

The implications of *Missio Dei* for transforming the ideal of well-being of the Sangha Baka Pygmies (Republic of Congo)

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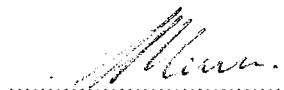


DECLARATION

I, JLS van Rooyen, declare that this mini-dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been appropriately acknowledged. The mini-dissertation is being submitted for the masters of Arts Degree in Theology (Missiology) in the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, in the Department of Theology of the North West University: Mafikeng Campus, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.


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Summary

It is a common myth that “natural man” seeks God or lives in harmony with the Creator. Contrasting the “praetercolonial”¹ Baka Pygmies² conception of wellbeing with the true ideal of wellbeing, depicted in the New Testament (specifically in John 6 and Philippians 4), it becomes evident that they lack an important aspect, shared with the rest of humanity: total reliance on the Creator. The New Testament ideal of wellbeing is closely related to a reliance on the mercy of God, born from the realisation of inadequacy and the need for redemption. The Gospel speaks of a God that not only offers that redemption, but in effect *became* redemption. This contradicts a common African belief that God abandoned His creation and that humanity is now at the mercy of the spiritual powers confined to a naturalistic world. Applying Brueggemann's three-storied worldview shows that God is actively involved in humanity, thereby contradicting the false notion of a distant Creator. The Baka do not consider themselves sinful and share the rest of humanity's unwillingness to surrender their independence to the mercy of God (Luke 18:9-14). They are consequently vulnerable to manipulation by spirits and powers in their search to interact with “superhuman” forces, in an effort to achieve an idealised state of wellbeing. Missiologically speaking, by transforming this subjective, anthropocentric ideal of wellbeing, the praetercolonial Baka is led to a new ideal based upon the surrender of self-reliance that leads to comprehensive salvation in Jesus Christ, avoiding vestiges of syncretism, relativism and dualism in new converts.

Key terms

Wellbeing, Biblical wellbeing, Worldview, Baka, Pygmy, Contextualisation, Poor, Inculturation, Missio Dei, Brueggemann, Syncretism, Dualism, Relativism, Prayer, African, Obedience.

¹ This is the description of the Baka as found outside or beside (Latin *praeter*) the colonial era influence, preferred to “premodern” which implies the inclusion into the occidental framework of anticipating a “progression” to “modern” and “postmodern”.

² The term “Pygmies” is used here to describe a larger ethno-linguistic group. The term “Baka” refers to a specific clan, living in the forests of northern Congo and southern Cameroon. More specifically, “Baka” will refer within the context of this study to a specific family group within the Baka clan that live along the ill-defined border of the two states.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Background

Knowing Christ is to want to make Him known. Chesterton (1994:32) contrasts the Christian message with those of other world religions, by pointing towards the centrifugal symbolism inherent in the Christian Cross. Bosch (2011:390) goes so far as to attribute the mission of salvation to God Himself, when he describes God as "a missionary God". This mission is directed to all mankind (Matt. 12:18; Matt. 28:19) and Simeon (Luke 2:32) proclaimed the inherent comprehensive nature of the Christian Gospel, when he described it as "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel".

Throughout Scripture, God sends and uses His church to fulfil His mission (Gen.12:1-3; Is. 6:8; Mark 16:15; John 20:21). With the conviction that God wants to use Christians as instruments of His mission, this research looks for a way in which the Gospel can bring comprehensive change ("light to lighten the Gentiles") to a clan of the Baka Pygmy population living in the Sangha province of the Republic of Congo. This particular group came to the attention of the researcher during a prolonged mission as a medical and security consultant for a mining exploration company in the area. While providing informal medical assistance to a Baka clan in the vicinity, the researcher became well acquainted with the people, enabling him to enquire as to their ideals of wellbeing and worldview.

Bosch (2011:421) argues that the Christian message has always found relevance within the cultural world of people who have heard and believed the message. Attempts at establishing relevance by contextualising the message has, unfortunately, resulted in "infinite" and "often mutually exclusive theologies" (Bosch, 2011:427). Thus, the researcher focussed on seeking ways to find relevance in the world of the Baka, while avoiding the dangers of relativism and duality that the church may act amongst them as an instrument of God's mission.

2. Problem statement

The events in Acts serve as example of Paul's difficulty in communicating the Gospel to culturally diverse people, but also that the Missionary God (Bosch, 2011:10) preceded him in each step (Acts 16:14). Consequently, the point of departure of this study is that "it is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the father that includes the church" (Moltmann, 1993:64).

African theologian Enyi Ben Udoh (1988:263) is of the view that "the problem of faith in Africa is fundamentally Christological". The problem he is referring to is not only the "struggles of some African theologians to explain the mystery of the Christ-Event" (Ezigbo, 2008:55), but also to an African duality of faith. A duality whereby new converts from all cultural backgrounds retain their cultural beliefs while "accepting" Christianity. Chigor Chike (2008:222) is adamant that many Africans have retained their "pre-Christian worldview", after their Christian conversion. While there are many voices calling for Christianity to be relevant in the African milieu, there seems to be few who call for the African culture and worldview to be "Christian". This issue might be an overreaction to the cultural imperialism that accompanied so many missionary efforts, during and after the Enlightenment. The World Council of Churches (12) acknowledge that colonial mission often belittled the colonised cultures and ignored any insight forthcoming from these cultures (12), while also condemning exploitative systems and cultures (15).

Udoh (1988:263) blames this lack of relevance in African theology on the absence of an indigenous messiah role, into which Christ can be cast. This void is then objectionably filled by a totem-like Christ model, undermining the Trinitarian attribute of a missional God and bereft of the full approbation of a comprehensive salvation in Christ. Accepting the fundamental Trinitarian nature of *Missio Dei*, this lack of Trinitarian understanding creates a tension that undermines the ability of those converts to appreciate the realities of an incarnated God, intending communion with mankind (Moltmann, 1993:252). The consequences of this are not only seen in a dualistic belief system, but also in an inability to apprehend and relate the missional narrative and thus proclaiming God's judgement, redemption and man's responsibility (Keller, 2012a:7901).

Some African people³ have always seen the world through spiritual eyes. Everything has a spiritual connection, source, cause, action or resultant reaction. It is also one of the reasons that some African people are very easily "converted" to religion (Chike, 2008:223). Chike (2008:226) ascribes this religiosity to a "desire for spiritual power"; because everything has a spiritual dimension, this realm should be manipulated and brought under control in order to achieve or sustain wellbeing. The Kenyan-born Christian philosopher and writer, John Mbiti (1986:77), implicates the name of Jesus in this same quest. The researcher had a similar experience, concerning the Biblical text, during his work in Nigeria. It's all about gaining power over the opposing spiritual forces in a dual reality. The name of Jesus, the imaginary "spraying of His

³ Generalising about "Africa" and "Africans" is not only a mistake, but has also been the result of common misconceptions and stereotypes. The whole of China, USA, Western Europe, Mexico and India fit geographically into Africa (The Economist, 2014).

blood", the biblical text are all imbued with a power that is (hopefully) more powerful than the opposing spiritual forces.

This study contests that this is fundamentally tied to a failure in surrendering self-reliance in an effort to reach an elusive ideal of wellbeing. This is particularly acute in Africa and specifically amongst the Baka, where traditional belief holds that God has distanced Himself subsequent to creation (Van den Toren, 2009:312) and thereby forcing mankind to take the initiative and responsibility to control his environment to deal with the surrounding spirit world and ancestral powers.

Bosch (2011:421) argues strongly that the missionary message has always "incarnated itself in the life and world of those who had embraced it". One of the unplanned externalities of contextualising the Gospel into missionary activities is that new converts risk integrating the new message with their previous *weltanschauung* and religion, thereby losing the cardinal aspect of complete renewal (Phil. 3:13). They consequently remain hostage to superstition, traditional and cultural constraints, inhibiting the scope of salvation to those areas of their lives in which God are tolerated. In the context of *Missio Dei*, the radical message of the Christ recognises the particular revelation that God established with a specific people, but requires drastic change towards a comprehensive extant salvation as a cardinal element in the metanoia (Bosch, 2011:393). This contradicts a common pre-Christian African belief that God abandoned His creation and that humanity is now at the mercy of the spiritual powers confined to in a naturalistic world (Van den Toren, 2009:312).

Shaw (2010:210) suggests a "shared experience" as prerequisite for effectively communicating a relevant Gospel. Brueggemann (1993:75) develops this theme of communality in his three-storied universe. Throughout his book, Brueggemann dispels the notion that God abandoned humanity and argues instead that He is intimately involved in the history of all people (Brueggemann, 1993:105,110). Common to all communities is the quest for wellbeing. The Baka has a rich storytelling tradition and culture. The story of the three-storied universe seems to relate that God is keen to bring wellbeing, as part of comprehensive salvation, to all people - including the Baka.

The question is then how the pitfalls of relativism, syncretism and duality can be avoided by infusing a Biblical view of wellbeing. A Biblical ideal of wellbeing is closely connected to the way in which the individual understands and experiences his relationship with God. This, in turn, depends on how the attributes of God is understood. If new converts continue to hold to the belief that God is remote and distant, they will be inclined to appease spiritual forces (Chike, 2008:223)

in an effort to reach an ideal state of wellbeing. Thus, false hope begets a false sense of wellbeing that in turn discourages a comprehensive approbation of salvation in Christ.

Questions arising from this problem are the following:

1. What is the role of Missio Dei in transforming the innately sinful ideal of wellbeing commonly found in the praetercolonial Baka?
 - a. What role does the church play in this transformative action?
 - b. What does the sending of the Holy Spirit contribute toward transforming the ideal of wellbeing?
 - c. How indicative is the manner of interaction between new converts and God of their approbation of the comprehensive nature of salvation?
2. What is the nature of the pre-conversion ideal of wellbeing of the Baka?
 - a. How does the Baka's ideal contrast with the Biblical ideal of wellbeing?
 - b. Which elements thereof must change in order to avoid the pitfalls of syncretism and duality and conform to the Biblical ideal?
3. How was the Gospel proclaimed to other Pygmy groups in the past?
4. What difference can Missio Dei make in this context?
5. How can the Biblical story be made contextually relevant in the worldview of the Baka?
 - a. How can Brueggemann's three-storied universe be employed to this effect?

3. Aim

The aim of this research is to explicate means by which God's intention to restore the moral evil in man can be elucidated by missionaries to the Baka, in order that they may experience the liberating consequences of God's redemption through Christ.

4. Objective

The following specific objectives will be reached, in order to achieve the above aim:

1. The principles of Missio Dei as the main driving force in mission and the context in which this dissertation should be understood will be established, by:
 - a. clarifying the conceptual idea of Missio Dei;
 - b. explaining the comprehensive scope of Missio Dei;
 - c. examining Missio Dei and its engagement with the poor, marginalised and oppressed;
 - d. scrutinising the demands of Missio Dei upon the very core of cultural and individual ideals of wellbeing and the response of obedient transformation;
 - e. establishing the need for a Christian *counterculture*, derived from the Missio Dei narrative;
 - f. discussing the role of the church in Missio Dei;
 - g. explaining how Missio Dei makes demands upon and obliges both change and obedience;

- h. looking at how this transformation compels the new church to centrifugal engagement with surrounding community; and
 - i. analysing the role of the Holy Spirit in *Missio Dei*.
- 2. The Biblical ideal of wellbeing, as being built on a solid foundation of communication and petitionary prayer to a loving Father, will be explained as:
 - a. a relationship based on loving trust in Christ; and
 - b. investigating the ways in which prayer is determinant of the appropriation of the new truth in Christ.
- 3. The present state of wellbeing of many Pygmy populations in central and west Africa will be explained, through:
 - a. an enquiry into the anthropocentric ideals of wellbeing current amongst the Baka, aiming to shed light on the contextual aspects of mission to the Baka;
 - b. making clear that this understanding will bring the bearer of the message closer to building a *shared experience*, from which the communication channel is enabled;
 - c. examining certain conceptual problems in the Baka thinking, in order to show which aspects of their lives require fundamental transformation;
 - d. demonstrating the comprehensive demand of obedience contained in the Biblical wellbeing narrative; and
 - e. offering an explanation as to why this obedience should be the only acceptable consequence of an appropriated "*alternative narrative*", grounded in the Gospel.
- 4. The Biblical ideal of wellbeing will be explored, to show that:
 - a. the transformation of an anthropocentric worldview into a Biblical worldview can be considered as the most important focus of mission;
 - b. the dominion of God extends over all aspects of human endeavours, including culture and worldview that must conform in obedience to the new narrative of life;
 - c. a Biblical approbation of wellbeing comes about not only through a change of belief, but crucially a change of behaviour; and
 - d. the idea of a Biblical worldview can be established and should constitute an ultimate worldview, against which all others are measured; the call to transformation comes from a source objective from all worldviews.
- 5. A realisation of sinful inadequacy lies at the heart of Christian wellbeing, implying a total reliance on God, will be demonstrated by:
 - a. explaining how a Biblical ideal of wellbeing is wholly accountable to God and thus theocentric; importantly, thereby concluding that this is to the perfect advantage of humanity and does not inhibit the seeking of happiness and joy, but finding them centred in a Christ-filled life;
 - b. illustrating that the approbation of the Gospel does not merely *add some colour* to the ideal of wellbeing, but demands a comprehensive transformation thereof;
 - c. explaining, in reference to the preceding, how an anthropocentric ideal of wellbeing forms part of humanity's predicament and as such cannot itself offer a solution (the clue lies with an outside reference making an authoritative claim to transformation); and
 - d. demonstrating the acts of the Holy Spirit as the cardinal element in the movement of man and the transformation of his ideal of wellbeing.

6. The ways in which the radical narrative of the Gospel should be communicated to the Baka, in order to affect radical transformation of (not in) their lives, will be described by:
 - a. examining the methods and role of contextualising the Gospel message;
 - b. paying particular attention to interpretative issues when *reading* the Bible with another cultural or socio-economic group, making specific reference to the poor and marginalised people as well as how the *three-storied worldview* might serve as a model for making the message relevant to their circumstance; and
 - c. scrutinising *inculturation* to determine how it can be applied in terms of the Baka, in order to pour the Word of God into their cultural heart.
7. The application of Brueggemann's (1993) three-storied worldview will be proposed in order to show that God's ideal of wellbeing is relevant to all people, chiefly because of the universal application of God's involvement with Israel, by:
 - a. showing that this universal narrative illustrates that:
 - i. God has not abandoned His creation, but seeks an active and intimate relationship;
 - ii. God took the initiative in being involved with mankind in a history of nations and lives of individuals;
 - iii. humanity is sinful and requires redemption;
 - iv. redemption is in Christ alone;
 - v. each individual is required to make a decisive choice;
 - vi. perfect obedience is the response required;
 - vii. perfect obedience can only be fulfilled by the perfect man: Jesus; and
 - viii. God offers redemption through Jesus.
8. It will be explained how the acceptance of the Biblical ideal of wellbeing:
 - a. avoids relativism of the Gospel by the missionary;
 - b. avoids dualism and syncretism in the converted Christian; and
 - c. creates disciples that act as instruments in God's mission.

5. Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that God, from His Trinitarian relational attributes, desires *koinonia* with man as He takes the initiative to restore creation. As the absolute moral good, He exacts justice for the disobedience of mankind and yet offers loving, self-giving, redemption through which the whole of man is to be restored in Christ. Once humanity obediently surrenders (to the transformative power of the Holy Spirit) a pursuit of innate sinful ideal of wellbeing, they can experience comprehensive liberation from an existence of bondage to their own moral evil.

6. Methodology

This research takes a Christological, post-modern perspective within the Reformed theological tradition, while accentuating the cardinal element of *Missio Dei* as the driving force of all missions. The comparative literature study shows that although there is substantial anthropological research available, it is largely outdated and written from a colonial perspective. Neither do any

texts address the specific aspect of the transformative action of *Missio Dei*, in the context of the Baka. This study also focusses on a small group of people and most research works only address the larger Pygmy population in general. Some of these are relevant and could be extrapolated to the specific Baka group, specific to this research.

Personal interviews and experience with the Baka adds considerably to the contextual conception of the research, while contributing much to the understanding of the unique circumstances wherein they live. In this regard, the research adheres to all ethical guidelines of the NWU.

7. Concept clarification

7.1. Pygmy

The term was first used by 19th century travellers from Europe, referring to any nomadic forest-living peoples of short stature (Bahuchet, 2012:11). It currently covers 20 ethno-linguistic groups, among which the Baka. Despite its unfortunate description of a particular physical characteristic, it remains the most common and comprehensible way in which to refer to this group of people. This research uses the preferred term of *Baka*, when referring to the specific focus of the study.

7.2. Baka

The Baka is one of 20 ethno-linguistic groups, often referred to as *Pygmies*. The Baka is geographically located in the south of Cameroon and the north of the Republic of Congo. They are commonly referred to as *Baka* and so is the language they speak. In the text the underlined Baka will refer to the ethno-linguistic group, whereas *Baka* will refer to the specific family group that forms the focus of the study.

7.3. Wellbeing

Wellbeing can be referred to in such terms as happiness, satisfaction and contentment as a consequence of "optimal functioning" (McDowell, 2010:70). This does not imply perfect function and is thus subjectively perceived as relative to individual circumstance.

7.4. Missio Dei

David Bosch (2011:10) defines *Missio Dei* as the act(s) of God's self-revelation to humanity as "the One who loves the world". This is God's involvement with the world and the church, showing Him as a "God-for-people" (Bosch, 2011:10). Rather than being an activity driven by the church or humanity, it is an attribute of God as a "missionary God" (Bosch, 2011:390). The church is included in the original mission of salvation of the Trinity (Moltmann, 1985:316).

7.5. Mission as Missio Dei

Karl Barth identified mission as God's activity as early as 1932, breaking with the Enlightenment methodology (Bosch, 2011:389). Mission originates within the heart of God (Bosch, 2011:392).

7.6. Mission as Salvation

Although "salvation" is defined in multiple ways, this should be considered as the "throbbing heartbeat of mission" (Gort, 1988: 203) and the ultimate goal of mission.

7.7. Comprehensive salvation

The interpretation of salvation within a comprehensive Christological framework, ministering to the whole need of humanity, thereby emulating Christ in "incarnation, earthly life, death, resurrection and *parousia*" (Bosch, 2011:399). In this text, comprehensive salvation is seen as the purpose of mission.

7.8. Weltanschauung

This is described as the fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society; i.e. a particular philosophy or view of life.

7.9. Contextualisation

Ukpong (1987:278) defines contextualisation as "the process and practice of relating the Gospel message to the people's concrete life situation". David Bosch (2011:421) points out that the Gospel has been contextualised from the earliest of days.

7.10. Naturalistic worldview

Naturalists see the world as a closed system, wherein the laws of nature govern the behaviour and structure of the universe. It is in essence *deterministic*.

7.11. Supernatural

This is anything or anyone not bound by the natural order – above the natural.

7.12. Theism

Believe in the existence of at least one deity that is above or at least separate from the natural order.

7.13. Superstition

A religious belief supposed to be irrational, unfounded or based on fear or ignorance.

7.14. Fetish

Objects used by people of Guinea and neighbours as means of enchantment, i.e. amulets, and is related to superstitious dread.

7.15. Sehnsucht

A German noun used as a concept in the works of C.S. Lewis that he describes as the "inconsolable longing" in the human heart for "we know not what" (Lewis, 1966:72). In this study, it refers to the *unnameable longing* that connects the temporal reality with a promised eternal communion with God.

4. Missio Dei and the poor

A mission that confines its activities and objectives to the *spiritual*, without addressing the “social compassion and justice”, is “biblically deficient” (Wright, 2006:3888). The mission of God, as denoted by the term Missio Dei, cannot be distanced from the attributes manifested in the Trinitarian relationship. The infinite God has infinite relational attributes (Horrell, 2014:128), from which man derives some semblance of his analogous humanity and personhood (Horrell, 2014:132). Man derives his interpersonal traits from the Trinitarian “self-givingness”, defining his relationship with “others”. As the “absolute moral standard”, God is infinitely just and seeks perfect justice amongst His created (Horrell, 2014:134). This forms part of His goal, purpose and mission (Wright, 2006:718). Although, being self-sufficient, God does not require the aid of creatures to achieve this; He chose to allow mankind to achieve personhood only in relation to Himself and others (Horrell, 2014:133). If justice and poverty are such important issues for God, it should then also bear fruit in the lives of His children. Judging from the frequency and intense urgency with which these concerns are emphasised throughout the whole Bible (Wright, 2006: 3762), it should form the focus of mission in the context of Missio Dei. Relegating God’s passion for the poor to the spiritual realm (as opposed to practically addressing socio-economic realities) would make the mission “biblically deficient” (Wright, 2006: 3888). Any reading of Luke’s dealings with “the poor” that confines itself to the spiritualisation of the concept should also be considered as deficient. It is evident to Bosch (2011:86) that “All who experience misery are, in some very real sense, the poor”.

Luke’s first mention (Luke 4:18-19) of Jesus’ public ministry emphasises His mission to the poor and socially marginalised (Bosch, 2011:76). Jesus upset people and established conventions, making important people rend their clothes in exasperation (Mark 14:63). Nothing was “just spiritual” and the people of the time took His teachings so literally that they finally crucified Him (Wright, 2006:4164). When Jesus identified Himself with the prophecy and His mission, He upset people by differentiating the object of God’s love, grace and justice beyond the bounds of Jewish societal norms (Bosch, 2011:76).

With this in mind, the Missio Dei to the Baka is vested with urgency and importance. It cannot only focus on “saving souls”, but should engage comprehensively in their culture and sense of wellbeing to eradicate ignorance, poverty, illness, injustice, fear and the spiritual domination that keeps them in subjection. When referring to money’s power to “blind us to greed”, Keller *et al.* (2012c:273) state that materialism can “blind you spiritually”. Poverty can be equally blinding if every thought of every day is focussed on getting the next meal or earning money to fulfil basic needs. Chapter 4 examines the peculiar reading and “re-membering” (West, 2003:77) of the Biblical text by poor, oppressed and marginalised people like the Baka.

God's redeeming act through Christ should remain the core principle, while at the same time injustice, poverty, ignorance and oppression cannot be ignored by any of the redeemed (Bosch, 1995:33). Keller (2012a:9443) adds that "Living justly means living in constant recognition of the claims of community on us"; to which could be added ...*the claims of God over the lives of the redeemed*. The following section looks at the extent of this redemption willed by God, through Christ.

5. Missio Dei as redemptive salvation, compelling obedient transformation

The whole of creation "suffers and groans" (Rom. 8:22) as a consequence of mankind's wickedness (Jer. 12:4), but eagerly awaits the fulfilment of God's plan (Rom. 8:19) in expectation of liberation from bondage and decay (Rom. 8:21). When accepting that the fall affected every aspect of creation and as such every part of man's nature and existence, then the radical impact of the Cross on all facets of humankind's broken condition must also be accepted (Wright, 2010:520). God's "yes" to humankind is not only confined to the "spiritual", but to the integrated whole of human existence (Bosch, 2011:599), encompassing and addressing the social, political and judicial needs of man.

It, therefore, follows that the response required from new believers should also be comprehensive in nature, transforming all aspects of their being.

In the climactic chapter of the Missio Dei, God sends His Son, so that His children may no longer live according to earthly desire (Rom. 8:9), but according to the new life of resurrection in Christ, through His Spirit which lives in believers (Rom. 8:11). God now lays an obligation upon humankind to negate the fleshly past and be led by the Spirit of the Lord (Rom. 8:14) that sets it free (Rom. 8: 15, Luke. 4:18).

Brueggemann (1993:15) points out that the proclamation of the Gospel must be followed by "reordering all of life according to the claim of the proclaimed verdict". The verdict of the triumph of God cannot have any other result than radical change in the life of the Christian. This change will then compel the new believer towards others (symbolised in the centrifugal aspect of the Cross) (Chesterton, 1994:322), within the society wherein they find themselves. Brueggemann (1993:11) describes a confrontation with the Gospel as a "wrenching encounter", leaving no aspect of life to be "business as usual". New converts are then sent into the world as "God's pilgrim people" (Bosch, 2011:364), bringing something of the glimmer of God's reign amongst the fallen.

The children of God act not only as the "yes", but also as God's "no" to the world (Bosch, 2011:610). Living from the perspective of their "new minds" (Matt. 9:17), their desires are set on the will of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5) and their minds governed by the Spirit (Rom. 8:6). Consequently,

their words and deeds will contradict and judge (1 Cor. 6:2) those that have not accepted God's communion. It is clear that Missio Dei makes demands upon the very core of cultural and individual ideals of wellbeing and obliges both change and obedience (Phil. 3:8; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Missio Dei is the inaugural coming of the kingdom of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:24) in the lives and society of the people, called by God to partake in His mission. When mission then arises from the heart of God (Bosch, 2011:246), into that of believer it follows that it should reach into the hearts of those reached by God's mission through the believer. With reference to the missional task, Wright (2010:1120) remarks that the Gospel must both be believed and also obeyed. This is a crucial facet in the acceptance of the Gospel. Obedience requires a radical alteration of the core belief system and in order to effect this change, the new convert must alter their ideal of wellbeing; just as a baker would throw out his old yeast (1 Cor. 5:7). True to the fundamentals of Missio Dei, God not only obliges, but himself provides the means of justification (Gen. 15:17-18; Rom. 8:30). These conquerors (Rom. 8:37) will in turn transform their society and culture (Jonah 3:5), like salt in food (Matt. 5:13), enabling them thereby to partake in the Missio Dei. It is not because salt is similar to the meat that it succeeds in its task of preservation and taste; it is effective, because it is different. It had the value of currency in Biblical times not only because it added value, but because it was scarce. In a similar way the Missio Dei will activate individuals (believers) as change agents in their society, culture and church. Instead of merely receiving the Gospel, they will become "agents of missionary activity" (WCC, 2012:16).

Thus, Missio Dei makes a comprehensive demand upon every aspect of the individual convert. Macdonald (2012b:86) puts it succinctly, when he says that it is: "...the indwelling badness, ready to produce bad actions that we need to be delivered from". The "sins of his being" that impacts upon his nature, blighting the whole of man (MacDonald, 2012b:49). The very core of individual (and cultural) ideals of wellbeing can, therefore, not be excluded from God's revelation. Missio Dei is Jesus setting mankind free from his sins, with a deed and message of forgiveness (MacDonald, 2012b:79), exacting both conversion and obedience. The resultant transformation ensues from the appropriation and consequent integration of the theocentric Gospel narrative, into the core ideal of wellbeing. Obedience to this claim by Missio Dei should manifest in the transformation of the sinful anthropocentric ideals of wellbeing to an ideal grounded in the liberating salvation in Christ.

This compels the convert to centrifugal engagement with society as part of the new church-in-mission, with which this chapter will engage as a manifestation of conversion.

6. The narrative of Missio Dei towards a counter-culture

Keller (2012a:4763) advocates that Christians should become a "dynamic counterculture" that reflects the activity of God in their lives and His involvement with practical everyday human experience of needs, angst, joys and hope. Keller (2012a:4763) speaks to the urban church, but this can be considered valid for each context wherein the Gospel is preached. It is not just the oral, written or read narrative of the Bible that impacts upon the missional audience, but also the visibility of the *otherworldliness* in the life of the missionary testimony. The narrative should invite to transformation. The light (Matt. 5:14, 16) should expose sin and the promised redemption announce rest (Matt. 11:28, 30), for those weary of sin (MacDonald, 2012b:133).

Alan Hirsch (2009:53) is emphatic that only an "alternative story" will break the predominant paradigm. Hirsch refers to the institutionalised church, but this can be considered relevant to the manner in which the Gospel is proclaimed. The *salt* of believers infuse this "alternative story". Wright (2010:397) points out that James made use of the Old Testament narrative to tell the first Jewish believers (living outside Palestine) "their own story" that found fulfilment in Christ (James 1:1). The alternative is then not necessarily a new story, but probably an alteration (fulfilment) of the old narrative.

Following the example of James, the unique place of the Baka people in God's Missional story must be shown to reach fulfilment in Christ. God is busy throughout world history. God is busy in the history of the Baka. God is busy in the history of each individual. Within this broader perspective, we should search for the existing activity of the Spirit that precedes the missionary effort (WCC, 2012:35). Just as the ideal of wellbeing amongst the Baka encompass every aspect of their lives, so the Gospel offers a comprehensive solution to a fallen creation wherein the Baka finds himself. Only the Gospel provides an "integrated worldview" (Stott, 1992:334), making sense of the daily struggle for existence of the Baka. Like Paul's proclamation of the Gospel in Athens's Areopagus, the message to the pre-Christian Baka should be "a bigger gospel", relevant within their ideal of wellbeing, philosophy, worldview and culture without being unfaithful to the truth (Stott, 1992:334). It is crucial to show the Baka that God is not to be served (appeased) out of fear (Rom. 8:15), but that "this dangerous character intends communion with us" and that mankind will always be lacking in true wellbeing until such communion is established (Brueggemann, 1993:110).

Wright (2010:459) identifies four major narratives in the Biblical storyline: *Creation, Fall, Redemption in History* and *New Creation*. These are the main points that will serve in explaining to the Baka where they enter into the Grand Narrative.

Creation and *new Creation* represent the limits of the Biblical story, but not necessarily the limits of God's plan for or involvement with mankind. The creation story holds the keys to fundamental concepts such as the origin of man and the universe; the identity of the Creator; and the first sign that God wants an intimate relationship with His creation. In relation to *Missio Dei*, this narrative explains the origins of God's involvement with man and establishes the fact that He is in interaction with His creation. It also clearly dispels the Baka notion of a God that created and then promptly turned His back on His work.

The fall clarifies how man's disobedience and rebellion was causal to the entropic nature of the universe and explains the evil influence that permeates the world and every aspect of the human experience. This element of *Missio Dei* illustrates God's love and salvation plan, leading to redemption. The Baka finds this insightful as they do not consider themselves sinful (Van den Toren, 2009:311), but rather helplessly lost in a hostile environment. It is the part of the story that offers not only an explanation of evil and strife, but also the promise of salvation planned by a loving God, contrary to their concept of a distant Creator abandoning His children to the cold realities of everyday existence.

Fortunately for mankind, redemption is offered through grace and at the initiative of God. God acts to save creation, instead of destroying it. Contrary to the human expectation of divine wrath, God decided to save creation despite man's continued disobedience. He also provided the means of justification through His covenantal relationship with Abraham and Israel (Gen. 15:17-18) and finally gave His Son as ultimate sacrifice, thereby extending His salvation to the "gentiles" (Wright, 2010:535) and thus by extension, also to the Baka. This redemptive act is not limited to the soteriological aspects. Just as the fall condemned creation comprehensively, so the redemption offers comprehensive salvation. By making demands on every aspect of the human condition, it aims to destroy the mortal effects of the fall (Wright, 2010:481, 1049). Through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit the believers form part of the missional community, partaking in the *Missio Dei* (Wright, 2010:541).

The coming of Christ will be the final chapter of redemption in history and announce the start of the renewal of the whole of creation – the ultimate goal of God's salvation plan (Wright, 2010:541). This New Creation is good news for the Baka. Contrary to their beliefs that predict a dark, cold and lonely "afterlife" (Van den Toren, 2009:310), the Gospel proclaims to them that there is real life after death. An afterlife more real than this imagined *shadowland*. The Gospel makes the incredible claim of the resurrection of the flesh and not just some spiritual phantom-like existence.

Brueggemann (1993:9) use the metaphor of a three-storeyed (wordplay on "storied") building to illustrate a Biblical theme, common to all man. By means of these three stories, he proposes, people living outside the covenantal relationship with God can become "insiders" (Brueggemann,

1993:50). How this three-storied universe can be employed to make insiders of the Baka people, by reimagining their lives in the ancient narrative of the Bible, will be explored in further detail in Chapter 5. This section just briefly touches on how these relate to Wright's themes and become relevant in contextualising the Gospel for the Baka. God, the Promisemaker (Brueggemann, 1993:10), makes His promises to Abraham and the nation of Israel (Gen. 17:1); God, the Liberator (Brueggemann, 1993:10), delivers (from slavery) and affirms His activity in history as he leads Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 17). God, the Promisekeeper (Brueggemann, 1993:10), delivers on His promises (gift of the land) to Israel; later in the story, this becomes synonymous with His promise to all mankind through His Son (John 3:16).

Drawing from Timothy Keller's sermon *Lessons from Jonah* (Keller, 2012b), ways in which the Biblical story can be related to the lives of the Baka are explored. Given that Keller wrote with an urban audience in mind, it is interesting that the narrative of the Jonah account should be a very successful way in which to contextualise the Gospel into a culture where storytelling plays such a large role. The three-storied approach of Brueggemann should be effective for the same reason.

Keller (2012a:6903) lays emphasis on the change that should first come to the bearers of the news; God's story sends the believer into the world (Jonah 1:1-2). The life-changing truth of God's salvation must compel the Christian to proclaim the story of God's intention to save. This proclamation must originate from personal salvation and be translated into the reality of the Baka's ideals of wellbeing. Believers must apprehend God's story (Jonah 2:9) by continually affirming and understanding that "salvation is of the Lord". Comprehending this element will enable the identification of the source of real (Biblical) wellbeing in the mind of the missionary, so that it may be transferred into the lives of the Baka. God's story is for people (Jonah 4:11). Jonah was sent to Nineveh, the "great city" (Jonah 1:1; 3:2; 4:11). The missionary to the Baka is sent to the great forest and finds the spiritually lost, dwarfed by the giant trees. The narration of God's story (Jonah 3:4) is a story of God's justice, judgement and human sin. This is especially relevant to the Baka who do not conceive of their own sinful nature, but only know the absence of a cold and distant God; feeling exposed to the wrath of the spiritual powers here in the natural world (Van den Toren, 2009:312). God's story is a humbling message: It is only the dying of human nature (Rom. 6:2-7) that enables a true search for the Biblical ideal of wellbeing. It is in assimilating the True Story that the Baka can truly start living (Rom. 6:8). This story must be lived and not just heard, understood or known. *Being well* must be understood as *being with God*, living His story in all aspects, which is the overarching fundamental of sustainable wellbeing. Humanity's hierarchy of values should be transformed (back) from anthropocentrism to theocentrism. The Baka is mainly occupied with the foundational aspects of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and it is specifically here where the fundamental difficulty of surrender is most acutely experienced.

Missio Dei affirms the idea that mission originates with God and that He provides the means for the salvation of man. Taking part in His mission, the church must proclaim the Biblical story as the revelational acts of a God that wants communion with man. The fall of man was comprehensive and impacted the whole of nature and (most probably) the entire creation. The Biblical story of God's mission aims to reveal this news to all people, making them part of the Great Narrative. The "wrenching encounter" calls for radical change, overthrowing the old customs, traditions and ideals of wellbeing and being resurrected in Christ (Rom. 8:5-8, Rom. 6:20-23).

7. Missio Dei and the Church

"All this talk of 'missional church' sounds to me like talking about a 'female woman'. If it's not missional, it's not church." (Wright, 2010:1231)

This chapter establishes the concept of Missio Dei, i.e. that Missio Dei affirms the idea that mission originates with God. It relates the great pains authors like Bosch (2011:389), Moltmann (1993:64), Wright (2006:62) and Hirsch (2009:82) take to explain and emphasise the role of mission in the church and the role of the church in mission. Lewis (2009:2405) emphatically states that the church exists for "nothing else but to draw men into Christ". He goes further to link this to the very reason God became Man. If the church does not fulfil this fundamental task, it is "simply a waste of time" (Lewis, 2009:2407).

With the acceptance of the new story, described in the preceding chapter, a young new church comes into being. Drawing from the above argument, the inference must be made that this new church immediately acts missional, considering that the inverse would not constitute a church at all. Not only did individuals appropriate a new story, but a church was born, testifying to this new paradigm. It conveys the core beliefs to outsiders, as the manifestation of the new system story, while maintaining the unity of the new culture (Steel, 2002:2). Mission simultaneously clothes the church with a *new story* identity and extends the story outwards by virtue of this very identity. This is not only a consequence of obedience, but intrinsic to the covenantal relationship. The new story ideal of wellbeing cannot allow confinement of the ideals to the appropriated lives. The consequence is centrifugal (remember Chesterton's cross, p. 13) and, therefore, fundamentally missional.

C.S. Lewis observes that "there exists in every church something that sooner or later works against the very purpose for which it came into existence" (Lewis, 2002:43). If Lewis is correct, there is a danger that this new church may (in essence) cease to be a church. Keller (2012a:1249) warns that this is the fate of every church at some time or another. As they lose sight of the unique nature of the Gospel, they conform to the world and to the belief systems of other religions.

When the Gospel ceases to be a power of transformation, it becomes a mere set of beliefs (Keller, 2012a:1250) and no longer worth sharing. Hirsch (2009:54) blames such a state of affairs on a defective "systems story" that does not allow the members of the affected church to "step out", into the mission field. It would seem that the problem in a mission-deficient *church* is either the result of a fall back into the *old story* or a failure to recall the essentials of the new story they chose. *Redemption* is one of the defining features of the new story; there is hope yet for the *pseudo church*.

8. Church-in-Mission

Earlier in this chapter it was mentioned that the concept of "Missio Dei" holds that mission originates with God and the church results from God's redeeming act in sending His son, Jesus. The church is the body of Christ and acts as "emissary" of the kingdom of God (Kirk, 1999:36). Lewis (2009c:5) describes the church (through the mouth of Screwtape) as "spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners". The church is a result of God's mission and is made for the purposes of mission (Wright, 2006:62). God's mission goes further than the church, of course, culminating in the reconciliation of all creation with Him (Moltmann, 1993:10).

Bosch (2011:381) describes mission as an attribute of God. The new church, adhering to a new story wherein they have been created in the image of God, can therefore not negate the central tenets of the missional objective in their lives and foundation of their church. The old story (of death) did not require any proselytising, there was little hope and consequently no good news to be told. Even if their sinful natures were suspected, there was no known remedy for the affliction. Accordingly, there was no reason to proclaim anything except the story of death. The new story has mission at its heart. Man was created in the image of God, turned away from Him and is being saved by His redeeming act in Christ. This is newsworthy; this is the story of life!

Moltmann (1993:4) urges the reader to ascertain whom the church is "intended to benefit", and for "whose interest" it was devised. The church not only came about by an act of God, but is built on the foundation of God. As long as the church lives this new life in Christ, it will function true to its calling and be a source of liberation (Moltmann, 1993:5) and salvation to the world. The church did not replace Israel as the people of God, but was rather assimilated (Rom. 11:17) into the "renewed" Israel (Bosch, 2011:103). Just as Israel bore testimony of God's involvement in their history, so does the church now bear witness to the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:22).

Recognising the source of its origin as God Himself, the church must then proceed with the mission of proclaiming the Gospel with "bold humility - or a humble boldness" (Bosch, 2011:489). The mission of the church is to live the divine narrative. This narrative is broadcast by God Himself

(Mic. 6:9a), proclaiming to the city (world) a story of life incompatible with all other stories. Where the gods of the death story expect sacrifices and rituals, the God of life asks only to “act justly”, “love mercy” and to “walk humbly” with Him (Mic. 6:7-8). Contrary to a story of human ingenuity, this alternative is unyielding that “wisdom” is to fear the Creator of the universe (Mic. 6:9b). He acts as conscience (Mic. 6:8c) for those that walk with Him, rebuking them not to exact more fear and offerings nor to show His supremacy (as does the powers of this world), but to let them live (Rev. 3:19).

With the authority of God, the church can confidently live the appropriated new worldview and the renewed ideal of wellbeing. Such changed lives have little choice but to share the good news with the rest of humanity, slaves to their own wisdom and victims of the gods of this world. Having Christ as its Lord, any statement (words or deeds) by the church will be a statement about Christ and the Kingdom of God (Moltmann, 1993:6). The church, realising that it is sent as the Son and the Spirit is sent, understands the scope of the mission (Moltmann, 1993:10). All the activities of the church and the people living the story of obedience are contributing to the mission of God. Wright (2010:214) puts it succinctly: “If everything is mission...everything is mission”. The church will comprehend its definitive place in history and the role it must play in the comprehensive salvation of man (and creation) in the history of the Kingdom of God (Moltmann, 1993:11).

The famous words of the Lausanne Covenant (2013:par. 6) extrapolate the above assumption: “World evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world”. Wright (2010:219) invites the reader to investigate the Biblical theology of mission within this framework, which is an opportunity to further investigate the scope and impact of the church’s mission. Again, this is not a product of the church, but an essential element and foundational *raison d’être* of the church of Christ.

The Trinitarian God is involved in the world and its history and Horrell (2014:127) describes the Biblical Trinitarian worldview as the “most persuasive and truly beautiful invitation possible to believe in the Christian God”. The mission of the Son and the Spirit is the glorification of God and salvation, liberation and healing of the world (Moltmann, 1993:60). The church partakes in this mission, as shown above, whereby the church should also then partake in the comprehensive nature of God’s dealings in the world and in history (Moltmann, 1993:50). This mission is geographical, ecological, economical (Wright, 2010:267) and sociological as well as concretely real in the history of people, individuals and nations.

In this story of God’s self-revelation, He cannot be confined. It encompasses everything, living and dead. For the godless of the old death story, He becomes *God for us*; for the Godforsaken Baka, He becomes *God with us* (Rom. 8.3) (Moltmann, 1993:96). The history of death, so long lived by the Baka, is revealed as a history of life. The Christ of Easter announced the start of a

new creation (Moltmann, 1993:98) and the story must be told! This is the message that the church is compelled to bring to the whole world.

9. Changed lives cannot be silent

Although the church is the chosen means whereby God brings His mission to the world, the church can also be an obstacle to mission (Wright, 2009).

The people comprising the new church should live the appropriated story of life and bear witness as to how the switching of stories influenced their ideal of wellbeing, their worldview and priorities in life. Believing the Gospel must result in obeying the Gospel (Wright, 2010:300). The redeeming act of Christ broke the chains of the old story and enabled the switching of stories, which entails a return to fellowship with God. This fellowship constrains the church to a life of self-giving, just as Christ gave Himself to the church (Moltmann, 1993:96). It also compels the church to a fellowship with the world. This is a fellowship "under the cross" (Moltmann, 1993:97) by suffering with the world, into which the church was born. The church cannot suddenly stand aloof from the crisis from where it emerged, just moments before. The ideal of what it means to *be well* now includes the suffering of the world and is no longer merely confined to the organism. The church must preach and act if it strives to be true to the missional attribute of God.

The church is imminently placed to testify to the world and its very nature it cannot allow it to act as if it is *business as usual*. Each member is testimony of somebody that switched stories and entered into a new life of grace, through repentance and faith in Jesus. As transformed individuals, they form a church that should bear testimony to the transformative power of the Spirit in Jesus (Wright, 2010:544). Lewis (2009:2505) warns that Christian's mode of life can harm this message: "Careless Lives cost Talk". Because the church is in the world, it can act as light (Matt. 5:14), qualitatively altering "life's atmosphere" (Moltmann, 1993:152). Because it is part of the community, it can act as *salt* (Matt. 5:13) with the missionary aim to *infect* society (Moltmann, 1993:152). The Lord of the church examines its work (Rev. 3:15) and judges it hot, cold or lukewarm - inaction is *spat out* (Rev. 3:16).

10. Straight lives, straight thinking and straight talk

The church of Christ is a "ministry of reconciliation exercised upon the world" (Moltmann, 1993:153), but cannot make the claim (as it did at the Council of Florence, 1442) that there is no salvation outside the church. The redeeming work of Christ is for the whole world (1 John 2:2) and the whole church is its instrument.

The church must get their new redemptive story straight, it cannot be confused with other stories. The old story claimed to provide obedient solutions for man's lack of prosperity, while the new

story shows man his innate disobedience and reveals the grace of God through one act of obedient redemption. They are incompatible. The old stories cannot really be understood, until the one story that is true is found. Some of the old stories may well contain wisdoms and truths, but they cannot be expounded as a solution to mankind's dilemma. They are fatally flawed in that they are alternatives to the Biblical narrative of God's action in history. The new church must now *preach and act* this message to the world. The central tenant of this message is that God chose to bring salvation to the world through the person of Christ and no other person, technique or ritual (John 14:6).

In order to do this faithfully, the church requires knowledge. The Bible is both a source and the content of the church's mission and wisdom (Wright, 2010:349). Although there are other texts that played an important role in the knowledge base of Israel and the early Christians, it is important to note that only the Bible was considered as "inspired text" and as such formed the authoritative basis against which all else were judged (Hayes, 2007:197).

Titus 2 makes clear that teaching, instruction, encouragement and exhortation form an important part of the community of believers. The Greek *teach* in this regard conveys a sense of continuity, training and discipline (Keller, 2012a:1682). It is a continual process of mentorship and receiving mentoring. Not only must fellow believers be taught "sound doctrine" (Tit.:2:2), but they must also be encouraged to behave in a way that will not enable the world to bring proof of wrongdoing against the community of believers (Tit. 2:5, 8). They are also exhorted to avoid those behaviours that are typical of a previous story and ideal of wellbeing (Tit. 2:12). In short, they are instructed to make the Gospel "attractive" (Tit. 2:10) to all people, because the grace and salvation of Christ has come "to all people" (Tit. 2:11).

The knowledge the church requires is not merely cerebral or limited to Scripture verses, but involves the experience of His salvation and activity in the contextual life of the individual and the activity of the church (Wright, 2010:335). The Bible and personal experience teach that the church is instructed and guided by the Holy Spirit in both word and deed (Ex. 4:12; Matt. 10:19). Just think of how the apostles were told that the Spirit would show them the way and give them the words to speak (Matt. 10:20).

The church is situated within a specific culture. Although the church and the Gospel flow from this culture, it is important for the Gospel to also critique the culture and traditions of the church as well as the culture and traditions of the society wherein it is situated (Wright, 2009). The Gospel should not be made to conform to the culture of an old story (it cannot), but the culture must be renewed by the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

11. The problem with “religion”

“Religion” also cannot elude the transformative power. The Biblical narrative tells repeatedly of God’s judgement over religion and as Moltmann (1993:154) puts it: “The enemies of faith are not lack of faith but superstition, idolatry, man’s ‘Godalmightiness’ and self-righteousness”. The Gospel of Christ is liberating news to all mankind, freeing them from the oppression of their own hearts and sinful desires; the ideal of wellbeing that seeks self-gratification, ease, affluence and power at the expense of others are in fact a prison called “belief in myself” (Chesterton, 1994:85). The Gospel of Christ is about dependency. The church must not depend on “philosophy”, “human tradition”, “elemental forces”, but on Christ alone (Col. 2:8).

The church also finds itself amongst religious beliefs that are incompatible with Christianity. Lewis (2009:2512) asks us to consider that God is at work in religion. There are Christians who think that God has revealed Himself in religions other than the Judean-Christian (Higgins, 2009). Lewis does not go that far, but acknowledges that God is involved in the lives of men and does not confine His sphere of influence to Christians alone. Lewis (2009:2515) posits that God’s “secret influence” results in people “belonging to Christ without knowing it”. While it is not the object of this study to analyse divine providence, it does seem compatible with the accepted idea of God as the original missionary, engaging with people; taking the initiative of changing stories and lives by preparing the listener to receive His word. Simply said: Not everything in all religions is false, nor are all individual Christians necessarily *better* people than all individuals from another belief system. This knowledge will hopefully serve to caution the church against the absolutism of the Christian worldview (Bosch, 1995:64) and enable it to recognise the whisper of God’s name in all stories. The belief that salvation is through Christ alone does not preclude or confine the *effects* of the saving grace to Christians (1 John 2:2), but it is a “great joy for all the people” (Luke 2:10).

12. Retelling and renewal

Keller (2012a:1239) calls for “gospel renewal” and distinguishes between “personal gospel renewal” and “corporate gospel renewal” (Keller, 2012a:1245). The former refers to the experiences of grace in the life of the individual - intimate and personal in nature - allowing the believer to grow in faith and to support and bear witness towards fellow believers. It grows from a deep knowledge of dependency upon grace through Christ and is an important aspect of the correct conceptualisation of justification. This not only imparts humbleness, but also comfort and joy (Keller, 2012a:1268) in the knowledge that the grace of the Lord is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9). Corporate renewal refers to a congregation of believers that rediscover their communal grace as body of Christ and reignites their fervour and energy to the missional task at hand.

Brueggemann (1993:25) emphasises the need to retell the story, the good news of the Gospel, so that the victory can be won and re-won and won in every life and in each new circumstance

(Brueggemann, 1993:25). Christ only died once for all mankind, but the battle against the sinful nature must be renewed daily with fresh initiative. The retelling of the story is not the same as the victory (which has been won), but only recounts some of the story in order for the audience to appropriate its essentials. There is a host of events that occurred *behind the scenes* in the cosmic battle that are not explicit in the story (Brueggemann, 1993:27). The story was given to man "Gently for our instruction to impart Things above Earthly thought" (Milton, 1667/2011:1937), to rejoice "For one Man found so perfect and so just that God vouchsafes to raise another World from him, and all his anger to forget" (Milton, 1667/2011:3466). The narrative in Luke 2 recounts a definitively altered reality, but the shepherds receive only the part of the story relevant to their circumstance in life (Brueggemann, 1993:28). The first scene in the dramatic Christian narrative is the "decisive combat" to which the story gives only indirect reference (Brueggemann, 1993:30). The announcement of the battle and the victorious outcome (1 Cor. 15:57) is the act that requires repetition in order to affect a "lived appropriation" in the lives of the listeners (Brueggemann, 1993:30).

In his seminars, called "The Three Chairs", Bruce Wilkinson (2012) highlights the issue of the appropriation of the Christian belief by the children of Christians. As noted above that the retelling of the story amongst members of the congregation is of cardinal importance to obtain the continued blessings of the Lord, it should also be considered how this message is effectively transmitted to the children of the first believers within the church.

Wilkinson (2012) illustrates how the message of the Gospel is lost and the story confused from one generation to the next by means of three chairs. The first generation is completely devoted to following God and obeying His commandments (like Joshua and the people in Shechem - Josh. 24). They appropriate the truths of the Gospel and see the promise of land being fulfilled in their lifetime, even though they had only heard about the exodus narrative (Brueggemann, 1993:50). They commit to a covenantal relationship with God (Josh. 24:15), thus determining their identity as *people of God* (Brueggemann, 1993:66). This core belief determines all their actions and beliefs, with the deep knowledge of their own inability to serve God adequately (Josh. 24:19).

The next generation starts to compromise (Wilkinson, 2012) and their identity as *God's people* becomes less clear in comparison to the people around them. They remember the "core memory", but do not understand or appropriate the practical meaning or cost of serving Yahweh (Brueggemann, 1993:71). They are most likely a bit more affluent than the previous generation and confuse prosperity with Godly approval (Brueggemann, 1993:77). They have forgotten to remember.

The third generation has lost the core memory that is crucial to staying close to God and living in dependence of Him. They are confused, faithless (Wilkinson, 2012) and clutching at straws for any religion, philosophy or ritual that seems convenient or expedient.

Where did the greatest story get lost? Keller (2012:1731) makes the interesting point that successful transmission does not depend on “redoubling our efforts” to be better Christians (following the example of Christ). While teaching and preaching is important and imperative, the transmission only really follows out of a “deep understanding” of Christ’s salvation in life and the living out of this transformation. This understanding only comes through the Spirit and is devoid of any personal achievement, focusing on the achievement by Christ for the purposes of salvation (Keller, 2012a:1691).

Brueggemann reminds parents that the transmission of the story is a continual process of re-appropriation and that the conversation never really reaches a conclusion (Brueggemann, 1993:94). Some children may well grow up and make an effortless and (almost) unconscious transition to persons of faith, it still requires a deep knowledge base. One part of this is catechism-based learned knowledge (Keller, 2012a:1309) and the other is experience-based appropriation of the grace and promises of God (Keller, 2012a:1386). The source of the learned knowledge is often derived from the parents, but also from the community of believers. Encouragement and example should also be primarily forthcoming from the parents, but the community provides a point of reference and a network of support for young believers.

A balance between “advocacy” and “receptivity” is required, but difficult to attain (Brueggemann, 1993:95). Remembering that this is also the domain of God’s mission, comes with the realisation that sometimes even the greatest of effort is not effective. Brueggemann (1993:95) sums it up, when he concludes: “Faith does on occasion arise, partly because of us, partly in spite of us”.

13. The reason and the source

Understanding that Christ is both the reason and the source of mission, the church - as body of Christ - can only be missional. Hirsch (2009:142) states that man’s notions of the church cannot inform its missionary purpose. It is the understanding of Christ and a relationship with Him that defines the mission: “Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology”. Again, man is urged to seek outside of himself and his conceptions of the perceived reality.

Keeping the inadequacy of man’s best efforts in mind, the work of the Holy Spirit is examined in the next section. This will reveal how the successful appropriation of God’s redemption transforms lives, even despite man’s best intentions.

14. Missio Dei and the Holy Spirit

Jürgen Moltmann (1993:139) explains the special role the Holy Spirit plays in the relationship of the church and Christ. The Spirit rekindles the church in its mission, invigorating it with renewed fellowship with Christ and empowers it through fellowship with Christ. The Spirit fills the church with the potency of a creation that was forever changed by the victorious Christ. It testifies (1 John 5:6) of Christ, but also lives inside believers (Rom. 8:9). Calvin (1541/2013:15401) describes the Holy Spirit as the *lien* (*link*) that attaches the believer to Christ, animating the “lifeless” body (Calvin, 1541/2013:15417) (Rom. 8:11) and being both the root and the seed of eternal life (Calvin, 1541/2013:15407) – thus He is called *l'Esprit de sanctification* (Calvin, 1541/2013:15406). The persons of the Trinity can be distinctly identified and worshipped, but it is the mutual “glory, love, and communication of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” that gives essence to a differentiation with all other forms of theism (Horrell, 2014:127).

The Holy Spirit convinces man of his sinful state and teaches him of his need for salvation, the imminence of retribution and the means of sanctification. The Holy Spirit thus conveys the incarnation into the core of human weakness; into the sense of wellbeing, filling an illusion with Substance.

14.1. Sent by the Father: The Holy Spirit

*Credimus in Spiritum Sanctum qui a Patre Filioque procedit*⁴.

Berkhof (1996:97) shows that the Holy Spirit stands in an intimate, but distinct, relation with the other two persons of the trinity and that the special task of the Holy Spirit is to *bring to completion* by acting “immediately upon and in the creature” (Berkhof, 1996:98). The Holy Spirit can be said to *complete* the missionary work of God; He regenerates a new life by dispensing redeeming grace and providing instruction and inspiration (Berkhof, 1996:424, 426). Bosch (2011:115) describes mission as “intrinsic” to the character of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:18-19 teaches that the transformative power working within each believer is the same “mighty strength” that was exerted when Christ was raised from the dead. This leads to the conclusion that the transformation from old ideals and concepts of wellbeing to a new understanding in Christ shares the same intrinsic might and power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it is God in action.

⁴ “We believe in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son” (Berkhof, 1996:97).

15. God Acts

A continuum of Godly activity permeates the Bible. Carson and Moo (1992:7074) describes the *Acts of the Apostles* as forming part of a "history of Christian beginnings", which could've been an alternative title for this study. *Missio Dei* is all about new beginnings and this study is all about God radically transforming lives, by providing an opportunity for beginning anew. Carefully considering the second book of Luke, within the framework of the concept of *Missio Dei*, offers an alternative title of "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" (Carson & Moo, 1992:7082). It then becomes clear that the goal of mission is not the *spreading* of the church, but the extension of the Kingdom of God to every facet of life and the universe. In the same sense, it is not the church that is to be glorified, but the "Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit" (Moltmann, 1993:11). Bosch (2011:74) explains that the Holy Spirit, although closely connected to the epoch of the church, did not start His work only on Pentecost, but has always been working as part of *Missio Dei*. Luke unites the acts of Christ and the church into the acts of the Spirit, showing a continuity of purpose and person in the *Missio Dei*.

Again, (and it cannot be stressed enough) it is not the mission of mankind, Christians or even the Christian church to bring salvation to creation. It is the Mission of God, through Christ in the Spirit. Smith (2005:1) states the obvious (but not always appropriated) fact that God is not confined to specific geographical locations (such as *mission fields*), but that the Spirit is at work equally and everywhere. He puts it succinctly that the mission of God takes place everywhere where there's "alienation from God", working within man, priming them to receive the Gospel with the determination of generating "new hearts", making "new creatures" that submits to Jesus as Lord in their lives and within creation.

15.1. God acts: sending

The relation between the Sent and the Sender must be understood within the concept of the Trinity. The original *nature* of the Trinity is "open" in that it is "open for its own sending" to man, the world and time (Moltmann, 1993:55). Paul talks about the sending of the Son and the Spirit in the same breath (Gal. 4:6). Because we have been reconciled with the Father ("you are sons" – Gal. 4:6) the Father sends the "Spirit of His Son into our hearts". This presence of the Holy Spirit offers the same "transforming power that energized the life and ministry of Jesus and raised him from the dead" (Wright, 2010:543). The transforming power available to the Mission of God surpasses the power of God in vanquishing death and the decay of entropy in the universe. That is a lot of "transforming power"! The Holy Spirit is not merely an emotional *force* that makes people feel good or talk strange. It is God in action. God in mission. The Spirit works inwardly, transforming (with terrible power) the sinful hearts of man, filling it with the Spirit of God (Smith, 2005:8). Self-loyalty is transformed to God-loyalty (Smith, 2005:9).

The Lord's Day 20 of the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that the Holy Spirit is "true and eternal God", together with the Father and the Son (Gen 1:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16). It goes further to explain that the Spirit is given to "share in Christ", comforting and accompanying the Christian through his earthly pilgrimage. The Lord's Day 1 explains that the Spirit sustain the Christian in his transformed life, focusing him on the eternal truth of God's salvation and love. What Moltmann calls the "creative Spirit" (Moltmann, 1993:112), both transforms lives, stories and histories (John 7:38-39; John 3:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:16-18) as well as liberates (Rom. 8:2-6), comforts (John 15:26; Acts 9:31; Rom. 8:15), abides (John 14:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:14), teaches (Jer. 31:33), exposes lies and sin (Micah 3:8-10; John 14:17) and protects the Christian.

15.2. God acts: breaking bonds, filling voids

In his book, *Spirit of the Rainforest: A Yanomamö Shaman's Story* (Ritchie, 1996), Mark Ritchie shares some testimony on the work of the Spirit in the lives of the Yanomamö people of the Amazonian rainforest. The similarity with the spiritual (and physical) experience of the Baka is striking. Both peoples are involved in a daily struggle for survival in the jungle. Their struggles are also "not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). This Bible verse so accurately describes the spiritual subjection of these people that it seems to actually describe them and not the Ephesian church to which Paul wrote his letter from prison (Carson & Moo, 1992:12287).

Similar to the Yanomamö people, the Baka life has a very serious and real spiritual aspect. They remain true to what Lewis (2009:30) called "amphibians", belonging to the eternal world as spirits but inhabiting time as humans. As with the Yanomamö, the Baka employs the services of a shaman-like figure to render various services to the clan. Amongst the Baka the shaman is not always a dedicated post, but a role that can be fulfilled by certain "talented" individuals (Van den Toren, 2009:312). Michael Harner (1997:1) cites astounding similarities in shamanistic societies worldwide: "...fundamental principles of shamanic practice, which I found to be basically the same among indigenous peoples, whether in Siberia, Australia, southern Africa, or North and South America". One reason for this similarity might be that the shamans are not merely ritualistic figures in the community, but that they are really involved with the spiritual powers that are obviously not bound by geographical limitations. Medical anthropologists attribute the success of shamanistic healing ceremonies to the community sympathy, support and involvement that is brought to bear upon the sick during these rituals (Brown, 1989:172). Ritchie (2009:2) points out that the ritual is often just the means (often associated with hallucinogenic substances) of communicating with the spirits. The role and function of shamans the world over includes not only the tasks of healing, but also divination, communicating with the spirits (ancestral and otherwise) and adjudicating disputes. In short, the role of the shaman is to improve the wellbeing

of his people (Ritchie, 2009:2). Unfortunately the ideal of wellbeing (*diabolic version*) is also communicated to the people via the shaman, ensuring that the people remain prisoner to the evil spirits bent on their destruction. Whatever contributes to the *wellbeing* of the spirits, forms the basis of the ideal of wellbeing communicated to the people and ingrained culturally and ritually by means of the shaman. The shaman often performs his duty under duress, with his own wellbeing (or safety) in mind (Brown, 1989:172). Illness is frequently perceived to be an attack made upon an individual, a sorcerer-type figure. The shaman and the *sorcerer* is believed to obtain their powers from the same spiritual source and as such they both have the power to harm people (Brown, 1989:172). In the absence of a successful healing attempt, the shaman can easily be accused of being the source of the affliction.

The Baka remain fairly pragmatic on this point, shifting loyalties and ritual to suit their immediate needs (Van den Toren, 2009:311). New Baka converts to Christianity may be tempted to continue this see-saw approach to spirituality, if they do not apprehend the scope and imperative of the Creator's claim on their lives.

Ritchie (1996) describes the lives of the Yanomamö through the first person accounts of their members. He recounts the testimony of a Yanomamö shaman, explaining how the Holy Spirit (here referred to as God, *Yai Pada*) dramatically transformed his life (and consequently that of his clan) (Ritchie, 1996:227):

"He (Yai Pada) reached out and grabbed me. I felt so safe...Then with a big voice the spirit said to my spirits, "Leave him alone. He's mine". They scampered in every direction, like a herd of terrified hogs. And he was right; I was his."

A more complete illustration of *Missio Dei* can hardly be imagined. The Holy Spirit intervened drastically in the life of a man that had intimate relations with *his* spirits (Ritchie, 2009:37); plucking him out of diabolical enslavement and revealing to him the truth in Christ. Now, for most Westerners, this spiritual struggle has become an abstract concept. Rationalism has created the temptation to *unspiritualised* even the spiritual. The Baka understands the spiritual war literally and experiences this frequently, making it impossible for them to view this in any other way than practical. They would expect the Holy Spirit to act in the same way, not just emotionally or abstractly. The Baka's reality includes the spiritual just as much as the temporal. In fact, for the Baka, the temporal includes the spiritual.

The Yanomamö knew the creator God, before the arrival of the first Christian missionaries (Ritchie, 1996:122). He was "the one we have always called...the unfriendly spirit, the enemy spirit" (Ritchie, 1996:227). The Baka has also been prepared for the coming of the Christian message. The story they have been told (and embraced) is one of abandonment, of inferiority

and spiritual tyranny. The clincher of the story was that they required no salvation, even if it was offered, because they lack the concept of a sinful nature (Van den Toren, 2009: 311).

15.3. God acts: controlling to liberate

Smith (2005:8) is of the opinion that *control* is the key issue. Satan endeavours to control all of human existence. He does so by means of deception, spiritually invading worldviews, cultures and ideals of people. While Western rationality provides some protection against overt spiritual deception, it also makes them blind to the more covert assault of the spiritual forces. Lacking a Holy Spirit filled existence either leads to a disbelief in the spiritual forces or, alternatively, being subject to their whims. Materialist, rationalist or shamanistic all fall into the same trap (Lewis, 2009: 01). Controlling the story of the Baka is cardinal to their salvation. Satan and his spirits gain this control through lies, deception and manipulation. This is effective, because it fits in perfectly with the sinful nature of humanity. The Holy Spirit's control is "indirect, exalting Christ as Lord" (Smith, 2005:9). Jesus is in control, in other words, not man. The new story demands that man relinquish that thing that he most desires: power to control his destiny. Carefully note the difference between the two. The evil spiritual powers control to enslave; the Holy Spirit controls to set free.

15.4. God Acts: spiritual transformation - great expectations

Macdonald (2012:45) is adamant that the "cure" for man is to have "all its parts brought into harmony with each other" for there to be no vestiges of sin left. Every man is plagued by a nagging feeling of discomfort and will go to great lengths to be freed from this; seeking the defect that causes their misery, not realising that it is merely the "variable occasion" of it (MacDonald, 2012b:24). A radical transformation is required to recognise the moral sin in himself and to seek and receive redemption. This transformation does not have only behaviour as aim. Behaviour is important (Jam. 2:14), but should not be limited to the superficial. The transformation that the Spirit works results in a change that brings all the human parts into harmony with Christ. It is only once the ideal of wellbeing is changed inherently that the neighbour's wife is no longer coveted. Inversely, the sinful heart brings forth "evil thoughts" (Matt. 15:18-19).

15.5. God Acts: new birth

Man is repeatedly confronted by an inability to change, to affect the transformation of the heart confessed with the lips. In Gethsemane, Jesus warns the disciples to pray so that they do not fall into temptation. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38) seems to be the mantra of man. Instead of an admission of defeat, this is again God on the mission path - warning and exhorting. Paul (Rom. 7:18) admits that he does not do what he knows to be right; he rather does that which he knows to be evil. He blames it on "sin living in me that does it" (Rom.

7:20). Salvation lies outside of man. It is beautifully illustrated in the life of the Yanomamö shaman described above (in 1.18, named *Jungleman*) that had “a chest full of spirits”, which he described as “wonderful” and “beautiful” (Ritchie, 1996:37). While *Jungleman* might have wished to be relieved of the spiritual burden, he recognised this intimate relationship with the spirits as the origin of his status and power. He felt no desire to relinquish either, but rather submitted to their council and influence: “When you have spirits as wonderful as mine are, you would never think of ignoring their advice” (Ritchie, 1996:42). Then God intervened. “His spirits” came to kill him, but he was suddenly “grabbed” by the Spirit and assured of His protection; the spirits were chased away by a Word: “He is mine” (Ritchie, 1996:42). All at once the deceit and lies became powerfully clear: “suddenly in this bright light, I saw that they were all lies. Everything they ever said was a lie” (Ritchie, 1996:42).

Jungleman was transformed by the Spirit from within. His response: “He was right; I was his.” “Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:6) replied Jesus to the teacher of Israel, Nicodemus. *Jungleman* comprehended what Nicodemus was slow to understand.

Jungleman received salvation *sola gratia*. He appropriated this transformational change and it not only changed his life, but also his village (Ritchie, 1996:123). His salvation was relational, rather than based on justification. *Jungleman* “threw away” the gods his ancestors worshipped (Joshua 24:14) and chose to *switch stories* and “serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15). *Everybody* knew that their village was different; *everybody* saw that their lives were changed and differed from the surrounding villages. Urged to go back to the old ways, they reply: “*we never will*” (Ritchie, 2009:3). Asked how it feels to live a life emptied of the spirits, a former shaman replied: “*I can tell you in one word — peaceful...and what’s best — we are never afraid*” (Ritchie, 2009:3).

16. Man responding with *cheap grace*

New Christians will rightly believe that their new faith requires a change in the way they live their lives (*obedience* was repeatedly emphasised in the preceding chapters); these new believers do not always understand that it also requires a new way of thinking. Their concept of *when all is well* should change, but also the dream or ideal of wellbeing. The Holy Spirit works this change in God’s children, miraculously and powerfully. Unfortunately Christians often become dependent on this outcome (leading a *good life*) for justification, even though they bear preciously little claim to the transformative power in the changed life (Keller, 2012a:1263). This is a precarious position, resulting in one of two extremes: Either the Christian offers the evidence of his good works or life as a means of redemption (*I-save generations*) or becomes despondent in their failure (Josh. 24:9) to live up to the absolute and impeccable (in mind and body) mandated by God (Keller, 2012a:1263). Both can result in a self-deceiving *cheap grace* (Bonhoeffer, 2001:44), where sanctification by grace (alone) is either negated or supplemented by a personal offer. True to the

call to obedience, Bonhoeffer (2001:54) states it simply that “only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes”. Purposefully living a sinful life, while using the grace of God as a *blank cheque* can even be construed as sin against the Holy Spirit (Bonhoeffer, 2001:724).

Legalism, morality and *cheap grace* are described by Lovelace (1979:100) as three aberrations permeating a church lacking a Biblical understanding of sanctification. He describes these as forming part of “auxiliary methods in assurance”, in contravention of what they actually know and believe to be true. The church must translate their rational understanding of justification (through grace alone) to a practical, externally orientated and perceptible product of the appropriated Gospel (Keller, 2012a:1266). Bonhoeffer (2001:782) calls the church to “costly grace”, abandoning the old life (death story); born new to discipleship in a “life which springs from grace”.

Only the Holy Spirit can regenerate this new life, by dispensing the grace that completes the salvation of man (Berkhof, 1996:424, 426).

17. Go : the sending forth of new man

Anekwe Oborji (2006:35) explains that the relationship between the Holy Spirit and *missionary* church is “inseparable” and “intimate”. Bosch (1991:102) and Moltmann (1977) both refer to the “power” of the Holy Spirit, emboldening the church and awakening the desire in the hearts of the believers to share the good news (Greenway, 1999:54). It is not only something talked about, but it enables the disciples to reach out beyond their preconceived ideas and stereotypes. It enables them to reach out beyond borders, even towards their enemies. As the believer was accepted by God, he is now enabled by the Holy Spirit to accept others in obedience to the Lord of his life (Greenway, 1999:55). At the same time, it convinces the audience (or witness) of their own sin and inadequacy to save themselves (Greenway, 1999:57). Without the work of the Holy Spirit, there is no mission; without the work of the Holy Spirit, there are no *results* in mission.

18. Missio Dei: Conversing with God

It was noted that the Holy Spirit works within the believer to expound the person and work of Jesus in such a way that they progress from the first steps of believing in the salvation through Christ to experiencing the width, length, height and depth of the love of Christ (Eph. 3:17-18). From a situation where the Baka experienced hopeless abandonment, they are now being told that they are in fact loved by the Creator and called to an intimate relationship with Him. One of the ways in which this relationship takes form is in prayer. The Christian prayer differs substantially from any form of communication with spiritual powers that the Baka would have used in their pre-conversion lives. In this sense, the way in which this difference is evident in the lives of new converts can be indicative of their approbation of the essential truths of the new faith. It is not only the way in which they pray, but also what they pray for and how they react to God's response that provides an insight into the extent in which they have been able to shed the vestiges of their old religion and ideals of wellbeing.

John Piper (2003:57) describes prayer as an illustration of God's power and supremacy in the spiritual war. This "walkie-talkie" of the church is for those on "active service" to move mission forward so that it is not based on human initiative, but displays the singular fact that it is God pursuing His mission. If it is then God's mission, the co-workers should keep in constant contact with their command centre and power post (Wright, 2010:5502).

This is the prayer of the church, the missionary man that is chosen by God to work with Him in restoring His creation. The new converts' prayer must bear testimony to the fact that they are now also part of His mission.

In prayer, like in everything else, the converted Baka will be guided and taught by the Holy Spirit who intercedes in prayer on their behalf (Rom. 8:26). This can be confusing for the Baka. Saying that the Holy Spirit *intercedes* on behalf of the Christian, does not mean that He *uses* the body of the believer to communicate like a ventriloquist. In the comprehensive understanding of Missio Dei, God (Holy Spirit) is speaking to God, but it is not a shamanistic dreamlike trance or manipulated state. Lewis (2002:68) warns against a pantheistic interpretation, when he points out that "God and man cannot exclude one other". Lewis offers a "pseudo-Dyonesian" (Cassidy, 2010: 139) explication of the origin of prayer in saying that "the deeper the level within ourselves from which our prayer, or any other act, wells up, the more it is His, but not at all the less ours" (Lewis, 2002:69). What is important in this context is that the Baka should discern between *their will* and the will of God. God's *will* is that of a *giver* so that He is not all (Pantheism), but that He has given Himself so that He can be "all in all" (Lewis, 2002:70). God does not *stream out* into the natural world, but all of creation exists as His creation and not "as His essence" (Horrell, 2014:129).

Bonhoeffer (2011:2296) describes the essence of Christian prayer as “definite, concrete petition” in contrast to “general adoration”. Such petition can only make sense if the believer understands his position as part of a family, now that God has called him as a child through His son Jesus. The Baka no longer has to negotiate and appease evil spirits, but can just ask “of One who we know has the heart of a Father” (Bonhoeffer, 2011:2297). This is a cardinal aspect of the wellbeing ideal. Each and every need and desire can be brought before the only One that can really provide. Not only is it in His power, but He also has the loving desire to provide all that is good for His children (Luke 11:11; Matt. 7:7).

The prayer (to the goddess of the earth) of an Igbo man illustrates a subtle difference in this regard (Okorochoa, 2004:68):

Our beloved father

Please hear my voice

Give us life, worthwhile life (Ezi Ndu) ...

May I never lack a successor

Earth goddess please hear...

Do give us “childbearing”

Children are superior to wealth

But do not deny us wealth

Children and wealth are closely related

Chase sickness away from us

Give us health

Give us wellbeing [total wellbeing]

Sickness is evil and terrible. Life is supreme

Therefore give us life

Viable life

Long life

Sometimes, words can be power. Words (or the name of a god) is considered powerful in many civilisations (Frye, 1983:6). In this seemingly petitionary prayer, the man asks “for a life worth living (*Ezi Ndu*)” which is defined in material and communal wealth (successor and childbearing), general wellbeing (health, absence of illness, long life). All the preceding can be summed up as “absence of evil”. Thus, the man is petitioning for what he regards as goals and objectives, which can only be achieved with the co-operation of the deity and the defeat of evil. It seems as if the desire for spiritual power (to overcome the evil powers) is the driving force behind his prayer (Chike, 2008:226). If his requests are not being met by tangible results, his petition has failed. How does this differ then from Christian prayer?

Christian prayer, unlike any other form of *communication* with supposed deities or spiritual forces, has the one defining factor that all others lack: The One to which prayer is directed, prayed an *unblushing* (Lewis, 2002:35) petitionary prayer; and did not receive what He asked. Nevertheless, these types of *petitionary prayers* were recommended by Him (Matt. 7:7; 11:9-10). The Old Testament bears testimony to multiple examples of petitionary prayer born out of apprehension (Ps. 50:15, 118:5) and commanded by God (Jer. 33:3).

As can be seen from the preceding Igbo prayer, petitionary prayer can be a great determinant of the extent to which the believer has infused the Gospel into his life and thoughts. This type of prayer is often (not always) born from anguish. Anxiety is the result of uncertainty and is one of the most important issues that mankind tries to avoid, by appealing to spiritual forces or preternatural phenomena. Lewis (2002:41) explains that the Christian should see this state of uneasy apprehension from the experience of Jesus. When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, it would be an understatement to say that He was anxious. Jesus was pleading for His life, pleading for a horrible (He had probably seen crucifixions before) death to be avoided. Not only does this draw attention to His human condition, by experiencing an unpredictable world (Lewis, 2002:42), but it shows that it is also part of God’s will and destiny (Lewis, 2002:43). For a Christian, anxiety can no longer be a sign of failure. It is something the Perfect Man experienced; why not he?

Jesus prayed, His request was not granted. He turned to His friends, they were sleeping. The people that He healed and walked amongst were buying for His blood. The Roman justice took refuge in subterfuge. God *vanishes*.

This is of particular significance for the Baka converts. The future will not be without trials and frustrated hope. Not only will they experience anxiety in an uncertain environment, but they are now promised a God that has experienced this emotion. They are no longer alone in this unpredictable world. Christianity does not promise the absence of uncertainty and anxiety; it promises a God that subjected all things to His will. They are commanded to pray. They are commanded to petition God. They are commanded to submit to “Your will be done” (Matt. 6:10).

In this, they should now act as “an agent as well as a patient” (Lewis, 2002:26). In other words, they should not merely be passive observers (or victims or subjects) of God’s will; they must actively work the will of God as agents of His kingdom on earth. In a world where the voice of the Baka is often disregarded, Christian petitionary prayer is more about being heard than achieving an objective or manipulating a deity. The Baka can now count on being heard and taken into account. They will have to “bear to be refused”, but they will not be ignored (Lewis, 2002:52).

The results of a healthy conversion (without syncretism and dualism) will be attested by honest, open petitionary prayer that is not merely subjected to the will of God, but also inspires to action as agents of God’s will. God already knows every need and apprehension. He is not like the spirits that can be bought to further personal agendas.

The following chapter explores this world in which the Baka find themselves. A glimpse of their hopes and dreams will also point towards their apprehensions and anxiety.

CHAPTER 3: BEING PYGMY IN A CHANGING WORLD. THE WELLBEING OF THE BAKA IN 2014

1. Introduction

"Wherefore, though good and bad men suffer alike, we must not suppose that there is no difference between the men themselves, because there is no difference in what they both suffer. For even in the likeness of the sufferings, there remains an unlikeness in the sufferers" (Augustine, 1467/1984: 14).

In *The City of God*, the African theologian, Augustine, refers to a picturesque Biblical metaphor that will appeal to the Baka. He shows that people's ideal of wellbeing is subject to their worldview, by referring to Zech. 13:9 and 1 Pet. 1:7; the same fire that refines gold, burns chaff to smoke. The way in which reality is perceived is thus closely bound to reactions to events and identification with a personal modality, wherein the ideal of wellbeing (often based around a reliance on *peace and security*) lies. The intervention of Christ makes a comprehensive demand on this ideal of wellbeing, disrupting the elements of fearful bondage and greed that dictated its boundaries (Rom. 8:15; Heb. 2:15) and transforming this into a fear of the Lord (Jonah 1:16) as the "beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7).

While the reality of the redemption brought by Christ transcends cultural barriers, the way in which this relates to identity-bound worldviews and the way that it is understood does not (Van den Toren, 2009:306). As seen in the previous chapter, it is considered crucial to find a way in which to communicate the Gospel normatively in a dynamic, interactive and relevant way that will be transformative in the lives of the Baka. One of the aspects included the concept of kenosis (Frederiks, 2005:216): finding a shared experience (Shaw, 2010:210) in order to *put yourself in another's shoes*. As Blaise Pascal (1669/2011:425) puts it: "All men seek happiness without exception. They all aim at this goal however different the means they use to attain it" (Pascal, 1669/2011:425). This quest for an elusive ideal of wellbeing can serve as a common denominator, a *shared experience*. In order to familiarise the reader with the Baka world that underlies and informs their sense and ideals of wellbeing, this chapter will examine the hopes, dreams and challenges of the Baka.

2. Being Pygmy

For most readers, the Pygmy peoples are little more than mythical shadows inhabiting foreign forests. What constitutes *being Pygmy* and where do these people live? Despite many misconceptions, the term Pygmy refers to twenty groups of people from the Congo Basin with different morphological, cultural and biological features (Verdu & Destro-Bisol, 2012:1). There is

also genetic evidence of high levels of Bantu ancestry (mostly paternal Bantu) amongst the Pygmy (Jarvis *et al.*, 2012:1).

There is even a degree of contention on what constitutes a *Pygmy*. W'Isuka (2011:76) is of the opinion that although there are diverse groups of Pygmy, they do share a number of common traits. Bahuchet (2012:12) is more cautious showing that some 20 ethno-linguistic groups can be described as *Pygmy*, although various terms do exist. He warns (Bahuchet, 2012:11) that the term *Pygmy* is confusing and that it derives from early European travellers that assigned this appellation to all people of short stature. The following generalisations are necessary to form a conception of the group of people to whom this term refers. *Pygmies* are generally depicted as being short (less than 1.5m), but this short stature is not confined to the Pygmies and many of the surrounding Bantu⁵ (also called *Bacwa*) are of similar height (Verdu & Destro-Bisol, 2012:2). In general, however, Pygmies are ~17cm shorter than their Bantu neighbours (Jarvis *et al.*, 2012:2). Pygmies are not exclusively hunter-gatherers, they also fish and practice limited agriculture since the 1930's (Bahuchet, 2012:15). Those Pygmies that live in the forest (not all do), also display a strong attachment to the forest (Bahuchet, 2012:15). According to Verdu and Destro-Bisol (2012:4), they share related languages. Bahuchet (2012:15) is, however, adamant that there is no evidence of a Pygmy linguistic family and that all Pygmy languages are related to those spoken by their non-Pygmy neighbours. He points out that the Baka do speak a language not understood by others in the same linguistic family (Bahuchet, 2012:16). Interestingly, I have often seen my Bantu colleagues speaking with the Baka in a dialect preferred to the commonly shared French, but have not been able to determine if this is as a result of the common dialect or if one party is familiar with the language of the other. Responses to my questions in this regard have been met by confused and confusing responses.

People described as *Pygmies* can be found as far and wide as the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. The subjects of the study, the Baka, live primarily in southern Cameroon, Gabon and northern Congo (Brazzaville) (Bahuchet, 2012:13; Mvondo, 2006:682). They are regarded by some to be the original inhabitants of the region (Winterbottom, 1992:222) and today live in close proximity to their Bantu neighbours. They are the largest of three *Pygmy* groups that can be found in Cameroon (Mvondo, 2006:683).

⁵ *Bantu* is a common term in the Republic of Congo and in academic literature for the people and culture of non-Pygmy peoples.

They inhabit an area in the north-west Congo Basin (Verdu & Destro-Bisol, 2012:1), the sedimentary basin of the Congo River. This area is typified by lowland equatorial evergreen rain forests, with a high average rainfall (>2000 mm) over the course of the year.

The specific Baka clan of this research lives on the verge of a dirt road that crosses into Cameroon from the northern Congolese province of Sangha. They no longer live a forest-bound life and have lost many of the unique skills of their kin in the deeper forest. They are in daily contact with their Bantu neighbours and some of them have received a degree of schooling in a neighbouring village. They wear Western clothes and have adopted the triangular mud and wood huts of the Bantu, as opposed to the palm leave shelters typical of the Pygmy.

2.1. Pygmies' encounter with Christianity

Commenting on the success of missionary work amongst the Aka Pygmies of central Africa, van den Toren (2009:307) remarks that many new converts continue with their old religious practices after enthusiastically embracing the Christian faith and being baptised. He offers two reasons for this (Van den Toren, 2009: 307): discipleship and relevance. While enthusiastically embracing the redemption of Christ, they have little understanding of how this should translate in their daily lives and how this should influence their relationships with non-believers. They were presented with Christianity, based on solutions to Western problems and addressing Western questions. According to Kwame Bediako (2004:22) this version of Christianity does little to address many of the spiritual issues, dangers and joys they face on a daily basis.

Both these issues touch on the importance of the effect that the radical message of Christ impacts upon the central aspects of an individual worldview and ideal of wellbeing. It has been recognised (in the preceding chapter) that the demands of the Gospel are not confined to a mere recognition of the redemption through Christ, but that God "invades man's consciousness" (Minear, 1946:115). It is invested with a call to obedience as an absolute demand, the importance of which Wright (2010) stresses throughout his book, *The Mission of God's People*. He puts the issue into perspective when he describes the Gospel as "something to be obeyed not just believed" (Wright, 2010:306) and describes Abraham's "faith-obedience" as the cardinal covenantal foundation (Wright, 2010:1333). Obedience is both the source of the church's mission (Wright, 2010:368) and the requirement of faith amongst the nations (Wright, 2010:994). It can, therefore, be concluded that the Gospel should make a direct impact upon the core perspectives of the convert (by addressing his reality) from where it will permeate their lives and circumstance; through obedience, ultimately working towards comprehensive salvation. James 4 compares disobedience to a person "looking at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like" (James 4:23-24). The Gospel compels the individual

to take a *hard, good look* at himself and, realising his inequity, abandons self-reliance and seeks to reflect the reality of redemption in obedience.

2.2. It's a Jungle out there

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Gen. 3:18)

Although most of the challenges of the Baka are universally understood, some aspects are specific to their environment and perceived reality. Consequently, while the postmodern *urban jungle* inhabitant will find common experience in elements of the existential facticity of an angst-ridden (Sartre's "nausea") existence, they will find it difficult to imagine a world wherein existence is dominated by a daily search for sustenance. In contrast to what many city dwellers think, the idealised paradise of the jungle is in fact a dense green challenge to human survival. In this context, the rare beauty of a multi-coloured bird in flight becomes a target and source of protein. The lush green vegetation becomes the medium wherein the drama of life is short and climatic, as the hunter becomes the hunted prey of feline keenness.

In a controversial book called *Spirit of the Rainforest: A Yanomamo Shaman's Story* (1996), Mark Ritchie deals with the Yanomamö people of Venezuela. He might as well have been referring to the home of the Baka, in saying that few Westerners would be prepared to live in the perceived *Eden* of the jungle (Ritchie, 1996:9). Nobody would choose to live there, because *life is good* in the jungle. Ritchie (1996) does not consider Westerners naïve, but are rather uncomfortably reminded about their true selves when confronted with the *noble savage*. They want them to exemplify the human ideals of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* as the romanticised *original state* of mankind. This inclination exposes the deep seated denial of human sin, something of which the Baka are painfully guilty. As Ritchie (2009) points out: "We don't want them to be violent because we don't want to think of ourselves as violent. We don't want them to be rapists because we don't want to think of ourselves as rapists. We need to believe an Eden is possible. Above all, we want to believe in our own fundamental goodness."

2.3. Foraging

The harsh fact of the jungle is that there are mouths to feed and the forest does not give up its bounty easily. The Baka often spend the whole day (and sometimes night) foraging for food, often unsuccessful for days. There are no weekend respites, nor the possibility of a few days spent in idle rest and recuperation. Life is a constant struggle against a hostile nature, with each

hard day followed by a night of restless sleep amongst the dark towering trees, lying on the hard damp ground.

2.4. Exploitation of forest resources

This already dire situation, as described above, has been exacerbated by the exploitation of forest resources by *outsiders*. Logging and black-market hunting with snares and modern firearms have not only affected their surroundings, but also diminished their access to food. The destruction of prey animal habitat and indiscriminate hunting for the “bush meat” market by poachers are causing many Baka Pygmies to abandon their live as hunter gatherers and seek employment with the local logging firms. Access to “communal forest resources” has been limited to the Baka and they are often barred from the administrative committees and accounts (Mvondo, 2006:683).

2.5. Cultural invasion

With the steady march of “progress”, the access to the deep forests is continually being improved. Gone are the days of intrepid adventurers penetrating “deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness” (Conrad, 1990:618). Today, an air conditioned journey in a modern 4x4 will take the visitor into the heart of the rainforest within a day or two. Most of the visitors are not curious Westerners, but neighbouring Bantu⁶ that are settling in the Baka territory to take advantage of the bush meat trade, logging employment and the possibility of cocoa farming under the protective shade of the great trees of the forest. The Bantu regard themselves as being far superior to the Baka and as far as education goes, many are obviously more adept at reading and writing than the Baka, making it easier for them to take advantage of the trade infrastructure (Kazadi, 1981:838).

The Pygmies have a long history in the tradition of the Bantu peoples. Depictions of Baka caricatures in the art of the Bantu allude to a mythological past, wherein the Baka shares a distant pedigree with the Bantu, albeit an inferior one (Kazadi, 1981:839). This mythical relationship has become secondary to a relationship built on the socio-economic necessities of trade. Unfortunately, the Baka seems to be exploited frequently due to their naïve participation in a foreign economic system wherein they have little skill to participate, apart from occupying the lowest strata of labourers. Some Pygmies (not part of this research group) live in practical feudal bonds with “their” Bantu family, contrasted between the mud houses of the hosts and the small leaf and branch hide of the Pygmy family (W’Isuka, 2011:78).

⁶ Also known as *Bacwa* in the Baka language.

The Pygmy also often fall prey to criminal gangs of poachers exploiting the lucrative global black-market trade in bush meat (estimated to be worth \$1 billion annually, according to janegoodall.org, 2013), by making use of Pygmy hunters and trackers.

The Baka also succumb to many of the vices of invading cultures and are tempted to sell their meagre sources of food to the local Bantu in exchange for liquor. In early 2013 the group was forced to flee across the border to Cameroon, after one of their members died subsequent to being gored by an elephant during an illegal hunt. The police immediately raided their village, since it is common knowledge that the Baka are employed by poachers as trackers and guides in the forest.

2.6. Health and healing

Personal experience has shown that the Baka has very limited success with the *traditional* healing remedies at their disposal. A point Van den Toren (2009: 310) confirms, by pointing out that child mortality and the limited life expectancy found amongst the Pygmy is indicative of the lack of efficacy of traditional medicine. Pygmies regard the act of healing with great respect and it is one of the areas in which individuals can attain respect, while simultaneously contribute to the wellbeing of the clan (Van den Toren, 2009:312).

The Baka community's conceptual understanding of the nature of disease, the causative agent thereof, the treatment and what ultimately constitutes healing can provide clues to how they relate to the natural world around them. The Baka consider the nature of disease as primarily a physical manifestation of a spiritual event, whereby the causative agent is frequently seen as a spirit or sorcerer using magic to punish the humans (Van den Toren, 2009:6). The Baka employ herbal remedies as a first-line solution to cure small ailments, but resort to rituals of dance and music in an effort to manipulate and counter the spiritual magic of the evil spirit. In this too it is evident that they are being held hostage within a realm of superstition, witchcraft and a spirit dominated milieu of fear.

2.7. Human rights within the political system

Although Pygmies are constitutionally protected (as minority groups) in Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo (Mvondo, 2006: 682), they are frequently the victims of discrimination and enjoy very little practical security from exploitation. There are numerous reliable reports of cannibalism, rape and sodomy targeted towards the Pygmy peoples in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic (W'Isuka, 2011:79). The Baka has escaped this, but some are still living in bondage to their Bantu neighbours or paid very little for their work.

Anybody spending a few days with the Baka will soon discover that although they live in an intimate relationship with the jungle, it is not a relationship built on mutual trust and maternal care, but rather a life closer to the one described in the Genesis text of chapter 3:18,19. It is a daily battle for the most basic needs.

Van den Toren (2009:310) points out that Christ should not be confined to our greatest needs, but should also be the “fulfilment of our greatest and best hopes”. What then are the hopes of the Baka people?

Bearing in mind all the challenges of Baka life as described above, one could be excused for assuming that the Baka’s hopes and joys revolve around the “absence of pain and hunger” (Conrad, 2006:1405). In fact, despite these challenges, the Baka is in general a friendly hospitable people. Their broad smiles (frequently accentuated by sharpened teeth) always welcome the visitor to share their meagre resources.

2.8. Family and clan

The clan is more than just the security and social environment wherein the Baka lives. The clan determines their identity and it is within the safety of the clan that the Baka manage to withstand the threatening forest filled with spirits. Van den Toren (2009:311) experienced that even amongst Christian Pygmies their family relationships are perceived to be more important than their relationship with God (Van den Toren, 2009:311).

The smallest unit in the clan is constituted by a number of family groups and is closely associated with other clans that live in the vicinity. People visit regularly from clan to clan and will sleep over to hunt and forage with the other group, without a second thought. Children will often visit the other clans and at first glance they seem indistinguishable from the other children running around the clearing.

Loyalty, therefore, is often closely related to the clan wherein values and ethics are bound (Van den Toren, 2009:311). It is, therefore, difficult to appreciate how an outside entity and foreign cultural narrative (such as Biblical Israel) can have an impact on the wellbeing (and salvation) of the individual, within the confines of the clan. It is therefore crucial that the Biblical redemptive narrative be made relevant within this closeknit unit so that the salvational message can be appropriated.

The Baka is not polygamous like some of their close neighbours. This provides a potential for a recognised relevance within the context of the Baka. The image of Christ as the bridegroom and the church as His bride (John 3:29; Mark 2:19; Matt. 25:1-13) will be a familiar concept as the loyalty between life partners amongst the Baka is strong and last the duration of a lifetime.

2.9. Sin

Most Pygmies grasp the concept of evil, yet do not consider themselves sinful (Van den Toren, 2009:311). The evil and bad things in the world are attributed to the work of spirits and magic worked by sorcerers. Because the Creator is considered distant, they feel alone and threatened in this world. Consequently, they try to manipulate such powers to achieve some measure of peace and happiness. They truly desire salvation from these forces.

2.10. Self-image

The Baka are frequently seen as inferior and even sub-human by their neighbours, a view that stems from a history of bondage and slavery going back hundreds of years (W'Isuka, 2011:78). Consequently, the Baka often feel inferior to the peoples living in the surrounding areas. They desire to escape this stereotype and be regarded as equals.

2.11. Religion

Matthew Henry (2009:67910) remarks: "The God of Israel, the Saviour, is sometimes a God that hideth himself, but never a God at a distance". The Baka disagrees. They acknowledge that the world was created and, similar to other African peoples, they also believe that the Creator has distanced himself from His work (Van den Toren, 2009:312). He still sustains the universe at large (Mbiti, 1991:40), but takes little interest in their daily plight. Abandoned, they are now subject to the whims of the natural order filled with spirits and magic. The forest is often seen as a (some say "kindly") personal god that provides the bare necessities of life (W'Isuka, 2011:76), but little more. Mbiti found that the Bambuti⁷ Pygmies of the northern DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) see God as "the First, who had always been in existence, and would never die" (Mbiti, 1986:33), an assertion Sawada (2001:29) disputes, mainly because Mbiti substantiates this observation from an earlier text by Paul Schebesta. The latter is suspected of being influenced by pre-conceived Christian beliefs and primitive monotheism (Sawada, 2001:38). During his study of the Efe Pygmy, Sawada (2001:32) claims that he found no concept of a Creator God. When asked about the origin of the world around them, the Efe would reply "we don't know" (Sawada, 2001:32). The researcher found this to be a common enough response amongst the Baka. This expression of ignorance (concerning just about everything – healing, procreation, technology) can be perceived as an invitation to teach and inform.

Whatever the case, there certainly is no concept of a loving Father-God. Spiritual forces are the only forces that can be influenced and the Baka seek to manipulate these powers for endeavours of particular importance. Van den Toren remarks that, sadly, even Christianised Pygmies are

⁷ Plural of *Mbuti*

quick to revert to placating the spirits in moments of trouble. They have difficulty in understanding that there can be only one God and that He has dominion over all powers and spirits. It is even more difficult for them to grasp the concept of a loving heavenly Father (Van den Toren, 2009: 312).

Generally, Pygmies fear death intensely and the afterlife is a poorly defined concept to them. Unlike the Greek *Hades* or the Hebrew *Sheol*, which has some conceptual description, the Baka's concept of life after death is little more than a poorly defined state of hiatus. Unfortunately, the spirits of deceased ancestors are active enough to terrify the living and exact tributes and sacrifices (Van den Toren, 2009:312). The ancestors are supposed to aid them with important tasks, such as hunting, but also extract some form of reward or recompense. Sawada (2001:35) is confident that all hunting rituals and *prayers* are directed to the ancestral spirits. Some of the spirits encountered in the forests are of animal origin or possibly have anthropomorphic features (Sawada, 2001:37). According to Bahuchet and Thomas (1991:125), the same distinction is not always clear amongst the Aka Pygmies, so it cannot serve as a general rule.

It seems as if the Baka has journeyed so far down the road of idolisation that the monotheistic worship of the true God has been totally disregarded in favour of a horde of spiritual powers.

2.12. Goals and objectives

Children form a large part of the Baka's aspirations and goals. It is very important to have children within the clan and family, most definitely contributing to the status of the individual. It is also greatly prized within the clan to develop proficiency in a field that contributes to the common good. This includes music, dancing, foraging, hunting and the ability to heal (Van den Toren, 2009:311).

Much commonality can be found in the fears and hopes of the lives of the Baka. All worldviews are tainted by the shared human condition of sin (Rom. 5:12). If it is accepted that the ideal of wellbeing is subject to a particular worldview, as Augustine asserts, then the Baka's ideal of wellbeing is also degraded by the sinful nature of man. The ideal of wellbeing of the Christian Baka must gain a new perspective in Christ in which they will no longer be subject to their sinful natures, but receive the Biblical ideal of wellbeing through the grace of God (Rom. 6:14).

The next section examines God's ideal of wellbeing in specific contrast with that of the Baka and humanity in general.

3. The ideal of Wellbeing

"...discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2c)

Luděk Brož (1964:31) defines wellbeing (*bien-être*) as an ideology, consisting of a system of ideas and principles that is followed in the pursuit of an ideal state of wellbeing. He contends (Brož, 1964:33) that the value of the particular ideology should be measured (as everything else) according to the age old Christian response "Annoncer la miséricorde du Seigneur" (*Proclaim the grace of the Lord*). According to Brož (1964:31), the proclamation is made both by the way one lives, the system chosen to live by and the words used to announce the Gospel. Wright (2010:996) suggests that this Gospel does not aim to merely complete an existing ideal of wellbeing by making it "richer" or more "colourful"; it challenges the established view and demands faith and obedience, thereby transforming towards a new worldview and consequently, ideal of wellbeing.

McMahan and Estes (2012:94) denounce such flowery speech when they insist that the individual's concept of wellbeing can be classified as either hedonic or eudaimonic. The former is directed towards personal pleasure and happiness, whereby the latter concerns personal attainment and striving towards the "common good". The nature of the hedonic option is subjectively justified, while the eudaimonic depends more on objective standards and measures (McMahan & Estes, 2012:94). They point out that the eudaimonic approach may view certain hedonistic interest as conducive to wellbeing, while others are disdained as antagonistic to the ideal, and certain eudaimonic behaviour might also be subjectively perceived as negative in hedonic thought, but understood as positive when objectively viewed (McMahan & Estes, 2012:95). This viewpoint might be construed as anthropocentric, but as Lewis (2013:25) argues, this is not necessarily "a bad thing". In *The Weight of Glory*, Lewis (2013:25) proposes that any notion that seeks to condemn the quest for happiness and enjoyment is in error and not to be confused with the Christian faith. He (Lewis, 2013:140) famously observed that, considering the "promised rewards" in the Biblical narrative, God "finds our desires not too strong, but too weak". It is clear that Lewis does not see the happiness and enjoyment as an end in itself, but from the Christian perspective of a Christ-centred life "(to) see everything else" (Lewis, 2013:140).

Continuing where Lewis left off, Shalkowski (2011) disputes the validity of the pure anthropocentric formula of wellbeing. While not contesting the veracity in practice, he counters the authenticity of such a viewpoint. Shalkowski (2011) points to the pre-Socratic philosopher, Protagoras, who remarked that "man is the measure of all things" to illustrate that, contrary to a fashionable criticism, Christianity does not consider mankind to be the centre of "all things". On the contrary, Shalkowski (2011) points out that mankind is rather accountable to the Creator, as

created beings of divine grace, as exemplified in Romans. Should this crucial element not be reflected in a discussion about the Biblical ideal of wellbeing?

Kinghorn (2011:1) contrasts the fundamental differentiating element of a Christian ideal of wellbeing with that of post-modern philosophical view, by pointing to the results-driven approach of the philosophical version. He claims that the post-modernist interprets wellbeing as a state where desires are satisfied. The Christian approach, he argues, should be relational: The fundamental wellbeing of a Christian should lie in a loving relationship with God and others, thereby mirroring the “self-giving relationships” amongst the Trinity (Kinghorn, 2011:1). The measure to which a life can be understood as “good” is directly related to how successful this “perfectionist” ideal is implemented. Kinghorn (2011:2) advocates the better interpersonal relationships, the better lives are and the closer to the Christian ideal of wellbeing. Lewis, for one, would probably disagree without negating the need for healthy and fulfilling interpersonal relationships. Lewis (2009:649) sees himself as a fish out of water⁸; a pilgrim or even a soldier in enemy occupied territory. He does not expect that mankind will reach the ideal of wellbeing here on earth, just as much as a fish would not achieve a sense of wellbeing on dry land. This is the believers’ home, they are but mere pilgrims on the journey to a heavenly destination, he counters. The believer is told that unhappiness is part of life (“Blessed are those who mourn...” – Matt. 5:4) (Lewis, 2009:649). The Afrikaans poet, Totius⁹ (1965:31) affirms this view when he warns:

<i>“Die wêreld is ons woning nie,</i>	<i>dan rys 'n koue op uit die vlei.</i>
<i>Dit merk ek aan die son wat wyk,</i>	<i>'n Kouge gril deurhewer my;</i>
<i>en 'k merk dit aan die reier wat</i>	<i>en 'k sien dit dan aan alle ding</i>
<i>Mistroostig na die son sit kyk</i>	<i>wat in die skemer my omring,</i>
<i>op een been, in die biesiesvlei.</i>	<i>die wêreld is ons woning nie.”</i>
<i>En is die laaste strale weg,</i>	

This longing for something else, this incomplete compromise of incomplete dreams is identified by Lewis (1966:7) as *Sehnsucht*. In the afterword to the third edition of *The Pilgrim's Regress* (Lewis, 2014:200), he describes it as “That unnameable something, desire for which pierces us like a rapier at the smell of bonfire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead...” This concept

⁸ “A man feels wet when he falls into water, because man is not a water animal: A fish would not feel wet.”
⁹ Prof. Jacob Daniël du Toit (21 February 1877 – 1 July 1953) was an Afrikaner writer, poet, theologian and Bible translator. Totius is his pen name.

explains the common experience of a lack of wellbeing, rather than explaining the nature of wellbeing, referring to the *void* that just cannot be filled. It does, however, seem point in the correct direction for attaining *contented* wellbeing; a state of wellbeing that accepts the limitations of a temporal order. In this order, happiness and enjoyment are not ends in themselves, but rather like breadcrumbs pointing towards the complete package in the eternal destination.

Thus, Biblical wellbeing can be described in reference to John 6:25-35; 48-59 and Philippians 4:1. Firstly, living life in an intimate relationship with God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, appropriating the curative effects of the wounds of Jesus. Originally created in the image of God, man should be “primarily in a personal and individual relationship with God” (Gen 1,2) (Helberg, 2011:125). When Jesus describes himself as the “bread of life”, he draws a continued line from the temporal everyday life (manna in the desert, John 6:49, 58) to the eternal (John 6:40,47,51,54). Living from the blood and bread as the centre of the idealistic wellbeing, Christians can live active and vigorously, contented (Philippians 4:1) with the hope and surety that they have true and vibrant life (*zóé*) through Christ. This approbation necessitates a personal transformation as God creates life from the death of sin (Helberg, 2011:129, 133, 138). Let’s look at how this transformation can take form in the life of the Baka.

3.1. The Biblical ideal of wellbeing

“The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.”
(Lewis, 1966:229)

Preceding chapters have shown various authors expounding the idea that the Gospel demands radical transformation. Brueggemann (1993:15) argues for a “reordering of life”, following a “wrenching encounter” (Brueggemann 1993:11) with the Gospel. Wright (2010:306) repeatedly emphasis that “the gospel is something to be obeyed, not just believed”. This chapter explores the way in which this imperative impacts the ideal of wellbeing; transforming not only the overt religious aspects, but also the human perception of wellbeing towards God’s ideal for man’s wellbeing.

Not everybody agrees with this need for comprehensive transformation and those that are in agreement seem to differ in their opinions on just what should change and to what degree (Handy, 2010a). Coleman (2012) refers to Kevin Higgins (2009), a proponent of the Insider Movement (or “C-5”), who propounds that some elements of a cultural religion can be tolerated in the life of a convert to Christianity. The convert’s beliefs and behaviour will reflect change and his religious ritual will transform in content and meaning. This way, the convert can still belong to his cultural religious community, just as the original Jewish converts continued to frequent the synagogue and imparted some Jewish rituals with new meaning (Coleman, 2012). Meeks (1986:110)

counters that, although Acts depict many of the early church's activities as being centred in the synagogue, the "distinctive life" of the Christians went on in private homes (Acts 2:46; 12:12). He shows that key tenets of the Christian faith were incompatible with the Jewish faith and that there is much evidence of a separation towards the time of the writing of the Gospel of John (Meeks, 1986:109).

It seems as if "change" can rightly be described (Handy, 2010a) as one of the primary goals of mission, but what should change, to what extent and what should be the goal of these changes?

3.2. Transformation of wellbeing

"Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2)

Paul calls the believers to transformation of their minds in such a manner that they are distinct from the popular mind-set and aspirations. This transformation is not limited to one sphere of life, but encompass the way in which they conduct themselves in their personal and cultural life. Ultimately, this transformation should change the way in which they perceive reality and determine their perception of wellbeing.

3.2.1. Obedience

"Do not be conformed..." (Rom. 12:2a)

Handy (2010b) employs the following motto for his blog, "A mission-driven life": Theology without obedience is mere religious opinion". Differing from legalistic religions, Christianity's call to obedience (Gen. 2:18) does not fundamentally lie with an innate requirement to appease an angry or vengeful God(s) or spirits. As God's redeemed, Israel's obedience was not an achievement that earned redemption. Obedience is rather the way in which Christians should live within the blessings of God, enjoying the benefit of their salvation (Wright, 2010:1153). Because Christ was obedient (Gal 3:13-14), Christians can share in God's redemptive blessing (Keller, 2012a:856). The Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 32) shows the reason for the Christian life of thankfulness to be in gratitude for the blessing of redemption through Christ. The way in which this life of gratefulness is lived is exemplified by obedience to the Law of God and not that of man (Lord's Day 32:91). God warned the freed Israelites (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4) that their physical circumcision does not preclude a "circumcised heart" (Keller, 2012a:1527). It is not merely sufficient to abide by all the laws and rituals, but He expects an obedience that transcends the whole man - his acts, thoughts and worship. This *true circumcision* is explained in Phil. 3:3, where worship in the spirit is distanced from the outward signs of formalism.

Keller (2012a:15410) identifies three categories of interaction with Christ: religion, irreligion and the Gospel. The first (religion) may be equated with the uncircumcised heart, while the second points to avoidance by ignoring God as saviour. The latter conforms to the searching for God through Christ in faith and by grace (Keller, 2012a: 1541). This is the crux of the matter. Hirsch (2009:122) warns the believer to renew his thinking (Eph. 4:23) concretely by acting "into new way of thinking". Keller (2012a:1723) confirms the dynamism of this action, when he encourages believers to "move the heart with the gospel".

Obedience is thus not a formalistic following of rules and rituals in an effort to come to some kind of *understanding* with a force more powerful, but a faithful response to God's saving grace and justification in Christ, thereby sharing in the *Missio Dei*. This requires abandonment of self and, by necessity, must contrast with a former ideal of wellbeing that revolves around the incentives for self-gratification. Without a transformation of the ideal of wellbeing, all actions as Christians will be mere manipulating efforts in order to persuade God to bestow beneficial effects (Keller, 2012a:1678) in a loveless action-reaction cycle.

It is, therefore, important to understand that although obedience to the law is imperative, sinful man cannot offer comprehensive obedience and that "there are no good works except those which God has commanded, even as there is no sin except that which God has forbidden" (Luther, 1520/2010:13).

3.2.2. Culture

"Do not be conformed to this age" (Rom. 12:2a).

Diversity in culture can be seen as a gift of the Spirit which contributes to the appreciation of innumerable facets of our faith (WCC, 2012:36). It is thus not that diverging cultures should conform to some central ideal, but that each culture should be confronted by the gospel (WCC, 2012:33). Living in obedience also extends to culture, as it does every other element of life. Louis Berkhof (1996:570) avers that the Kingdom of God is not confined to the visible church, but includes every component of life, representing the "dominion of God in every sphere of human endeavour". Handy (2010a) is adamant that the Gospel demands change in the cultural domain and goes as far as to say that "Christianity, by its very nature, is a universalizing religion" (Handy, 2010a). Upon addressing the response of the contemporary American church, Keller (2012a:6838) remarks that each minister is confronted with the need to "relate Christ to culture". When referring to efforts in the revitalisation of church organisations, Hirsch (2009:52) points out that no lasting change is possible unless the paradigm at the "heart of culture" is changed.

Why this emphasise on cultural change? Is culture not part of the diversity of humanity created by God, exemplified in the South African "Rainbow Nation"? Wright (2010:476) reminds us that

all cultures are also tainted by the disastrous consequences of the fall. Evil permeated every aspect of human life and person, including the most precious sense of being; worldview and culture, a sense of wellbeing and its ideals. As God's mission targets each aspect of the fallen creation, through His redemptive act, so the Gospel must convey and reflect this comprehensive range (Wright, 2010:484).

As mentioned briefly above, the so-called "Insider Movement" (C-5) has a more lenient view. It is the view of a proponent of a Biblical justification for C-5, Kevin Higgins, which holds that God potentially works in other religions (Higgins, 2009:85). He shows instances in the Bible where God worked through other religions and propose that God was in a relationship with people from other religions (Higgins, 2009:85). He cites the example of the Jonah narrative, where "it is the sailors' prayers that are heard by Yahweh" (Higgins, 2009:85). Higgins (2006:119) uses the word "identity" to describe a collection of elements that differentiate between people, one of which can be construed as "culture" and another as "worldview". He postulates that a follower of Christ is allowed to have a so-called "dual identity" and shows how the first Christians were "Jewish Christians", whereby the same can be implied for "Muslim Christians" and by extension to "Baka Christians" (Higgins, 2009). He does point out that the Christians later found the need to differentiate into the church in an effort to personify the essence of their Christian faith (Higgins, 2009). Bosch (2011:50) concedes in *Transforming Mission* that he understands that Christ did not have the "intention of founding a new religion", but that the "Jesus community" became a new religion striving for a place amongst the other religions of the day. Higgins (2009:86) is quick to state that although he recognises a potential relationship between God and other religions, it does not follow unequivocally that all people of all religions are necessarily included in this relationship.

If God enters into relationships with other religions, thereby ratifying them, it can be concluded that new converts will not be required to change religious community. If God works in other religions, surely He then works in other cultures? Consequently, all religious cultures should fall within the Kingdom of God.

Coleman (2012) disagrees with this sweeping notion, which equates all religions and cultures with the ordained of God. He not only questions Higgins' examples of Biblical instances where God worked through or affirmed other religions, but also denies the place that Higgins gives to these religions inside the Kingdom (Coleman, 2012). Coleman (2012), however, agrees that similar to New Testament converts, new Christians should not be required to "go through" a Westernised cultural version of the Christian faith (Coleman, 2012). He does not ask new believers to convert to a culture, nor a religion, but to Christ. Importantly, Coleman (2012) also draws attention to the obvious close ties between the Jewish and Christian religion, while denying the same for Islam. The Biblical narrative includes a covenant with Israel and a revelation (and salvation) through the

Jewish people and faith, but describing a religion that postdates Christianity with 600 years as a “precursor” or “way” to Christ does not make sense (Coleman, 2012).

When Bosch (1991:368) speaks of “Mission as the church-with-others”, he sees the source of identity (and culture) in the common denominator of worship. It is the shared worship of the Creator that brings people together and this element should permeate their lives (and cultures) in such a way that it does not conflict with their shared belief. Wright (2006:47) describes Gods mission as universal, with a claim on every culture, without denying the diversity of culture, “affirming humanity” in its cultural variety.

The Gospel does not require a change that entails the mere integration of cultural values, but requires a comprehensive cultural transformation motivated by obedience to the Biblical “culture”. When Jesus says “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6), it is indisputable that this Biblical way is not open to interpretation. Jesus makes it clear that the truth lies uniquely in the Father and apart from Him no true and lasting wellbeing (real life) can be found. This way is through Jesus and cultural heritage can never be a substitute.

3.2.3. Worldview

“...be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” (Rom. 12:2b)

The fundamental concept of *worldview* can be defined as the response to questions concerning life, the universe and all (Smith, 2013:246). Mbiti (1991:35) describes the worldview held by most Africans to be anchored in the creation of the universe by a personal Creator, which Sawada (2001:29) disputes and attributes the misconception to the preconceived (monotheistic) belief system of researchers and missionaries (Sawada, 2001:38). Mbiti counters this by referring to the differing accounts of the creation event that can be found in myths, legends, proverbs, symbolic beliefs. Although it has not been systematised or codified, it permeates all of African life, custom and culture (Mbiti, 1991:34). Religion is “deeply integrated into the total life and worldview of the people” (Mbiti, 2010:5). Man is seen as being at the centre of an eternal universe that’s being sustained by God (Mbiti, 1991:40), a universe considered to be ordered; there is moral order amongst the people, the laws of nature a religious and mystical order in the universe (Mbiti, 1991:41). The universe is mysterious and unknowable, but can be manipulated by those who have access to the underlying spiritual powers (Smith, 2013:248). In contrast, the laws of nature are fixed and operate permanently, universally and eternally (Mbiti, 1991:40). The mystical forces of the universe are hidden and underlie the obvious of the natural laws, also provided and maintained by God (Mbiti, 1991: 42). The moral law was given to man for his own good so that it might govern their relationship with each other, God and the spiritual and natural realm (Mbiti,

1991:41). It is not the individual that is the most important, in this moral code, but the good of the community (Smith, 2013:249). As a result of the God-given moral code, any abstention or deviation thereof is considered as offensive to God. It is, therefore, governed by a strict religious code (taboos) or order prescribing consequences (social ostracism, punishment, ill health or death) (Mbiti, 1991:41). The concept of an eternal universe seems to provide an explanation for an abstract approach to time, wherein there is little thought for the distant future (Smith, 2013:247).

Paul Hiebert (2008:11) argues in *Transforming Worldviews* that conversion to Christianity necessitates not only a change of belief, but crucially, a change of behaviour (James 1:22-23). This obedience required by the Gospel does not accept a superficial change of custom, behaviour or appearance, but a new worldview (Keller, 2012:2288). Taking into account the concept of inculturation (Chapter 4), in which ways and to what extent should the Baka be expected to transform their worldview? This new worldview should reflect the new relationship with Christ (Van den Toren, 2009:312). Linwood Barney (1981:175) sees this worldview at the core of human culture, required to be renewed to reflect the new believer's faith in behaviour and lifestyle that is evident to others. Hiebert (2008:12) explains that this includes the transformation of a worldview into a Biblical worldview and describes this as the most important focus of mission in the current century.

Handy (2010b) warns of the danger of universalising a particular worldview, when we posit the biblical worldview as absolute and universal. The Christian worldview should not be absolute and, being multi-faceted in origin, must not be canonized. This does not bring into doubt the veracity and everlasting truth of the Gospel, but warns of the danger posed by a Christian ideological worldview. In his treatment of the enlightenment paradigm, Bosch shows in both *Transforming Mission* (2011:262-74) and *Believing in the Future* (1995:5-15) that missionary effort in the wake of the enlightenment frequently saw Christianity in terms of a dominant culture, instead of a theology that requires obedience.

Handy (2010b) continues by questioning the existence of a Biblical worldview as expounded by Hiebert. The latter finds the Biblical worldview rooted in the implicit understanding that "all the biblical events are part of one great story" (Hiebert, 2008:266).

Hiebert (2008:26) defines worldview in anthropological terms as "the foundational cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions and frameworks a group of people makes about the nature of reality which they use to order their lives." In other words, the reference used by a group of people that serves as their yardstick against which their own and other people's behaviour is gauged. Hiebert (2008:26) sees the Biblical worldview as the "yardstick" against which all other yardsticks should be measured. When accepting "Missio Dei" as the Biblical theme (as does

Wright, 2006:723), then the Biblical worldview can perhaps be described as “The expression of God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate” (Bosch, 1991:10). In these terms, the Biblical worldview should be understood from God’s missional actions towards mankind and experienced by partaking in this activity. When God gave His Son (John 3:16) it became clear that no other worldview can be a way to enjoying God’s grace (John 14:6). This is the ultimate worldview against which all others should be measured, expounding that all worldviews must be continually reformed in an effort to conform in obedience. In this sense it might be better to refer to the Biblical worldview as a “cosmic view”, thereby indicating not only a hierarchical prominence but also its universality.

What does this imply for the practical question of the Baka Pygmy worldview and their way of life? Keller (2012: 2250-2253) explains that the Gospel should be preached by providing Biblical answers to life’s questions and problems. This is not the same as telling people “what they want to hear” (Keller, 2012:2250), but rather what they should hear in response to their peculiar situation. This relates to Van den Toren’s (2009: 312) assertion that the Pygmy Christians should re-examine their heritage so that the “good must receive a new orientation, and a richer meaning”, when Christ occupies the core values of their lives. Van den Toren might be a bit optimistic. The Gospel cannot be applied as a balm to a sore, but must rather resemble the scalpel, cutting away the necrotic flesh.

Wright (2010:478) describes mankind’s predicament in Genesis as being twofold: “The sinfulness of every human heart” and “The fracturing and confusion of the nations of humanity”.

Both share the overarching element of a sinful worldview that cannot merely be *overhauled*, but requires deep-cutting surgery. The planned redemption positions the Biblical worldview of the Gospel in a “cosmic battle” against that of the world. Brueggemann (1993:14-18) explains the Biblical narrative as a drama in three (unfinished) scenes: The first scene depicts a battle “between powerful forces”, followed by the proclamation of the verdict and the appropriate response of “reordering all of life” accordingly. Brueggemann’s three-storied universe will be examined in greater detail when exploring the ways to make the Biblical story relevant to the lives and wellbeing of the Baka.

Chesterton (2012:60142) proposes that a worldview cannot be changed without some outside reference making a claim to transformation. He asserts that such change is only possible when you “believe in something outside them, something positive and divine” (Chesterton, 2012:60143). In another instance, Chesterton (2012:53593) explains this by differentiating between “conventions” and “commandments”. Conventions can be defied as long as the

commandments are kept. The latter stands in correlation to the external “positive and divine” and as such serves as the ultimate measure of the human worldview.

3.3. Towards a Biblical ideal of wellbeing amongst the Baka

The conventions and commandments of a worldview determines our perception of the ideal state of wellbeing. The conventions describes certain states of emotional and material welfare that is considered conducive to wellbeing. The commands instructs and prohibits in order to depict parameters wherein an ideal of wellbeing will be achieved. Moving outside these boundaries is supposed to inhibit or destroy wellbeing. Despite these inherent *guidelines*, it is clear that “being well” is not the norm. People often express surprise to the discovery that they are “doing well” and gratitude that “things are getting better”. The Baka is no different. The beginning of this chapter describes the life and ways of the Baka, clearly showing that they struggle with the same issues and predicaments as most Westerners. They also, however, experience quite a number of particular factors that inhibit their wellbeing that can be explained as being secondary to their circumstance, mode of life, culture and worldview.

3.3.1. The pre-conversion worldview of the Baka

The Christian understanding is that God intends not only the believer’s future salvation, but also (as evidenced in the history of Israel) seeks to engage in terms of “current predicaments and patterns of thought” (Nürnbergger, 2012:973). The challenge is to present the Bible to the Baka in a way that it would be relevant to their predicaments and patterns of thought. Van den Toren (2009:307) opines that the “reality” of Christ’s redemption is “transcultural”, but that the same is not true for the way in which people of different cultures understand it as being relevant to their circumstances. It is clear that the Baka have (at least) three fundamental conceptual elements that impacts negatively on their approbation of the Gospel. These factors hinder them from experiencing the comprehensive nature of God’s grace. Firstly, they believe that God abandoned mankind shortly after creation (Van den Toren, 2009:312). Secondly, they do not consider sin as part of their nature and consequently do not require redemption (Van den Toren, 2009:311). Thirdly, although they believe in a life after death, they fear this state of “suspension” (Van den Toren, 2009:311) and as such their feeling of abandonment is heightened. In other words, creation (in the image of God), the fall (sin) and redemption (grace) must be made a Biblical reality in the lives of the Baka.

Brueggemann (1993:17) employs a “three-storied universe” to illustrate a way in which the Biblical narrative can be made relevant in the lives of the readers and listeners amongst the Baka: The first concerns the battle “between powerful forces”. Secondly, the proclamation of the verdict (outcome of latter battle) and thirdly the appropriate response of “reordering all of life” (Brueggemann, 1993:18).

The following section explains how these three scenes permeate the three fundamental elements in the worldview of the Baka that stands in the way of their approbation of the Gospel.

3.3.2. Creation (image of God)

The Bible emphatically states that God created man in his image (Gen. 1:27). After the fall (Genesis 3), God immediately acts in His saving grace. God did not intend abandoning the works of His hands to the certain death that followed from the disobedience of mankind. The dynamic salvation process is further expounded in the New Testament, reaching the defining point with the death and resurrection of Christ. This provides some clues as to how God's salvational acts should become real in the lives of Christians; how this astounding truth should guide the ideal of wellbeing. Both in Ephesians (4:22-24) and Colossians (3:5-14) this message becomes an imperative, urging believers to renege their old self and be renewed by accepting their restored nature as (originally holy) created in the image of God. Brueggemann (1993:64) shows how these texts contrast the negative with the positive imperative of Biblical wellbeing. Fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed are replaced by those attributes that are found in the Creator: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.

The appropriate response to the news of man being created in the image of God is to understand that God wants man to be like Him (1 Pet. 1:16), without *being* Him (the base sin during *the fall*). God seeks to restore man to His image (Smith, 2005). A restoration implies something of a *departure*, a *parting* or *separation*. Brueggemann (1993:64) adds that what is required is in effect a "change of gods" and that "Yahweh cannot be embraced until there is a costly abandonment of other loyalties". The Baka understanding that they were created in the image of God requires the simultaneous understanding that God tolerates no other gods and that He has not abandoned His creation. At the same time, something has gone terribly wrong that He aims to rectify. Like Adam and Eve receiving clothes from God, as they left the garden, so God wants to clothe the believer in new clothes (Col. 3:10) that resembles his image.

This leads to the second of the Baka conceptual problems, i.e. their failure to understand (and take responsibility for) their sinful nature.

3.3.3. The fall (sin)

Van den Toren (2009:312) puts it well in article 3 of his *Pygmy Confession*: "God did not withdraw himself from the world, yet humankind withdrew itself from him". Mankind rebelled, mankind ceased to trust God "as a child his father" and "prayed to other gods" (Van den Toren, 2009:313). Mankind became clothed with sin, camouflaging the fact that they were made in the image of God. The cosmic battle for the future was joined; a battle between the "God of life" and the "gods of death" (Brueggemann, 1993:20). The Baka understands the fact that a spiritual battle is

underway, but they feel themselves lost behind enemy lines, forced to wage a defensive war of dissuasion and tribute to the overwhelming gods of death.

Where Western Christians might have an ephemeral conceptual idea of this battle, the Baka understands this very concretely from their traditional worldview wherein everything has a spiritual causality or effect. They might also understand the redeeming power of Christ within this struggle as a *stronger force* opposing the adversary, which is intimately linked to their conceptual understanding of *what* they require saving from. Some Africans "...see their deliverance in terms of victory over evil forces" (Chike, 2008: 226). They require a saviour in order to deal with the many spiritual threats of witchcraft, illness, poverty, *accidents* and the ancestral spirits. A saved life would then be testified by an abundance of prosperity, health and general wellbeing. The Lausanne Movement (2014) warns that while a dichotomy of the material and the spiritual is "unbiblical dualism", spiritual welfare can also not be "measured in terms of material welfare" or that wealth is "always a sign of God's blessing". Unbiblical asceticism should also be rejected (The Lausanne Movement, 2014).

The verdict of the Gospel is that the battle is "decisively ended" (Brueggemann, 1993:23) with Yahweh declared the winner with Christ's triumph not only over the gods of death, but over death itself (1 Cor. 15:26-27a) (Brueggemann, 1993:24). The Baka still find themselves in a battle (Eph. 6:11-18), but the tide has swung and the enemy defeated. This battle will be won and re-won (Brueggemann, 1993:25) in the life of each believer.

This verdict does not only appoint a victor, it also points towards a guilty party and the guilty party is not confined to the spiritual powers and dominions. Man himself has been appointed guilty and irretrievably sinful, without the intervention of a saviour. The realisation of sinful human nature brings an understanding of the absolute need for redemption, the third of the three conceptual problems.

3.3.4. Restoration (grace)

"It is lawful to pray 'Thine anger come on earth as it is in Heaven'" (Chesterton, 2012:27690).

Employing a wordplay on the "Thine kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer, Chesterton (2012:27690) here refers to the righteousness of God exacting justice from creation. Man, shown as the guilty party in the verdict, is deserving of God's wrath. Brueggemann (1993:25) explains that the outcome of the cosmic battle changed everything. By the grace of God, mankind has been vindicated (Rom. 8:1)! Now, the believer must appropriate this announcement (Brueggemann, 1993:30). The knowledge of this redemption must "saturate" the life of a believer (Brueggemann, 1993:30), putting on the new dress as the inherent deathly nature is disposed of, revealing the image of God. Nature rejoices (Ps. 96:11-13a) and can finally be "its best true self"

(Brueggemann, 1993:31), lifting its head after “groaning together and suffering labor” (Rom. 8:22). God’s plan of restoration is comprehensive. Just as the fall dumped the entire creation into the shadows of death and entropy, so the restoration lifts it up to perfection.

It is noteworthy to consider the opinion of Nürnberger. He considers entropy as a part of nature, so created by God and not a result of the fall (Nürnberger, 2012:13). This is interesting so far as it affects opinion on the consequences of the fall and the eschatological promise of restoration. Nürnberger (2012:987) asks the reader to consider that the belief in the Biblical eschatology requires a “prescientific age” belief. Interestingly enough, the Baka (prescientific) finds entropy, death and decay as a quite normal part of the natural environment in which they live. It is Christianity that points out the abnormality.

The theme of restoration runs throughout the Bible. One of God’s first acts of restoration was the proclamation of the Ten Commandments, described by Brueggemann as the “working documents for covenanted community” (Brueggemann, 1993:31). These commandments touch every part of life, proclaiming the milieu in which the victorious King wants to establish His Kingdom. Without Israel’s approbation of the saving grace of the Lord, the Promised Land would surely have been just a mirage on the horizon. In fact, they would most probably have returned to a life of slavery without it, thereby making the new covenantal behaviour both possible and also “urgent and imperative” (Brueggemann, 1993:32). Christ has now set the believer free and he should not return to a life of slavery (Gal. 5:1).

The Baka must appropriate this covenant and be “transformed by the renewing of their minds, so that they may discern what the will of God is— what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Rom. 12:1-2). Firstly, the Baka must encounter God and recognise Him as the highest truth in the cosmos. Van den Toren (2009:311) shows that many Pygmy converts are not sure whether Christ is an option or an imperative; whether He can be idolised today and replaced by another, more convenient, god when the future demands require an adapted response. Like Chesterton (2012:25809) points out, they are not unlike the Romans who were readily able to admit Christ to their plethora of gods, but could not admit that He was “the God—the highest truth of the cosmos” (Chesterton, 2012:25809). Brueggemann clearly suggests that the Gospel forms the rationale and basis for evangelism (Brueggemann, 1993:7) and the Biblical story invites the listener to “reimagine” their lives according to a new narrative (Brueggemann, 1993:10). It is this new narrative that can lead the Baka to appropriate a new story. A story of another people (Israel) whereby they can receive the good news of a God known as “the promiser-maker (sic), the liberator, the promise-keeper” (Brueggemann, 1993:10).

The need for a reordering of the Baka ideal of wellbeing, their worldview and approbation of God's promises have been established. The next chapter examines the way in which the Biblical narrative can be employed to correct the three main conceptual problems of the Baka.

CHAPTER 4: COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL TO THE BAKA

1. Introduction

The word "Gospel" is linked to the Hebrew word *bissar* (Brueggemann, 1993:14) a verb that is an active "tell the news". How is this good news told to a culturally distinct population of people, with a divergent worldview and a different ideal of wellbeing? It not only necessitates an enquiry into the way in which this story can be practically conveyed, but must simultaneously create the opportunity to make this people part of this story, so that the salvation in Christ becomes their story. In order for the gospel to bear fruit, it "needs to be both true to itself and incarnated or rooted in the culture of a people" (WCC, 1996:21-22).

The ways in which the Gospel was brought to the *new world* during and after the enlightenment is often seen as mere *cultural imperialism*. In Afghanistan, an old French soldier commented that "everybody expects us to respect their cultures, but nobody respects ours". It must be remembered that what is recognised today as the *Western Culture* has been transformed from the pagan heritage (albeit imperfectly) by Christianity. Bosch (2011:441) successfully argues that the Western culture was considered as *supracultural* and that Western civilisation considered their values universal and that colonial subjects could only benefit from exposure to the dominant culture. One result of this culture was that Western society had the means and impetus to send missionaries to the New World. Another was that they brought imperialism in the guise of Christianity, perhaps from an erroneous sense of moral superiority. Recognising that all cultures and worldviews are required to transform and convert to the ideals of wellbeing in Christ, makes it clear that the Baka culture cannot remain unchanged post-conversion. How then can the errors of the past be corrected, while being true to the exigencies of the Gospel and at the same time conscious of the positive and negative influences of the missionary's own cultural worldview?

"When God invades man's consciousness, man's reliance on 'peace and security' vanishes from every nook of his existence" (Minear, 1946:116). Paul Minear goes further, saying that the barriers in this vulnerable life have been broken down so that God now "invest him with full responsibility for total obedience to an absolute demand". In this light, all cultures and systems should be confronted with the gospel and transformed accordingly in obedience (WCC, 2012:33).

When proclaiming the Gospel, the radical impact thereof should be kept in mind. This message concerns a "dangerous character" (Brueggemann, 1993:110) and will comprehensively change the lives of those chosen by God. The old ideals of wellbeing will be shattered, replaced by the incarnated Christ under the Grace of God (Rom. 6:14). The life of the individual cannot remain unchanged and so neither the cultural dimension and worldview of the Baka that accepts the responsibility of obedience.

The first conversion should take place in the missionary. He should act in vulnerability and obedience, testimony to the fact that the Gospel has filled the void of self-reliance.

Over the last decades of the 20th century the question has been how to bring God's Word in context with the lives of the hearers. This study instead asks: How can the radical Gospel be communicated in order to affect radical transformation of (not in) the lives of God's children. This transformation will overthrow their previous ideals of wellbeing and confront them with the responsibility of the "absolute demand" made by God. Rather than limiting the spiritual healing to certain safe areas (much like a physician would try and arrest the disease to certain organ systems), this message should aim to break down the "bulkheads which confine explosions to one compartment" (Hirsch, 2009:88).

2. Contextualising the Gospel

Ukpong (1987:278) defines *contextualisation* as "the process and practice of relating the gospel message to the people's concrete life situation". David Bosch (1991:421) points out the fact that the Gospel has been contextualised from the earliest of days. There has been much critique on how mission and evangelising imposed another (frequently Western) culture on a conquered people (W'Isuka, 2011:82). Missionary and colonial enterprises did in fact go hand in hand, but did not necessarily collude to nefarious purposes (Bosch, 2011:303). It was much more a sense (born from superiority and not of service as Christ demands) of *duty* to bring *Western Civilisation* to the world. It should never be forgotten that Western civilisation was itself moulded by Christianity and, therefore, a propagation of its fundamental belief system should not seem strange.

Taking account of these types of criticism, great emphasis was placed on looking at ways in which God's Word can be made relevant or contextualised in the culture of the receiving group and their worldview (Shaw, 2010:212). Matt. 28:19 exhorts Christians to transmit the Gospel, but it also acknowledges and insinuates that cultural barriers will be crossed. Moltmann (1993:98) advises that the Biblical story must be told in ways that impact every aspect of public and personal life, thereby becoming agents of change and the messengers of the "absolute religion" in truth for all other religions (Moltmann, 1993:185). It is, therefore, not the message that changes, but the receivers of the story. When Jesus commented that "the dead (should) bury their own dead" (Luke 9:60) and that the young man should "go and proclaim the kingdom of God", He clearly shows that the unbelievers can continue to live their old lives, but that the chosen is obligated to change and keep no vestiges of the past bonded life of sin (Rom. 6:4). The act of *looking in the mirror* should not leave the observer unchanged (James 1:23-24).

Kwame Bediako (2004:22) avers that the understanding of Christ within the African context is not “necessarily less accurate than any other perception of Jesus”. He qualifies this by pointing out that it should not be accepted out of hand that this is in fact rooted in the Biblical truth. Frye (1983:4) mentions the fact that the Christian Bible has always been a book of interpretation – and translation. Translations which each time cast a different light on Scripture. John Mbiti, (1986:91) extols the traditional African worldview as one of four basic tenants of African theology, but emphasised that African theology can only remain relevant to African life if it keeps “close to Scripture”. It is evident that both Bediako and Mbiti would agree that the Bible is the ultimate measure of Christian endeavour, but they seem reticent to admit any need for a cultural change in African Christians.

As Shaw (2010:209) points out, past (20th century) missionary efforts coincided with the colonial era and the “message bearers” were predominantly Westerners who brought a Gospel (as *cargo*) that might have been conditioned by Western thought and culture. It must be well understood throughout this study that when the urgent call to *radical transformation* is made, it does not presuppose a change to a Western ideal of wellbeing, culture or worldview, but rather a transformation of a sin-bound life (Rom. 6) to a life and ideals governed by the claims of obedience made upon it by God and infused by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8). James 4:22-25 makes a singular call to obedience. Don’t just read the Word, but “Do what it says” (James 4:22).

Eugene Nida (1914-2011) had a profound influence on Protestant missiological communication models. His translation theory, known as Dynamic Equivalence (or Functional Equivalence), presented the Source-Message-Receptor (S-M-R) model of mission. Shaw (2010:209) is of the opinion that the S-M-R model largely results in an approach where the message bearer appeals to the receptor to embrace the missionary’s (idea of) God and frequently the implicit ideals of wellbeing, culture and worldview. Shaw (2010:209) calls this a “prescriptive approach” that puts the emphasis on the communicator’s interpretation of the Gospel and its implications. He also points out that this often neglects the appeal to an essential intimate relationship between the new convert and God.

Although the author deems Shaw’s criticism of Nida rather unfair, it does alert us to a dangerous and presumptive effort by the missionary to infringe on the role that God claimed for Himself. This point is beautifully illustrated by the Jonah narrative. Jonah’s efforts to expound on his faith are unsuccessful. The sailors are in the end not converted by Jonah’s words, testimony or way of life as a Hebrew (they merely become afraid - Jonah 1:10), but come to fear God only after witnessing and experiencing God’s involvement in their lives and His power over creation (John 1:16).

This perspective leads to the context into which God sends His messenger.

In order to successfully bring the Gospel to the Baka, the following aspects may be considered. A Biblical foundation (normative): The Bible should dictate the behaviour of the missionary effort and the content of the message from the outset and within the context of the *Missio Dei*. Secondly, an understanding of the circumstance and worldview into which the Word is preached (context conscious). Thirdly, the *encounter* between people with the transmission of the Biblical story (proclamation). It is important for the Baka to realise that they are no longer outsiders (Brueggemann, 1993:10), but children of an intimate and loving God. They are now part of God's story and should now (repeatedly) proclaim God's involvement in their lives (Brueggemann, 1993:15). After the proclamation, the apprehension of the story (acceptance) should take place. The Baka must understand that they are sinful, but that God want an intimate relationship with them, despite this reality that brings separation between God and man. This realisation must bring about change in the circumstance and worldview (obedience) of those that accept the story. They must turn from fearful, oppressed and lonely outsiders into transformed insiders (Brueggemann, 1993:50).

3. Reading the Bible with the Poor

As will become clear in a following chapter, Brueggemann (1993:11) refers to a "switching" of stories that will result in a changed life. This alternative story (Hirsch, 2009:53) is the narrative of God's mission, as depicted in the Bible. The Bible must then form the foundation of the impetus of the mission and dictate the behaviour of the missionary, including the message, in contrast to the "cargo" method that makes the Gospel a vehicle for cultural imperialism (Shaw, 2010:209). Undoubtedly, it remains clear that the Biblical message is one of change. God intervening in His creation in order to change the status quo of destructive entropy, brought about by the rebellion of man (Gen. 3:15; Gen. 12:2; Heb. 1:1-2). It is immediately clear that this message will require a change from an antithetical ideal of wellbeing, culture, identity and worldview (Brueggemann, 1993:43) by which the current sin-bonded live is justified (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:1-2).

West (2003:xi) researched the "reading interface", upon receiving an invitation by poor and marginalised people to read the Biblical story with them. This is important for this research, when seeking ways to make the Biblical story relevant in the lives of the Baka (poor and marginalised). It entails a telling (*reading*) of the Bible that aims to bring the Biblical story to life in the milieu of the Baka, to enable them to appropriate the transformative freedom of Christian salvation. Before relating this narrative, the missionary should be aware that the audience might interpret the core elements of the story in unforeseen ways.

Shaw (2010:211) reports of this, in reference to his work with the Samo, when saying that with "my theological boxes set, all systematized and ready to be communicated". He quickly realised

that the Samo had different “boxes” and that he could learn much about God and the reality of the world from these people.

Following Jesus’ example, the missionary should not hesitate to humble his understanding and knowledge to learn from other people, even though his worldly status would imply that they should be learning from him. During many encounters and personal interviews with the Baka (2012, 2013), the author came to understand that familiarity with a divergent culture can deepen the missionary’s understanding of his own faith (WCC, 2012:36) while adding a deeper dimension to his knowledge of God. Jesus’ rendering of Isaiah 61:1-2 and Isaiah 58:6 (Luke 4:18-19) shows that Jesus had a particular mission towards the socially marginalised. Liberation theology chose these “non-persons” as the “chief interlocutors” of the Bible (West, 2003:xiii). In “Together Towards Life” the Missional statement of the World Council of Churches is clear that mission is no longer “to the margins” but “mission from the margins” (WCC, 2012:5). When the missionary (or “socially engaged” scholars or theologians as West (2003:xiii) calls it) partakes in a contextual Bible study with people from these marginalised socio-economic (and cultural) stratum, it is important to realise that they will have a *reading of their own*. Some of them will, of course, not be literate and so will listen and remember. What they then “hear, remember and retell” is what West (2003:77) “calls re-membering”. This oral transfer of the Biblical narrative occurs in a communal setting. This is where all important subjects are discussed, analysed and re-interpreted by the Baka. In this way the Bible will also be re-membered through the particular circumstances of the Baka. West (2003:82) considers this re-membering akin to a re-writing of the text into a “redirecting of meaning”, from a “particular social location”. Such a reading might not be what the missionary had in mind, but West (2003:87) warns that it is ignored at great peril. When approaching the Baka with certain reading resources, it should not be surprising that they will bring their own and that this can be an opportunity for mutual enrichment. As Shaw (2010:212) states, neither party should come away “unchanged”. It should never become a case of outsiders telling insiders what to know and believe (Shaw, 2010:211).

Although the missionary should then be prepared for an alternative reading, it has already been mentioned that one of the objects of this research is to find ways in which syncretism, relativism and dualism can be avoided in the *converted*. The redemption of Christ should be an objective reference, against which all readings should be measured. The *struggle* should not be considered the redemptive act, but the “action of God in Christ” that exacts a decision of obedience (Keller, 2012a:7344). Salvation is through faith alone and no amount of struggle will replace this mere fact.

Hiebert (1987:108) showed that a critical reading of the Bible would prevent any culture (or in this case struggle motive) from becoming authoritative at the expense of the Gospel truth. This study

suggests that when the Biblical narrative is received critically into the context of the Baka, it will become a relevant part of their ideal of wellbeing, thus transforming their understanding of and approach towards God and the world around them. This results in a liberation (through Christ) from the bondage of personal sin and spiritual captivity that has been the fundamental cause of their subjection.

4. Context conscious

Jesus came to interact with people and became one of them (although not as them), assimilating their culture, language and customs; washing their feet, although he “knew that the Father had put all things under his power” (John 13:3-5). Frye (1983:5) points out that there are common understandings that transcend *language*, things that are mutually recognised as being common in the human experience. The desire to be an instrument in God’s mission requires the willingness to go beyond cultural constraints and become “God’s intent”, His “Word in their midst” (Shaw, 2010:214). This can be achieved with an attitude of “self-emptying humility”, “respect towards others” while engaging in dialogue with people of different cultures and faiths (WCC, 2012:39).

The Word should become a conceptual reality, eliciting a powerful and consuming reaction. In order to bring about this transformational renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:1-2), the messengers should first be transformed themselves (W’Isuka, 2011:85). W’Isuka (2011:80) points out that racism and discrimination have largely left the Pygmy peoples unreached, next to spiralling cathedrals. As instruments in God’s mission, the messengers require their own minds to be renewed (*metanoia*) by God’s grace.

In these parts of Africa people would quickly point out that they “know” the Pygmies quite well. Unfortunately, what they know is often just a caricature of them and almost never a knowledge that attempts to understand their daily challenges, worldview, culture or ideals of wellbeing. The problem of cultural understanding is thus not only confined to the Western missionary, but also includes a reluctance to accept the realities of diversity in their own society amongst Africans. The missionary should go to great lengths to acquire an informed knowledge and understanding of the ideal of wellbeing, culture, identity and worldview of the people into which this life-changing message is brought. It is only armed with this understanding that the missionary can *awaken* the Baka to recognise the intimate involvement of God in their lives and His powerful sway over creation.

In Christ, they now truly have shared experiences that surpasses those of the clan but extends to all Christians worldwide.

5. Encounter by shared experiences

Jansen (2008:55) lays the emphasis on the reconciliatory role of Christ in voicing the need to interact and converse with people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Regarding the Pygmy, she warns that these people are perceived along the following precepts: *otherness*, *otherwise*, and *elsewhere*. It follows then that the first step would be for Christians to overcome prejudice, those temptations to paternalistic superiority so easily awoken when encountering pre-modern people.

When Shaw (2010:210) speaks of finding a shared experience, it is with a view to establishing effective communication by building relationships. This is especially important when encountering people like the Baka that have an innate mistrust of outsiders, grown from experiences of exploitation and suffering from an acute inferiority complex. Instead of trying to transfer the Christian message from one cultural understanding to another, Shaw (2010:210) suggests that it should rather be a question of finding ways in which God's intent becomes clear and relevant to people. This seems to be compatible with the *Missio Dei* principle of God using the Biblical narrative to explain and propound His will, plan and activity within human history. People who find themselves outcasts amongst humans and also perceive themselves to have been abandoned by their Creator (Van den Toren, 2009) would consider God's message quite clear: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). As will be made clear from Brueggemann, there is plenty of hope in the Biblical story for the oppressed, the downtrodden and the lost.

As previously indicated, Shaw (2010:210) opines that the S-M-R model of communication is flawed in that it merely offers the conveyance of "cultural cargo" to the listeners. In order to avoid this danger, the intent should be to make God's will cognitively relevant, thereby encouraging the listener to make an effort to apprehend the story and become part of it within his own contextual relevance. By addressing the intrinsic ideal of wellbeing of the Baka, the messenger creates a shared human experience that can demonstrate a direct benefit from a transformed worldview. It is important to do this without subtracting the inherent element of the intimate relational involvement and the requirement of obedience. The motivation for conversion should therefore not be the expected result, but the outcome of a life lived with God and in obedience to His commands. The "cargo" is as such neither merely cultural nor beneficial, but affects both from the inherently transformational nature of the appropriated message. Interestingly, W'Isuka (2011:80) remarks that by "escaping colonisation", the Pygmy people of central and west Africa "escaped Christianity".

The next chapter fully investigates the ideals of Baka wellbeing, wherein insecurity and abandonment are core determinants in their perception of wellbeing. Not only do they live in what they perceive as an insecure physical environment, necessitating a daily struggle for survival in a

menacing forest, but they are subject to the tyranny of natural spiritual powers. In this unfriendly environment they are alone, abandoned by the Creator. Even death does not bring escape, as they are now forever trapped in a suspended reality somewhere between life and nothingness. By relating the Biblical “metanarrative” of God’s involvement in the Baka life and history must be apprehended, in order for them to understand their responsibility towards a just and merciful God and begin living the Biblical story (Keller, 2012a:6576).

In which way can the messenger then communicate the Biblical story to the Baka so that it invites true conversion? Shaw (2010:212) suggests that such a model should be dynamic and interactive, intentional, relevant, global and transformational. Regarding the Baka, it would consist of a dynamic, interactive and intentional endeavour to bring a relevant message in order to transform each party to the conversation.

Communicating the Biblical story would necessitate building a relationship of trust with the Baka. In order to do this, the messenger must first be in a close relationship with God, understand himself to be part of God’s story and convert (metanoia) to a true messenger (W’Isuka, 2011:85), willing to be sent without prejudice. The Biblical story of Jonah reflects how difficult it is to go even when you are a chosen prophet, in a close relationship with God (Jonah 1:3).

Compelled by a converted lives, the Christian must seek ways and means of relating God’s story in a relevant way. Brueggemann (1993:128) adds that the telling must be artistically satisfying, politically constructive, morally relevant and intellectually credible in order to have lasting impact.

It is important to note that other people harbour different cognitive realities and that their perceptions are as real to them as it is to the next person. Shaw (2010:214) reminds the missionary that knowledge of the reception group is paramount. The message bearer should first “hear their voices” (Shaw, 2010:214) and be aware that the relationship is a “two-way street” (Shaw, 2010:212), where neither of the parties can remain unchanged. Without an understanding of their contextual framework and cognitive base, it will not be possible to address their worldview and ideals of wellbeing.

Every party to the communication should become changed by the encounter. The hearers should assimilate the new information into their known framework. Transformation occurs when the new information *reframes* the familiar and the new understanding begins to make sense. The Christian transformation will ultimately require the death of the old self and a new life in the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:10-11) through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. This will be possible once the hearers re-evaluate their reality against a new accepted truth, i.e. they must accept the truth of the Biblical story and apprehend this in their lives (James 1:22-23).

Brueggemann (1993:9) is emphatic that: “the biblical text has a voice of its own, other than ours”. In the context of *Missio Dei*, it is this Voice of God that must invade the consciousness of the Baka, convincing them of God's involvement in their lives and history; their own sinfulness; God's righteous judgement and His grace in Christ. As partakers of *Missio Dei*, the church should look at ways to proclaim this message in a relevant, non-reductionist manner.

6. Inculturation

It was Father Masson who first used the term *un Catholicisme inculturé* (“inculturated Catholicism”) in 1962 (Carrier, 1997:33). While it was first embraced by the Jesuits (Carrier, 1997:34), it was quickly also accepted in Protestant thinking (Bosch, 2011:440).

Inculturation aims to incarnate the Gospel into the culture, norms and thoughts of a community. In turn, they are expected to entrench their culture in Christianity (Carrier, 1997:35). The process of inculturation is not a one-way street. Bosch (2011:447) calls it a “double movement”. Both parties to the process are challenged to transformation and mutual enrichment should be expected. The process must, however, not stop there. The objective still remains the implanting of the Word of God into the cultural heart of a community (Carrier, 1997:36). In fact, this core group should be “sharply dissimilar and at deep odds” with the surrounding community in which they find themselves (Keller, 2012a:6904). The missionary should always be conscious of his own cultural baggage, but should allow for the Gospel a “chance to start a history of its own in each people and its experience of Christ” (Bosch, 2011:447).

Some would say that the incultured Gospel has been *too successful* in Western Europe. The dichotomous mantra “I am Catholic but not practicing” is a very common one in France. Although Bosch (2011:448) warns never to use “incultured” as a final stage of development, it seems that Catholicism has become so incultured that it remains only as a cultural identity (as opposed to Jewish, Muslim or Protestant; not even Christian – non-Christian). The focus should then not be on the *marrying* of Christianity with a culture, but the transformation of this culture as an unavoidable reaction to accepting Christ. Bosch (2011:447) hopes that it would be as a seed grows from the soil of a new culture, taking up the nutrients of the specific soil and bearing the exquisitely unique fruit that only that soil can produce. This growth should not preclude others from sitting in its shade. The new church should have a local flavour, but Bosch (2011:449) warns that it should not become “too local” and result in exclusivity. If this new church is truly church, it will be missional and should then be able to take the Gospel to other cultures with the same principles of inculturation as were used to convert them. The new converts are not only passive receivers of the gospel, but becomes “agents of missionary activity” (WCC, 2012:16). As the body of Christ, the church can only be united (Bosch, 2011:449).

Inculturation would first presuppose a familiarity with the culture of the community at which the preaching is directed and can be obtained *on the job*. At the same time, the ways in which the Gospel can be *poured* into the cultural framework should be examined and approached. The next chapter examines one way of telling the story of Missio Dei. The story of the Good News that wants to permeate the whole of man.



CHAPTER 5: THE APPLICATION OF BRUEGGEMANN'S THREE STORIED WORLDVIEW

"Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more." (Gen. 37:5)

1. Living the dream

The Baka can be said to have fallen along the wayside of God's blessings. Like the dreamer Joseph, they too can discern and appropriate a future of blessing through the grace of God. Walter Brueggemann (1993:7) describes a way in which the Biblical narrative can become relevant as "imaginative models of reality" in the milieu of the Baka, thereby enabling them to appropriate the promises and experience the liberation that was proclaimed.

Despite frequent assumptions to the contrary, the Gospel was first preached in "a very cultured and very cynical world" (Chesterton, 2012:25692) and not unlike the post-modern paradigm of today. The Baka cannot be described in these terms and this raises the question of how the Bible can be considered relevant for their daily lives and specific circumstances. If the Biblical narrative does not become relevant in their lives, they will be disadvantaged by an inability to answer the call to obedience and appropriate the promises of grace. Brueggemann (1993:11) invites the listener to hear the "the old, old story" in such a way as to "switch stories" and change their worldview and ideal of wellbeing. In a milieu where many new converts continue to live with one foot in the other story (Van den Toren, 2009:315), this is crucial in the spiritual quest to steer them clear from the dangers of syncretism. Baka culture is rich in storytelling, values and beliefs are transmitted orally (Van den Toren, 2009:312). It then asks nothing new of them to listen to a new story. The Bible is the miraculous source of a Great Story, being both "unmistakably divine and providentially human" (Keller, 2012a:883).

Brueggemann (1993:10) understands that none of the hearers will come to the telling without an existing story, reflecting their current worldview and understanding of what it is *to be well*. When telling this new story, it is therefore important to know and understand the listeners. As mentioned before, Shaw (2010:210) emphasises the importance of a shared experience as basis for relationship building. Without reciprocal confidence built on a solid relationship, it will not be possible to understand the context into which the story is told. The Biblical narrative plays off in periods of severe privation and hardship, but also in times of luxurious affluence. While the context of affluence can serve as a warning to the Western auditor, it is the theme of God's "attentive generosity" to Israel's "anxious need" (Brueggemann, 1993:76) that will strike a chord with the Baka.

Where the Biblical chronicle repeatedly addressed the *forgetfulness* of Israel, the Baka must be told the story in order for them to form a new core memory. Brueggemann (1993:71) describes this as the crucial element of Israel's godly wellbeing. In appropriating the Biblical story, the Baka can imaginatively integrate the providence of a loving Father into their core memory.

Brueggemann, (1993:12) explores the way in which the Biblical story can be made real and relevant in the lives of people. He distinguishes three main audiences: *outsiders*, *forgetters* and *children of believers*.

This study suggests that there are elements in all three these categories that can be employed for the Baka audience, in order to make the Biblical narrative pertinent for their appropriation of the Gospel. Not unlike the congregation in Shechem, the Baka likes to hear a good story and stories always have meanings; they are never considered *mere stories*. Like the New Testament Gospel authors, the missionary will endeavour to act as "preachers and teachers" in an effort to make the truth of Jesus' redemption relevant to the Baka audience (Carson & Moo, 1992:2242).

2. The three stories

"Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast Brought Death into the World, and all our woe, With loss of EDEN, till one greater Man Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat." John Milton (1667/2011:8).

Brueggemann (1993:48) titles his first chapter "Outsiders become Insiders" and explores the way in which the Biblical story of Israel can be told to people falling outside a covenantal relationship with God. Brueggemann's *outsiders* are likely to be privileged classes, employing non-covenantal exploitative economic and religious practices to legitimatise their social and economic position to the detriment of those less influential. In this study the *outsiders* are the Baka, living a life of "continuous struggle for survival" (Van den Toren, 2009:310) and often considered *persona non grata* by the authorities (W'Isuka, 2011:77), the subjects of slavery (Van den Toren, 2009:311) and even cannibalism or sexual assault (W'Isuka, 2011:79). In no imaginable way can they be considered part of the powerful elites of society, but they are outsiders. Most of the Baka live outside of a covenantal relationship with God. This study posits that the Biblical story can be made relevant in the lives of the Baka, enabling them through the working of the Holy Spirit to become *insiders*; they can become full members of Israel's covenant with God.

Brueggemann (1993:50) refers to Joshua 24 where the congregation was asked to choose. Choose between a life within the covenant, governed by the principles (and God) of the covenant or a life outside of the covenant, governed by the principles of other norms and the laws of other gods. The Biblical story confronts the Baka with the same choice. They can either continue considering themselves cut off from the Creator and endeavour to deal with the spiritual powers

around them by themselves or accept their sinful nature and enter into the covenantal relationship of a victorious and loving God. The latter requires a change of stories (Brueggemann, 1993:50) and the creation of a new core memory (Brueggemann, 1993:76).

Brueggemann (1993:50) points out that Joshua was not a witness to the saving events of which Moses testifies. In a sense, the missionary differs from Joshua in that he is a direct witness to the saving grace of God in his own life (and maybe that of his family, tribe and nation). In another sense, the missionary follows in his footsteps, courageously showing the results of appropriation and obedience. Like Joshua, the missionary can also testify that God has kept all His promises, just as he did towards Israel (Brueggemann, 1993:51). Joshua saw the promises fulfilled, unlike Moses. This is a call from a another tribe for the Baka, testifying that God is not detached from His creation, but wants to be intimately involved in their lives and circumstances.

The Baka is called to a covenantal relationship. This relationship promises blessings, but requires obedience (Wright, 2010:1123). Through the history of Israel, all nations will be blessed (Wright, 2010:1116), but at the same time reminded that God exacts obedience.

Brueggemann (1993:50) asks the reader to imagine three individuals listening to the words of Joshua in Shechem. First, a tired business executive. This docile individual has been empowered by God to leave his comfort zone, despite his fears of failure and retribution. Secondly, a young woman from a dysfunctional family is shown that God does what no family can do by themselves. He blesses, provides sanctuary and reconciles; through grace alone. Lastly, a member of the permanently dispossessed receives a promise from God that He will provide land, sustenance and liberates the oppressed from an unjust system.

While all three of these auditors share something in particular with the Baka as a group, it is sadly the latter participant who has the most in common with the Baka. The auditor at Shechem was told that God has a promise of land for him; the Baka that God will provide sustenance and human rights. As mentioned in chapter four, the Baka cherishes the family and clan (Van den Toren, 2009:311); something that the young woman heard was dear to the heart of God. The Baka hear that God will heal their family and increase their coherence, but that He does not tolerate the family being substituted in His place of priority. He is also not a power to be used to further their interest, but wants a real intimate relationship.

3. Genesis: The unveiling narrative

Genesis unveils God as the Great Instigator, the hand that moves history. The Genesis narrative leads the audience through the elemental Gospel truths of the Creation, Fall, Promise and prefigurement and Israel (Keller, 2012a:881).

Each of these aspects should be understood in the context of the redeeming story of God's involvement with mankind. Each of these *chapters* (not necessarily in the above order) must be internalised and apprehended by the listeners, before the next part of the story (Exodus) is told. The Baka has a meaningful culture of storytelling and will look for the meaning and relevance within their own milieu.

Through the words of Joshua, the Baka audience is asked to consider the acts (in history) of God. This was expressly the purpose of historical literature in the Bible. It shows how God acted in the history of Israel and revealed himself to mankind (Hill & Walton, 2009:2491). At Shechem, Joshua asks the audience to consider how God chose Abraham from amongst a family and people worshipping "other Gods" (Josh. 24:2). The Baka audience is invited to partake in an imaginary journey (Brueggemann, 1993:8) and listen to a "counter story" of their lives (Brueggemann, 1993:53). The mention of "other gods" sets the scene; it means there is an alternative and somebody has explored it and lived to tell the tale. Joshua is recounting the core memory of Israel, a memory that the Baka is now invited to share and appropriate.

In a world hereto comprehended by the Baka to be governed by spirits and powers, the new story has begun. This story will address the primary thought problems of the Baka. They will be told that God intends an intimate involvement in the lives of created (His own image) man; that it is man that turned his face away from God and that He has vanquished death as He has subjected all other powers. This story recounts that the Baka is not at home, but merely under way to a home called *reconciliation* in Christ (Col. 1:16-20) (Keller, 2012a:909).

God reveals Himself in this tale as an active participant in the lives of individuals, families (clan) and nations. In Joshua 24 the audience repeatedly hears "I took (v.3), I gave (vv. 3- 4), I sent (v. 5), I afflicted (v. 5), I brought (vv. 6; 8), I destroyed (v. 8)". Who is this God that claims all this action? But above all, this story is about a giver (Brueggemann, 1993:53); a God that has the power to give, the willingness to give and delivers what He promised. The narrative gives a glimpse into the faithful walk of God with faithless people, at each crisis point transferring the blessing and working reconciliation. Families (clans) described as in the care of a loving God, receiving the "attentive generosity" (Brueggemann, 1993:76) from God through grace alone.

Where Joshua started his brief journey through Genesis with the history of Israel, the Baka needs to hear the story from the beginning and each time aimed at addressing one of the thought problems of the Baka. While journeying through Genesis, they must hear that God created man in His own image for His own reasons and that He intends intimate involvement in the lives of His creatures. Once appropriated, they should know that this has certain implications for the way they interact with God and the world around them. It dictates a new worldview and a new perspective on what it means to *be well*. It would oblige them to introspection and find that it is

their sin that has caused the divide between themselves and God; they should seek salvation outside of themselves. Genesis will also tell them about God's plan of redemption, through His walk with Israel, and that the covenantal God can become their God; and the Baka can become His people (Keller, 2012a:918).

The appropriation of the Gospel should be reflected in their confession of faith as a reaction to God's revelation. Becoming part of God's story, such a confession should not only be in response to the narrative, but contain the scaffolding to the solutions of their conceptual problems. Van den Toren (2009:312) successfully addresses these requirements in the *Pygmy Confession* under at least 6 of the 9 articles (although it probably permeates all):

Article 1: There is only one God;

Article 2: God created humankind in order to have an intimate relationship with them (part of family);

Article 3: God did not abandon His children; His children withdrew from Him;

Article 4: God has a plan for all humankind, including the Pygmy;

Article 6: God conquered the power of death (in Christ);

Article 8: God has prepared a home for His children;

Strangely, this confession does not address the cardinal element of *Christian community*. A sense of community is very important in the Baka community and in African culture in general. Contrary to Victor Turner's (1969:132) assertion that the traditional sense of *communitas* transcends clan and tribal borders, I would propose that this sense of community is confined to a certain well-defined core group, outside of which there is little empathy. The clan or family forms the centre of this community, within which there is a great sense of cohesion and a strict responsibility of care and protection. This communal responsibility concentrically diminishes the further away an individual or group lies from the central core. God's story is radically different. It not only includes social outcasts, strange nations and foreign peoples, but also demands a centrifugal missional outreach of a countercultural community. The traditional community excludes or banishes by emphasising a shared morality; the community of the Christian church should seek to be inclusive, while being distinct in their moral integrity towards the world (Wright, 2010:4941). The traditional community acts as and propounds counterfeit alternatives to the Christian life in Christ (John 6:35-48). The community is a safe place outside of which there is no "salvation".

The Biblical narrative in Genesis has now unmasked these counterfeit “bread(s) of life”, these *unknown gods* of the Baka. Like the unassuming priest (Father Brown) in Chesterton’s tale, it responds: “I know the Unknown God. I know his name; it is Satan” (Chesterton, 2012:25843).

Having identified the foe and the guilt of the human party, the following section examines how Brueggemann’s model can be used to show the Baka the way to be travelled by examining the tracks of God through the history of Israel and (by implication), the Baka.

4. Exodus: The Redemptive narrative

The New Testament interprets the exodus events as a metaphor for the redemption work of Christ (Wright, 2010:1882). Jesus leads His people out of the bondage of slavery to a new life, at the price of His own life. What Moses did for Israel, Jesus will do for the whole world (Wright, 2010:1892). For Brueggemann (1993:55), Exodus tells the story of three characters: God, the Empire and the Peasant. It is a story where “the cry from below evoked the power of God from above” (Brueggemann, 1993:56). Israel cries for help and God intervenes in the history of a great empire, to come to the aid of His chosen people. How relevant is this not for the Baka. The cry from a community of oppressed individuals reaches the Creator and He responds by leading them out of their bonded state. The former docility of the Peasant is broken and they obtain the help of Him that commands nature!

As in the Genesis narrative, God is depicted as the animator, the instigator of events. Joshua 24 describes the escape from the Empire: “I sent Moses and Aaron, I afflicted the Egyptians, and I brought you out” (v.5). They saw “with their own eyes what He did to the Egyptians” (v.7) and afterwards, during the journey: “I brought you to the land, I gave them into your hands, and I destroyed them (v.8)”. Interestingly enough, Joshua speaks to the people of Shechem as if they were present during the departure out of slavery! This includes the current day audience of the Baka into the community of listeners (Brueggemann, 1993:55), urging them to take ownership of the story. Yes, Baka, you were (are) slaves to sin (even physically); yes, you were (are) at the red sea; you were (are) pursued by the Egyptians; you were (can be) delivered by God. You were (are being) cared for in the desert, you were (can be) given victory, you were (can receive) given the land of others.

The Baka is invited to start on a homeward journey (Keller, 2012a:904), through a story that points to Christ giving up His home so that man can return to his real home (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58). The story chapters that follow will encourage them that they will be able to count on the attentive care of their Heavenly Father, throughout this journey. Through the forty years of wandering in the desert, God gave the Israelites everything they needed. In Deuteronomy, Moses reminds Israel that “Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell” (Deut. 8:4). Not only did God

protect Israel from the powerful forces and agents of this world, but He gave them food – and urged them to remember this in generations to follow (Ex. 16:32) as a powerful testimony to His everlasting care. Not only did God provide *chicken soup for the soul*, but He provided for all aspects of the human condition: political, economically and socially (Wright, 2006:271).

In the retelling of the Shechem meeting narrative, Brueggemann (1993:49) prefers to use the term *Canaanites* as a reference to an elite class of people that draws profit from an unjust, exploitative system in contravention to the covenantal relationship with Yahweh. Others would rather depict the possession of the land by the Israelites as a real “holy war”, against the servants of Baal and Asherah (Hill & Walton, 2009:505). Whatever the realities at the time, it does refer to a contest of two groups of people. One group championed by Yahweh and another championing a contrarian, non-covenantal life and (most possibly) religion. What is striking is that it involves practical institutions and systems, such as property, territorial integrity, security and authority. Furthermore, these *Canaanites* are invited to become part of the covenantal relationship! There is always this *open* invitation; never subject to law (Brueggemann, 1993:42), but always with the appropriation of “alternative obedience” (Brueggemann, 1993:43).

Israel was promised property. They were promised the land of other people, property that does not *belong* to them and God gave it to them (Brueggemann, 1993:57): “land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build” (Joshua 24:8-13). The Baka consider them in the desert and cannot see anything, but sand stretching as far as the eye can see. They will experience this again in their new story as people of the covenant. This is why it is so important to grasp this part of the story, the part of the story that will give them hope. The part of the story that prevents them from seeking the *old gods*, just in case the new one is limited in some way. On the one hand, sustenance and protection against the powers of this world, but on the other hand, a promise of the economic viability of successful hunts and full crops. This is also the news about their worth in the eyes of God for the Baka. Downtrodden people, lifted up and given the power by God to “have and to hold life for himself” (Brueggemann, 1993:59). Contrary to the stories being told by the firelight of his Bantu neighbours, the Baka will realise that he is chosen by God to receive all that surrounds him. Brueggemann (1993:60) admits the prospect of violence here, “for this story has a potential for violence”; but it may merely “break the ideology of deprivation” and “authorize liberated self-assertion”.

The story that the Baka are hearing is a *story of life*. The main character of this story is the conqueror of death. The story relates of life; the resurrection of Christ from the dead through God the Father. The story continues to be life-giving with the continual acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ (Moltmann, 1993:98). After listening to so many stories of death, this story beckons them to depart for a new story where marginality becomes entitlement and abandoned

children becomes loved and cared for children of God, despite their sinful natures. The homeless pilgrims of the forest are invited to come home and choose a redefinition of the way they perceive reality (Brueggemann, 1993:61). The price is to "put away the gods of your ancestors".

5. The response of obeisance

Wright (2010:1116) points out that God required covenantal obedience from Israel for the continual enjoyment of blessings. The Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 24) warns the believer that God's grace cannot be earned. Obedience is in response to the blessings received (Wright, 2010:1144) and not a way to manipulate or placate God. Lord's Day 32 explains that obedience is a consequence of the life of gratitude and not a means to an end. It is important to bring this point across to the Baka, as they come from a religious tradition wherein spirits and powers must be continually pacified and appeased by rituals or offerings. In the old story, (physical) salvation was sought by means of sacrifices, charms and ritual. In the old story there was no suggestion of reciprocal love or (rare) thanksgiving. Now, the reaction to the blessings becomes rejoicing (Deut. 26:1-11), followed by responsive obedience (Deut. 26:1-14) and even more blessings (Deut. 26:15) (Wright, 2010:1145). It is when the new story is appropriated and integrated into the Baka worldview that the feeling of abandonment and alienation gives way to a personal experience of God's love, resulting in a grateful response of obedience.

However, a word of caution: God does not permit half measures (Rev. 3:16), but demands perfect obedience. In fact, as Edwards (1834/1995:23815) points out, it is against the very nature of God to command otherwise – imperfect obedience. Man is not "able to serve the Lord" (Josh. 26:19). The switching of stories and the consequences thereof is costly (Brueggemann, 1993:63). It means that the whole sense of self, view of reality, imagination and identity (Brueggemann, 1993:65) must be reworked and intrinsically changed. This change ultimately leads to the Cross on Golgotha (Wright, 2010:1882) and each changeling must take up his cross. The believer knows that he cannot obey perfectly, nor carry his own cross for "even our best works are imperfect and defiled by sin" (Lords Day 24, 62). Therefore salvation lies in Christ, though grace alone (Lords Day 24, 63).

Towards the end of the meeting at Shechem the audience commits to a new and particular identity that not only differs from the surrounding people, but also from their previous way of life, economic and social pragmatism and behaviour. All aspects of their lives receive a new meaning and substance (Brueggemann, 1993:69). By leaving the old story behind, they "throw away" (Josh. 26:14) the old gods and by implication, the old worldview, cultural identity and ideal of wellbeing.

By making the decision to switch stories, the listener cannot continue to believe that *all is well* and that his old story life can form the basis of his sense of wellbeing. Reading the Heidelberg

Catechism shows that Lord's Day 1 puts all aspects of the person ("body and soul, both in life and death") under the sovereignty of Christ. The old gods allowed (encouraged) self-sufficiency, self-promotion, self-interest and a life spent in efforts to control destiny (Brueggemann, 1993:66). Yahweh does not allow Himself to be used as a "means to an end" (Ex. 20:3-7) and forbids use one's neighbour as a "means to an end" (Ex. 20:12-17) (Brueggemann, 1993:68). Entering into the covenantal relationship means that God and His people are "bound inextricably and irreversibly" (Brueggemann, 1993:67) and consequently the new way of life commit *inextricably and irreversibly* to the ideas of God. The "new story ideal of wellbeing' cannot contradict this, and must at all times be "subservient to my salvation" (Lord's Day 1). By the Holy Spirit the adherents of the New Story can "live unto him" (Lord's Day 1), bearing the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) as opposed to the "acts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19) dictated by the gods of the old story.

Faced with the contradiction of reality, the impossibility of making the sinful nature heel to the exigencies of the new story must be conceded. However, inherent to the new story is the paragraphs of failure and the chapters of redemption. Switching stories does not provide immunity to the habits of an old life or the nature of a sinful creature. The difference lays in the redeeming features of the new story. Adherents will realise that they will have to put on new clothes daily and each time where "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" are required (Col. 3:12).

The story will have to be retold, memories refreshed with the alternative memory, promises and commands of the new story. The "cost and joy" only known by *outsiders* that became *insiders* (Brueggemann, 1993:70).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

“Cela est bien, repondit Candide, mais il faut cultiver notre jardin”¹⁰.
— Voltaire, *Candide* (2011:1449).

The best we can do in this life is to work at improving our person and environment; to “cultivate our garden”. The central tenant of Meliorism is that *we can do better*, humans can improve on the canvas that is nature. Firstly, there is the zeal of the missionary church to *do God’s work* and secondly, man’s quest to rid himself of the haunting discomfort that is the consequence of his innate moral evil. Both might be tempted to *cultivate* the world around them, in order to *set it right* or to rid themselves of the nagging discomfort (MacDonald, 2012b:14). *Missio Dei* responds to both.

The subtle danger of man’s missionary role in *Missio Dei* lies in the attempt at usurping responsibility for mission. On the one hand, it can soothe the soul to inaction (it’s God’s problem). On the other hand, it stirs the ambition in man to bring forth great things (*I’ve got the solution*). It is tempting to take the initiative to *cultivate our (missional) garden*, especially in the face of so much ignorance, spiritual bondage, illness, poverty and suffering that appears without hope and end - “Helping God to get over those barriers” (Wright, 2010: 125).

Bosch (1995:33) explains the essence of *Missio Dei* as the restoration of the creation by God, with the participation of the church. By reminding people that God “reigns universally”, they are called to bring all of their person in obedience under the dominion of God. A reality without (the governance of) God is not merely an inconvenience, it is death (Macdonald, 2012a:3200).

The benefit of an awareness and the approbation of *Missio Dei* would enable the church-in-mission to strike the right chord. Paul (Rom. 15:20) spoke about his ambition to preach the Word “not where Christ was already named” so that he does not “build on another man’s foundation”. It would seem at first like Paul is *cultivating his own garden*, getting on with the job *because nobody else will*, but reading further reveals Paul’s heart. He “delights in (his) weaknesses”, so that Christ’s power can make his weakness powerful (2 Cor. 12:9-10). He does not boast of his own inspiration, intellect or insight for he declares that he “received it by revelation from Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:12). While the creation narrative points towards the good in nature and the world of humankind, the doctrine of the falls acts as a dire warning against “utopianism and triumphalism” (Keller, 2012a:6662).

¹⁰ This is all well and good, responded Candide, but we must cultivate our garden (my translation).

Mission starts with *Missio Dei*; it “flows from the prior mission of God” (Wright, 2010:183). *Missio Dei* starts the heart of the missionaries, starts the church. *Missio Dei* starts the hearts of the Baka. *Missio Dei* starts in the heart of God and is his action. The works of mission, flowing forth from the redemption of God through Jesus, is by faith alone; the Biblical narrative must propound the contextual salvation through faith in Christ alone. God has a church (Wright, 2006:62) that *cultivates His garden*. It is only when digging faithfully in the garden of God that the fullest desires of the heart is unearthed (Ps. 37:4).

Jesus is the central figure in the redemptive history. The crescendo of God’s love reached its fullness in Christ. This salvation brought radical change to the way in which humanity should regard itself and prioritise its ambitions, worldview and sense of wellbeing. This study looked at the ideal of wellbeing and concluded that the radical impact of salvation through Christ should and must change the fundamental ideal. Not only should the source of wellbeing flow forth from the relationship with the eternal God, but it should also be directed to the glory of the Creator wherein it will find its fullest content. John Piper puts it succinctly: “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him” (Piper, 2014).

This implies that only when the perception and ideal of wellbeing is submitted to the will of God can the pitfalls of relativism, dualism and syncretism be avoided, leading to comprehensive salvation. The stumbling block is humanity’s sinful and innate quest for control that translates into a perception of wellbeing, when some façade of mastery is accomplished. Man is likely to change everything but his heart, in an effort to finding comfort for the nagging feeling of incompleteness. The real cause of man’s misery is a moral evil in himself (MacDonald, 2012b:26), from which he can only be freed by the saving grace of God. His message speaks of deliverance, forgiveness and liberation, not punishment. Those who do not accept the choice of a regeneration in Christ will experience His judgement.

Some key issues can be considered to be crucial to the establishment of a new ideal in Christ. Firstly, the believer must be conscious of his/her sinful nature and the need for redemption outside him-/herself. Appropriating the New Story of God’s redemptive plan is choosing “eternal life” (John 6:60,68) in which a responsibility for transformative, distinctive obedience becomes entrenched. Although the Baka will still die (John 6:49, 68), they have already received eternal life in a continual relationship with the Life-Giver in an (already) “unbreakable bond” (Helberg, 2011:31). This is a crucial element in Biblical wellbeing. The eternal life has already started by Christ’s reconciling man with God. Now, this does not preclude the consequences of disobedience. By proclaiming and living according to the motto “Jesus is Lord”, new converts join the earliest Christians by excluding all other loyalties (Hirsch, 2009:92) such as old gods, idols,

ancestral worship, superstitions and personal reliance. This new story is centrifugal at heart and it must be told and re-told; it must be won and re-won in each life.

Can the Biblical ideal of wellbeing be reached by other means? Are there other spiritual paths or techniques of human endeavour or travail whereby the saving grace of God can be appropriated? The Bible provides an emphatic *no* (Piper, 2003:174). Whereas the Old Testament recounts the history of grace and mercy shown by God's acts of salvation extended to specific people in specific times, the New Testament paints a focussed picture around the figure and person of Jesus as the redemptive grace and mercy through which comprehensive salvation is worked and towards whom comprehensive obedience is owed.

The initiative lies not with humanity. Man neither premeditated nor fulfilled the redemptive plan. It is God that took the initiative and brought the ultimate sacrifice. It is, therefore, not for man to choose his own way of salvation; for humanity to find techniques or spiritual enlightenment towards salvation.

Future research could illuminate the ways in which wellbeing ideals and perceptions are formed and changed. This study could also be broadened to ascertain the measure in which new converts are successful in transforming their ideals of wellbeing and the correlation with dualistic and syncretistic elements that remain in their conceptual reality. There are also many socio-economic issues that require in-depth study and research. The Baka is still effectively landless (without ownership) and economically marginalised. They lack political clout and representation. They are technologically compromised. While the information superhighway is speeding past them, they get smaller in the rear-view mirror of the information age. Until these issues are resolved, the Baka will continue to suffer oppression, poverty, ignorance and illness.

Notwithstanding their perceptions about their attainment of wellness or not, all men will be required to respond (in word and deed) to the question posed by Jesus to the future disciples: "*You do not want to leave too, do you?*" (Jonah 6:67).

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