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Introduction

Missiologists agree that contextualization is necessary in communicating the gospel in a different culture. However, when thinking of culture, many still view Africa in its traditional, precolonial cultural position. This perception impacts contextualization strategies. For example, one of the websites that promotes the Africa Study Bible indicates, “Hundreds of millions of Africans know and love Christ. However, most biblical resources come from a Western perspective—cultures far removed from the reality of life in Africa. In order to help meet this urgent need, the *Africa Study Bible* was created” (Oasis International, 2020). There is no doubt that this contextualized Bible is useful. However, is the African culture of today actually far removed from Western culture? This article proposes that a number of recent studies suggest sub-Saharan Africa is no longer traditional in culture.

Challenges experienced in colonial era missions taught missionaries to take other cultures seriously. The consequent widespread acceptance of the indigenous church principle, and the subsequent introduction of the self-theologizing concept accelerated contextualization of the gospel in African cultures. Further, with their habitual engagement of the spirit world, Pentecostals have arguably created a contextualized theology that takes African cultures seriously (Nkurunziza 2013, 60; Anderson 2018, chapter 1). However, the youth culture in sub-Saharan Africa is progressively becoming Western, and not all young Africans in African cities are culturally Africans. For this reason, the youth culture in the region goes in the opposite direction of missionaries’ contextualization efforts. In this situation, westernized youth in sub-Saharan Africa may find a contextualized “African” gospel foreign in their own continent.

The cultural transition in Africa has created a complex cultural map. As Africa emerged from colonialism, the westernization process was well underway. This trend

has continued and, as argued in this article, modern youth in Africa are divided in three groups: (a) westernized youth in major cities, (b) youth, especially in rural Africa, who still hold on to some forms of traditional African cultures, and (c) youth in urban centres who are in various stages of cultural transition but largely westernized. In this situation, cultural identity does not have a direct relationship with ethnicity. This cultural environment is not unique to Africa. In his cultural milieu, for example, the apostle Paul faced similar challenges, as the distinction between a cultural Jew and the hellenised one was not obvious. This article uses Paul's contextualization methods to instruct the modern church in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Gospel and African Cultures

Preaching the gospel is primarily a communication task, and culture impacts cross-cultural communication. For this reason, missiologists take the issue of culture seriously. However, different periods saw different missiological positions regarding African cultures. For example, in the colonial period, which in Africa was approximately between the year 1870 and 1960, missionaries from Western countries considered African cultures as either containing evil practices or being primitive and in the development stage (Hiebert 1994, 77–78). Consequently, many missionaries totally rejected African cultures and sought to replace them with Western culture. For this reason, they introduced Christianity along with Western education, Western medicine, Western leadership style and structures, Western music and style of worship, and many other expressions of the Western culture. Churches planted in Africa during this period were largely clones of missionaries' home churches.

These cultural postures by colonial missionaries resulted in a number of challenges. First, Christianity was considered a foreign religion and was thought to be an instrument of colonialism. As a result, it was rejected by some people and opposed by others. Second, because the local context was often ignored, many Africans confessed Christianity at the public level, but retained their former beliefs and continued making sacrifices to other gods. However, with time, field experience brought changes in missiological approaches to other cultures (Hiebert 1994, 80–81). The concept of indigenous churches, which introduced “three selves”—self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating—created a way for serious consideration of local cultures as missionaries trusted and prepared local leaders to take charge of their national churches.

The above change, however, came when it was already late to reverse the trend of cultural transformation. As early as 1953, when most African countries were still under colonialism, William Bascom pointed out this challenge. He argues:

Although our own attitudes toward African culture have changed, either they have not changed as completely as we would like to believe, or else this change has not been adequately felt, or believed, by the Africans themselves. There are many young people who have grown up to look upon the ways of their fathers as backward and superstitious. The heritage of African culture, to them, is shameful (1953, 500).

Third, as noted above, colonialism and colonial missionaries' actions initiated a process of cultural transformation in Africa. As Africa emerged from colonialism, many Africans retained their culture despite the drive towards westernization. However, some Africans became largely westernized and others were partly transformed. Other factors such as a Western education system and increased interaction with the West in the post-colonial period brought further complication in the cultural identity of Africans. As Wanjiru Gitau observes, "African cultures continue to navigate transitions between the traditional world, the modern urban world, and the globalizing world" (2018, 7). While this transition continues, cities in sub-Saharan Africa are becoming more and more westernized.

Hiebert's introduction of the "fourth self" has brought a focus on planting self-theologizing indigenous churches under the leadership of nationals (Hiebert 1994, 46). This process entails contextualizing the gospel, missionary approaches, and the church itself. However, the complexity surrounding cultural identity in African cities means this process needs more reflection. While the missionaries' view has shifted from promoting Western culture to contextualizing the gospel in African cultures, the youth culture in sub-Saharan Africa seems to be moving in the opposite direction. As a result, westernized young adults in these cities may not be effectively reached with the gospel unless it is appropriately contextualized in the emerging youth culture.

African Youth in Cultural Transition

It is important to understand what the traditional African worldview is in order to set the stage for the current cultural transition among African youth. It is challenging to describe a single worldview of sub-Saharan Africa, however. The region is made up of 51 countries and hundreds of ethnic groups. For example, Tanzania has more than 120

ethnic groups and Nigeria more than 350 (African Studies Center, n.d; Wahab, Odunsi, and Ajiboye 2012, 2). Notwithstanding this ethnic multiplicity, it is possible to outline a common worldview that will have some minor variations from one country and ethnic group to another. David Hesselgrave made a good attempt at describing this worldview, which, for lack of a better word, he calls tribal, and defines it as follows:

This tribal worldview often (but not always) transcends the secular-sacred distinction that is so much a part of the thinking of the West. It may be at one and the same time sacred *and* secular. It is preoccupied with gods, spirits, and ghosts, but it is patently anthropocentric (and ethnocentric) in most cases. It brings nature and supernature together in a curious amalgam. It brings space and time together in an inextricable mix. It cements this world and the other world together in a single system. This unity is not that of monism or pantheism, however. It is rather the unity of a continuum on which boundaries between deities, spirits, animals, men, and natural phenomena are more or less obscure and shifting (Hesselgrave 1991, 222).

Many modern youth in Africa do not possess the above worldview, and they can be categorized into three broad cultural groups. On one extreme, there are youth who largely possess values of traditional African cultures. The majority of them would have been born, raised and still living in rural areas. Rural Africa is largely traditional; however, since it is also subjected to some westernization forces, it is not as traditional as it used to be before colonialism. For example, Meghan Marie Scott establishes prevalence of American culture deep in sub-Saharan Africa, “even in a non-English speaking area, where the family has no television” (2007, 10–15).

On the other extreme, there are youth who have a direct experience of living in Western countries for a considerable amount of time as they study or work abroad. On their return, they tend to be culturally more Western than African, they have more friends in the West than in Africa, and they are often more connected to the rest of the world than they are connected to the rural Africa. A majority of them possess very little, if any, of the traditional African culture. Their number is significant. Looking at the education sector alone, Jane Marshall estimates that in 2010 African students studying abroad accounted for 6% of all African students and about 10% of all international students worldwide (Marshall 2013). Marguerite Denis (2020) observes almost the same ratio a decade later.

In between the above extremes are the majority of urban youth who, although they may have no direct experience of living in the West, are subjected to a number of westernizing forces in African cities. With the increased urbanization of Africa, most of them are born and raised in urban centres with limited ties to the rural and traditional African ways of life. For those who relocate to cities from rural areas, it does not take long before they also acquire Western values because of the strong influence of the Western culture in urban centres (O'Donovan 2000, 12).

Youth Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa

The youth culture in sub-Saharan Africa is changing and is now more Western than traditional African. This fact, however, can easily be overlooked or underrated. For example, Jim Harries (2019, 4) believes the “apparent similarity to the West found in urban contexts is often deceptive.” Similarly, despite observing when youth leave rural Africa “they leave a significant degree of African traditions behind as well,” Marc Sommers claims “Africa’s urban youth are still tied to the cultures and traditions of their upbringing” (2009, 18). Given the level of westernization in African cities, these conclusions need to be revisited.

It is true that youth who move to urban centres carry elements of traditional cultures. However, developments in African societies negates the argument that urban youth are still traditional in culture. First, with the increased urbanization of sub-Saharan Africa, a growing number of urban youth are born and raised in westernized urban centres. Most of them have never experienced rural life and cannot identify with traditional African cultures. Second, a substantial number of youth live in Western countries for education purposes. On their return, they tend to be more Western than African in culture. Third, with a prolonged stay in urban centres, even people migrating from rural areas become westernized (O'Donovan 2000, 12). Fourth, as argued in this article, even rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa are westernized to a large extent. Looking at the cultural situation in Africa, O'Donovan (2000, 12) notes:

Based on careful research and the observations of many people, it is evident that the cultures of traditional Africa tend to be holistic and oriented toward the extended family and the ethnic community. At the same time, research suggests that the effects of urbanization and education are beginning to change these values in the cities. It is almost certain that things will change even more rapidly as more and more people move to cities and are influenced by western cultural values.

O'Donovan's view regarding the future of cultures in Africa is supported by subsequent studies. Delali Kumavie (2016, 165–80), for example, notes cultural changes among African youth and highlights the influence of music and media on the new youth culture. In his view, popular music, especially hip hop, has become a major cultural force among African youth. Through global media, he argues, youth culture in Africa intersects with, and is influenced by, global cultural flows. Based on a study of youth in South Africa, he suggests, "while African youth may be physically located in specific local contexts, they draw from international cultural resources in making sense of those local contexts" (2016, 165). This lens applies even in the mundane routines of everyday life.

Like Kumavie, Alex Perulo (2005, 74) sees a connection between the youth culture in Tanzania and Western rap music, which he argues has been successful in reaching both urban and non-urban youth. Similarly, Martina Rwegelera (n.d, 162) observes the distortion of Tanzanian culture through hip-hop and other western types of music. However, her study covers more aspects of cultural expression than music and dance. In particular, she examines the effect of globalization on language, food, drinks, songs and dances, as well as clothing, which, as she argues, have all been impacted by globalization forces that push Western norms in Tanzania. Consequently, she believes "there has been a deterioration of traditional Tanzanian culture. Tanzania now is no longer traditional" (n.d., 152). This conclusion echoes Dare Arowolo's observation regarding cultural westernization of Africa (2010, 11).

Chukwudum Okolo (1991, 127–136) observes the pervasive change in African cultures and identifies a number of initiatives taken by African governments to reverse their apparent erosion. Similarly, Ernest Beyaraaza (1991, 112) observes establishment of ministries of culture by many African governments with the aim of liberating African cultures from western domination. However, despite initiatives to contain its influence, Western culture continues to grow as Okolo argues:

In short, the African wishes to retain his self-identity through retaining his traditional values, yet, he experiences that his drift to the cities and the values of his scientific and technological culture which are vital concomitants of modern civilization highly endanger his traditional values, and consequently, his cultural identity. He wants to retain the past, from which he yet alienates himself (1991, 135).

Colonialism and Cultural Transition

With colonialism, political and economic power in Africa, as well as key drivers of social life, such as religion, were put under the leadership of people with completely different cultures from African cultures. This began the process of disseminating Western culture in the continent. Both the colonial government and activities of colonial traders, settlers, and missionaries contributed to the early spread of the Western culture. Naturally, as they pursued their mission, people in these groups contributed to the alteration of the traditional way of life even if they did not intentionally want to do so. For example, as they travelled upcountry in colonial British East Africa, colonial administrators, traders, and missionaries established administrative headquarters, trading centres, and mission stations respectively. In doing this, urban life emerged in various places, which introduced a way of life that was hitherto unknown to Africans (Gutkind 1962, 170–72).

In addition, colonialism changed African economies by integrating them into the capitalist economic system in which the continent became the source of raw materials (Arowolo 2010, 8–9). With this change, Africa's peasant economy gave way to commercial farming followed by the introduction of wage labor and imposition of taxation (Gutkind 1962, 170; Arowolo 2010, 8–9). These changes, Arowolo observes, called for a new infrastructure leading to the emergence of cities such as Dakar, Lagos, Nairobi, and Luanda (2010, 9). As the economic system changed, political structures were also transformed. The traditional leadership structure was generally "pyramidal and highly religious and traditionally fixed to the lineal succession" (Igboin 2011, 100). With colonialism came Western democracy, which brought a completely new philosophy in leadership and governance at both macro and micro economy levels. With these developments, one can only agree with Gutkind that "quite obviously in such a setting there is little room for the exercise of traditional African ways of life" (1962, 171).

One of significant events in the colonial era is the Berlin conference, which is famously known for its arbitrary division of Africa. The Conference disregarded ethnic, cultural, and linguistic peculiarities of the many African societies it split and, therefore, broke societies that were previously held together by common culture (Oni and Joshua 2014, 8). Before the division, people of the same tribe, or a number of similar tribes that shared the same culture, lived together in democracies that were established for many generations. The Conference split many tribes into separate countries and brought within colonial borders different kingdoms that did not necessarily share the same

history and culture. As a result, new societies were formed using ideologies and social premises that were foreign to the continent (Oni and Joshua 2014, 1). For this reason, the natural cultural bond that existed before colonialism was dismantled and people were held together by, among other things, “positive law and the conditioning to western culture” (Beyaraaza 1991, 112). In this situation, it was not possible for African cultures to survive.

With colonialism, the reality of life in Africa was permanently changed. It is not possible to operate in a modern economic system, adopt the Western governance structure, follow Western social norms, and still retain traditional African values and structures. Cultural changes initiated at the colonial period are fundamentally affecting not just the outer layer of cultures but going deep into values, beliefs, institutions, and the worldview of Africans. For example, looking at modern Africa, one notes that almost all African countries have adopted the Western government system. It is now virtually impossible for any government in Africa to go back and follow the precolonial traditional ruling systems and view its leaders as God’s representatives. As Arowolo concludes, “the trend of cultural westernization of Africa has become very pervasive and prevalent, such that Western civilization has taken precedence over African values and culture” (2010, 11).

Urbanization and Westernization

There is evidence that urbanization in Africa results in westernization (Beyaraaza 1991, 111). This relationship should not be surprising. Urban life was not common in precolonial sub-Saharan Africa, and in the former British East Africa. It is solely a result of activities of British administrators, missionaries, traders, and explorers (Gutkind 1962, 170). Colonial administrators expected urban centres to work as agents for change in African cultures and were concerned change was not happening fast enough, as expressed at the East Africa Royal Commission meeting in 1955 (1955, 201). This dissatisfaction, however, was premature as what followed after colonialism shows that urban life did, in fact, change African traditional values.

A closer look at a few key African values shows the extent that Africa has changed culturally. One of these values is large family sizes. A traditional African loves many children and counts “blessings by the number of children he has whether they are educated or not, rich or poor, healthy or sick, well-fed or hungry” (Okolo 1991, 128). With a westernized urban mindset, the African worldview of family has completely

changed. As Okolo further observes, an African “now speaks in terms of family planning and cutting down family size. The younger urban generation are no longer prepared to make the same mistakes as their parents and grandparents particularly in not limiting the number of births” (1991, 132).

Respect for elders is another value that faces extinction. Okolo links this value with ancestors worship, another important value in traditional African cultures. “In fact,” he emphasizes, “the basis for the honor and respect accorded to the old people in the traditional African culture is their closeness to the ancestors” (1991, 132). Similarly, Parrinder suggests old people, “who are expected sooner or later to join other good ancestors in the land of the “living dead,”” were considered to possess wisdom and were seen as an embodiment of good moral life (1949, 125). With globalization and technological advancements, it seems natural that the respect for elders is waning. “As the African, particularly the younger generation, faces up to the challenges of modern life dictated by education, modern economy, developments in art, science and technology and the new values they create, increasingly he finds the “senior citizens” and their wisdom irrelevant to his life” (Okolo 1991, 129).

In the same way that respect for the elderly has diminished, respect and worship of ancestors has also suffered. Many youth in urbanized Africa no longer believe in the gods of their traditional African religion. Instead, they embrace Christianity as a new value and its belief in one God (Okolo 1991, 130). With many years of Christianity in the continent, a large number of youth who were born and raised in the Christian belief system know very little, if any, of ancestor worship. As Jacob Aliet (2007, 4) observes, it is practically impossible for a modern African of the Christian persuasion to go back and entertain the gods of his or her ancestors. This, according to him, “demonstrates how far Africans have wandered from the paths that their ancestors once treaded” (2007, 4). This change in religious belief has brought many other changes in the traditional African ways of life.

As values change, new ones, such as secularism, have been acquired by city dwellers. Like Christianity, secularism has affected other aspects of African life and, among other things, has made roles of traditional seers less significant. In the African mind of old, there was no distinction between the physical and supernatural worlds, traditional African societies explained all events through spiritual eyes. Thus, traditional seers were needed for translating events and foretelling what was to come (Ruel 1991, 343–53). With the new secular worldview, this role has become insignificant. As core

African values changed, many other customs have also changed. Changes in practices that are publicly displayed, such as marriage customs and celebrations, are more visible, while others, such as perception of time, are less observable.

The Influence of Western Languages

There is an increased use of Western languages in sub-Saharan Africa, which contributes to the growth of Western culture, as languages are closely tied to cultures. Casmir Rubagumya observes this relationship and argues it is not easy to promote the use of the English language “while at the same time attempting to somehow ‘neutralize’ the impact which the spread of English has on the cultural integrity of the learner” (2010, 46). Since both Western culture and the use of the English language are growing in sub-Saharan Africa, missionaries should not automatically disregard the use of English in contextualizing the gospel in African cities. This view, however, is objected by some. Harries (2019, 2–4), for example, finds Western languages inappropriate for contextualizing the gospel in African cities. In his view, “the categories presupposed in Western languages are not the familiar categories known by people in the majority world” (2019, 4).

Harries’ view seems to disregard both the cultural transition and the growth of western languages in sub-Saharan Africa. It also disregards the growing number of Africans who are brought up in Western environment and who mostly speak only English. For the majority of urban youth, education perpetuates their use of English. Ali Mazrui, for example, observes the overwhelming prevalence of European languages in African universities and remarks, “almost all black African intellectuals conduct their most sophisticated conversations in European languages. Their most complicated thinking has also to be done in some European language or another. It is because of this that intellectual and scientific dependency in Africa is inseparable from linguistic dependency” (2003, 144).

Apart from the dependence referred to by Mazrui, there is also a general preference for learning Western languages. In Tanzania, for example, researchers find parents prefer English Medium Primary Schools (EMPS) because they want their children to master the English language (Mbise and Masoud 1999; Muhdhar 2002). In his research, Rubagumya asked parents whether they would take their children to the same EMPS if it did not use English as a medium of instruction. According to his findings, 79.8% of 119 parents who responded to this question said no (2010, 49). In the same way,

Nigussie Negash (2011, 165) establishes a general preference for English among young people in Africa. Patrick Plonski, Asratie Teferra, and Rachel Brady note an increased demand for English educational materials in Africa, and project that English will gain more prominence in the continent as Africans “seek strong English language competence in order to obtain work, attend university, and compete in the global marketplace” (2013, 23).

In addition, Negash (2011, 163) observes English “is used for different communicative purposes in 52 African countries,” and, in sub-Saharan Africa, about 20 countries “use English as an official language exclusively...or with another African language.” Taken individually, English is among the most used languages in Africa. In Liberia, for example, it is well spoken by approximately 49% of people while none of the local languages are spoken by more than 10% of people (Buzasi 2016, 371). In these circumstances, it may not be appropriate to simply consider English as inappropriate for contextualizing the gospel among urban youth in sub-Saharan Africa. As discussed above, education simultaneously assists the growth of Western culture and Western languages. Symbiotically, the growth of Western languages propels the growth of Western culture, and vice versa. There is, therefore, a cycle whose result is the perpetual growth of both Western culture and Western languages in sub-Saharan Africa.

Changing Demographics

Two types of demographic changes propel westernization in sub-Saharan Africa. First, the region has a very high rate of urbanization. Due to the relationship between urbanization and westernization, a high rate of urbanization results in rapid westernization. Michel Caraël and Judith R. Glynn note that “the urban populations of sub-Saharan Africa have increased by 600% in the last 35 years, a growth rate which has no precedent in human history” (2008, 124). Changes in three East African countries demonstrate this phenomenon. In 1958, the urban population of Uganda was 0.7%; Tanganyika, which is now mainland Tanzania, was 2.7%; and Kenya was 4.8% (Gutkind 1962, 167). In 2015, the urban population in these countries was 16% in Uganda, 32% in Tanzania, and 26% in Kenya (Racaud et al. 2017, 8). According to Sommers “sub-Saharan Africa is not only the world’s youngest region, it is also urbanizing at the fastest rate in the world” (2009, 9).

Second, the rate of population growth in sub-Saharan Africa is very high, and it is projected to become the highest in the world from the second half of the century (UNDESA 2019, 7). Further, UNDESA indicates “of the additional 2.0 billion people who

may be added to the global population between 2019 and 2050, 1.05 billion (52 per cent) could be added in countries of sub-Saharan Africa” (2019, 6). The table below shows relative populations and population growth rates of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the world. As indicated in the table, between 2019 and 2100, there will be an addition of approximately 2.7 billion youth in sub-Saharan Africa. More importantly, even before this addition, the current population of sub-Saharan Africa is largely made up of youth, who are more disposed to westernization forces. UNFPA, for example, reveals that in 15 countries of the region, 50% of the population is under the age of 18, and the population of five countries is getting younger rather than ageing (2014, 3).

Table: Population and Growth Rates

Year	World Population	SSA Population	SSA Contribution to the World Population	SSA Population Growth Rate	World Population Growth Rate
2019	7713	1066	14%		
2030	8548	1400	16%	31%	11%
2050	9735	2118	22%	51%	14%
2100	10875	3775	35%	78%	12%

Source: Data extracted from UNDESA, World Population Prospects

Looking at the demographic trend, Sommers argues that Africa is in general youthful, it is urbanizing very quickly, and its youth, whose sheer number dominates the region, lead in the continent’s advance toward city life (2009, 7). Since both urbanization and youth are linked to the westernization process, sub-Saharan Africa will get more westernized as the future unfolds. As can be seen in the table above, by the year 2100, the population of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to account for 35% of the entire world population. Cultural changes noted in this article require a missiological response, lest the church risks becoming ineffective in reaching a significant part of the world population.

Reaching Urban Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa

Urban youth are not the same following the cultural transition in Africa. Although they all appear African, some are culturally more aligned to the West, a few are still aligned to traditional African cultures, and the majority are in between but mostly holding to Western values. The problem with urban youth is that it is not easy to identify their cultural orientation. Some may conveniently pose as Africans while they are culturally Western. This posture started a while back. As observed by Gitau, their parents, the postcolonial adults, “vacillated between Western and African identities, proud to be African but strongly embracing Westernized lifestyles” (2018, 7). In this cultural environment, it is inappropriate to look at Africa in its traditional culture because not every young African who looks African is culturally African.

The above cultural situation is not too different from the apostle Paul’s cultural milieu. Schnabel’s cultural analysis of first century Palestine suggests the distinction between Jews and Gentiles was not as simple as it might seem because it had nothing to do with ancestry (2008, 306–334). Similar to youth in sub-Saharan Africa, diaspora Jews in the first century Graeco-Roman world were divided in three cultural groups. First, there were Jews who held 100% to their customs and traditions. This group included what Tessa Rajak calls the purity-obsessed Pharisees, Sadducees insistent on cultic practice, and monastic Essenes in their strict communities, who, in his estimation, were a very small minority of Palestinian Jews (Rajak 1995, 5). Through acculturation, this group also included proselytes.

Second, there were Jews who were completely transformed by Hellenistic culture. These were Jews only by ancestry, because they abandoned all their ancestors’ customs. According to Schnabel, “a totally assimilated family that did not care about the details of the Jewish law would probably not have wanted to be identified as Jewish on a gravestone” (2008, 327). Third, was the majority of diaspora Jews, who were in between the two, mostly Hellenized but holding to some of their traditions and customs. These Jews “did not worship in the pagan temples of the city they lived in...However, their language, dress, houses, material possessions, professions and in some cases even their education would have not been different from that of their pagan neighbors” (Schnabel 2008, 327).

In the above environment, cultural distinction was very “unlikely to have been particularly visible,” to a visitor (Rajak 1995, 5). Rajak further argues that “by the time of Paul, ‘Greekness’ had been an intrinsic part of Judaism for some centuries. Around

the Roman empire lived Jews who knew no Hebrew, spoke no Aramaic, and lived their lives, heard their Bible and did their reading (if they did it) in Greek” (1995, 4). Despite this cultural complexity, Paul was able to distinguish between cultural Jews and Greeks, and confidently argued that “to the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews....” (1 Cor 9:20–21). As a result, Paul was able to appropriately contextualize his message, his methods, and even the churches he established.

A critical challenge to missionaries and church leaders working in sub-Saharan Africa is to understand youth well enough to distinguish those who are culturally African from the ones who are not. Like Paul, they should then seek to contextualize their message and methods appropriately. Some of the tested and approved methods may not work the same in the new youth culture. For example, for many years, Pentecostals have effectively used healing and miracle crusades to draw many to Christ. Such crusades may not have similar impact among secularized youth with strong belief in Western medicine. Some practices discouraged in the past may need to be reconsidered. This includes the use of Western languages and the planting of Western looking churches, which might be an attraction to youth with the Western worldview.

Any strategy to reach modern youth should be relevant in their culture. For this reason, it is imperative to understand the worldview of modern youth and how it drives their thinking and behavior. For example, the Lausanne Committee identified challenges of reaching modern youth in Africa due to cultural changes (Lausanne Committee 2005, 17–21). However, strategies it proposed to reach them may never work. For example, the proposed strategy to introduce church-type “rite of passage,” associated with many traditional African cultures would not make much sense to the youth group between age 12 and 25, which was the Committee’s main focus. While the Committee identified the right problem, it prescribed a wrong medicine because the youth it had in mind was the old generation of youth. This will always happen unless leaders develop a thorough understanding of the new youth culture.

Conclusion

The culture in sub-Saharan Africa has changed and will continue to change. This change impacts contextualization of the gospel in the region. Colonial missionaries introduced the gospel in Africa in tandem with the Western culture, which resulted in its rejection by some people and syncretism among those who became Christians. Subsequently, missionary practices changed from imposing Western culture to contextualizing the

gospel in African cultures. However, as this change took place, the culture in sub-Saharan Africa moved in the reverse direction. A number of factors promoted this cultural change. Chief among them were urbanization and education, which influenced many youths toward the Western way of life. In addition, media globalization, the Western entertainment industry, and the growing influence of Western languages played a significant role in defining the new youth culture in sub-Saharan Africa.

Youth in the region are now more exposed to westernization forces and, as they continue to distance themselves from traditional African cultures, their population is increasing at a very fast rate. This shift suggests sub-Saharan Africa will continue to be more westernized as the future unfolds. Under these circumstances, it is inappropriate to view modern Africa in its precolonial cultural situation. To do so will result in the Church's inability to reach westernized African youth. As argued in this article, the contextual realities of modern Africa make it necessary for the church to understand the new youth culture and appropriately contextualize its message, methods, and the church itself into this culture.

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