

# Church Doctrines as Living Rules in African Perspective

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## Abstract

Diverse mechanisms in the contemporary world are concealing differences between Africa and the West. At the same time, Western Christian denominations believe in the distinctiveness of the churches they have planted. Perhaps in Africa only genuinely indigenous churches have ‘true’ doctrines, because only they guide their church lives in the light of local contexts and avoid a distorting adherence to Western modes of theology. Biblical criticism, and rejection of a holistic framework to make space for the ‘secular’, has weakened the cultural-linguistic dynamic that could contribute to doctrinal formation by Western churches. Such weakness helps secularists to apportion blame to churches for various contemporary maladies. A re-appropriation of holism could take the church back to a pre-modern position, thus creating a space in which cultural context could once again be central in doctrinal formation. Doctrines established in living contexts promote inter-church dialogue and change. The cultural-linguistic dynamic calls for African churches to use their own languages in order to form doctrine which has value for indigenous contexts.

## Introduction

Doctrine has become a bad word in contemporary circles. People prefer a ‘religion’ which is based on one’s heart conviction and feelings. This article looks at some of the reasons for this. Reference to African Christianity acts as a mirror helping the West to reflect on its own ecclesial history. Many Western Christians have accepted the legitimacy of a kind-of dualism in which they consider their Christianity to be relevant primarily on the ‘spiritual’ rather than the secular side of life.<sup>1</sup> This article asks whether the ceding of the secular realm, that in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century contributed to the internalisation of faith, resulted in weakness and misunderstandings when it comes to theological and doctrinal formation in the church.

This article might be considered a ‘work in progress’. It turns over stones, that for many were long ago laid to rest, in the hope that doing so might throw light on contemporary quandaries.

## African versus Western Church Doctrine

I was once privileged to read a book prominently entitled *A History of the Church of God*.<sup>2</sup> Having taught part-time at a denominational theological college of the same church, I knew something about this denomination. The church was originally planted in Kenya in 1906. The mother church is in the USA. The prominent part of the title of the book did not mention that it was describing a church in Africa. At a glance, one would have thought the book was about a church in the West.<sup>3</sup>

The experience of teaching at a theological school in Africa has contributed insights that give me ongoing cause for rumination and reflection.<sup>4</sup> It was a privilege to have taught there, and now to know that many who passed through my hands are serving God in the Church in Kenya. What was strange was that we taught an almost 100% American curriculum<sup>5</sup> and the

language of instruction was English.<sup>6</sup> Over the hedge, a stone's throw from our administrative offices, were the head offices of the Church in Kenya. The latter was functioning largely in a local Bantu language and in Swahili. People at the church headquarters appeared to be heavily pre-occupied with what we might call African, or certainly not North American, concerns. For example:

- Memorial events for the dead were a prominent issue.
- Fund raising that could go on for hours dominated many church services.
- Issues relating to witchcraft often formed a backdrop to activities.
- The church functioned vastly differently to the way churches function in North America.

At the same time, there was almost no formal questioning of the direct relevance of our imported syllabus to the day-to-day or strategic running of the Church.<sup>7</sup>

Gifford addresses a parallel issue in his account of the church in Africa.<sup>8</sup> Christian denominations that have become globalised assume a church in a different country (and culture) will be like the mother-church and foundationally unlike other denominations, including those that have also established churches in that African country.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, Gifford explains, what 'constitutes the really significant characteristics' of African Christians, as perceived by the West, may well also characterise other Africans, even Muslims.<sup>10</sup> In other words: the gap between the West and Africa is generally larger than that between denominations within Africa.

If Gifford is right to conclude as he has, this suggests that there ought to be some difference between training offered to Christians in Africa and those in the West. One would expect African Bible colleges and seminaries to resemble one another more, and to resemble sister institutions in the West less. Why does this not happen? Why did my colleagues and I at the local denominational college, keep as close as possible to an American model of theological education, rather than teaching things that were more relevant to the African context? The practice of the Kenyan church is very different in many respects from that of its mother denomination in the USA. Why, when it came to theological education, was this difference being ignored?

In adding to this discussion I am forced to continue drawing on 'personal experience'. Having learned three African languages and using them extensively over 30 years, I draw on the unwritten 'scholarly articles' of indigenous African people. There are at least three reasons for them to be unwritten:

1. Many 'traditional' African communities are oral. They say things; they do not write them down. A scholar cannot learn from reading, but has to hear what is said.
2. Whereas media of wider communication are in European languages, contextual African information is held in African languages. In order to acquire indigenous insights a scholar must be familiar with African languages and the ways in which they are used in context.<sup>11</sup>
3. The West's economic prowess contributes to ways in which Africa stands in gaping awe at what the West says and does. Economic dependency often means that it is more important to say yes and keep bread on the table or keep the church flourishing

financially, than it is to be honest and risk falling out with Westerners. To listen effectively a Western scholar must be able to side-step this tendency for African people by default to agree with him. This requires a distancing from wealth and potential material generosity. If a scholar does all this, then and only then is he able to begin to perceive some wider contexts peculiarly associated with Africa.

When one examines the materials (which are written in English) of mission-founded churches in Africa, all the 'correct' doctrines are present. In practice, the church community does not, and in fact cannot, live by all those doctrines, because the very doctrines are rooted in a context that is unfamiliar to them.

There is another group of churches in Africa often known as Pentecostal churches.<sup>12</sup> Pentecostal churches also often maintain close links with the West. Many know how to express orthodox church doctrine, especially using English, but those doctrines are contextually re-interpreted into means of acquiring power. Often Pentecostal churches have little choice, in the light of African contexts of 'spiritual power', but to re-interpret Western doctrines in this way. Furthermore, their insistent adherence to Western languages and forms prevents the development of complexity and depth with respect to indigenous contexts and languages, substituting practiced orthodox doctrinal profundity with spirit-power and the prosperity gospel.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to mission-founded and Pentecostal churches, there is a group of indigenous churches known in East Africa as *Roho* churches.<sup>14</sup> This category of indigenous churches make few efforts at imitating or pretending to comply to Western theology. Often they have some basic ideas of doctrine: knowledge about Jesus and the Holy Trinity and affirmation of the centrality of the New Testament. They add their own teachings to these basic ideas. These indigenous churches tend to be more faithful to the doctrines that they espouse than are the above two types of churches: Because they have devised their own doctrines without pressure to conform to an outside body, there is little reason for them not to say what they do or do what they say.

### **The 'Dirty word' of Doctrine**

'Doctrine' seems to be the soft underbelly of the contemporary Western church. While the whole church seems to be under attack from many quarters, perhaps its 'doctrines' have been the most extensively mocked. Much of this has arisen from contemporary developments in the interpretation of texts. For example, insights from historical criticism<sup>15</sup> can seem to have effectively undermined every logical basis for Scriptural authority. Someone quoting the Bible as authority can in many Western countries be laughed out of court!<sup>16</sup>

In contemporary Western society, doctrines are not only considered irrelevant, but destructive as well. References to the so called 'Wars of Religion' epitomise this kind of understanding. Armstrong expounds on this matter at length.<sup>17</sup> Organised Christian religion can be perceived as little less than a curse or blemish on modern society. The church (and religion) can be blamed for almost everything including ecological degradation, oppression of women, exploitation of the poor, hindering of scientific process, perpetrating fairy tales, inciting violence, hate-speech, and being unloving to persons who do not embrace heterosexuality. The source of the church's guilt is seen to be in the doctrines which they expect people to live by. This is perceived as a form of 'dogma' – 'a principle or set of principles laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true.'<sup>18</sup>

I have identified two dominant contemporary features of Christian doctrine:

1. The adoption by African churches of Western Christian doctrines is to an extent at least pretentious. While some African Christian churches officially follow the doctrines of their mother churches in the West, in practice they are selective. As a result of their need to respond to contexts that are unfamiliar in the West, they add their own doctrines which are often largely hidden from the West.<sup>19</sup> For example, doctrines are needed in Western Kenya to define the relationship between churches and rituals designed to appease the dead. Such add-on doctrines invariably affect the understanding and practice of inherited doctrines.
2. Western Christian doctrines are heavily under attack from liberals, secularists, science, educationalists, and many others on Western churches' 'home turf' in the West.

To summarise, we can say that contemporary Christian doctrines are under attack both in the North (by critics who are outside churches) and in the South (from those inside of churches), reasons for each set of attacks are apparently very different. I want to ask in this essay why Christian doctrine, that has been for centuries a mainstay of Western civilisation, should be coming under such severe attack from so many quarters, whether more overtly in the West or more covertly by African churches?

Peculiar things happened during the 19th and into the 20th century. Masuzawa's intricately researched account of certain English language scholarship over that period outlines a transition from an apparently almost universal acceptance of the unique authority of church doctrine to Christianity's being seen as only one of many essentially 'equal' world religions.<sup>20</sup> At the start of the 20th century, this shift seemed to bode very badly for the future of the Christian faith in the English-speaking Western world. 'The rise of a comparative history of religion has shaken the Christian more deeply than anything else,' Troeltsch announced in 1897.<sup>21</sup> Troeltsch later added, significantly for our purposes, that 'the evidence we have for [the truth of Christianity] remains essentially the same, whatever may be our theory concerning absolute validity—it is the evidence of a profound inner experience ... this does not preclude the possibility that other racial groups, living under entirely different cultural conditions, may experience their contact with the Divine Life in quite a different way' (my emphasis).<sup>22</sup> Note Troeltsch's emphasis here on what is 'inner'.

Anthropologists, whose history can be traced back into the church, have at times assumed religion to be something inner to people. Yet, numerous scholars have recently made a very strong case to say that the category 'religion', as understood through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is vacuous. 'It is impossible to speak about religion as a universal phenomenon, since it is a historically created category,' shares Bialecki, making this point.<sup>23</sup> These contrasting claims beg the question, of what anthropologists have been studying? Have they also been wrongly assuming that 'religion' is 'really something coming from inner-feelings'? It would appear so. From here on, it seems, Western Christian theologians, at least Protestant ones, considered Christianity, and all of religion, as a dualistic opposite to 'the secular': 'Religion' was some mysterious connection with 'divine life'. The rest of life functioned on the basis of insights arising from the physical world.<sup>24</sup>

I must give credit to my time in Africa for my realisation of this aspect of the Western worldview that I here call dualism.<sup>25</sup> For the purpose of this essay I focus on the separation that occurred between anthropology (and scholarship in general), and theology. Such

separation, I suggest, must at one time have seemed incredibly unlikely, if not impossible.<sup>26</sup> I state 'impossible' with some conviction, because in much of Africa as I understand it (if one gets beyond surface level hegemony of Western languages and education) the separation makes no sense. In the contemporary West, endless recent developments bring the same separation into question, such as: Einstein's undermining of Newtonianism,<sup>27</sup> explorations into the embodiment of thinking,<sup>28</sup> advanced exploration of matter in physics,<sup>29</sup> chaos theory,<sup>30</sup> the spread of New Age movements,<sup>31</sup> the ascendancy of fundamentalism, especially in Islam,<sup>32</sup> anthropology's new pre-occupation with studying the very Christianity that birthed it<sup>33</sup> (once something of its 'arch-enemy'<sup>34</sup>), and so on. For my articulation of this separation I draw especially on Lindbeck.<sup>35</sup>

The question that prompted Lindbeck to write was slightly different, but actually not all that different, to what we want to consider here and have introduced above. He was concerned with denominational divisions apparently caused by differences in doctrines, especially between Catholics and Lutherans. He asked: what makes doctrinal differences so insurmountable?

### **Two Wrong and One Right Way to come up with Doctrines**

Given the Bible, and the tradition of the church as it is, I want to ask: how does one come up with doctrine? Lindbeck gives us three options. The vast response, variously critical or affirmative, that Lindbeck has received for his work indicates that he has hit on something important.<sup>36</sup> As we look at his methods, we will have in mind especially the contrast between today's dualistic society and the monism or holism in much of traditional Africa and the New Testament.<sup>37</sup>

1. Propositions. The first in Lindbeck's list of three means of coming up with doctrine 'stresses the ways in which church doctrines function as informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities'.<sup>38</sup> This I understand to be conclusions drawn especially through systematic study of the Scriptures. It produces propositions such as 'it is true because the Bible says so' and 'we do it this way because the Bible tells us to'. This method, Lindbeck tells us, has in recent decades experienced steady decline in popularity. I take a major cause for such decline to be rises in various types of literary criticism already mentioned above, making it increasingly difficult to consider one's interpretive work to be objective. In contemporary times, many Westerners assume the Bible to be just a piece of literature like so many others, so they wonder how on earth one can 'objectively' get any doctrines out of it at all.

2. The Expressive. Lindbeck's experiential-expressive approach to developing doctrine 'interprets doctrines as non-informative and non-discursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes or existential orientations'.<sup>39</sup> It builds on 'feelings, attitudes or existential orientations'.<sup>40</sup> This is the method that assumes that all religions share some common religious experience, and attempt to draw on that experience in different ways. (This is what, to Troeltsch, was to become the only true foundation of Christian faith, as per above. It is also the belief of anthropologists, according to the above.) Because scholars cannot put their finger on such a 'core experience', this unfortunately, according to Lindbeck, leaves this method 'logically and empirically vacuous'.<sup>41</sup> Because it values doctrines for their emotional impact on an assumed commonality of the human heart, this method belies true comprehension of historicity. From this basis the resurrection of Jesus need not be historically true in order to communicate into the supposedly universal orientation to

'religion' of human kind. From this basis, Christian belief and practice should be the same everywhere, regardless of people's historical and cultural background.

3. Cultural-Linguistic. This is the model that Lindbeck finds to be grossly underrepresented in the contemporary church. Of particular interest to us, this model is unapologetically consonant with 'anthropological, sociological and philosophical studies'<sup>42</sup> of the impact of religion.<sup>43</sup> It is not vacuous, as might be number 2 above. Lindbeck tells us that what he advocates 'is clearly in conflict both with traditionalist propositional orthodoxy and with currently regnant forms of liberalism.'<sup>44</sup> The culture-linguistic model is more often used by people whose critical writing seeks to confirm religion to be basically a private affair where 'all religions [are seen as] possible sources of symbols to be used eclectically in articulating, clarifying and organising the experiences of the inner self.'<sup>45</sup>

Lindbeck does not suggest that either propositionalism or drawing on the expressive in order to formulate or understand doctrines is entirely wrong. He does point to a need for a greater use of thinking that is culturally and linguistically rooted. In other words – he points to a contemporary dearth in culturally-linguistically rooted thinking, especially with respect to derivation of doctrines and more generally in the practice of theology. I want to ask: what may have brought about such a dearth in cultural-linguistically informed theological thinking?

### **Causes for the Dearth in Cultural-linguistically informed theology**

This brief and somewhat speculative historical survey may not successfully separate chicken from egg. It points to a plethora of factors. All are related to the contemporary Western orientation to observing everything through a dualistic lens that conceals, i.e. re-interprets, the nature of once-normal means of designing doctrines based on linguistic-cultural context.

1. Anthropology's withdrawal from the church, followed by its opposition to the church, forcing the church to use non-anthropological method in its defence. In other words, when anthropology 'took sides' with secularism, then in order to protect its integrity, the church was forced to reject anthropology's methods. This has led to a bipartisan parting of ways, and so presumably to theologians rejecting thinking that might have been helpful to them.
2. The promotion of world religions articulated by Masuzawa.<sup>46</sup> Actualising the view that Christianity was only one of many 'religions'<sup>47</sup> required compromises by theologians. Lindbeck's category of the expressive as a source of doctrine has been a particularly effective way of concealing Christian singularity. Lindbeck explains how the position which sees all 'religions' as emerging from some foundation in the inner feelings of all people appears to create a very open framework for inter-religious dialogue. Hence its popularity.
3. Widespread strictly implemented prohibitions of racism enacted in the West, a pendulum swinging way in the opposite direction to what was the case in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Racist theories abounded in the 19th Century. In contemporary times, racism is seen as a great evil. The decline of racism has paralleled the demise of knowingly culturally-linguistically informed doctrine.<sup>48</sup> If people are universally the same 'on the inside', and the inside determines everything else, that seemed to do away with the

need for partiality based on the racial cultural-linguistic or other factors distinguishing human populations.

4. Western missionaries are looking for short-cuts in their approaches to majority world peoples.<sup>49</sup> The latter often used obscure languages and had 'exotic' (to Westerners) ways of life. Trying to root Christian doctrine in such diverse contexts seemed to be a herculean task. Propositionalism helped in part, but still left the problem of translation; translating propositions was a headache. Assuming the foundation of the acceptability of doctrines to be innate to people's hearts became an excuse for missionaries to keep teaching in their own languages, knowing that 'all would come out right in the end'. The alternative cultural-linguistic approach seemed to demand extremes of commitment and cultural/language learning that became less and less acceptable to short-term-oriented people in an increasingly Western-leaning world.
5. Closely related to expressive notions of religion, is the idea that once a believer had a change in heart arising from faith in Jesus and repentance, much further doctrine may not be required. That spirit and experience, after all, has become key. One problem with this approach to evangelism and discipleship, in so far as it might expect to produce recognisable Christians, is that it bypasses the need for translation to take account of cultural-linguistic realities: Previously 'primitive' people are expected to be transformed into Westerners by one simple act of conversion. Discipleship becomes an after-thought, done hurriedly in English, without significant consideration of the culture of the people being disciplined.

Lindbeck's suggestion that cultural-linguistic methods should be used for the derivation of doctrine have met considerable opposition.<sup>50</sup> To some, such a suggestion is a capitulation to the world, a massive concession to liberals. What I point to above – is that it could also be seen as a return to a pre-modern religious norm. I explore this theme in more detail below, with reference to African Christianity.

Many African governments claim to operate largely on a secular basis. The constitutions of sub-Saharan African states reflect this supposedly secular outlook.<sup>51</sup> Global bodies concerned with African development such as the World Bank and IMF operate on the same basis. They were inspired at a time, in the 1950s before the more recent 'resurgence of religion' in the West.<sup>52</sup> As a result their efforts continue to be rooted in an imagined world in which 'religion' (i.e. Christianity) is superfluous or redundant.

As described above, what happens at grass-roots level in the majority world is often relatively little known by outsiders from the West. Even researchers, typically those with anthropological leanings, that do reach the grass-roots, have been trained to turn a blind eye to 'Christian things,' and can very effectively do so.<sup>53</sup> Very few, even amongst serious anthropologists, get to the position where they can do research by participant observation through non-Western languages. The period given for field research is typically far too short.

Speaking as someone who has lived in the same African village from 1993 to date, who is familiar with indigenous languages, and who frequents a great variety of churches, I can say that Christian churches are extremely active in my community. I can add that making rules is amongst their major occupations. Widespread evidence suggests that my known stamping grounds are not exceptional, but that such is widespread around the continent of Africa, perhaps even universal wherever Islam has not got the upper hand.<sup>54</sup>

The above churches are certainly not confining themselves to discussion of what comes out of people's hearts, as would be suggested by the expressive model articulated above. While propositions from the Bible clearly underlie what they do, their practices are also fundamentally tied to their languages, cultures and contexts. A visit to a *Roho* church would soon demonstrate that church doctrines are constantly being devised, and re-devised, honed, and adjusted to their own contexts through dialog conducted in their indigenous languages.

Some indigenous churches with apparently very different doctrines, nevertheless have amazingly close relationships. An example comes to mind of a senior leader in a *Nomiya* church<sup>55</sup> who came to accept that his wife would worship in a very different church called *Luong Mogik*. Both churches root their doctrines in the Bible.<sup>56</sup> Both believe in and follow their own doctrines. Their doctrines are essentially rules (as Lindbeck points out becomes the case when doctrines are formed culture-linguistically) that respond to local cultural and linguistic categorial realities, in the light of the Gospel. Members of both churches, knowing the nature of each other's doctrines as rules, are not heavily engaged in inter-denominational dialogue, yet each can appreciate what the other is doing and why. At some points, certainly, they learn from one another. We can say that, despite the differences between them, they do not thereby consider their different stands to be mutually exclusive.

In the light of the above, from a careful examination of Western Christianity, I suggest Western Christianity has been hit by a problem which arises from the very dualism I have mentioned above: *that the church has ceded the secular realm*. Since having done that, it has attempted to remain true to that cessation; it has endeavoured to confine the origins of its doctrines to a non-secular, that is 'spiritual', sphere of understanding.

Such an exclusive rooting of doctrine in the spiritual was not and could not have been there in pre-modern churches because, as we have discovered above, they were non-dualistic.<sup>57</sup> This is the same issue addressed by Lindbeck. When churches endeavour to root themselves entirely in a spiritual sphere, denominational doctrines can become inflexible. Lindbeck points out that this impedes avenues of dialogue that could arise if rules were viewed as linguistic-culturally based orientations to solving real-world problems, instead of as hegemonic spiritual dogma. In other words, viewing rules as linguistic-culturally based orientations to solving real-world problems may 'enable' fruitful inter-denominational dialogue. Fruitful dialogue can be aided by the flagging of areas where dialogue will be unfruitful due to issues of incommensurability between dialogue partners.<sup>58</sup> Thus the creation of unnecessary hot air could be avoided. Hence I agree with Lindbeck; that understanding doctrines as 'rules' enables dialogue.

A linguistic-cultural approach to doctrine jettisons the Western Christian vision of having a religion (i.e. Christianity) which is supra-cultural and can simply be transplanted inter-culturally using one language and a pre-determined supra-cultural set of doctrines.<sup>59</sup> That this supra-cultural model has ghettoized theology from the rest of academia is telling.<sup>60</sup> A re-integration of theology into the mainstream would be a re-integration of the mainstream into theology. That implies challenges to both sides. If theological doctrine became more effective at engaging the world, it could be more effective at transforming the world.<sup>61</sup> Those involved in global mission, must begin to do the hard work of engaging with people's cultural-linguistic realities.

## Conclusion



African Christianity, as personally experienced by the author to this article, throws light on dilemmas faced by the contemporary church in the West. This article proposes that the Western Church's concession to a secular-spiritual divide (which is closely linked to its granting that Christianity is only one of many 'world religions') has weakened the church's ability to meaningfully engage with majority world cultures. This dualism is a departure from Biblical precedent and New Testament faith. A renewed engagement with the world is advocated. For the African and Western church, this points to a requirement for contextual engagement, which in turn raises questions about the nature of doctrine. Much work remains to be done on the 'mission field' which is today inappropriately being made dependent on Western languages and kinds of 'detached' theologies considered in this article. Doctrines formed from discussions using indigenous languages will avoid unhealthy dependence on the detached theologies often present in Western-mission-founded churches.

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<sup>1</sup> For more discussion on this, see: Hiebert, Paul, 2007, *Transforming Worldviews*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, especially Chapter 7.

<sup>2</sup> Makokha, Byrum Akhahenda, 1996, *A History of the Church of God in Kenya, East Africa: an indigenous perspective 1905-1992*. Maseno, Kenya: Church of God.

<sup>3</sup> See here for an image of the front cover of the book concerned: <http://www.vulnerablemission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/makokhas-book-cover-page.jpg>

<sup>4</sup> I taught part-time at a bible school in Western Kenya from 1996 to 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Many of the foundations for our curriculum were set by Global University: <https://www.globaluniversity.edu>

<sup>6</sup> With just very a very occasional course in Swahili.

<sup>7</sup> Makokha *Church* (p. 171 and elsewhere) does question the value of a more academic foreign approach to theology.

<sup>8</sup> Gifford, Paul, 2015, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*. London: Hurst and Company.

<sup>9</sup> The leaders of the African church may also emphasise ways in which they are uniquely different from other denominations. This emphasis can be very pragmatically oriented towards facilitating of ongoing relationship with the mother church in the West. That is – more funding will flow more freely if the church is presented as if it is the only true light in a dark place.

<sup>10</sup> Gifford *Christianity*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Translation from these African languages into English often results in loss of the content.

<sup>12</sup> I follow Stan Nussbaum who in an unpublished article considers African churches to be in three categories: 1. Mission-founded. 2. Pentecostal. 3. Truly indigenous.

<sup>13</sup> In other words, these churches may know more doctrines than they can implement.

<sup>14</sup> The term *Roho* comes from the Hebrew *Ruach*, wind or spirit. Similar churches are in Southern Africa often known as *Zionist* churches, and in West Africa as *Aladura*. (For reference to these churches see Kalu, Ogbu, 2008, *African Pentecostalism: an introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 69.)

<sup>15</sup> A method of investigating a text that seeks to understand the world behind it.

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<sup>16</sup> A head-teacher in the UK was mocked for suggesting that there is more evidence to support the Bible than there is for evolution: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/03/headteacher-mocked-twitter-claim-evolution-not-fact>

<sup>17</sup> Armstrong, Karen, 2014, *Fields of Blood: religion and the history of violence*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

<sup>18</sup> This is the top definition that came up on googling 'dictionary dogma' on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Many are only ever expressed in non-Western languages.

<sup>20</sup> Masuzawa, Tomoko, 2005, *The Invention of World Religions: how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*. London: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>21</sup> Troeltsch, Ernst, 1991 (1897), 'Christianity and the History of Religion', in: Ernst Troeltsch, *Religion in History*, translated by James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense, 77-86, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> Troeltsch, Ernst, 1923, *Christian Thought: its history and application. Lectures written for delivery in England during March 1923*. (Edited with an introduction and index by Baron f. Von Hügel.) London: University of London Press, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> Bialecki, Jon, 2015, 'Protestant Language, Christian Problems, and Religious Realism' pp. 37-42 in: 'Forum. Is there such a thing as religious language? Is there such a thing as religion?' pp. 37-51 *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 40(4), Winter 2015, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> While the extreme expression of this position, positivism, may now be much discredited, much positivistic thinking continues to be presupposed in the Western world.

<sup>25</sup> Harries, Jim, 2015, *Secularism and Africa: in the light of the Intercultural Christ*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, and Harries, Jim, 2016, *New Foundations for Appreciating Africa: beyond religious and secular deceptions*. World of Theology Series 9, World Evangelical Alliance. Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft.

<sup>26</sup> Larsen is at pains to point out that the separation never really occurred, referencing for example the profound Christian faith of Evans-Pritchard, perhaps the leading anthropologist of his time. (Larsen, Timothy. 2014. *The Slain God: Anthropologists and the Christian Faith*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 119.) Yet such separation was evident to many, such as Evans-Pritchard himself. (Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1964. 'Religion and the Anthropologist.' pp. 155-171 in: E.E. Evans-Pritchard, 1964. *Social Anthropology and Other Essays*. New York: The Free Press, 162.)

<sup>27</sup> Torretti, Roberto, 1990, *Creative Understanding: Philosophical Reflections on Physics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark, 1999, *Philosophy in the Flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*. New York: Basic Books.

<sup>29</sup> Esfeld, Michael, 2016, 'The reality of relations; the case from quantum physics', 218-234 in: Anna Marmodoro, and David Yates, (eds), *The Metaphysics of Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 221, and see also:

<http://ourultimatereality.com/the-reality-of-quantum-physics.html>

<sup>30</sup> Strogatz, Steven H., 2014, *Nonlinear Dynamics and Chaos: With Applications to Physics, Biology, Chemistry, and Engineering (Studies in Nonlinearity)* 2nd Edition. Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.equip.org/article/the-new-age-movement-what-is-it/>

<sup>32</sup> Marty, Martin E., 1996, 'Too Bad We're So relevant: the fundamentalism project projected.' *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 49/6 22-38, (no page number; html version read: <http://www.illuminos.com/mem/selectPapers/fundamentalismProject.html> )

<sup>33</sup> The anthropology of Christianity has been around for only 15 years. (Robbins, Joel, 2014, 'The Anthropology of Christianity: Unity, Diversity, New Directions: An Introduction to Supplement 10', *Current Anthropology* 2014, 55:10, pp. 157-171, p. 157.)

<sup>34</sup> Evans-Pritchard 'Religion', p. 162, already cited above.

<sup>35</sup> Lindbeck, George A., 2009, *The Nature of Doctrine: religion and theology in a postliberal age*. 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press.

<sup>36</sup> Lindbeck *Nature*, pp. 152-165.

<sup>37</sup> The New Testament was written in pre-modern times, in which the people's worldview was not dualistic.

<sup>38</sup> Lindbeck *Nature*, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Lindbeck *Nature*, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Lindbeck *Nature*, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Lindbeck *Nature*, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> Lindbeck *Nature*, p. 18.

<sup>43</sup> What I am suggesting is, that while anthropologists consider religion to be an 'inner thing,' they leave the discernment of such amorphous content to theologians, while they study what is externally evident.

<sup>44</sup> Lindbeck *Nature*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>45</sup> Lindbeck *Nature*, p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Masuzawa *Invention*.

<sup>47</sup> Lindbeck seems implicitly to hold this view, but the direction he takes suggests that it is not the case.

<sup>48</sup> Young, Robert, C., 1995, *Colonial Desire: hybridity in theory, culture and race*. London: Routledge, p. 91.

<sup>49</sup> This is clearly illustrated by the rise in recent decades of short-term mission. Theories that come out in support of short-term mission are necessarily founded in assumptions of easy intercultural communication.

<sup>50</sup> Marshall, Bruce D., 2009, 'Introduction; the nature of doctrine after 25 years.' vii-xxviii in: George A., Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: religion and theology in a postliberal age*. 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, p. ix.

<sup>51</sup> <https://propelsteps.wordpress.com/2013/11/19/know-list-of-secular-non-secular-and-ambiguous-countries/>

<sup>52</sup> Thomas, Scott, M., 2005, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

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<sup>53</sup> The prominence of 'religion' in Africa surprised authors like: Jones, Ben, 2005, 'The church in the village, the village in the church, Pentecostalism in Teso, Uganda.' pp. 497-517 in: *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines*, XLV(2), p. 506, and Meagher, Kate. 2009, 'Trading on Faith: religious movements and informal economic governance in Nigeria. pp. 397-423. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 47(3), September 2009, p. 406.

<sup>54</sup> Hence Jenkins can talk of the 'runaway success of Christian missions' (Jenkins, Philip, 2002, *The Next Christendom: the coming of global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 39.)

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Nomiya-Church-Archbishop-Gideon-Charles-Owalo/1056-2639064-sva40k/index.html>

<sup>56</sup> The Nomiya Church does also draw on Islam to a certain degree.

<sup>57</sup> Only dualism enables distinct identification of the 'spiritual' as against the 'material' or social.

<sup>58</sup> Harries, Jim. 2011, 'Intercultural Dialogue - an overrated means of acquiring understanding examined in the context of Christian Mission to Africa.' pp. 129-144 In: Jim Harries, *Vulnerable Mission; insights into Christian Mission to Africa from a position of vulnerability*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.

<sup>59</sup> A prime cause for the ongoing popularity of this supra-cultural model on the field is the massive financial subsidy it often comes with. That is: the wealthy West pushes this model onto the majority world.

<sup>60</sup> Lindbeck *Nature*, p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Oviedo goes to far as to suggest that science should be a part of theological curricula, see: Oviedo, Lluís and Garre, Alvaro, 2015, 'Review Articles on Religion and Science around the World – the interaction between religion and science in Catholic Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal).' *Zygon*, 50(1), March 2015.