



Published for distribution in Africa by WordAlive Publishers, PO Box 4547 GPO-00100 Nairobi, Kenya
www.wordalivepublishers.com

Distribution in Africa also provided by Oasis International Ltd.
info@oasisint.net

Published for distribution in the rest of the world by Zondervan
www.zondervan.com

First edition published in 2006

Second edition published in 2010

© ABC Editorial Board, Association of Evangelicals of Africa (AEA)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other – except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the appropriate publisher.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*®, *NIV*®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

Requests for information on all other English editions should be addressed to Zondervan, *Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530, USA*

Requests for information on translations should be addressed to the Piquant Agency, PO Box 83, Carlisle, CA3 9HZ, UK
abc@piquant.net www.piquant.net

ISBN 978-9-966-00-3010 (African Edition)

ISBN 978-0-310-29187-9 (Zondervan Edition)

The Library of Congress has cataloged the first edition as follows:

Africa Bible commentary : a one-volume commentary / Tokunboh Adeyemo, general editor
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-9966-805-78-2 (African Edition)

ISBN 978-0-310-26473-6 (Zondervan Edition)

1. Bible — Commentaries. 2. Theology — Africa. I. Adeyemo, Tokunbo.

BS491.3.A47 2006

220.7096 — dc22

2006004692

Cover design: Projectluz projectluz@mac.com

Editorial oversight: Isoword isoword@sympatico.ca

Proofreading oversight: editorial Suite www.editorialsuite.com

Printed in China

CONTENTS

| | | | | |
|---|---|-----------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Foreword by Dr John Stott</i> | <i>vii</i> | Joel | <i>Yoilah Yilpet</i> | 1053 |
| <i>Foreword by Dr Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah</i> | <i>vii</i> | Amos | <i>Daniel Bitrus</i> | 1059 |
| <i>General Introduction</i> | <i>viii</i> | Obadiah | <i>Augustine Musopole</i> | 1067 |
| <i>Guidelines for Using the ABC</i> | <i>xi</i> | Jonah | <i>Cossi Augustin Ahoga</i> | 1071 |
| <i>Abbreviations</i> | <i>xii</i> | Micah | <i>Yoilah Yilpet</i> | 1075 |
| <i>Contributors</i> | <i>xii</i> | Nahum | <i>Cossi Augustin Ahoga</i> | 1085 |
| | | Habakkuk | <i>Youssouf Dembele</i> | 1089 |
| | | Zephaniah | <i>Yoilah Yilpet</i> | 1093 |
| | | Haggai | <i>Yoilah Yilpet</i> | 1099 |
| | | Zechariah | <i>Yoilah Yilpet</i> | 1103 |
| | | Malachi | <i>Yoilah Yilpet</i> | 1119 |
| COMMENTARIES | | | | |
| Scripture as the Interpreter of Culture and Tradition | | | | |
| <i>Kwame Bediako</i> | 3 | | | |
| The Old Testament | | | | |
| Introduction to the Pentateuch | <i>Abel Ndjereou</i> | 7 | Intertestamental Period | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> 1125 |
| Genesis | <i>Barnabe Assohoto, Samuel Ngewa</i> | 9 | The New Testament | |
| Exodus | <i>Abel Ndjereou</i> | 85 | Principles of Interpretation | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> 1127 |
| Leviticus | <i>Felix Chingota</i> | 129 | Matthew | <i>Joe Kapolyo</i> 1131 |
| Numbers | <i>Anastasia Boniface-Malle</i> | 169 | Mark | <i>Victor Babajide Cole</i> 1197 |
| Deuteronomy | <i>Luciano C. Chianeque, Samuel Ngewa</i> | 209 | Luke | <i>Paul John Isaak</i> 1229 |
| Joshua | <i>David Oginde</i> | 255 | John | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> 1277 |
| Judges | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> | 295 | Acts of the Apostles | <i>Paul Mumo Kisau</i> 1323 |
| Ruth | <i>Isabel Apawo Phiri</i> | 319 | Romans | <i>David M. Kasali</i> 1375 |
| 1 and 2 Samuel | <i>Gbile Akanni, Nupanga Weanzana</i> | 325 | 1 Corinthians | <i>Dachollom Datiri</i> 1403 |
| 1 and 2 Kings | <i>Musa Gotom</i> | 409 | 2 Corinthians | <i>Issiaka Coulibaly</i> 1425 |
| 1 and 2 Chronicles | <i>Nupanga Weanzana</i> | 467 | Galatians | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> 1439 |
| Ezra | <i>Nupanga Weanzana</i> | 531 | Ephesians | <i>Yusufo Turaki</i> 1451 |
| Nehemiah | <i>Nupanga Weanzana</i> | 543 | Philippians | <i>Eshetu Abate</i> 1465 |
| Esther | <i>Lois Semenye</i> | 559 | Colossians | <i>Solomon Andria</i> 1475 |
| Introduction to the Wisdom Literature | | | 1 Thessalonians | <i>Rosalie Koudougueret</i> 1485 |
| | <i>Tewoldemedhin Habtu</i> | 569 | 2 Thessalonians | <i>Rosalie Koudougueret</i> 1491 |
| Job | <i>Tewoldemedhin Habtu</i> | 571 | 1 Timothy | <i>Solomon Andria</i> 1495 |
| Psalms | <i>Nupanga Weanzana, Samuel Ngewa, Tewoldemedhin Habtu, Zamani Kafang</i> | 605 | 2 Timothy | <i>Solomon Andria</i> 1503 |
| Proverbs | <i>Tewoldemedhin Habtu</i> | 773 | Titus | <i>Solomon Andria</i> 1509 |
| Ecclesiastes | <i>Tewoldemedhin Habtu</i> | 813 | Philemon | <i>Soro Soungalo</i> 1513 |
| Song of Songs | <i>Tewoldemedhin Habtu</i> | 823 | Hebrews | <i>Tesfaye Kassa</i> 1515 |
| Introduction to the Prophets | <i>Yoilah Yilpet</i> | 831 | James | <i>Solomon Andria</i> 1535 |
| Isaiah | <i>Edouard Kitoko Nsiku</i> | 835 | 1 Peter | <i>Sicity Mbura Muriithi</i> 1543 |
| Jeremiah | <i>Issiaka Coulibaly</i> | 879 | 2 Peter | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> 1551 |
| Lamentations | <i>Issiaka Coulibaly</i> | 951 | 1 John | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> 1555 |
| Ezekiel | <i>Tewoldemedhin Habtu</i> | 959 | 2 John | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> 1563 |
| Daniel | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> | 1015 | 3 John | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> 1564 |
| Hosea | <i>Douglas Carew</i> | 1039 | Jude | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> 1565 |
| | | | Revelation | <i>Onesimus Ngundu</i> 1569 |

ARTICLES

| | | | |
|---|--|------|------|
| Angels, Demons and Powers | | | |
| | <i>James Nkansah-Obrempong</i> | 1480 | |
| Authority and the Bible | <i>Patrick M. Musibi,</i> | 79 | |
| Bible Translation in Africa | <i>Aloo Osotsi Mojola</i> | 1341 | |
| Blood | <i>Victor Babajide Cole</i> | 139 | |
| Christians and Politics | <i>James B. Kantiok</i> | 1027 | |
| Christians and the Environment | <i>George Kinoti</i> | 618 | |
| Christian Education in Africa | <i>Lois Semenyé</i> | 1506 | |
| Conflict Management | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> | 551 | |
| Cultural Issues and the Biblical Message | | | |
| | <i>Eunice Okorocho</i> | 1493 | |
| Debt | <i>Stephen Adei</i> | 805 | |
| Democracy | <i>Yusufu Turaki</i> | 811 | |
| Discipleship | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> | 1249 | |
| Dreams | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> | 1019 | |
| Faith And The Search For Signs | <i>Adama Ouedraogo</i> | 303 | |
| Family and Community | <i>Soro Soungalo</i> | 1204 | |
| Favouritism | <i>Soro Soungalo</i> | 1537 | |
| Female Genital Mutilation | <i>Sicily Mburu Muriithi</i> | 37 | |
| Funeral and Burial Rites | <i>Joe Simfukwe</i> | 1488 | |
| Generosity and Solidarity | <i>Solomon Andria</i> | 231 | |
| Healing | <i>Kingsley Larbi</i> | 447 | |
| History of Israel | <i>Tewoldemedhin Habtu</i> | 207 | |
| HIV and AIDS | <i>Peter Okaalet</i> | 677 | |
| Homosexuality | <i>Yusufu Turaki</i> | 1381 | |
| Hospitality | <i>Emily J. Choge</i> | 390 | |
| House Fellowship | <i>Uzodinma Obed</i> | 1362 | |
| Ideas of Salvation in Other Religions | | | |
| | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> | 1379 | |
| Indigenous Missions | <i>Bayo Famonure</i> | 1374 | |
| Initiation Rites | <i>Judith A. Milasi</i> | 101 | |
| Idolatry | <i>Emeka Nwankpa</i> | 866 | |
| Intertestamental Period | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> | 1125 | |
| Introduction to the Pentateuch | <i>Abel Ndjereou</i> | 7 | |
| Introduction to the Prophets | <i>Yoilah Yilpet</i> | 831 | |
| Introduction to the Wisdom Literature | | | |
| | <i>Tewoldemedhin Habtu</i> | 569 | |
| Jews and Gentiles | <i>David Oginde</i> | 82 | |
| Land | | | |
| | <i>Dwight S.M. Mutonono and Makoto L. Mautsa</i> | 290 | |
| Leadership | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> | 546 | |
| Legalism | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> | 1447 | |
| Life and Doctrine | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> | 1470 | |
| Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> | 1175 | |
| New Family Relationships | <i>Soro Soungalo</i> | 12 | |
| Persecution | <i>Elias M. Githuka</i> | 1590 | |
| Power and Accountability | <i>Remi Lawanson</i> | 1075 | |
| Prayer | <i>Bonifes Adoyo</i> | 1212 | |
| Priesthood in the Bible | <i>Felix Chingota</i> | 191 | |
| Principles of Interpretation | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> | 1129 | |
| Prophets and Apostles | <i>Adama Ouedraogo</i> | 1460 | |
| Rape | <i>Isabel Apawo Phiri</i> | 393 | |
| Refugees | <i>Celestin Musekura</i> | 321 | |
| Religious Pluralism | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> | 1558 | |
| Reward and Retribution | <i>Luciano C. Chianeque</i> | 877 | |
| Scripture as the Interpreter of Culture and Tradition | | | |
| | <i>Kwame Bediako</i> | 3 | |
| Secularism and Materialism | <i>Yusufu Turaki</i> | 817 | |
| Slavery | <i>Rubin Pohor</i> | 89 | |
| Street Children | <i>Solomon Gacece</i> | 2366 | |
| Suffering | <i>Issiaka Coulibaly</i> | 585 | |
| Syncretism | <i>Lawrence Lasisi</i> | 926 | |
| Taboos | <i>Ernestina Afriyie</i> | 159 | |
| Theological Heresy | <i>James Nkansah-Obrempong</i> | 1579 | |
| The Ancient Near East | <i>M. Douglas Carew</i> | 217 | |
| The Bible | <i>Yusufu Turaki</i> | 744 | |
| The Bible and Polygamy | <i>Isabel Apawo Phiri</i> | 429 | |
| The Church and the State | <i>Yusufu Turaki</i> | 1397 | |
| The Place of Traditional Sacrifices | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> | 1528 | |
| The Role of the Ancestors | <i>Yusufu Turaki</i> | 480 | |
| The Role of Women in the Church | | | |
| | <i>Nyambura J. Njoroge</i> | 1497 | |
| Tribalism, Ethnicity and Race | <i>Rubin Pohor</i> | 316 | |
| Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Peace | | | |
| | <i>Yusufu Turaki</i> | 901 | |
| Unity of Believers | <i>Kuzuli Kossé</i> | 1314 | |
| Violence | <i>Yusufu Turaki</i> | 1069 | |
| War | <i>Robert Aboagye-Mensah</i> | 993 | |
| Wealth and Poverty | <i>Stephen Adei</i> | 788 | |
| Weddings and Lobola | <i>Isabel Apawo Phiri</i> | 825 | |
| What Is the Church? | <i>Samuel Ngewa</i> | 1457 | |
| Widows and Orphans | <i>Mae Alice Reggy-Mamo</i> | 843 | |
| Widow Inheritance | <i>Mae Alice Reggy-Mamo</i> | 323 | |
| Witchcraft | <i>Samuel Waje Kunhiyop</i> | 374 | |
| Worship and Praise | <i>Tokunboh Adeyemo</i> | 251 | |
| Yahweh and Other Gods | <i>Abel Ndjereou</i> | 887 | |
| ADDITIONAL RESOURCES | | | |
| Glossary | | | 1607 |
| Kings of Israel and Judah | | | 412 |
| Prophets to Israel and Judah | | | 833 |
| Some Web Resources | | | 1612 |

GENESIS

Genesis is a book about 'beginnings'. It tells of such things as the beginnings of creation, of languages and of a chosen nation. It also gives us an account of the generations before and after the flood, together with specific details about lineage (5:1-32; 10:1-32). In fact the phrase 'this is the account of', which occurs at key points in the book, could literally be translated 'these are the generations of' (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2).

Genesis can also be described as a book about relationships. It shows us relationships such as those between Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Seth's descendants and those of Cain, Abraham and Lot, Sarah and Hagar, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers.

But above all, Genesis is a book about God: creating (all things), saving (Noah, his family, and certain animals and birds), destroying (with water in Noah's time, with fire at Sodom and Gomorrah), choosing (Abraham), making covenants (with Noah and with Abraham), forgiving (Jacob) and protecting (Joseph).

Genesis and the four books that follow it (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) are traditionally viewed as a unit known as the Pentateuch. They are all thought to have been written by Moses. Moses was probably born about 1500 BC, and lived for 120 years (Deut 34:7). For the first forty years of his life, he enjoyed the status of Pharaoh's adopted grandson (Exod 2:11; Acts 7:23). The Pentateuch was probably written during his last eighty years, forty of which were spent caring for Jethro's flock in Midian and in God's providence, familiarizing himself with that area (Acts 7:30), and forty of which were spent leading the people of Israel.

Some scholars suggest that the five books were produced by many writers over many years, with the bulk of the writing having been done between approximately 850 BC and 550 BC, and that they were not all put together until as late as the fifth century BC. However, none of the arguments for this view (for example, the use of different names of God in different sections) have been strong enough to overthrow the traditional position that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. This commentary thus assumes Moses to be the writer.

The book falls into two main sections: God's dealing with humans in general (1:1-11:9) and his dealing with those he has chosen to be his special people (11:10-50:26).

Outline of Contents

1:1-11:9 God and Humankind

1:1-31 Creation of All Things

2:1-3 God's Rest

2:4-25 Creation of the Human Community

3:1-24 Disobedience of the First Couple

3:1-6 A flaw in the community

3:7-19 A new reality

3:20-24 Immediate consequences of the fall

4:1-16 Evil Between Brothers: Cain and Abel

4:17-5:32 The First Genealogies

4:17-24 The line of Cain: Multiplication of evil

4:25-26 The line of Seth: Abel's replacement

5:1-32 Family tree from Adam to Noah

6:1-8:22 The Flood

6:1-7, 11-13 The cause of the flood

6:8-10, 14-18 An exception

6:19-7:5 The goal of the flood

7:6-24 The nature and effect of the flood

8:1-19 God finishes the operation

8:20-22 Noah's worship and God's commitment

9:1-17 God's Covenant with Noah

9:18-29 Noah's Failure

10:1-32 Repopulation of the Earth

10:1 Introduction

10:2-5 The descendants of Japheth

10:6-20 The descendants of Ham

10:21-32 The descendants of Shem

11:1-9 The Tower of Babel

11:10-25:18 Abraham and His Descendants

11:10-26 Abram's Ancestors

11:27-32 The Move from Ur to Haran

12:1-9 Abram Obeys the Lord's Call

12:10-20 The Lord Strikes Pharaoh

13:1-4 Abram Returns from Egypt

13:5-18 Abram and Lot Separate

13:5-13 Abram protects family ties

13:14-18 The Lord reassures Abram

14:1-16 Abram Intervenes on Behalf of Lot

14:17-24 Kings' Responses to Abram

15:1-21 God Reassures Abram

16:1-16 Sarai's Solution to Childlessness

17:1-27 The Lord's Promises

18:1-15 Abraham Entertains Three Visitors

18:16-33 Abraham Pleads for Lot
 19:1-29 The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
 19:30-38 Lot and His Daughters
 20:1-18 Abraham and Abimelech
 21:1-7 Isaac, the Promised Son
 21:8-21 Hagar and Ishmael
 21:22-34 The Treaty with Abimelech
 22:1-19 Another Test of Faith
 22:20-24 Nahor's Descendants
 23:1-20 Death and Burial of Sarah
 24:1-67 Isaac's Marriage
 25:1-11 Abraham's Death
 25:12-18 Ishmael's Descendants

25:19-28:9 Isaac

25:19-34 Two Sons: Jacob and Esau
 26:1-33 Isaac and the Philistines
 26:34-35 Esau's Marriage
 27:1-29 Esau's Blessing Given to Jacob
 27:30-40 Esau's Despair
 27:41-28:5 Jacob Flees to Haran
 28:6-9 Esau Learns a Lesson

28:10-36:43 Jacob

28:10-22 The Lord Meets Jacob
 29:1-14a Jacob Reaches Paddan Aram
 29:14b-30 Jacob Marries His Two Cousins
 29:31-30:24 Life in Jacob's Family
 29:31-35 Jacob's children from Leah
 30:1-8 Jacob's children from Bilhah
 30:9-13 Jacob's children from Zilpah
 30:14-21 More children from Leah
 30:22-24 Jacob's children from Rachel

30:25-43 Jacob Blessed with Flocks
 31:1-21 Jacob Leaves Without Telling Laban
 31:22-32:2 The Lord Protects Jacob from Laban
 32:3-21 The Lord Protects Jacob from Esau
 32:22-32 The Lord Changes Jacob's Name
 33:1-17 The Meeting with Esau
 33:18-34:31 Dinah Dishonoured
 35:1-15 Jacob Returns to Bethel
 35:16-29 Rachel and Isaac Die
 36:1-43 The Descendants of Esau

37:1-50:26 Joseph

37:1-11 Joseph and His Dreams
 37:12-36 Joseph Sold by His Brothers
 38:1-30 Judah's Sin
 39:1-23 Joseph's Victory over Temptation
 40:1-23 Pharaoh's Two Officials
 41:1-40 Pharaoh's Dreams

41:41-57 Joseph in Charge of Egypt
 42:1-38 Joseph Meets His Brothers
 43:1-15 Joseph's Brothers Return to Egypt
 43:16-45:15 Joseph Reveals Himself
 43:16-34 A meal together
 44:1-34 Benjamin and the silver cup
 45:1-15 Joseph's revelation

45:16-28 Pharaoh's Support
 46:1-47:12 Jacob Moves to Egypt
 46:1-4 Jacob's time with God
 46:5-27 Jacob's company
 46:28-30 Jacob meets Joseph
 46:31-47:12 Pharaoh's welcome

47:13-26 Joseph's Strategy for the Future
 47:27-49:28 Jacob's Final Years
 47:27-28 Jacob's circumstances
 47:29-31 Jacob plans for his burial
 48:1-22 Jacob blesses Manasseh and Ephraim
 49:1-28 Jacob blesses his sons

49:29-50:14 Jacob's Death
 50:15-26 Joseph's Life after Jacob's Death
 50:15-21 Joseph's reassurance to his brothers
 50:22-26 Joseph's death

COMMENTARY

1:1-11:9 God and Humankind

1:1-31 Creation of All Things

The account of God's creation of the world establishes two key points that apply throughout this book and throughout the Bible. The first is that God was uniquely involved in the origin of the earth and the sky. They do not exist by themselves and are not the result of impersonal forces or other spiritual beings. The second is that because the world is God's creation, it reveals him and is subject to his will.

The first verse of Genesis can be read as a summary statement that God created everything – *the heavens and the earth* and everything in them (1:1). The rest of the chapter is then seen as an expansion on this summary. However, it is also possible that these words outline the first step in creation, with the words, *in the beginning* being equivalent to 'first'. The idea then would be that the first thing God did was to create the raw shell (heaven and earth), and then for six days he filled that shell with content. He did not create the whole universe as a finished product in one grand gesture, but worked to create it. This second view fits with the description of the earth as *formless and empty* and of darkness *over the surface of the deep* (1:2). The Spirit of God hovered over the waters to keep them under control until

they could be assigned to their place. He was controlling the creation project, with the result that all creation takes place under God's watchful eye and results from his power.

This account of the creation in six days (whether taken literally as twenty-four hour days or figuratively as representing long periods of time) reveals a methodical God who created different things one after another with precise purpose. One by one the Lord puts in place all the elements necessary to sustain the human beings for whom he is creating this world.

As we read this account, we should note that each new stage in God's work begins with his some form of his creative words, *let there be* (1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26). At the end of each of his creative utterances, there is some form of the statement, *and it was so* (1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30). No matter what God ordered to come into being, gather or separate, it came to be. He has the power to create and the power to order his creation. We can rely on this same power in our circumstances. The God of creation is still the God of history. If we listen to his word and submit our plans to his will, he can speak to raise Africa to great heights!

The first thing that God created out of the raw material of the universe was light (1:3-5). It was created before everything else because it would be essential for the survival of future plants, animals and human beings. Though the heavenly bodies were not yet created, the light permitted the Creator to give initial temporal structure to his creation: *day and night, evening and morning*.

During the second phase of his creation, covering days two to four, God provided the material framework to sustain living beings. He created the sky (1:6-8), followed by sea and dry land (1:9). The dry land would be the main arena for human life and would provide the ingredients for that life (see 2:7). It was only after he had formed the dry ground that God pronounced his creation *good* (1:10).

This earth was then blessed with plants that will provide food for human beings once they are created (1:11-13; 29-30). Finally, the stars and their movements were specially provided to help the future occupants of the earth to organize time by marking *seasons and days and years* (1:14-19). The way the Creator brought together all that was necessary for our survival before creating us reminds us that God was working for our good, not creating us so that we might suffer (Lam 3:33; Ezek 33:11).

The creation of living beings follows the same sequence as the material creation. On day five, God created the creatures that live in sea and sky (1:20-23), followed on the sixth day by animals that live on land (1:24-25), and finally the culmination of his creation, human beings.

The privileged position of human beings is shown by the fact that our creation required a special decision, presented as if it was made at some great gathering. The plural in *let us make man* indicates the solemnity of the decision and

stresses that something new and important is about to happen (1:26a). The plural 'let us' also suggests the community of the Godhead, which involves three persons – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Human beings, both male and female, are said to have been made in the *image* of God (1:26b-27). Thus humans are different from other created beings like animals, and this fact has important consequences for how we live. First of all, it means that every human being resembles his or her Creator in some way. Consequently, every human being is special and important. We should be able to recognize the Creator in the men and women we see around us. Second, it means that we should not worship any animal (Exod 20:4; Rom 1:21-22). Woe to the person who lowers himself to the level of animals by giving an animal or an image of an animal the place that belongs only to the Creator! Third, because God created both our bodies and our spirits, we must not artificially separate the two and think that we can ignore our bodies while living to God in our spirits. Scripture makes it plain that we must not mistreat our own bodies or those of others (1 Cor 6:19-20).

Both men and women were blessed by God and assigned a two-fold mission: to *increase in number* and *fill the earth* (1:28a) and to *rule over* creation and to *subdue* the earth (1:26c, 28b). This mission was not a heavy burden but a gift from God. Human beings were to occupy and enjoy, not fear, creation. This mission indicates that the first way in which all of us can glorify and serve God is by caring for his creation.

It is important to note that men and women were permitted to rule only over other living creatures, not over other human beings. Nor were men given authority to dominate women (or vice versa). Our fellow human beings bear the image of the Creator and thus are not to be dominated but to be served (John 13:13-14; Gal 5:13; Eph 5:21). For food God supplied *every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it* (1:29-30). It thus appears that humans and animals were originally vegetarian. It is only in 9:3 that we are permitted to eat other creatures for food.

The chapter ends with another summary of all God's acts of creation: *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good* (1:31; see 1:4, 10, 18, 21, 25). Nothing comes from the hand of God that is not intrinsically good. He is the good God who does all things for good (Mark 10:18; Rom 8:28).

God may have viewed his creation as good because it breathed order. Each element was created at the appropriate time and occupied the place which allowed for the harmony of the whole. It was also filled with rich diversity. God created different species within each vegetable and animal family, each *according to their kinds* (1:11, 12, 21, 24). Each kind was told to multiply (1:11, 20, 22, 28). Finally, his creation was

NEW FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Becoming a Christian involves a profound transformation, as was evident in the life of the Apostle Paul. He expressed the difference using the expression 'once ... now': 'You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord'. Consequently we are now to 'live as children of light' (Eph 5:8).

The transformation of our lives by Christ affects every aspect of our existence, including our family relationships. Where once we accepted traditional African relationships in the family, now we are to seek for God's style of family relationships. These two styles of relationship are not necessarily contradictory, for, like Africans, God places a high value on a spirit of community. However, some changes may be called for if we are to follow Christ, and there may be areas of conflict. One such area may come with accepting Jesus' insistence that obedience to God comes before blood ties (Matt 12:46-50).

At the core of all family relationships is the union between a man and his wife. The foundational text for the entire Christian philosophy of marriage and the family is Genesis 2:24: 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh'. This verse makes it clear that marriage requires leaving one's parents in order to create a new family. It is fine for a man to live with his parents as long as he is single. But when the time comes, he must separate from them and enter into a new relationship with his wife. Doing this requires autonomy, working at a relationship, full responsibility and maturity.

The new husband and wife must then become one flesh. They are no longer two individuals, existing side by side, but must become one entity, sharing each other's lives. This new type of union is very different and very much stronger than that of parents and children. It requires the work of God himself, so that in speaking of this text in Genesis, Jesus says, 'Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate' (Matt 19:6).

The Apostle Paul's words on the interaction between husbands and wives (Eph 5:22-32) must be interpreted from the perspective of forming a single entity. So must the relationship between parents and children. As the fruit of this new union, the children belong as much to the woman as to the man. Both parents share equal responsibility for training them (Prov 6:20). Given that God is at the core of their union, the parents must train their children in how to live on earth, and also show them the way to heaven (Deut 6:6-7).

Traditional African ideas do not always agree with this biblical concept of the relationship between a man, his wife and their children. At times, in fact, they make a true union almost impossible. For example, in many African cultures, the man does not leave his father and mother. He does not leave them spiritually and, sometimes, not even physically. The husband and his wife are perceived as members of two distinct families, with each family retaining all its rights on their own child. The parents of the woman can reclaim her at

any time if they think that their son-in-law has behaved badly. In such a situation, the woman feels obliged to listen to her parents rather than to stay with her husband.

In such a culture, there can be no spiritual unity either, for whenever sacrifices are made to ask protection for the family, the married woman will have to sacrifice to the spirits considered part of her family of origin, and her husband will sacrifice to his family's spirits. In relation to the spirit world, each one is always a member of his or her family. This way of thinking means that the wife is forever a stranger in her husband's home. Among the Senoufo of Cote d'Ivoire, for example, the wife is called 'the foreigner' by her husband's parents and must avoid speaking his name out of respect and shame. When the wife dies in a location distant from her place of origin, no matter how far away that may be, her remains will be transported back to her village, to her own people.

Understandably, such attitudes can lead to conflict within the family. The wife often feels like a foreigner and finds it difficult to integrate, knowing that she is not in her home but in her husband's home. Any visiting relative of the husband's is more at home than the wife. Thus the husband's brother will not hesitate to remind the woman of her foreign origin if her behaviour does not please him. And if the visitor is the husband's mother, the situation becomes still worse, for the mother will believe herself to have full control of her son's home and may attempt to run it. Obviously, such attitudes to marriage can cause problems in the home.

This traditional view of marriage can also have consequences with regard to the status and training of the children. Some traditions regard the children as the offspring of the father and not the mother. She is simply the woman who has borne the children for him. In matriarchal traditions, the children are recognized as belonging solely to the mother. Neither system regards the children as belonging equally to both parents. Either the man or the woman can feel wronged or slighted in the training of the children.

A final consequence of these traditions follows from the fact that a man's inheritance belongs solely to the members of his family. Since the wife is not regarded as a member of her husband's family, she does not inherit anything, and when her husband dies, she may be left destitute. There is no concept of joint property owned by both the man and his wife. Modern legislation may have given women inheritance rights, but conflicts still arise because of the way the relationship is perceived.

One positive aspect of the traditional African concept of marriage is the strength it gives the extended family and the sense of community it encourages. A nuclear family on its own is weak. But the Bible makes it clear that the nuclear family should have a core strength that the traditional concept tends to deny. As Christians, we need to work towards enriching our African culture by integrating into it the new concepts set out in God's ideal for Christian marriage.

Soro Soungalo