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Book of Abstracts

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Epidemics, Pandemics, and Plagues: How the Church has Responded throughout History, and Implications for Churches in Battling the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The recent outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a massive disruption of the 'normal' in every area of life. Apart from creating fear, confusion, and uncertainty, the pandemic has led to a new way of life in both the society and the church. In such times, how do Christians live out their biblical mandate of ministering to both the church and the world? Over the last 2000 years, there has been a repeated emergence of plagues of devastating nature. In these different eras, Christians (and corporately, the church) have responded to plagues in diverse ways. While employing a case study method, the paper examines how the church responded to epidemics and plagues throughout history. The exploration will look at the following plagues: the Plague of Cyprian (250-270 CE); the Black Death (from 1348 and 1500s), Smallpox (1758), Cholera (1854), the Flu Epidemic (1918-1919), and Ebola (2015). The study will highlight practical considerations for contemporary churches in Kenya as they battle with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key Words: Pandemics, Plagues, Covid-19, History, Christian Response.

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A theology of culture for modern Africa

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Abstract

The role and place of culture in theological discourses has been a subject of intense controversy among theologians and scholars over the years. This controversy has been fueled by the perceived exclusion of culture as a key player in shaping our theological enterprise and especially in the African context. The foregoing notwithstanding, theology in its nature is contextual. This assertion flows from both the biblical and historical models of theologizing. For instance, in Jeremiah 18: 2, we see Jeremiah being invited to receive God's message from within a cultural milieu of the day. It is notable therefore that, culture plays a vital role in the theological enterprise of a given people in a given place.

But then, whose culture is to be utilized? Is there a universal culture through which theological enterprise must proceed? What kind of culture is qualified to be considered for theological enterprise and especially with respect to modern Africa? It is argued that "European missionaries introduced the message of Jesus Christ to most Africans based on their own culture and mentality". In the same manner, the resultant theology was devoid of African cultural milieu and mentality, hence the failure to adequately serve the myriad of Africa's needs that call for theological interpretation.

This paper will therefore seek to formulate a distinct theology of culture for the modern African context, and one that will respond appropriately to the unique and varied needs of the modern African person.

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The future of Children and Teenage Ministries in Kenyan Churches: Fear of an Emergence of a Generations without God after COVID-19 Pandemic.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every part of the World. It brought unfortunate consequences; unexpected deaths, sudden unemployment, strain on healthcare systems, economic near collapse and the worst of all is the unprecedented disruption in places of worship. On the 13th of March 2020, the government of Kenya ordered an immediate closure of Churches as a containment measure against the spread of the pandemic. This move forced the Kenyan church leaders to navigate through unfamiliar territory of adopting new ways of doing ministry through online platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Zoom, and Church Websites and Televisions to offer spiritual services such as preaching, discipleships, follow-ups, fellowships and even visitations to all groups' children, teens, youths and adults. This study sought to establish which of the groups in the churches did not receive adequate or specific attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research was carried out on 22nd May through 20th June 2020. The study used survey research design, a valuable tool of assessing the attitudes, opinions and trends of church leaders. An exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling technique was used to identify the 429 (n) pastors and church leaders from 33 Counties of Kenya and among 161 denominations who participated in the study. The online survey was hosted by US-based data company SurveyMonkey Inc. that processed and analyzed the data. The study findings indicated that Children between the ages of 0- 11 years (64.57%) and Teenagers between the ages of 12- 19 years (30.77%) received inadequate attention (95.34%). The knowledge gained in this research is helpful for churches and various denominations to formulate appropriate and practical methods of effectively ministering to the children and teenagers even in seasons of crises.

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CHANGES IN LEATHERWORK INDIGENOUS INDUSTRY AMONG THE TUGEN OF BARINGO COUNTY; 1895-1963;KENYA.

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This is a study of pre-colonial African technology with special emphasis on the Tugen indigenous leather industry. The position that is strongly advanced through this paper is that before colonialism the Tugen practiced indigenous industries such as pottery, blacksmithing, and leatherwork among others. Leatherwork was characterized by the provision of knowledge and skills to individuals who were supposed to selflessly serve the society by making garments for the members of the society. They learnt through their interaction with their physical environments, to cope with the changing climatic conditions by making suitable attire for the varied climatic zones and seasons. The work relied on oral traditions as a primary source. Secondary sources were utilized such as unpublished works like articles, books, and thesis. Archival source from Kenya National Archives were extensively used to supplement the sources from primary and secondary. The study described the distribution, methods and techniques and the procedure used in leatherwork. It further assessed the types and uses of leather products. This study established the forces which led to the dismantling of the industry during the early periods of colonial rule such as through taxation, forced labour, settler farming and western education. Leatherwork in the 1930s underwent re-organisations in form of labour innovativeness, cultural transformation; marketing strategies etc. The Tugen devised ways of survival so as to compete favorably with the British colonizers which led to the Tugen transformation of the leather industry from 1945. The main problem that this study advanced is that Tugenland like other African societies is regarded by some people as having not had any form of industry or organisations before the arrival of the colonialists. This paper raised an argument against this position. The study has recorded the Tugen leather industry for posterity purposes.

Keywords: Indigenous industry, indigenous knowledge, leatherwork, colonialism, independence.

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THE PLACE OF A COW AMONG THE PRE-COLONIAL KIPSIGIS OF RIFT VALLEY REGION IN KENYA: APPRECIATING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS IN A PASTORAL ECONOMY.

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The pre-colonial pastoral economy is mainly subsumed to comprise of a community of people wandering with their drought-stricken cattle in search of pastures and water over long distances. The Kipsigis, who were initially a purely pastoral community and finally settled in a well-watered area around Kericho, gradually adopted crop production and supplemented their diet with agricultural produce, thus becoming mixed farmers. They nevertheless retained their indigenous knowledge in cattle herding and before the advent of colonialism, they were well known for their great attachment to and love for their cattle. The 'cow' was a central defining feature in their socio-cultural, economic and political organization and relations. This paper seeks to provide historical insights on the knowledge and practice of animal husbandry among the pre-colonial Kipsigis community in the Rift Valley to underscore the importance and resilience of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a pastoral setting. It examines the variety of pastoral systems, the diversity on animal production and the dynamic animal-based food processing and storage techniques in forestalling food scarcity. It also examines the broad social mechanisms concerning animals in alleviating food shortages and famines. It is demonstrated that the Kipsigis pre-colonial pastoral systems were dynamic, innovative, diverse, efficient, self-reliant and suited to the needs of the peoples involved. It is argued further that the Kipsigis pastoral organization was sound, resourceful, and rational and based on the people's knowledge of their environment.

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CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED DISASTERS IN ARID AND SEMI-ARID LANDS. A CASE OF BARINGO COUNTY

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The main objective of this study was to identify Climate Change Related Disasters (CCRDs) in Arid and Semi-arid Lands such as Baringo County. The study used a descriptive survey design. Purposeful sampling and stratified proportionate random sampling procedures were used to obtain the Sample. A sample of 376 households were selected for the study in Baringo County. Questionnaire, key informant interview schedule and observations were the main instruments of data collection. Analysis of data was done using the SPSS. Percentages were used to analyze CCRDs. Drought, storms and floods are climate change related disasters affecting Baringo County. About 80 percent of the households strongly agreed that drought is the most common disasters affecting the County. Vegetation clearance is the main cause of CCRDs in Baringo County hence there is need to increase awareness on climate change and encourage people to use alternative sources of energy and plant trees.

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The Implications of the Koininia Concept on Poverty Eradication in a Globalized World

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In such an interconnected world, one would expect the world to be a better place in terms of how people care for the needs of fellow human beings. However, this is not the present case, especially when you focus on world's economic discrepancies. Statistics show that the gap between the rich and the poor keep on widening with time. Only few nations are enjoying the benefits of globalization whereas others such as Africa are wallowing in poverty. Structures to combat this by international institutions (World Bank, IMF, WTO) have not availed much for they neglect the spiritual aspects of poverty and emphasize on the economic, political, anthropological, and cultural aspects. The study looks at the theological concept of koinonia as a biblical resource that can provide insights into how the globe can move toward a more understanding and caring community. The Early Church, that was a multiethnic community, demonstrate that it is possible to live together as a community. Using the social scientific method, this study will examine the concept of koinonia in the Early Church and how it functioned to address socio-economic needs within the church community. The study will analyze the paradox of poverty in a globalized world, explore the theological foundations of koinonia then draw implications of the koinonia concept on poverty eradication in Africa.

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Mission and Traditional Tugen Culture of Kenya: A Critical Theological Study in Biblical Christianity

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Doing effective mission within the Traditional Tugen, Culture is critical because it is difficult to avoid due to the issues of culture which have a dynamic dialogue with supra culture of biblical Christianity. The issue of reconciling the Christ mission with the traditional Tugen culture is a big challenge. This cultural challenge is as old as the history of mankind from the time of creation. Christ dialogue with the cultural setting of his day took several characteristics: affirmations, reconstructions, compromise and opposition. The same will also apply to the Traditional Tugen culture.

A traditionalist Tugen will always seek to have a good harmonious relationship with Supernatural Being and other spirit-beings whose intention is to attain certain powers for his survival. This relationship with supernatural being is illustrated by the hierarchy of Beings where there is a web of interrelationship of beings. In our evaluation of culture, several issues come to stake as regards to culture: Is culture Godless in regards to the mission of Jesus Christ? Is culture anti-God of our Lord Jesus Christ or is culture idolatrous? What is wrong in following the command to trust in God alone?

Such a relationship of Christ mission among the traditional Tugen culture calls for a real caution. In view of biblical Christianity syncretism is a real challenge because some of our Christians operate close to a traditional Tugen culture and portray real fear to the world of spirits, but those Christians who have a solid foundation in sound biblical Christianity will have a very little influence from a traditional Tugen culture. This piece of work intends to provide a road map based on the omniscience of Christ for Christians living in the world occupied by man in regards to doing mission within traditional Tugen culture in light of biblical Christianity.