked as one body with many parts. Their cultural differences did not hinder the preaching of the Gospel.

The main difference in the early Church was Jewish believers and Gentile believers, but the Church one.

The Church in South Africa is not exempted from problems. *Firstly*, the complex nature of the problem of denominationalism in South Africa becomes obvious when we reflect on the range of and variety of denominations present among us. We have the Roman Catholics and Protestants. The Protestants, have many 'movements' within it, namely Charismatics, Pentecostals, and Evangelicals. We have English congregations, Afrikaans congregations, African congregations, and Indian congregations, not forgetting a host of other 'congregations', each with its own 'church culture' and promoting its own 'brand' of Christianity. Many Church leaders feel that they find it easier to retain control and provide direction and function in their own structures without any need to cooperate with others.

The roots of denominationalism are often more sociological than theological. It is presumed that the origin of denominations came from socio-political forces. Denominations came to South Africa through colonialism. All of the historic confessional are imported, and most of the reasons for these divisions have little significance for all a large segment of the membership.

*Secondly*, the most demeaning of all evils in South Africa was the system of apartheid. This system further divided the churches, the community and the country. In apartheid, we see the ugly face of ethnic chauvinism. The system of separate development which was part of the policy of apartheid. This reinforced false ethnic pride and encouraged exclusive values. Culture became a vehicle of promoting intolerance especially amongst non-whites.

Thank God, for the emergence of prophetic Christianity in the early twentieth century as South Africa's black political culture began to articulate a vision of a just, non-racial society. Many gave their lives for the cause of the 'struggle' against apartheid.

Other challenges within multiculturalism in South Africa is economic exploitation, poverty, HIV/AIDS, break-down of family values due to complex social problems, the culture of substance abuse, and a high level of criminal activity.

What are the answers to the above one may ask? The criteria in evaluating the situation is found in the New Testament testimony of Jesus Christ, and that which He entrusted to his Church, with the gift of the Holy Spirit. His mission of making God known to man as One who loves, heals, restores, forgives, and cares was fulfilled in his life, death and resurrection. Each local church must recognise its own weaknesses and failures and know the reason for its existence.

## **8.5. Conclusion**

The apartheid struggle of the church in South Africa must not be forgotten which brought about political reforms in our country. The people who have strove for, and who gave their lives for this cause must be remembered. The multicultural church in South Africa must rise to build on strong Biblical principles of love, forgiveness, reconciliation and a spirit of brotherhood. It must rise from mediocrity and apathy. The giants of racial prejudice and suspicion must be eradicated with the weapons of faith and trust. I conclude this research with the words of Martin Luther King Jr., (1963) who wrote,

The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority. If the church does not participate actively in the struggle for peace and for economic and racial justice, it will forfeit the loyalty of millions and cause men everywhere to say that it is has atrophied its will. But if the church will free itself from the shackles of a deadening status quo, and, recovering its great historic mission, will speak and act fearlessly and insistently in terms of justice and peace, it will enkindle the imagination of mankind and fire the souls of men, imbuing them with a glowing and ardent love for truth, justice and peace. Men far and near will know the church as a great fellowship of love that provides light and bread for lonely travellers at midnight (Martin Luther King Jr. 1963: 62).

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