

## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND AND METHOD

#### 1.1 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

##### 1.1.1 The researcher

For the past six years that I have served as a missionary in Kenya, I have done pastoral training in many areas of Kenya. During this time, I have engaged in talks with many Kenyan pastors about spirituality. Apparently, there seemed to be a different understanding and/or practice of spirituality among Kenyan pastors, and I wanted to find out what lay underneath. I understand that the backgrounds, traditions, perceptions, understanding, and practice of spirituality of the Kenyan pastors may be different from mine. I am also approaching this issue as an outsider. However, through my six years of exposure and involvement within the context of serving as a pastoral leadership trainer, and through the relationships I have built with some of the Kenyan pastors, I believe that I have a good platform from which to do this research. For the sake of research, I set the limits of my research to Kikuyu PCEA (Presbyterian Church of East Africa) pastors in Nairobi.

My personal history resonates with the research arena. Since my conversion more than two decades ago, my main focus has been to grow spiritually, which is one aspect of spirituality. Upon conversion, I engaged in rigorous spiritual disciplines, such as Bible memory, Bible study, one-on-one discipleship, evangelism, etc. Thus, I was involved in discipleship training and disciple-making ministry for about ten years after conversion. After I was ordained, I was involved with adult education in the local church in which I served, led many Bible studies, and tried to help church members grow spiritually.

Since I came to Kenya, I have been more focused on the development of character and inward spirituality. I have been emphasizing the growth and

development of the quality of spiritual life both in myself and in the lives of Kenyan pastors.

Considering the Kenyan churches from the perspective of the struggles and experiences that I have had, I believe that the societal phenomena of rampant corruption, deceptive behaviours, immorality, lopsided emphasis on the Spirit's function (depending on the church's denominational affiliation), and lack of personal spiritual maturity, have root in pastors' understandings and practices of spirituality.

Currently, I am still engaged in pastoral training and am involved in the spiritual development of Kenyan pastors. Wherever I go for training seminars, after the seminar is over, they always ask me when I can come back to teach them further. I have found favour from the Lord and Kenyan pastors. One Kenyan colleague who does pastoral training with me once said, "Sung, you are a blessing to Africa." I believe the Lord has called me to this context for a purpose.

Richard Foster (1998) talks about six major streams of spirituality expressed over the years in church history in his award winning book *Streams of Living Water*: the Contemplative Tradition, the Holiness Tradition, the Charismatic Tradition, the Social Justice Tradition, the Evangelical Tradition, and the Incarnational Tradition. I understand that my spiritual journey or tradition may differ from others, and that Korean or Korean-American spiritual tradition may vastly differ from Kenyan spiritual tradition. However, perhaps, I would find similarities. Whatever I find, I believe my findings will benefit both the people I am here to serve and also myself because of the new insights, perspectives, and understandings my research participants and I would gain.

### **1.1.2 Research objective**

My research will be done on the *spirituality of Kikuyu pastors of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA)*. I want to understand the spirituality of Kikuyu pastors and the contributing elements to their spirituality, with a view to creating new horizons of meaning—towards dynamic

transformation that could possibly benefit their lives, the churches they serve, the communities they live in, and society in general.

Studies have been done about African theology, the Kikuyu tribe, African traditional spirituality, and various African churches in Kenya. However, in the area of African Christian spirituality, particularly in East Africa, very few studies have been conducted precisely upon the spirituality of Kikuyu pastors. Currently, there is no explicit study on this subject, and I am willing to enter into this area and find out what lies within.

There are three main objectives of this study. The first objective is to understand the spiritual world of Kikuyu pastors of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa through the “thick description” of Don Browning (1996:135). This is the foundation of the study, and in this section, the spirituality of the Kikuyu pastors I will be interviewing will be discussed. The method I am using to collect data is narrative, and the narratives will unfold the stories of individuals. The second objective is to study biblical and historical spirituality to form a grid with which to look at the present reality. This grid is essential in viewing the current picture from the normative biblical/historical perspective. The third objective is to write an alternative story or understanding of the spirituality of these pastors through critical hermeneutical dialogue in order to bring about dynamic transformation (Browning 1996:288).

### **1.1.3 Limitation and delimitation**

This research will be done on Kikuyu pastors of one denomination in Kenya called the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in the Nairobi area. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa has its main ministry within the Kikuyu tribe, which is the largest tribe in Kenya, and I will limit my research to these Kikuyu PECA pastors. Pastors of other denominations, other tribes, and other areas in Kenya will be excluded from this research.

## **1.2 THE SUBJECT OF SPIRITUALITY**

As the subject of spirituality is vast, there are many definitions of spirituality. Dallas Willard (1988:77) defines spirituality as follows: Spirituality is simply the

holistic quality of human life as it was meant to be, at the centre of which is our relation to God. Willard (1988:77) quotes Francis Schaeffer in that “true spirituality” is a positive, external manifestation of inward positive reality. McCarthy’s (2000:196) definition of spirituality is in-depth and broad; thus, it gives us concrete ideas of the subject. “Spirituality is broader and more encompassing than any religion. It is an expression of one’s deepest values and commitments, one’s sense or experience of something larger than and beyond oneself.” To summarise the above definitions, the subject of spirituality is holistic. It encompasses the whole human experience with God in the centre. It includes both inner life and outer manifestations. These elements provide us with some initial ideas of spirituality.

However, it is necessary to discuss the subject matter of spirituality further, that is, the etymology of spirituality, historical development, different approaches to spirituality, and characteristics of spirituality. The discussion of these issues will clarify the subject matter of spirituality.

### **1.2.1 Etymology of spirituality**

The English word “spirituality” originated from the Latin term *spiritualitas*, an abstract word derived from the noun *spiritus* and the adjective *spiritalis*, as translations of the Greek *pneuma* and *pneumatikos* respectively. In mediaeval times, the Latin word *spiritualitas* gave rise to such forms as *esperitalité*, *esprituaulté*, and *espérituaulté* in French, and *spiritualty* or *spirituality* in English (Principe 2000:44-46).

In Pauline theology, *pneuma* or *spiritus* are not contrasted with *soma* or *corpus*, but with *sarx* or *caro*. In other words, “Spirit” or “spiritual” are not antonyms of “physical” or “material,” but of “all that is opposed to the Spirit of God.” Therefore, the contrast is between two ways of life or attitudes to life. “The ‘spiritual’ is what is under the influence of or is a manifestation of the Spirit of God” (Sheldrake 1995:42). The “carnal” is what is opposed to the working and guidance of the Spirit of God (Principe 2000:45). The Christian life is “life in the Spirit” (Gal 5:25).

### 1.2.2 Historical development of meaning

In the ninth century, a new meaning of spirituality was introduced by Fulda, most likely a monk, who used the word *spiritualitas* as opposed to *corporalitas* or *materialitas*, thereby changing the Pauline moral sense of the word to an entitative-psychological sense. This shift of meaning brought in the idea of disdain for the body and matter in the later movement related to spiritual life (Principe 2000:45). Then, in the twelfth century, scholasticism made a sharp distinction between spirit and matter. The word “spiritual” was applied to an intelligent creature, that is, mankind, as opposed to non-rational creation. Losing its original Pauline moral sense, “spirituality” adopted a new meaning more radically opposed to corporeality or matter. However, the new meaning did not replace the old meaning completely, but rather the two meanings co-existed in the thirteenth century (Sheldrake 1995:43). For example, while in the majority of Thomas Aquinas’ texts, the word *spiritualitas* is related to the Pauline idea of life, that is, according to the Holy Spirit or what is highest in the human, in a good number of texts, it is used as opposite to corporeity or matter (Principe 2000:46). The thirteenth century was also the time that saw the split between theology and spirituality, or between the reasoned expression of faith and its lived experience (Schneiders 2005:2).

In the seventeenth century the word “spiritualite” became established once again in France in reference to the spiritual life. It was used positively to express a personal, affective relationship with God. However, it was also used pejoratively of enthusiastic or quietistic movements (Sheldrake 1995:43; Principe 2000:46). Then in the early eighteenth century, the word “spirituality” disappeared from the vocabulary of Roman Catholics due to a suspicion of religious enthusiasm and quietism. In the nineteenth century, it was used mainly in free religious groups outside mainline churches. In the early decades of the twentieth century, “spirituality” appeared once again among Roman Catholics in France; and then it passed into English through translations. The increased use of the word “spirituality” in this period was related to the attempts to distinguish dogma and the study of spiritual life as well as an increasing emphasis on religious consciousness and the experiential dimension of Christian life (Sheldrake 1995:43-44). Historian

Sheldrake (1995:41) points out that in recent decades, there has been more emphasis on human experience in the general approach to theology, and this brought about a movement from the static “spiritual theology” to the more fluid “spirituality.” Among Protestants, the word “spirituality” came to be used from about 1960 (Holt 2005:8).

### **1.2.3 Spiritual theology vs. spirituality**

In the early patristic and early medieval periods, before the split between theology and spirituality in the thirteenth century, spirituality was the purpose of all study, both sacred and profane. Spirituality was lived theology and theology was articulate spirituality. Spirituality that may be called “mystical theology” or “spiritual theology” continued to appear in scriptural and patristic commentaries up to the twelfth century (Sheldrake 1995:49). In the High Middle Ages, however, this integrated approach was destroyed as theology moved from the monastery to the university and became a philosophically elaborated academic and scientific specialisation. From then on, mystical theology as an experiential knowledge, and wisdom of God acquired in prayer through meditation on the Scriptures, became an exclusive monastic experience. Sheldrake (1995:52) explains the period as follows:

The period from the twelfth century onwards in the West saw a process of development in the approach to the spiritual life which may be characterised as one of separation and division. There was, first of all, a division of spirituality from theology, of affectivity from knowledge. Secondly, there was a gradual limitation of interest to interiority or subjective spiritual experience. In other words, spirituality became separated from social praxis and ethics. And finally, although it has been touched upon only indirectly, there was a separation of spirituality from liturgy, the personal from the communal, expressed most graphically by a new attention to the structures of personal prayer and meditation. Through these divisions and separations, an interest developed in specific experiences and activities: prayer, contemplation and mysticism.

After the Reformation, Protestant orthodoxy was suspicious of the word “mysticism” because of the suggested elitism or paranormal experience not rooted in the Scriptures, and preferred to use “piety,” meaning a daily reading

of Scriptures and prayer. Anglicans preferred the terms “devotion,” “inner life,” and “life of perfection” to “piety.” (Schneiders 2005a:22; Schneiders 2005b:2). From the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, “spiritual theology” as a discipline emerged in Catholic seminaries as a sub-discipline of theology. According to Schneiders (2005:2),

It [spiritual theology] was defined as the ‘science of perfection’ and usually subdivided into ‘ascetical theology’ which dealt with the active stages of the spiritual life and ‘mystical theology’ which dealt with the higher reaches of contemplation. The discipline of spiritual theology was deductive in method, prescriptive in character, and concerned primarily with the practice of personal prayer and asceticism.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a new discipline that came to be called “spirituality” rather than “spiritual theology” emerged in the academy. The emergence of this new discipline was due to interest in the search of meaning, transcendence, personal integration and social transformation (Schneiders 2005b:3). The transition from spiritual theology to spirituality is well summarised by Sheldrake (1995:57-58).

There has been a major shift in western theology towards a more serious reflection on human experience in its cultural particularity and therefore pluriformity. This in turn provoked a movement away from a static approach to the Christian life, embodied in an analytical and abstract spiritual theology, and towards a more dynamic and inclusive concept, namely ‘spirituality’. I would also add that this new concept has gained considerable ecumenical acceptance and so spirituality now tends to be eclectic in its approach as it seeks to draw upon the riches of a shared Christian heritage rather than to limit itself to a sectarian understanding of ‘life in the Spirit’. Spirituality, in other words, is far better expression of Catholicity than any previous spiritual theology.

#### **1.2.4 Definition of spirituality**

Besides some definitions given initially, I want to revisit the definition of spirituality here. Spirituality has two levels of definition. First, spirituality can be defined as “the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship.” This definition is an emic view rather than etic (Holder 2005:5). Emic refers to the insider’s view and Etic to the outsider’s view (Kraft 2005:29). The

contemporary understanding of Christian spirituality on this level emphasises the holistic and personal involvement of the person in the spiritual quest (Schneiders 2005b:1-2). Principe (2000:48) explains of this as follows:

It is the way some person understood and lived, within his or her historical context, a chosen religious ideal in sensitivity to the realm of the spirit of the transcendent. For Christians such a life would be one influenced, as Paul taught, by the Holy Spirit or Spirit of God incorporating the person into Jesus Christ as Head, through whom he or she has access to the Father in a life of faith, hope, love, and service.

The second level of spirituality is spirituality as an academic discipline. Sandra Schneiders (2005a:16-17), one of the most significant figures in the emergence of Christian spirituality as an academic discipline, defines spirituality as “the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives.” Schneiders further identifies “the horizon of ultimate value” in Christian spirituality as the “*triune God* revealed in *Jesus Christ* to whom *Scripture* normatively witnessed and whose life is communicated to the *believer* by the *Holy Spirit* making her or him a child of God” [italics mine]. This academic discipline of spirituality as a research discipline has the expansion of knowledge and understanding of the God-human relationship as its specific objective.

### **1.2.5 Three approaches to the study of Christian spirituality**

Three approaches have been recognised in the study of spirituality as an academic discipline: historical, theological, and anthropological. First, the historical study approaches the subject matter historically, and supplies the context for and constitutes the positive data upon which other studies exercise their inquiries. As stated, spirituality as lived experience takes place in time and space. It occurs within specific cultural contexts in interaction with the forces operating in the same context; being influenced by what and who preceded it. In some sense, all studies of spirituality can be said to be historical (Schneiders 2005a:21). Second, the theological approach uses theological categories to examine the practice of Christian faith. In this sense,

spirituality can be regarded as a form of practical theology. Although this approach is closer to nineteenth- and early twentieth century understanding of spiritual theology, it is more holistic and integrated, and less dogmatic and prescriptive than its predecessor (Schneiders 2005b:4). Schneiders (2005a:25) explains more:

The contribution of the theological approach to spirituality is that it keeps the specifically Christian character of the discipline in focus and reminds everyone in the field, whatever their preferred approach, that Christianity is a specific faith tradition that has content and dynamics it does not share with other traditions, even those with analogous concerns.

Third, the anthropological approach focuses on the interpretation of Christian religious experience to generate responses to contemporary questions rather than historical or theological ones. This approach uses methodologies that are always interdisciplinary, with different disciplines taking the leading role in different research projects depending on the researcher's primary question (Schneiders 2005a:27-28). Again Schneiders (2005a:28) explains about this approach:

Whereas historical and theological approaches frame the questions raised about complex spiritual phenomenon from the standpoint of those particular disciplines, the anthropological approach addresses the phenomenon in terms of what the researcher wants to know about religious experience, which may not be primarily historical or theological.

In the study of spirituality, all three of these approaches are not mutually exclusive, but complementary to one another—as all Christian experience is human, historically situated in a particular socio-cultural setting, and rooted in a theological tradition of Christian faith. In this research I am using all three approaches. In the descriptive theology, chapter 3, I use mainly an anthropological approach. In chapter 4, I employ a historical approach. Throughout the research process, the theological approach provides the main framework.

### 1.2.6 Characteristics of spirituality

The contemporary understanding of spirituality has several distinctive features. First, spirituality is not simply the prescriptive application of absolute or dogmatic principles to life. Rather, it tries to understand the complex mystery of human growth in the context of a living relationship with God. Secondly, it does not concern only the interior life but seeks an integration of all aspects of human life and experience, both human and religious values (Sheldrake 1995:58-59). Thirdly, spirituality is not only informative but transformative. Through the wisdom gained from texts, traditions, and practices, such questions are asked, “What difference does this make?” or “What could or should our response be?” This transformative dimension of spirituality involves judgment and appropriation (Sheldrake 2006:23). Fourthly, spirituality is interdisciplinary, interreligious, ecumenical, and cross-cultural. In other words, it is holistic. Therefore, the context within which spiritual experience is studied is anthropologically inclusive (Berling 2006:40). Fifthly, Scripture and the history of Christianity are two constitutive disciplines that supply the positive data of Christian religious experience, as well as its norm and hermeneutical context (Berling 2006:39). Lastly, I would like to finish this part by quoting Sheldrake (1995:60-61):

A central feature is that spirituality derives its identity from the Christian belief that as human beings we are capable of entering into a relationship with God who is both transcendent and, at the same time, indwelling in the heart of all created things. This relationship is lived out, not in isolation, but in a community of believers that is brought into being by commitment to Christ and sustained by the active presence of the Spirit of God in each and in the community as a whole.... In other words, contemporary Christian spirituality is explicitly Trinitarian, Christological, and ecclesial.

Characteristics of spirituality can be summarised as follows:

- Understood in the context of relationship with God
- Integration of all aspects of human life both religious and human
- Interdisciplinary, interreligious, ecumenical, and cross-cultural
- Scripture and the history of Christianity as its norms and hermeneutical context

- Transformative

### 1.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

With such an understanding of spirituality as stated above, I take a postfoundational practical theological position with a narrative and social constructionism approach for this research. It is postfoundational because it is the most viable option between the rigid foundationalism and the relativistic nonfoundationalism or postmodernism. The reason I have chosen Postfoundationism as my research paradigm for this study is that authentic spirituality requires the use of an interdisciplinary method, begins with a consideration of context, is grounded in tradition, is integrative, and uses the process of discernment (McCarthy 2000:197-201). It is practical because all theology is practical. McCarthy's (2000:201) statement is so precise: "Spirituality as a discipline is a practical theological discipline precisely because it aims at effective action in the world." It is narrative because narrative is ubiquitous in our lives (Polkinghorne 1988:14), and Polkinghorne (1988:18) quotes Jackendorf that "narrative is a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their effect on the whole." Narrative is useful to obtain meaning, purpose, and function of a practice, as human existence is essentially narrative in the end. It will also be useful and very relevant to the subject of my research. It is social constructionism because preferred realities are socially constructed and we ourselves are also socially constructed (Müller 2004:6). True spirituality is grounded in community. The following statement is powerful:

Thus an individual, privatised, or purely personal spirituality is an oxymoron. Authentic spirituality can never be an isolated, privatised, individual affair. It is always located in a particular community from which it derives its flavour, character, and efficacy (McCarthy 2000:200).

All these four elements mentioned above, that is, Postfoundationism, practical theology, narrative, and social construction, share the common spheres of positioning and methodology. However, in this research I would like to say that Postfoundationism provides the theological positioning; practical theology

is the main research methodology; narrative and social construction are used as the methods of the research.

### 1.3.1 Postfoundational

To discuss postfoundationism it is essential to understand modernism and postmodernism, since postfoundationism is the position between foundationalism (modern) and nonfoundationalism (postmodern).

#### 1.3.1.1 Modernism vs. postmodernism

Postmodernism is a cultural condition (Gergen 1999:195), and the term “postmodern condition,” which was coined by Lyotard, a French philosopher, was used to “expose the tenuousness of the grand narratives of modernity and enlightenment” (Graham 1996:20). Postmodernism itself is more of an attitude than a specific demonstrable trend or paradigm (Van Huyssteen 1997:187), and it rejects the concept of ideology as false consciousness (Gergen 1999:209).

Postmodernism can be placed *beyond* modernism as a movement that transcends modernism, or it can be construed as a moment *within* the modern, where the postmodern is a continuation of modernity’s emphasis on self-conscious social construction. Or it could be, following Jean-François Lyotard, placed *before* modernism as an incipient form of modernity. Whatever position one may choose, the common theme is that “postmodernity becomes intelligible through its relation to modernity” (Penner 2005:18-19).

Enlightenment ideas of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were highly successful in undermining the totalitarian rule of royalty and religion. Each individual is endowed with powers of observation and reason, and thus an inalienable right to participate in the process of governance (Gergen 1999:17-18). Thus, modernism that was spawned by the Enlightenment naturally puts a high value on the certainty about reality provided by natural sciences and personal gratification by autonomous freedom (Herholdt 1998:215-216).

Modernism as a culture, therefore, advocates beliefs in the sense of us as knowing, rational, and autonomous, and the correlative assumptions of objective knowledge, reason, and moral foundations. Thus, rational minds that are freed from the constraints of religious and moral tests would make irreversible progress in intellectual enquiry (Lundin 1993:20). However, the growing consciousness of the historical and cultural limitations of these beliefs sets the stage for considering major lines of critique typically identified as postmodern (Gergen 1999:29). In postmodern culture, all authoritative statements, propositions, descriptions, and rational arguments are questioned. The Enlightenment heritage of the “self-evident” and universal truths of reason and modern science methodology are critiqued. Thomas Kuhn’s (1970) work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, sparked this revolution in the epistemology of science. Claiming that there is no steady progress forward in knowledge in the natural sciences, Kuhn and others argued that movement comes often as a series of paradigmatic shifts and that all types of scientific knowledge are paradigm dependent, meaning that all scientific factuality is theory laden and every fact is an interpreted fact (Kreitzer 2005:1). All claims to knowledge of self and the world lose their authority (Gergen 1999:29). Without foundations and the universally accepted neutral ground provided by the traditional conceptions of reason, we confront a *legitimation crisis* (Loytard 1984). Van Huyssteen (1997:187) says:

Typical of postmodernism is its skepticism concerning the central role assigned to reason and rational thought. Over against indubitable truth-claims, an overconfident faith in science, and a metaphysical way of reasoning, the interrelatedness of truth-perspectives, ethical pluralism, and cultural relativism is typical of the postmodern perspective.

Postmodernism can take on many specific forms, such as revisionary thinking, constructionism, critical realism and deconstructionism (Herholdt 1998:215), or it is variously called post-foundational, post-Enlightenment, post-empiricist, post-structural, and post-modern (Gergen 1999:9). However, it is more than a time period after modernism. It is a progressive new way of doing science (Herholdt 1998:215).

### 1.3.1.2 Postmodern view of reality

In regards to the matter of reality, modernism, because of scientific objectivity, lacks an overarching epistemic framework that includes human subjectivity as part of reality. Therefore, postmodernism seeks to include human subjectivity and restore value of human feeling as part of experience. Actually, postmodernism regards the participation of the subject as essential to one's understanding of the external world.

Although Freedman and Combs (1996:22) said the following in a therapeutic context, their summary of postmodern reality conveys clarity and is relevant to this research.

- (1) Realities are socially constructed
- (2) Realities are constituted through language
- (3) Realities are organized and maintained through narrative
- (4) There are no essential truths.

In postmodernism, the importance of contextuality and the social determination [construction] of truth are emphasized (Herholdt 1998:216-220). Its view of reality is that people can construct their realities together as they live them (De Beer, Tumi, & Kotze 2001:37). However, Grobbelaar (2001:172) quotes Guba, that in postmodernism, reality can never be fully apprehended, only approximated.

In regards to their view and use of language, there is a difference between modernists and postmodernists. In modernism there is a clear distinction between the objective (real) world and the subjective (mental) world, and language is seen as a reliable and accurate link between the objective and subjective worlds. Language is used to represent external reality, and our internal representations are accurate reflections of external reality (Freedman & Combs 1996:28). However, postmodernists believe that societies construct their views of reality through language. The only world that people can know is the world we share in language, and language is an interactive process, not a passive receiving of preexisting truths (Freedman and Combs 1996:28). Wittgenstein (1961:115), who provided postmodernism with intellectual power, believed that language shapes our understanding, and that meaning only

occurs in the context of a language game. He said, “*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.*” For Gergen (1985:270), “Knowledge is not something people possess somewhere in their heads, but rather, something people do together. Language is essentially shared activity.” Experience is only within the scope of language (Linbeck 1984:39).

Postmodernism also stresses the central role of narrative in constructing reality. Narrative, as presented later in this chapter, reflects postmodern reality. Narrative understood with social construction attends to cultural and contextual stories as well as individual stories (Freedman & Combs 1996:31).

Postmodernists argue, “Within the multiple stories and multiple possibilities of the postmodern *multiverse*, we believe that there are no essential truth” (Freedman & Combs 1996:34). Relativism and pluralism are true postmodern characteristics.

In the old paradigm, humans were sometimes regarded as intricate machines and human values were consequently measured in terms of production. The function of a system was understood in a deterministic, periodic, linear, and static way based on cause and effect and action and reaction. Scientific knowledge is based on an objective and logical access to reality, known as a positivistic epistemology. However, postmodernism seeks an integrated understanding of reality that is holistic, ecological, and systemic (Herholdt 220-222). In other words, emphasizing meaning over facts and rules, postmodernism puts more emphasis on humanity than on physical science (Freedman and Combs 1996:22)

#### 1.3.1.3 Postmodern theology

This new paradigm influenced theology as well. In modernism, biblical scholars felt that, parallel to natural science, exact knowledge of biblical reality could be obtained. Therefore, historical-critical exegesis was employed to discover what early Christians thought and believed. In exegesis, the process starts with the text and follows exact criteria to analyze the Bible. However, in the postmodern paradigm, truth is relative and is influenced by the intellectual climate and cultural categories of every period (Herholdt 1998:221).

Away from positivism and logical rationalism, postmodern theology de-emphasizes dogma that requires exact understanding, and emphasizes poetic literary approach that communicates relative and applied meanings to believers respective to their needs (Herholdt 1998:223).

In postmodern theology, there is not a fixed body of theological truth that need be communicated from generation to generation; but every generation needs to discover meanings for themselves through metaphoric reference. Therefore, the epistemic construction of God is local and not universal (Herholdt 1998:224-225).

To understand postmodernism correctly, it is important to view postmodernism as a part of modern. According to Van Huyssteen (1997:278), "...the postmodern shows itself best in the to-and-fro movement between the modern and the postmodern." Lyotard (1984:79) says that the postmodern is undoubtedly a part of the modern and in its nascent state. Calvin Schrag's (1992:17) word sums up the relationship between modern and postmodern, "It is thus that the discourse of modernity remains within the web of the discourse of postmodernity."

Before turning to postfoundationalism, I want to revisit modernism in the form of foundationalism and postmodernism expressed in nonfoundationalism.

#### 1.3.1.4 Foundationalism & nonfoundationalism

Foundationalism is the "thesis that all our beliefs can be justified by appealing to some item of knowledge that is self-evident or indubitable" (Van Huyssteen 1997:2). Epistemologically, foundationalism always implies the holding of a position in an inflexible and infallible manner; invoking ultimate foundations on which to construct the evidential support system of various convictional beliefs (Van Huyssteen 1997:3). In the natural sciences, the implication of foundationalism is a positivist empiricism or scientific materialism that per definition renders all religion, theology and theological reflection meaningless. In theology, foundationalism implies biblical literalism, or positivism of revelation, that isolates theology in that it denies the crucial role of interpreted

religious experience in all theological reflections; thereby leaving the theologian to speak a language that may be internally coherent but powerless to communicate its content. Neo-orthodoxy and the Protestant evangelical movement are considered two forms of foundationalism. Neo-orthodoxy sought to return to the theology of the Bible and the Protestant Reformers emphasized the absolute authority of a transcendent God who could only be apprehended through the vehicle of God's own self-revelation and not the exercise of human reason (Graham 1996:74). Thus, foundationalism is unrelated to all nontheological discourse (Van Huyssteen 1997:226-227). Therefore, in both theology and philosophy, foundationalism is rejected in favour of nonfoundationalism (Van Huyssteen 1997:3).

Nonfoundationalism (or antifoundationalism) is one of the most important roots or resources of postmodernism (Van Huyssteen 1997:3). As postmodernism claims that all truth is relative and that there are no universal or absolute foundations, nonfoundationalism also denies any alleged strong foundations for belief-systems and argue that all our beliefs form a groundless web of interrelated beliefs. Nonfoundationalists emphasize the crucial epistemic importance of community, arguing that every community and context has its own rationality. This relativism of rationality in its extreme form denies interdisciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen 1997:3).

One more theological and philosophical position that deserves our attention is fideism. Fideism is a theory that teaches that all human knowledge has as its basis unjustifiable foundations that are solely founded upon a subjective feeling of certitude (Kreitzer 2005). Van Huyssteen (1997:24-26) speaks strongly against fideism:

Fideism, as a blind, uncritical commitment to a set of beliefs, could of course be at the heart of both foundationalist and nonfoundationalist models of rationality...the notion that religious system have their own autonomous principles and their own unique decision procedures not only is a denial of the interdependence of religious cognition and other forms of human cognition, but also is fundamentally inconsistent with a postfoundational holist epistemology, which claims a network

of interrelated intersubjective or transcommunal criteria for its statements.

Between rigid foundationalism and relativistic nonfoundationalism, where would we find theological and epistemological justification?

#### 1.3.1.5 Postfoundationalism

As we have seen in the previous section, in both foundationalism and nonfoundationalism, dialogue with other disciplines becomes difficult. Therefore, in response to the alleged objectivism of foundationalism and the extreme relativism of nonfoundationalism, J W Van Huyssteen proposed a “viable third epistemological option,” which he termed “postfoundationalism.” Müller (2004:4) calls this “a third way,” a way out of the “stuckness” of modernistic or foundationalist science and theology on the one hand, and the fatalism of some post modernistic approaches, on the other. Kevin J Vanhoozer (2000:87-89) calls this position “via media.” Van Huyssteen (1997:228) says further:

In a postfoundationalist theology the epistemological link between theology and the other sciences can be left open because the project of theological methodology and ‘prolegomena’ now becomes part of theological reflection as such, that is, as part of an ongoing interdisciplinary inquiry within the practice of theology itself.

As a pastor of Reformed tradition, I have believed that everything begins from the text and moves towards the context. I put ultimate authority in the text without any questions raised. “Thus says the Lord” was the end of discussion. The text was the final source of any argument. However, after I began my study at the University of Pretoria, through readings such as *A Fundamental Practical Theology* by Don Browning, the postfoundationalism of Van Huyssteen, other books of narrative and social constructionism, and also interaction with Prof Julian Müller, I came to realize that I have many postfoundationalist elements in my lifestyle, preaching and teaching methods, and approach to ministry. I am not as dogmatic and rigid as foundationalists. Nor am I so relevant as to accept any and every idea non-critically. So, I thought that the postfoundationalist position provided me with a boundary, but

with enough space to move around with freedom within it. For me, it is “a viable option beyond the extremes of foundationalism and nonfoundationalism” (Van Huyssteen 1997:4).

In the following sections the main tenets of this postfoundationalism will be discussed.

#### 1.3.1.5.1 Interpreted experience

In postfoundational theology, the focus will be the relentless questioning of uncritically held crypto-foundational assumptions. It engages in critical theological reflection in order to evaluate the roles of experience, tradition, and the classic Biblical text. Our beliefs are explored experientially and interpretatively. It allows the creative fusion of hermeneutics and epistemology. A postfoundationalist theology, therefore, acknowledges contextuality and the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience (Van Huyssteen 1997:4). Just as all scientific observations are theory-laden, so all religious experiences are interpretation-laden—and it is the interpretation that provides (valid) religious meaning (Van Huyssteen 1997:19-20). Regarding this idea, Van Huyssteen (2006:15) writes:

Because we relate to our world epistemically only through the mediation of interpreted experience, it may be said that our diverse theologies, and also the sciences, offer alternative interpretations of our experience (cf. Rolston 1987:1-8). Alternative, however, not in the sense of competing or conflicting interpretations, but of complementary interpretations of the manifold dimensions of our experience....[A]ll religious language, and certainly all theological language, invariably reflects the structure of our interpreted experience (cf. van Huyssteen 1997:40f.).

This interpreted experience starts from the individual’s experience towards the interpersonal and social (Müller 2004: 7). Don Browning presents a similar picture. In his *Fundamental Practical Theology*, Don Browning (1996:61) proposes differentiating common human experiences into three poles or foci: (1) interpretations of the practices, inner motivations, and socio-cultural history of individual agents; (2) interpretations of relevant institutional patterns and

practices; and (3) interpretations of the cultural and religious symbols that give meaning to individual and institutional action. These three poles of interpretation make up a model developed from James and Evelyn Whitehead's two poles of reflection, that is, *personal* and *corporate* experience, which is based on Tracy's "common human experience" (Browning 1996:61).

According to Van Huyssteen, this interpretation is a "received interpretation," in the sense that it is socially constructed, as opposed to an individual or subjective construction, and emphasizes the contribution of tradition, culture, and cultural discourses to the interpretation (Müller 2004:7). Royce's (Browning 1996:50) idea that interpretation always proceeds within a community, and Peire's (Browning 1996:51) argument that reality can never be known adequately by an individual, share the same social constructionist idea. Later, social constructionism will be addressed in more detail, but Van Huyssteen's (1997:16) argument encapsulates it well: "Our search for legitimate knowledge always takes place within the social context of a community..."

#### 1.3.1.5.2 Rationality

Rationality in postfoundationalism is "an awareness of the shared cognitive, pragmatic, and evaluative dimensions" (Van Huyssteen 1999:239). It is able to give an account, provide a rationale for the way one thinks, chooses, acts, and believes (Van Huyssteen 1997:39). This rationality describes the dynamic interaction of our various disciplinary dialogues with one another—as a form of transversal reasoning that justifies and urges an acknowledgment of multiple patterns of interpretation as one moves across the borders and boundaries of different disciplines (Van Huyssteen 2000:427). This rationality through transversal reasoning provides common ground for communication for people who have different beliefs and cultures.

Transversal reason, as mentioned above, originated from Calvin Shrag. It was used by Shrag (1992:149) to describe the way in which reason exists at the point of intersection between various disciplines, paradigms, and social

practices. Shrag (1992:149) says, “....transversality, most generally construed, provides a window to the wider world of thought and action.” This transversal reason was also called “shared rational resources” or “the resources of human rationality” by Van Huyssteen (2006:12, 40). For Van Huyssteen (2006:11-13), rationality takes many different forms, allowing us to integrate our multi-faceted lives, understand ourselves as individuals and communities, and relate to one another within and across complex socio-cultural structures. It is the most important “epistemic goal” that shapes the way in which we interact with others. Van Huyssteen (2006:11) continues:

We cannot talk abstractly and theoretically about the phenomenon of rationality anymore; it is only as individual human beings, living with other human beings in concrete situations and contexts, that we can claim some form of rationality. In this sense human rationality is revealed as always person- and domain-specific, as we discover it as present and operative in and through the dynamics of our words and deeds.

Postfoundational rationality, according to Van Huyssteen, is constructed on the basis of own experience, but is capable of reaching beyond. It starts with an individual and extends to community. This rationality is diverse from community to community, and there is no trans-cultural rationality. Therefore, postfoundational rationality is context-specific and is embedded in tradition (Van Huyssteen 2006:11). Regarding transversal rationality, Van Huyssteen (2006:20) argues:

Transversal rationality facilitates a multiperspectival approach to dialogue, where rationality exists in the intersecting connections and transitions between disciplines. In interdisciplinary dialogue, it is precisely these shared domains of rationality, these intersecting, overlapping concerns, that have to be carefully identified. This interwovenness of many different disciplinary voices opens up spaces for the performance of human cognitive fluidity at work, reveals the interdisciplinary conversation as transitional and interrelational, and the performance of human rationality is transversal. Welsh puts this quite succinctly: transversal rationality is rationality in movement, it is an ability, a skill, and as such is dynamically realized in these interactive process (cf. Welsh 1996:764).

Van Huyssteen (1999:267) further differentiates theological rationality from scientific rationality, “There are no universal standards of rationality against which we can measure other beliefs or competing research traditions.” For example, scientific rationality is different and should be treated differently from theological rationality because of different object, language, and method (Van Huyssteen 1997:263-265). Although the direction and process may be different, postfoundational rationality definitely has the characteristic of social constructionism, which is also a part of my research paradigm. Van Huyssteen’s rationality starts from an individual and reaches out to other human beings while social constructionism starts with the community (Müller 2004:7). This postfoundational notion of rationality challenges the interdisciplinary dialogue. It also produces interpersonal and all forms of cross-cultural dialogue, enabling us to interpret multiple aspects of our embodied experience (Van Huyssteen 2006:12-13). “In fact, rationality is all about epistemic responsibility: the responsibility to pursue clarity, intelligibility, and optimal understanding, as ways to cope with ourselves and our world” (Van Huyssteen 2006:11).

#### 1.3.1.5.3 Interdisciplinary conversation

Another major strength of postfoundationism is interdisciplinarity. A postfoundationalist notion of rationality in theological reflection claims to point beyond the confines of the local community or culture towards interdisciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen 1997:4). In particular, Van Huyssteen argues for interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and science, although domains of rationality of these two disciplines are different. For interdisciplinary dialogue between disciplines, paradigms, and practices to occur, transversal reason as mentioned above is employed. Van Huyssteen (2006:9) says:

Interdisciplinary discourse, then, is an attempt to bring together disciplines or reasoning strategies that may have widely different points of reference, different epistemological foci, and different experiential resources. This ‘fitting together,’ however, is a complex, multileveled transversal process that takes place not within the confines of any given discipline...but within the transversal spaces between disciplines.

Interdisciplinarity is further supported by the following arguments. Proposing three types of religious explanations—private, communal, and transcommunal—Philip Clayton (1989:3-5) defines transcommunal explanation as intersubjective explanation that transcends the boundaries of the individual or the religious community. Gelwick (1983:422) says, “Interdisciplinary study itself is a paradigm shift”. For such an interdisciplinary conversation to occur, epistemic humility is required and the willingness to learn is primary. In advocating fallibilism, one of the characteristics of postfoundationalism, Vanhoozer (2000:87-89) calls for exercising cognitive humility and willingness to put beliefs to the test. Don Browning (1996:81) also stresses the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue by saying, “It is extremely important for theology—especially practical theology—to have a strong and positive relation with the modern human sciences.”

When we thus engage in pluralist, interdisciplinary conversation, we are empowered to step beyond the limitations and boundaries of our contexts, traditions, and disciplines. “Here theology will share in interdisciplinary standards of rationality, which, although always contextually and socially shaped, will not be hopelessly culture- and context-bound. This will enable our theological reflection to aim for the reasoned coherence of a wide reflective equilibrium as the optimal epistemic goal of interdisciplinary dialogue” (Van Huyssteen 2006:41).

As we have seen above, in postfoundational critical theological reflection, the creative fusion of hermeneutics and epistemology occurs through the processes of interpreted experience, use of rationality and transversal reason, and interdisciplinary conversation. All of these are critical elements of my research.

#### 1.3.1.5.4 Critical realism

One more thing I would like to mention about postfoundationalism is critical realism. McMullin (1985:39) argues that critical realism provides the test where there is an overlap and interaction between science and theology in the human domain. Van Huyssteen clarifies the issue by saying that as a

promising but yet to be established theory, critical realism is neither a theological nor scientific thesis but philosophical, or more accurately, an epistemological thesis about the goals of scientific knowledge and the implications of theoretical models in science (Van Huyssteen 1997:41). However, in theology, critical realism means that what we are provisionally conceptualising in theology really exists (Van Huyssteen 1997:131). Van Huyssteen (1997:134-135) says again, “In theology, critical realism will imply a model of rationality where theological concepts and models are indeed provisional, inadequate, and partial, but on the other hand, also necessary as the *only* way of referring to the reality that is God, and the reality of God’s relation to humanity.” My purpose for bringing up critical realism is that it leads us to the realism of the text, which I believe is important in chapter four, “historical and systematic theology.” In critical realism the issues of faith experiences, the language of faith, and the theoretical language of theological reflection all presuppose an essential role of the biblical text and its interpretive tradition (Van Huyssteen 1997:133).

### **1.3.2 Practical**

Historically, practical theology shared some common features with pastoral theology. Sometimes, these two were treated identically, and other times completely differently. In the present context, the difference between these two is more of emphasis than substance. Pastoral theology is more associated with pastoring or shepherding, whereas practical theology is associated with academic and broad theoretic and theological issues. Despite these different emphases, both pastoral and practical theology are concerned with how theological activities can inform or be informed by practical action in the interests of making an appropriate and effective Christian response in our times. Within the mainstream Reformed tradition, however, practical theology tends to be a preferred term that includes pastoral theology (Pattison & Woolward 2000b:1-3).

Originally, the term “practical theology” emerged in the German Protestant tradition as part of the academic theological curriculum in the late eighteenth century (Pattison & Woolward 2000b:2). While there are many definitions of

practical theology, my purpose is not to elaborate on those various definitions, but instead to provide some significant characteristics of practical theology (Pattison & Woolward 2000b:6).

- (1) Transformational
- (2) Contextual and situationally related
- (3) Experiential
- (4) Interrogative
- (5) Interdisciplinary
- (6) Analytical and constructive
- (7) Dialectical and disciplined

Now in dealing with practical theology as my research paradigm, I would like to go one step further from these common characteristics presented above. I subscribe to the practical theology of Don Browning and use his work *Fundamental Practical Theology* (1996) as the main source for the development of my writing.

Traditionally, theology started from the text and the text provided norms of practice. Practical theology, therefore, has been treated as an inferior form of theology. However the whole theological process should be practical from the beginning because theology that is irrelevant to life in its abstract forms is not meaningful. Theology starts with the concrete and ends with the concrete. Browning's (1996:7) view makes sense when he says that theology starts from present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices.

In the above process, practical theology engages in reflective, critical, communicative, interpretive, hermeneutical, and correlational dialogue in order to achieve its purpose of bringing new meanings and horizons to specific contexts. It should be noted that other practical theologians uses a similar methodology. Gerkin's (1997) interaction between tradition and practice reveals dialogical and interactive nature of pastoral care, which is a realm of practical theology. Lartey's (2000:130) "pastoral cycle" presents a

model similar to Browning's argument of *fundamental practical theology*. Lartey (2000:128-134) talks about the theological process using different terms from Browning. As he talks about several different approaches to practical theology, he promotes his pastoral cycle, which consists of experience, situational analysis, theological analysis, situational analysis of theology, and response. This model of practical theology is a process, and there are interactions between situational analysis and theological analysis, and also between theological analysis and situational analysis of theology. Pattison and Woolward's (2000a:36-50) "conversation model" of pastoral theology also has such characteristics of practical theology as we are dealing with here—dialectical, interdisciplinary, reflective-based, and experiential-practical. Although it is not as fully developed as Browning's model of practical theology, David Tracy's (1983:76) definition also shares the same line of thought of interaction between theory and practice and their critical correlation: "*Practical theology* is the mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian fact and the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation." Müller calls this movement from the context to the theoretical and backward "the circle of practical wisdom" (Müller 2004:3).

I will be using Don Browning's four movements of theology as a guideline in developing the argument in my thesis writing. In the following section, Browning's four movements of practical theology are discussed.

#### 1.3.2.1 Four movements of practical theology

Browning (1996:8) argues that theology as a whole is "fundamental practical theology" and that it has four submovements of "descriptive," "historical," "systematic," and "strategic practical" theologies. Descriptive theology is to describe practices and attitudes of the personal, institutional, and religious situation of the research participant around a selected issue. Historical theology is to investigate the historical source, the Christian text, from the perspective of the description of contemporary practices. Systematic theology is a critical dialogue between the features of the Christian message and those of present practices. Strategic practical theology is to formulate new norms

and strategies of concrete practices in light of the critical dialogue and analysis (Browning 1996:72-73). These four submovements of practical theology deserve more attention.

#### 1.3.2.1.1 Descriptive theology

*Descriptive theology* is a hermeneutical task (Browning 1996:78). It starts with a whole, goes to interpretive critical thinking, and then reconstructs. It describes a question in all of its situated richness. It describes how people think and act practically in specific contexts (Browning 1996:94-97). Its purpose is to capture the questions that lead to historical and systematic theology and then back to the concreteness of strategic practical theology (Browning 1996:134). Therefore, descriptive theology aims for a “thick” description of situations (Browning 1996:105).

It is worth noting at this point to mention the five levels or dimensions of practical thinking proposed by Browning for thick description (1996:71). They are:

- (1) the visional level (raises metaphysical validity claims);
- (2) the obligational level (raises normative ethical claims);
- (3) the tendency-need or anthropological dimension (raises claims about human nature, its basic human needs, and the kinds of premoral goods required to meet these needs);
- (4) an environmental-social dimension (raises claims that deal with social-systemic and ecological constraints on our tendencies and needs);
- (5) the rule-role dimension (raises claims about the concrete patterns we should enact in our actual praxis in everyday world).

Browning (1996:71) recommends the use of these five dimensions for “describing the theory laden practices found in contemporary situations and for describing and critically assessing the Christian witness.” Of these five dimensions the visional and obligational levels are sometimes referred to as culture (Browning 1996:121), and these two upper levels are more

comprehensive and influence the interpretations of the lower three levels, that is, the tendency-need, environmental-social, and rule-role dimensions (Browning 1996:108). Altogether, these five dimensions are a great tool to obtain a thick description or questions concerning a situation or a phenomenon.

The descriptive task of theology mentioned above is really that of hermeneutic dialogue (Browning 1996:78). Since descriptive theology is hermeneutic in nature, the relation of theology to the human sciences such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology becomes essential. In fact, the human sciences are also hermeneutic (Browning 1996:130). The relation of practical theology to the human sciences can be stated as truth to method, understanding to epistemology, that is, procedure for gaining knowledge, and interpretation to explanation (Browning 1996:82). These human sciences are the disciplines that provide us with some in-depth knowledge of human mind and behaviours. Although these disciplines are not good enough to study various phenomena and practices of humans with completeness, they are useful when we assess individual human behaviours and practices. Therefore, Browning's (1996:81) point makes sense when he says:

It is extremely important for theology—especially practical theology—to have a strong and positive relation with the modern human sciences. But the use of these sciences by theology must be conceptually precise as possible—more accurate than it has been in the past.

Browning (1996:92) again makes a meaningful statement about the nature of descriptive theology and its relationship to human sciences as follows:

The idea of descriptive theology is not completely foreign to the human sciences. When they are used explicitly within fundamental practical theology, what is implicit in the so-called secular human sciences becomes explicit. The religious and theological horizon is made clear and direct. Interpretations of situations are made from a directly theological perspective. The human sciences can be used within descriptive theology and their explanatory interests employed to account for biological, psychological, and sociological factors that influence but do not determine human

behavior...it [descriptive theology] makes explicit what is often implicit within the human sciences themselves.

Lastly, Browning's (1996:89-92) following point says it all:

All the human sciences are, at least at their horizons, a kind of descriptive theology...[and] the human sciences fade at their edges into religious perspectives.

When descriptive theology catches the thick questions of a situation or a phenomenon hermeneutically, it prepares a way to the next submovements, that is, historical, systematic, and strategic theologies.

#### 1.3.2.1.2 Historical and systematic practical theology

Practical theology moves from descriptive theology and its formation of questions back to historical theology and asks the following question, "What do the normative texts that are already part of our effective history really imply for our praxis as honestly as possible?" (Browning1996:49). It is to understand what the text and the tradition say to the present context. The following statement of Tracy and Ricoeur succinctly summarizes what happens in this stage of practical theology.

This is where the traditional disciplines of biblical studies, church history, and the history of Christian thought are located. In this scheme, these disciplines and all their technical literary-historical, textual, and social scientific explanatory interests are understood as parts of a larger practical hermeneutical enterprise. Their technical, explanatory, and distancing manoeuvres are temporary procedures designed to gain clarity within a larger hermeneutic effort to understand our praxis and the theory behind it.

(Browning 1996:49)

As historical theology is engaged in dialogue, however, it is not an individual matter, but a communal interpretive process, especially in regards to both the theological academy and congregations (Browning 1996:51). This communally oriented interpretive process shares the same line of thought with social constructionism, which argues that we are socially constructed (Müller

2004:3). However, it needs to be noted that Browning is weak in social constructionism overall.

Then systematic theology, the third movement, is engaged. It is, according to Gadamer's hermeneutics, a fusion of horizons between the vision implicit in contemporary practices and the vision implied in the practices of the normative Christian text (Browning 1996:51). Systematic theology tries to gain as comprehensive a view of the present as possible and examine large, encompassing themes of our present practices. Its two main questions are:

- (1) What new horizon of meaning is fused when questions from present practices are brought to the central Christian witness?
- (2) What reason can be advanced to support the validity claims of this new fusion of meaning (Browning 1996:51-52)?

In answering the first question, systematic theology addresses general, shared and common themes of praxis in an orderly way. In answering the second question, systematic theology brings in critical and philosophical moment into theology (Browning 1996:52-54). Taking historicity seriously, Bernstein (1983:153) calls this process and challenge "the best possible reasons and arguments that are appropriate to our hermeneutical situation in order to validate claims to truth." After all, systematic theology is concerned with the grounds for religious belief—that is, how religious belief can make sense for modern people, since modernity undermines the common themes of practice (Browning 1996:54).

#### 1.3.2.1.3 Strategic practical theology

The first three submovements of practical theology have prepared us for the last movement, that of strategic practical theology. We began with the historically situated context or theory-laden practice, moved back to classical ideals, had a dialogue, and now we move forward to the future with new formulations.

In this stage, there are four basic questions that we ask. First, how do we understand this concrete situation in which we must act? It is a further development from general themes of praxis in systematic theology to particular ones of concrete individual, institutional, and religio-cultural situation. Secondly, strategic practical theology asks, what should our praxis be in this concrete situation? The symbolic and actional norms from historical and systematic theology are brought in to this particular situation. Thirdly, how do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation? Here the five dimensions of practical thinking—the visional, obligational, tendency-need or anthropological, environmental-social, and rule-role, employed to describe the theory-laden practice in descriptive theology—are engaged again for the defence of the norms. The revised correlational approach to practical theology at this stage, therefore, is different from just simple confessional, narrative, or cultural-linguistic approaches—because it defends the validity claims of the norms. Fourthly, what strategies and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation? This last question refers to the communication question for transformation, not only in the context in which the whole inquiry began, but also for the wider community (Browning 1996:55-56).

What is of special interest to strategic practical theology is the dynamic of transformation related to the fourth question above, and the nature of this dynamic of transformation is dialogical (Browning 1996:279). The dialogue that started with descriptive theology, the new horizon created in systematic theology, and the new praxis and norms put forth in strategic practical theology, when they are communicated, are truly powerful sources of transformation. Browning (1996:288) argues again for the crucial role dialogue plays in the process:

Increasingly, in this pluralistic and rapidly changing society where new moral challenges are constantly emerging, the establishment and maintenance of moral ideals will occur through critical hermeneutical dialogue.

This critical hermeneutics is the same as the revised correlational approach (Browning 1996:215), and the revised correlational approach to strategic

practical theology is basically an approach to communication (Browning 1996:291). These communications comprise a truly transformative dialogue (Browning 1996:292).

In the beginning of the discussion of practical theology, the first characteristic of practical theology put forth by Pattison and Woolward (2000b:6) was transformational. Unless practical theology aims at and brings about transformation of some sort for the betterment of Christian praxis, the whole hermeneutics and epistemology of practical theology focused upon in this section becomes an academic and theoretical activity. Practical theology, after all, is a transforming practice for communities of faith.

Before I close this section, I would like to mention Groome's (quoted by Browning 1996:218-219) "shared praxis." This model of practical theology is similar to Browning's. His five movements of critical reflection on present shared practices called shared praxis correspond to the four movements of fundamental practical theology of Browning. His five movements are: (1) Expressing present praxis; (2) Critical reflection on the present praxis; (3) Making accessible the Christian Story and Vision; (4) A dialectical hermeneutic between present praxis and interpretations of the Christian Story and Vision; (5) Decision and response for renewed Christian praxis. In his model, the fifth movement, which is also a forward movement for transformation, corresponds to Browning's last movement.

I quote Lartey (2000:133) as I conclude the practical theology portion as a valuable element of my research paradigm.

It is perhaps sufficient to say that what is aimed at in practical theology is a relevant, meaningful, methodologically appropriate and viable form of theological activity which may be personally and socially transformative.

### **1.3.3 Narrative**

Narrative is one of the main characteristics of postmodernity following Wittgenstein's "The limit of my language mean the limits of my world." The narrative understanding of reality is that it is not based on a single narrative,

but various narratives such as social, cultural, political, etc (Meylahn 2003:86). An awareness of the role of narrative in constructing human experience and giving significance to events in our lives has only recently surfaced in the human sciences (Polkinghorne 1988:184). Narrative theory of human understanding focuses its attention on existence as it is lived, experienced, and interpreted by the human person (Polkinghorne 1988:125). Polkinghorne (1988:183) argues,

Human beings exist in three realms—the material realm, the organic realm, and the realm of meaning. The realm of meaning is structured according to linguistic forms, and one of the most important forms for creating meaning in human existence is the narrative. The narrative attends to the temporal dimension of human existence and configures events into a unity. The events become meaningful in relation to the theme or point of the narrative. Narratives organize events into wholes that have beginnings, middles, and ends.

In Africa, this narrative approach is more valid than the western context. Manaka's statement (quoted by Müller, Van Deventer, & Human 2001:78) reveals the essence of this narrative approach to research—"in Africa we do things together through stories."

#### 1.3.3.1 Narrative understanding

We understand and live our lives through stories. According to Morgan (2000:5) "A narrative is like a thread that weaves the events together, forming a story" and the broader stories of the culture in which we live influence the ways we understand our lives (Morgan 2000:9). Polkinghorne (1988:13) defines narrative as follows: *Narrative* can refer to the process of making a story, to the cognitive scheme of the story, or to the result of the process—also called *stories, tales, or histories*. Barthes' comment (quoted by Polkinghorne 1988:14) is meaningful.

The narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives.

According to Crites (1989:69-71), there are two kinds of narratives: sacred and mundane. Sacred stories lie deep in the consciousness of culture, whereas mundane stories pass between people. Sacred stories form consciousness, while mundane stories find their setting within the world of consciousness. Barthes (quoted by Polkinghorne 1988:14) believes that narratives perform significant functions. On the individual level, people have narratives of their own lives that enable them to construe what they are and where they are headed. On the cultural level, narratives serve to give cohesion to shared beliefs and to transmit values. There is an interaction between the individual and cultural levels. Freedman and Combs (1996:17) say that cultural stories influence the way they interpret their daily experience, and that their daily actions influence the stories that circulate in society. "All a people's mundane stories are implicit in its sacred story, and every mundane story takes soundings in the sacred story" (Crites 1989:71).

The Enlightenment view of reality was a closed material system organized according to rules that could be expressed in terms of formal logic and mathematics. However, narrative understanding is that human experience is hermeneutically organized according to the figures of linguistic production (Polkinghorne 1988:155).

The concept of narrative action was born as an alternative to the three positions following: (1) mean-end rationality, that is, purposeful action is the result of a means-end calculation to achieve personal ends, (2) structuralism, that is, action is the enactment of transcendent and logically ordered rules, and (3) action as language game, that is, action is behaviour conforming to socially agreed upon rules (Polkinghorne 1988:137-142).

When action is understood within the systems mentioned above, the richness and fullness of its meaning disappears. Against the aforementioned approaches to human actions, the concept of human action proposed by a narrative approach is that action is an expression of existence and that its organization manifests the narrative organization of human experience (Polkinghorne 1988:142). This narrative involves the gathering of events into a plot in which meaning is given to the events as they relate to the theme of the

story. The plot configures the events into a whole, and the events are transformed from merely serial, independent happenings, into meaningful happenings that contribute to the whole theme (Polkinghorne 1988:143). Polkinghorne's (1988:145) statement is to the point:

Narrative is a form of hermeneutic expression in which human action is understood and made meaningful. Action itself is the living narrative expression of a personal and social life.

This hermeneutically based understanding of human behaviour as a narrative expression of existence can produce far more authentic and useful descriptions for a science of the human realm (Polkinghorne 1988:146). Kotze and Kotze (2001:1) say, "Telling narrative is doing spirituality."

#### 1.3.3.2 Narrative research

In the research arena, the narrative approach is a new form of research pattern. According to Müller (1999:1), the "narrative approach has made the discovery that people do not tell stories only for interest's sake or for entertainment but that life's grain is exposed through these stories." Although Müller said the above in the context of narrative therapy, it is revealing. In the research arena, we use the narrative approach in order to be truthful in doing research (Müller et al. 2001:77). One foundational understanding of narrative research is that we view people not as *research subjects*, but as *research participants* or *co-researchers*. In other words, research is not done on them, but with them (Müller et al. 2001).

There are two kinds of narrative research. One is descriptive, and it aims at rendering the narrative accounts already in place as are used by individuals or groups as their means for ordering and making temporal events meaningful. The criterion for evaluating this kind of narrative research is the accuracy of the researcher's description in relationship to the operating narrative scheme. The other kind is explanatory, and it aims at constructing a narrative account that explains "why" a situation or event involving human actions has happened (Polkinghorne 1988:161).

The purpose of descriptive narrative research is to produce an accurate description of the interpretive narrative accounts that individuals or groups use to make sequences of events in their lives or organizations meaningful. However, the research does not construct a new narrative; it merely reports an already existing one (Polkinghorne 1988:161-162). However, in this research paradigm, narrative is also understood to create an alternative story or understanding with the help of practical theology and social constructionism.

In narrative research, we ask questions, but questions are asked not to gather information, but to generate experience (Freedman and Combs 1996:113). Although Freedman and Combs developed these questions in a therapeutic context, they are still meaningful and can still be used in narrative research. The first type is called “deconstruction questions.” They are used to help people unpack their life stories so that they can see their life from different perspectives. Through deconstruction questions, problematic beliefs, practices, feelings and attitudes are revealed along with cultural and contextual influences. Then the second type of question is asked, called “opening space questions.” Once people see their lives from a different perspective, they are in a position to construct their lives differently with a unique outcome in mind. Then “preference questions” are asked to make sure the new story being constructed is that which they prefer to other past stories. Then we ask “story development questions” in order to develop new stories that would include details of time, context, people, and specific processes involved. Finally, “meaning questions” are asked to probe the meanings of all the previously asked questions. Meaning questions are asked about personal qualities, relationship characteristics, motivation, hopes, goals, values, beliefs, knowledge, and learnings that people derive from their developing narratives. Generally, deconstruction and opening space questions are asked in the early part of the interview, and preference, story development, and meaning questions are alternatively asked in latter part of the interview (Freedman and Combs 1996:113-143). In this research I will be using deconstruction questions in the beginning, but as the research progresses, I will be employing all the other questions as well.

It is worth mentioning “emplotment” at this point. In narrative interview, as the story develops and is constructed, the research needs to move from the specific stories towards the more general life stories that provide self-identity and give unity to the person’s whole existence (Polkinghorne 1988:163). The process is called emplotment. Plots are meaning expressions, and emplotment, or plotting, is an activity in which temporal happenings are shaped into meaningful units. Plot is the logic of narrative discourse that produces meaning. Through the action of emplotment, the narrative constitutes human reality into wholes, manifests human values, and bestows meaning on life. Emplotment composes meaning out of events using a similar process that grammar employs to develop meaning from words. Therefore, narrative meaning consists of more than the events alone; it consists also of the significance these events have in relation to a particular theme (Polkinghorne 1988:159-160).

In narrative research, research participants are valued and the researcher is involved in the lives of research participants. In the empiricist tradition, the investigator who “discovers” or “reveals” the true nature of things is honoured. As a result, the investigator’s voice is dominant and other voices are suppressed. As an alternative, in the narrative research, researchers seek to admit more voices to the conversation that generates understanding through the firsthand accounts (Gergen 1999:95). Therefore, in the narrative approach, the researcher with subjective integrity in mind, strives for participatory interaction and develops story through the active interaction between the researcher and participants (Müller et al 2002:85). Mishler (1986b:248-249) comments about the control of the research context by the researcher, “If we wish to hear respondents’ stories, then we must invite them into our work as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that together we try to understand what their stories are about.” This context is different from the typical survey interview context, in which the interviewer controls the interview by asking specific questions and intervenes when the answers are “off-track” (Polkinghorne 1988:161) or “suppresses narrative accounts in interviews” (Mishler 1986b:248).

The analysis of narrative interview needs attention as well. When analyzing narrative interviews, Labov argues for abstracting a core story, the plot, the theme from the total response of the interviewee. However, Agar and Hobbs offer a second model of analysis of narrative interviews that gives more attention to the particular content of a story than does Labov's method. They emphasize the question of how an episode in the story is related to the general story, that is, how it coheres with the rest of the account. Their proposal of three levels of coherence are as follows: local, in which the succession of statements is connected to prior statements by syntactic, temporal or causal relations; global, in which the statements cohere with the overall theme or intent of the story; and themal, in which general culture themes or values are expressed. Mishler, however, proposes still a different analysis—that the analyst can assume two notions about the story. First, the story is a form of self-presentation in which the teller is claiming a particular kind of self-identity. Second, the analyst searches for statements and references to the teller's identity through the account (Polkinghorne 1988:164-166). Mishler (1986a:64) further says, "Terms take on specific and contextually grounded meanings within and through the discourses as it develops and is shaped by speakers."

In this research, I will extract the themes that emerge from the interviews to develop them towards having a thick understanding of the context and also try to relate the stories to one another and to the themes.

Polkinghorne's (1988:160) following comment about narrative summarizes the central place of narrative in our lives:

Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell and hear told, with the stories that we dream or imagine or would like to tell. All these stories are reworked in that story of our own lives which we narrate to ourselves in an episodic, sometimes semiconscious, virtually in interrupted monologue. We live immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meanings of our past actions, anticipating the outcomes of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed.

We live and die through narrative (Gergen 1999:172).

#### **1.3.4 Social construction**

In the previous section, narrative leads us to think about people's lives as stories. In this section, social constructionism, we learn that every person's social and interpersonal reality has been constructed through interaction with other human beings and human institutions.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (quoted by Krog 1998:143) once stated: “[A] person is not basically an independent, solitary entity. A person is human precisely in being enveloped in the community of other human beings, in being caught up in the bundle of life. To be...is to participate”. In an increasingly diverse world where various realities clash and traditional values are waning, social constructionism as a postmodern project is seen as an alternative against the modernist faith in the individual mind, rationality, objectivity, and truth. This is a shift from focusing on the process by which an individual person constructs a model of reality from his or her individual experience, towards a focus on the way in which people interact with one another to construct, modify, and maintain what their society holds to be true, real, and meaningful. It is this social epistemology that attracts us to social constructionism (Freedman and Combs 1996:27)

The basic tenet of social constructionism is that people construct realities together. Freedman (1996:16) says:

The main premise is that the beliefs, values, institutions, customs, labels, laws, divisions of labour, and the like that make up our social realities are constructed by the members of a culture as they interact with one another from generation to generation and day to day. That is, societies construct the “lenses” through which their members interpret the world.

Without commitment to fundamental values, social constructionism is relativistic—meaning that all positions possess legitimacy in their own terms—but it is not relativism. Social constructionism invites a posture of continuing reflection; each moment of reflection is value-saturated. Their commitments are situated within culture and history (Gergen 1999:231-235).

Social constructionism is an alternative against scientism and humanism. Scientists argue that there are no principled differences between humans and machines, whereas humanists declare that there are many. Social constructionism offers an alternative to both traditions. Gergen argues we need not decide between the two any more than we must decide whether opera is any more true than jazz. We need to generate new conceptions that open up new alternatives for action. The point is not to search for what is fundamentally true or real, but to add to the cultural resources for relating (Gergen 1999:214).

Paré (1995:3-4) and Freedman and Combs (1996:20) discuss the locus of knowledge in the family therapy context from which epistemology has thus evolved: (1) knowable reality—its elements and workings can be accurately and replicably discovered, described, and used by human beings toward (2) perspectivist position—attempts to describe reality tell us a lot about the person doing the describing, but not much about external reality, and gradually to (3) a locus of knowledge in a community of persons—the realities we inhabit are those we negotiate with one another. Paré asserts that there has been a gradual, and as yet incomplete, evolution from the first to the third views over the course of this century. This trend is postmodern and social constructionistic, and celebrates relationship as opposed to the individual, connection over isolation, and communion over antagonism (Gergen 1999: 122).

Heshusius (1994:16) calls this “participatory consciousness” as opposed to the “alienated consciousness” of the natural sciences. Alienated consciousness requires that the act of knowing takes place through the distancing of oneself and the regulating of that distance in order to come to the known. Participatory consciousness takes place when the boundaries between the self and other are overcome through a deep connection. Heshusius (1994:16) contends:

Participatory consciousness is the awareness of a deeper level of kinship between the knower and the known....It refers to a mode of consciousness, a way of being in the world....It

requires an attitude of tremendous openness and receptivity....One is turned toward other (human or nonhuman) '*without*' being in need of it or wanting to appropriate it to achieve something

In the social constructionist view, the experience of self exists in the social realm (Weingarten 1991:289). The meanings of words are social constructions, meaning that words are not derived from private ideas in the mind but from social practice (Wittgenstein quoted by Polkinghorne 1988:26). The psychological is fashioned from the social (Gergen 1999:129). Even in education, truth does not exist beyond community. What is true or rational is an outgrowth of communal relations (Gergen 1999:180). In therapy, therapists take the position of "not knowing" instead of serving as the expert, and construct meaning through generative conversations (Gergen 1999:169-170). In various communities, as we have just seen above, people use stories to build new visions for the future—and the realities embedded in the stories come to life. According to Pieterse (quoted by Meylahn 2003:62), the social reality is determined by people's definition of their situation in terms of their own text and experience.

We need to take note here that there is a fundamental difference between constructionism and constructivism. Constructivism is a tradition deeply rooted in rationalist philosophy. The process of world construction is psychological and it takes place "in the head." However, social constructionism takes an outcome of real social relationships. Constructivism follows the individual tradition in the West. The individual mind is the centre of interest. Yet, constructionism searches for relational alternatives to understanding and action (Gergen 1999:236-237).

In social constructionism, reason also has a different interpretation. From the early Enlightenment philosophy to its emanation in twentieth century modernism, a strong faith has been placed in the power of reason. It is the power of human reason that stands against religious and political totalitarianism and from which we derive ethical foundations. However, for constructionists, rationality is not an inner state of mind but a form of public performance (in language, symbols, material arrangements). "Good reason"

derives its intelligibility and power from relationships. Reason is lodged within a particular culture and is committed to particular values and ways of life (Gergen 1999:229).

Finally, the social construction process takes us forward with new or alternative understandings. Although Habermas' "discourse ethics"—ethical foundations for productive dialogue on how we should resolve our conflicts—is appealing, we should move toward transformative dialogue that affirms relational responsibility and group realities (Gergen 1999:152-157). Malony (1983:189) says about the importance of dialogue for transformation as follows:

Truth exists in the interaction *between* persons rather than inside them....[T]ruth is discovered in the dialogue persons have with one another and that change comes through group action rather than individual insight.

Social construction is not a complete theory, but through reflection, constructionists appreciate the limitations of their commitments and the potential inherent in alternatives (Gergen 1999: 235)

In this research, I am using social construction as a method. Since realities are constructed together and alternative understanding is reached socially through group action, social construction is applicable to this research. De Beer (2001:38) comments about African reality:

An African world-view does not view the life of an individual in isolation from other human beings but sees life in communal terms. According to such a view, only through the mutual interdependence between people, as well as between an individual and her community, a full and healthy life can be enjoyed. The basic philosophy, according to Mbiti (1998:145) is: 'I am because we are, and since I am therefore we are.'

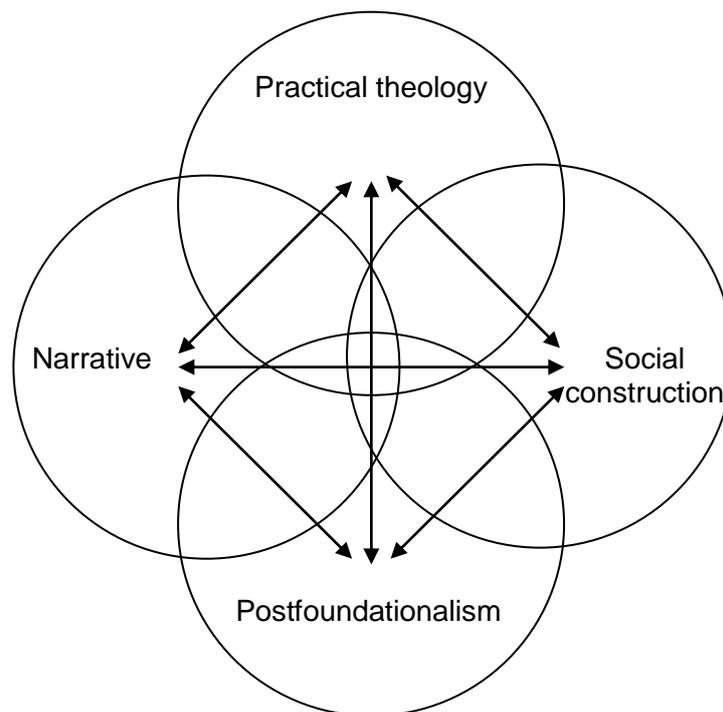
In favour of social constructionism Gergen (1999:221) says:

It is not the mind of the single individual that provides the sense of certitude, but the process of communal relationship. If there were no relationships there would be no meaningful discourse...We may properly replace Descartes' dictum with, *Communicamus ergo sum*—We relate, therefore I am!"

### 1.3.5 Distinct features of this research paradigm

The following will be the main features or values that will guide this research.

- Thick description and interpretation of experience
- Use of transversal reason for interdisciplinary conversation
- Communal construction of reality
- Dialogue for transformation



**Fig 1.1**  
**Research paradigm**

In summary, my theological position is postfoundationalism and practical theology. The main methodology I will be using is Browning's practical theology, and the epistemology will be narrative and social construction. These four elements will dialogue and interact with one another as the

research progresses. The diagram on the previous page shows the interrelatedness of these four elements of my research paradigm.

## CHAPTER 2

### NARRATIVES:

#### UNIQUE DESCRIPTION OF SPIRITUALITY

##### 2.1 RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Narratives create meaning in human existence, recounting our past actions and anticipating future outcomes (Polkinghorne 1988:160,183). I listened to the stories of the Kikuyu pastors of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) with a view towards understanding their spirituality and its formation. It was a great learning experience both for me and for my research participants. As my research participants described their life and ministry experiences, both good and bad, both joyful and painful, I, as a researcher, tried to listen to their experiences with subjective integrity, since I have come from a different background and context. I did not prepare questionnaires but approached them with some deconstruction questions with an intention to help them unpack their life stories.

##### 2.1.1 Research context

My research context was the Kikuyu PCEA (Presbyterian Church of East Africa) pastors in Nairobi area. The Kikuyu tribe is the largest tribe in Kenya and they are Bantus. As one of the mainline denominations, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa has its main thrust among the Kikuyu. Nairobi is the capital of Kenya and the hub of East Africa.

##### 2.1.2 Research participants

My research participants are five in all. The criteria that I used to select the research participants were: (1) pastors of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in their 30s, 40s, or 50s who had had at least 5 years of ministry experience and who lived in Nairobi area; (2) those who were trained in the theological institution of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa or the institution which was affiliated with the Presbyterian Church; (3) three male pastors and two female pastors; (4) at least one or two pastors from slum

churches—since the slum population comprises more than half of Nairobi population.

The five research participants whom I selected—Sam, Paul, Grace, George, Mary (all pseudonyms)—fit the criteria which I had set. I came to know them through Paul, one of the research participants, who introduced me to these pastors for interview. To give a little detail of the research participants, Sam is over 50 years old and has a total of 18 years of ministry experience in the Presbyterian Church. Since he is an elderly pastor, I thought he would provide a story that other pastors would not. Currently, he is a pastor of a slum church. Paul is a friend of mine, and I wanted to interview him. He has been involved with the Presbyterian Church over 15 years and is a pastor of a slum church. He is enrolled in a master's degree program, and I thought that his education would enable him to share something that perhaps others would not. George recently pastored a church located in suburban Nairobi. He has 10 years of ministry in the Presbyterian Church.

I had two women research participants. Grace has worked with the Presbyterian Church over 10 years. She pastors a church which is located close to a slum. Mary has worked for the Presbyterian Church for almost 15 years, and just started taking classes at a theological institution for continuing education.

These five pastors are all experienced Presbyterian pastors, and they are “encultured informants,” who know their culture well and take it as their responsibility to explain what it means (Rubin and Rubin 1995:66). Except Sam, they all belong to a “younger” generation, who are in the middle of their career. I am sure that although there would be other qualified Presbyterian pastors for this research project, the mixture of experience, age, ministry location, and education of my research participants provided me with a wide spectrum of voices of the Kikuyu pastors of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Nairobi.

I also consulted with scholars who taught at theological training institutes. Julius Murikwa is from a Catholic training institute who is a Kikuyu Anglican minister. I met with him three times and he provided insights in the area of the Kikuyu worldview. Caleb Kim is an anthropologist teaching at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST). I also met with him three times, and his anthropological insight helped me look at and describe the subject of my research from the discipline of anthropology. Michael Kirwen is a scholar at a Catholic training institute whom I consulted with in the area of Africa Traditional Religion. I met with him once. Sammy Linge is from Nairobi International School of Theology and provided me with insights in the area of African spirituality. I met with him twice. I consulted with these scholars, exchanged ideas, and some of them read my description of the context and provided me with feedback according to their expertise. I did not form a focus group because of their unavailability to all meet at the same time. Instead, I visited them in their offices and talked with them individually.

### **2.1.3 Research process**

Initially, I obtained written permission from my research participants after I explained to them why I was doing this research and what I was going to use it for. I also recorded every interview with their permission. I met with the research participants individually five times each. The meeting place was an office, church, or school. After each interview, I typed a rough draft, transcribed the interview, and received feedback at the following interview, which I conducted as a follow-up of the previous interview. For each research participant this process was done five times, and all my visits were made personally.

Since my method of interview and collecting data was narrative, I did not prepare questions but approached my research participants open-handed to listen to their stories. As a narrative researcher I took the position of “not-knowing” (Human 2003:42). However, I tried to use the questions of Freedman and Combs (1996:113-143), such as deconstruction, preference, and meaning questions of their spiritual experiences—first to unpack their

lives and subsequently to guide the interviews. For example, some deconstruction questions I used are as follows:

1. Who are those who influenced you in the formation of your current spirituality?
2. What events or experiences contributed to your spirituality?
3. Have you followed any tradition of spirituality consciously or unconsciously? If so, what traditions have you followed?
4. Can you identify any aspects of Kikuyu traditional spirituality that have become a part of your Christian spirituality? If so, what are those?

When the interviews were concluded, the overall impression I had of these men and women was that they were decent pastors. They loved the Lord their God, and were committed to their denomination, and were proud of being Kikuyu. Woman pastors struggled with gender issues but proved to be strong. Slum churches were struggling with the lack of funds. Within the Presbyterian Church of East Africa there was also a struggle between the conservative and the charismatic, with the charismatic gaining more power and adherents. Overall, financial issues were always a concern and constraint.

One out of the many benefits of this research for me is that I built relationships and friendships with the research participants—an invaluable resource for me. For my research participants, the interviews were tedious but rewarding. Two of the participants said that it was a hard process but that it made them revisit the past and look at their lives from a different angle. My research participants were cooperative, and it seems that they were sharing their lives' stories honestly. They taught me!

#### **2.1.4 Researcher's theological and cultural position**

I think it would be helpful to clearly make known my theological and cultural positions at this juncture, since my positions definitely interact with those of my research participants and unconsciously affect the research process, which is somewhat unavoidable.

I am a Presbyterian pastor trained at a dispensational seminary, and have studied missions at a school of world mission of another seminary. I was involved with campus discipleship ministry when I was in college and seminary, and was also exposed to charismatic ministry. Now recently, I was exposed to postfoundational research ideas. My theological perspective, therefore, is not limited to one denomination or theological school. It seems that I am “multi” something and I am happy with that.

Culturally, I am of Asian-born, raised in Korea, and moved to the US in my early twenties. All of my post-secondary education was done in the US. In my early forties, I came to Kenya as a missionary. I have experienced Korean culture, American culture, and Kenyan culture. I have become sort of “multi” here culturally as well.

Spiritually, I think the most dominant characteristics of my spirituality are, according to Richard Foster’s streams of spirituality, (1) the Evangelical tradition, that is, spirituality centred around the Word of God, and (2) Holiness tradition, pursuing the virtuous life. I can also identify the influence of Confucianism as part of my spirituality. It is there in me and in the Korean culture as a moral principle.

From the standpoint of these theological, cultural, and spiritual positions as I have briefly mentioned above, I am approaching the issue of Kikuyu pastors’ spirituality. Honestly speaking, these stances may hinder or promote the description, interpretation, and formulation of an alternative understanding. They may hinder the process because of the alleged differences between them and me. However, this distance that exists between us may produce a more balanced description and interpretation since the postfoundational research process involves collaboration with the research participants. I am quite positive about that.

## **2.2 STORIES OF KIKUYU PASTORS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EAST AFRICA**

The Kikuyus are the tribe who received the gospel early when the first missionaries came to Kenya in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. They are the ones whose fertile land was taken by British colonialists. They are also the ones who led the Mau Mau revolt against the colonial government and further towards Kenyan independence. Originally, the Kikuyus were agriculturists, but their innate inclination for capitalism moved them to urban areas and exposed them to different cultural influences. I have found that none of my research participants are traditional Kikuyus, which means that they have abandoned their traditional Kikuyu rituals and sacrifices. They are all modernized in one-way or another.

This chapter is about the stories of the five Kikuyu pastors of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Their stories include life's grains (Muller 1999:1); and the emplotment of their stories provide self-identity and unity to the person's whole existence (Polkinghorne 1988:163). The weaving of individual stories makes a beautiful tapestry that has distinctive colours and designs unique to their own spirituality. These narratives are in fact the description of their spirituality as lived experience. The names used in these stories are pseudonyms.

### **2.2.1 Story of Sam the Kenyan**

#### **2.2.1.1 Unstable childhood**

Sam was born during the period of struggle for independence in the 1950s. Kikuyus were trying to defend their identity and land from the colonialists. His parents were involved in this struggle as well. He said that they were not Christians necessarily, but were members of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). Since he was not baptized as an infant because of social unrest, he had to go through catechism, was baptized when he became 11 years old, and then confirmed. After he finished primary education, he went on to high school but could not finish it because of financial difficulties. But

then a couple hired him and sent him back to school for vocational training, and he became employed as a clerk.

While he was with the couple who employed him, he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal saviour and started growing spiritually. They were involved with the East African Revival Movement (EARM), which emphasized salvation and holiness. The East African Revival Movement started from 1929, and most of the church leaders now were leaders of that movement back then. It kept the church awake for almost 50 years, and Sam's evangelistic fervour has its root in the Movement. The common Christian expression "Nimeokoka" meaning "I am saved" started as a result of this movement. After he was saved, he led his parents and siblings to Christ.

#### 2.2.1.2 From Anglican to Presbyterian again

While he was working as the director of the community development centre at Eastleigh after the vocational training, he received a call from God to become a preacher. After several attempts, he managed to enrol in a one-year crash program at the Pastoral Institute Kikuyu. He moved on into ministry and was ordained later. In fact, from when he was saved, the Lord started impressing on him that he should go into ministry. At the time, his mentor or employer was a Church Army captain in the Anglican Church. Since the Church Army was evangelistic, they influenced him to become evangelistic as well. Then he sought an opportunity to train with the Anglicans but was not accepted because he was a Presbyterian and only 18 years old at the time. As for him, he did not want to be an Anglican anyways. He ended up being involved in evangelism activities with the Anglicans until he went to the Presbyterian Institute.

#### 2.2.1.3 Reforming Presbyterian Church of East Africa as his mother church

Although he was baptized at a Presbyterian church in his early childhood, he became its firm follower only after he was married. Before marriage, he associated with the Anglicans because he was still under the umbrella of the family who were his benefactors, and they were Anglicans. In fact, his Presbyterian affiliation began early on when he went to the PCEA-sponsored

primary school. His parents were also staunch members of the PCEA in the 1920s and 1930s. He considers the PCEA as his mother church. He seems to like it considerably, giving it a lot of respect. He gave three reasons why he liked the PCEA: its orderliness, development consciousness, and its reforms.

However, the conservatism of the PCEA caused its decline until recently. In the early 1970s, the conservative stance of the traditional churches, such as the Presbyterian, the Anglican, and the Methodist, caused their members to leave and form such Pentecostal churches as the Deliverance Church, Redeemed Gospel Church, and others. Sam stated, “They started out as small churches and it was like a revolution.” He was envious of them but the Lord spoke to him to stay and fight from within. He was challenged and took up the fight. From then on, he has been fighting for the reform of the PCEA from within.

In the early 1970s, the East African Revival Movement (EARM) also started getting some problems as it became institutionalized, and started breaking up. Although it was a very grand movement in the beginning, the EARM gradually became quite conservative and lost momentum. Instead, in the 1970s, the Pentecostal movement, or Pentecostalism, started taking over the Kenyan church almost as if God planned it, and started to influence everybody. About the characteristic of the PCEA and the EARM, Sam commented, “What the EARM and the PCEA emphasized was Jesus Christ a lot. Yesu, Yesu, Yesu all the time! And the Holy Spirit was not emphasized.”

Regarding the reform of the PCEA, the PCEA is Reformed and yet is reforming. The reform—actually Sam prefers the word transformation to reform—within the PCEA started 2-3 years ago with the present moderator Rev Dr David Githii. Githii and Samuel Muriguh, the denominational leaders, have been the supporters of the renewal movement of the PCEA, but the overall struggle started over 10 years ago. Presently, although conservative leaders are trying to block the present moderator from being re-elected, Sam believes that this will not occur since the church has moved on. During the last two, three years, the PCEA saw a remarkable growth from 24

presbyteries to 42 presbyteries under David Githii's leadership. Sam said, "Although the struggle for reform was hard, it was not in vain."

Regarding the weaknesses of the PCEA, Sam commented:

The weaknesses of the PCEA are slow procedures. They always say, 'If we are going to change, let's agree all of us together.' The other thing is bureaucracy. It takes too long. You have to move from a local church all the way up. But it is also positive since you can put a check along the process.

The PCEA has a policy of moving pastors to different parishes every five years. But the actual practice is every three years or less. It has both positive and negative impacts on pastors. As for Sam, transfers were good experiences. He stated:

Transfers expose ministers to different kinds of people. It only becomes bad when a minister has no mission. I feel I have a mission. I want to set as many groups free as possible. I hate dull churches. Dullness, if not checked, grows to deadness...If you have a mission, it's good to move everywhere.

That also matches with his desire to become a freelance minister within his denomination, the PCEA. According to Sam, the PCEA charismatic churches are growing very fast and since they are growing, they have no financial problems either.

#### 2.2.1.4 Turning to Charismatic

He was against the charismatic movement until 1993, when he attended a Mombasa convention organized by one of his colleague pastors. The charismatic pastors there at the convention challenged Sam so much that he started thinking of the Holy Spirit and asked God to show him the way. His efforts in reading the Bible and the relevant Christian literature about the Holy Spirit, and listening to the audiotapes of famous preachers like Bonke and Yonggi Cho, opened his eyes to the Holy Spirit—and as a result he was transformed. He said, "The whole of my Christianity was transformed." Then he started preaching for the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, he compared his

salvation and earlier life to a soldier's life in the barracks, and his life after the transformation to that of a fighting soldier.

From then on, he has fought for the charismatic movement within the PCEA. The Lord clearly told him to tell the church. He has obeyed his call, and despite much fear, pain, and tears he has not given up. Sam said, "We are almost through..." He also says, "People who support the charismatic movement within the PCEA are still minority." That speaks to how tough the struggle has been and is.

#### 2.2.1.5 Kikuyu but Kenyan

From what he said, I can say he is a real Kikuyu man. He was brought up in the EARM where they shunned tribalism. Sam does not like the question "What tribe are you from? Which part of central Kenya do you come from?" According to Sam, "Tribalism is a big problem." He mentioned that in the referendum vote on 11/21/05, on the new proposed constitution, the votes were divided according to the tribal division. He said of his identity, "I am a Kikuyu naturally but spiritually and nationally I feel differently."

He also states that Kikuyus are capitalists and very good learners. The negative elements of Kikuyus, however, are pride and selfishness. He said, "We are very proud of what we are." In regards to others, he thinks Kikuyus should influence others since they are blessed of God.

Sam was not exposed to traditional Kikuyu rituals. He himself paid dowry for his wife but never asked dowry for his daughters. He is against the dowry system. He was also circumcised at a hospital as opposed to going through tribal rituals. He just wants to be identified as a Kenyan born in the central province. He said, "The other ones [identities] bring lots of problems. Other tribes give Kikuyus a lot of names." He said, "I want anybody to see me as a Kenyan."

In regards to Ngai, the Kikuyu God, his initial response was “I don’t know.” He believes human beings believe in supreme beings who are somewhere. However, later he said, “I believe Ngai is same as Yahweh.” He said:

They [Kikuyus] didn’t have the details but Yahweh of the Bible as it was given to us has given us more details...the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That [the fact that Kikuyus had Ngai] could be a reason the Kikuyu tribe accepted the gospel faster than the other tribes.

#### 2.2.1.6 Conviction in teaching the word

Sam states that the tradition that the Scottish missionaries brought to Kikuyu has prevailed within the PCEA until the East African Revival Movement came in 1929. Then the EARM prevailed for almost 50 years. What the EARM taught Kenyans was holiness and upright living. This movement spread across tribal and denominational boundaries. In the 1970s, when the EARM became irrelevant and could not move any further despite its effort for renewal, the charismatic movement took over. About the charismatic movement, he seemed to have a firm conviction regarding it. He said, “We want the church to go where the Spirit of God is leading us.”

Another strong emphasis he has come to develop is his conviction in teaching the word of God. It started about 5 years ago. He was trying to change the PCEA structure laid down by the PCEA over 100 years ago but was not succeeding at all. Instead he was making many enemies. So he talked to his comrades that he would engage with people individually by teaching them the truth. And the truth shall set them free. He organized revival meetings on Sunday afternoons and provided them with heavy teaching, grounding participants on the word of God. And it started taking effect. Now the revival meeting on Sunday afternoons is everywhere. He said, “Pastors who are not teaching are in trouble because people are moving [to other churches]. Hundreds of them are with the Jesus is Alive Ministry because the PCEA didn’t teach them.”

He also said, “...we as ministers have not been able to give [people] more teachings...the Lord is challenging that when the Lord is calling me to be very

evangelistic, I should always be having something to teach...that will set them free.” He mentioned Matthew 28:20 that speaks strongly to him about the necessity and urgency of teaching. Nowadays he downplays preaching but puts emphasis on teaching. Sam says, “The Pentecostals are really trying to teach.” He pointed out some such Pentecostal ministries as Jesus is Alive Ministries, Green Pastures Tabernacle, and Nairobi Pentecostal Church, that concentrate on teaching the word of God. “The Pentecostals realize that signs and wonders are temporary, and they are teaching. This is a recent phenomenon.”

Sam was frustrated with all the preaching done in the PCEA churches that just focused upon, “Get saved. Get saved.” He said, “That is not enough. That is the beginning but we have to continue making them firm in the faith.” He also said, “They are all looking for green pasture. People are hungry and thirsty.” His conviction in teaching becomes evident when he said, “You are to teach. Otherwise, we shall perish. There will be no Presbyterian Church of East Africa if it doesn’t change.”

So it seems that Sam’s involvement with the EARM laid a spiritual foundation in his life. Then the paradigm-shift to the charismatic movement made him an effective preacher. Then he acquired an additional element for his ministry, which is his conviction in teaching the word of God.

#### 2.2.1.7 Ministry challenges

He talked about the Kibera slum where his church is located—that it started as a Sudanese refugee settlement. It was and is predominantly Muslim. Despite many efforts of Christian ministries in Kibera, problems still abound. The two main problems he mentioned in Kibera were HIV/AIDS and poverty, and that these two are closely related. He quoted South African President Mbeki—that it is poverty that causes HIV/AIDS. Because of poverty, people become careless and relate to each other carelessly.

Another major challenge his church faces is they have not been able to penetrate into the surrounding Muslim community. He also talked about the

lack of financial power of people. Although he wants to build a community-development and training centre in his church compound, which will draw people to the church for training, the necessary funds are not available. He also mentioned the need for spiritually mature leadership in his church; and he has started a program to train leaders to remedy the situation.

For his own spiritual health, he uses prayer, devotional reading, and preaching. Regarding preaching, he said, “I regard preaching as a spiritual exercise. I come down if I don’t preach a couple of weeks.” He is also very well aware of spiritual battles. Spiritual battle, entering enemy camp, and declaring war are all fighting metaphors he used. According to Sam, this understanding came after he joined the charismatic camp.

#### 2.2.1.8 Summary of Sam’s narrative

Sam is a Spirit-filled pastor who has witnessed what young pastors have not had the privilege of seeing. As a young boy, he saw the struggle for independence and suffered from it. However, the Lord was gracious with him and pulled him through. His wisdom from long years of ministry, evangelistic fervour, Charismatic ministry, and conviction in teaching the word of God have all made him an effective leader within the PCEA system. He finds his identity in Christ and puts the Kenyan national identity above his tribal identity. This makes him a model for others to follow since tribal division is one of the main struggles in Kenya, even in Christian churches. His church is a slum church and that brings some financial constraints to his ministry. However, he hopes to serve and liberate as many churches as possible with the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### 2.2.1.9 Major themes of Sam’s narrative

- The East African Revival Movement
- History and reform of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa
- Pentecostal or Charismatic movement in Kenya
- Kikuyu culture and religion
- The issues of HIV/AIDS and poverty

- Conviction in teaching the word of God

## **2.2.2 Story of Paul the modern Kikuyu**

### 2.2.2.1 Christian family heritage

Paul had the privilege of being part of a Christian family in his life. His grandmother was a devout Catholic, and his mother joined the PCEA through her life crisis. He said of his grandmother, “I believe she had a very powerful influence on my prayer life.” When Paul was young, his parents were living in the city because of work, and thus he spent the first few years of his life with his grandmother. As for his father, he used to drink a lot and did not do much for Paul except to provide for basic provisions such as school fees and clothes. For this reason, Paul said that he invests deliberate effort and time towards his own children.

For Paul, it seemed that women played a major role in shaping him while he was growing up. Generally speaking, Kikuyu children are influenced more by women than men, both at church and at home, as was in Paul’s case. Although he stated that the Kikuyu tribe is matriarchal in his early interview, he corrected himself later saying that Kikuyus are neither patriarchal nor matriarchal. “It depends on each locality because there are areas where women make more decisions than men, since women are majority in those places.”

Paul was born again as a Christian in his early 20s. He recalls the day when the he was born again as “a powerful revelation. It was revelation of what Christ did, what he desires and demands of me.” From then on, God led him gradually. Although his academic training was in the area of accounting to become a CPA, God called him into ministry, and Paul yielded to his call and went on to theological training.

### 2.2.2.2 Multi-denominational perspective

Paul had a Catholic influence from his grandmother early on, the African Inland Church (AIC) influenced him in the Word and prayer impact, and then

he was saved at an interdenominational prayer meeting. He also said he attended Pentecostal meetings frequently from 1989. For this reason, Paul was open to Pentecostals or Charismatics. For theological training, he went to St. Paul United Theological College, where it was possible to mingle with pastors of other denominations, such as Anglican and Methodist. Furthermore, he experienced discipleship ministry through the Navigators and the Life Ministry. Currently Paul attends Nairobi International School of Theology (NIST) and is gaining more interdenominational exposure. All these experiences and exposures have given Paul a unique perspective and have put him in a position to serve people across denominational lines. As a pastor rooted in the PCEA, one of the mainline denominations in Kenya, and having been exposed to a variety of denominations, Paul may have acquired the understanding and flexibility to influence a wide spectrum of church and society. This, I consider a blessing.

#### 2.2.2.3 Modern Kikuyu

He said, “I am a modern Kikuyu.” According to Paul, “Modern Kikuyus’ are mostly those who were born after independence (1963) and they have no roots in the rural areas.” His parents and grandparents were not overly committed to Kikuyu culture as being of primary concern, but were “Christianised” Kikuyus. For example, when Paul was born, his parents did not take him to the traditional altar like other traditional Kikuyu parents did. He followed some Kikuyu cultural forms such as circumcision, marriage custom and naming of children. However, even these customs were fulfilled in non-customary ways, especially circumcision and marriage. He was circumcised at a hospital and his marriage ceremony was Christian. Even paying dowry for his wife was a token gesture. He said, “My foundation is both Kikuyu and Christian.”

As a Christian Kikuyu, Paul loves his children and shares the responsibilities of home together with his wife. It seems like Christianity brought about changes in his life in the area of gender roles. In this sense, Paul does not seem to be a traditional African male but a Christian man who follows the

biblical role models. He said, “Young PCEA pastors are not traditional in gender roles mainly because of peer pressure.”

#### 2.2.2.4 Affiliation with the Presbyterian Church by choice

I had an impression that he likes his denomination, the PCEA, in general. He said, “By choice, I am a Presbyterian.” He likes PCEA governance and the freedom it gives him. When he studied theology, he said that he checked the Reformed Theology critically and realized that he could “live with it.” However, as a young pastor, Paul is not quite satisfied with some of the denomination’s policies. For example, he has resentment towards the pledging system of the PCEA, which is an offering system of the denomination, and its crippling effects upon the function of the church. He was keenly aware of the denomination’s economic policy and its accompanying difficulties. But it seems like he is trying to bring about changes in the areas where they are needed, for example, in the implementation of policies. He said of it,

The process is too slow...it is what I call the bureaucratic kind of system. It is not responding as it should....There is a generation of ministers...their way of thinking is not modern and they happen...to be in their leadership position. So they are not changing with the times.

Paul also mentioned other areas where the PCEA needed to change and improve, specifically to address the needs of the current generation at this time. Those areas are children and youth ministries, stewardship of finances, ministerial placement, discipleship and nurture, and the upgrading of catechism materials. He said there were no proper programs to teach children and that the PCEA needed trained youth workers, as there were only three parishes where there were youth workers, that is, St. Andrews, Nairobi West and Langata.

Currently, Paul teaches stewardship in the Kibera parish; additionally, the discipleship program he has introduced to the Nairobi West parish in the past is going well. Paul is an initiator. Overall, despite the problems he experiences within the PCEA, I sense that he likes his denomination like the other PCEA

pastors I interviewed. I see this as a good sign for the denomination. It seems like there is some bond between the PCEA and the Kikuyu.

Regarding the impact of the East African Revival Movement on the PCEA, Paul said that the concept of salvation came into the church through the East Africa Revival Movement. Those born again started their own fellowship called “Tukutendereza Fellowship.” “Tukutendereza” means “praise the Lord” and it was the identification of the East African Revival Movement. People who confessed Christ through the Revival movement were at first kicked out of their churches, but later, the three denominations—Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican —later accepted them back. Paul said, “When these people came back, the impact was powerful. This revival movement was God-ordained as any other revivals and gave tremendous benefits to the Kenyan church. Its impact is still felt.” Its influence on the Kenyan church’s spirituality must have been remarkable.

Paul said that from 1989 he attended Pentecostal meetings frequently. He seemed to be open to Pentecostals and in fact, wants to help Pentecostal pastors with training. Within the PCEA, however, Charismatic pastors are still a minority. They have been fighting for a more open attitude from the PCEA towards them. This struggle seems to be bearing fruit at some churches, and they are gaining more members and growing. Paul said, “We can’t ignore the impact of the Pentecostal movement we have had in this nation. We can’t ignore that.” He continued, “This Pentecostal affiliation or involvement is a generation thing. Young people are not satisfied where they are. Their needs are not met. So they are all over the place. They are interacting in school, colleges, wherever.”

One thing I also noticed through my encounters with PCEA pastors is that they did not seem to be very authoritative. Young pastors behave naturally or freely in the presence of pastors who are in authority. According to Paul, “There is a lot of freedom within the PCEA.”

#### 2.2.2.5 Holistic approach to ministry

His ministry approach seems to be holistic, meaning that his idea of spirituality is broad and multi-faceted. He has been involved in a national prayer movement to change politicians. He is currently serving in a slum church and experiencing their problems first-hand. He is also well aware of the dangers of cultic movements, and the syncretism that arises out of them, and the danger of televangelists. He believes in the power of prayer - that prayer brings about changes.

He is deeply concerned about raising leaders who model the Christian lifestyle. Concerning raising leaders, he said, "I'd like to see intentionality." Talking about the church, he said, "There should be a deliberate effort on the part of the church," and "All the congregation must have intentional discipleship." In this, he seems to imply that intentional effort is lacking in the ministry of the church, and also in the process of raising godly leaders both for the church and society. His question is very much to the point, "How can the church be relevant in every sector of the nation?" His comment also makes a good point,

I believe every congregation should be a congregation that tends to influence the people who don't know the Lord, to grow in the Lord, and to have a lasting impact, eternal impact. The church should be involved in the society at various levels. The church needs a proactive approach and a focus. The church needs to be represented in a community planning so that its people can be benefited like housing project in the Kibera slum.

As a person, he seems to be very diligent and organized, although he also tends to act too quickly sometimes. His seeking of balance, intentional effort, and critical evaluation should all be useful to achieve his vision and goal, which is raising up and equipping leaders.

#### 2.2.2.6 Spiritual disciplines

Paul seems to value the disciplines of fasting, prayer, time alone, etc. He seems to know the importance and benefits of spiritual health and disciplines.

His statement “I feel under-nourished” makes sense because he said he was always time-pressured.

Paul also knows the importance of discipleship: “Nobody took me through a formal spiritual growth [training].” However, he has had several people who have taken interest in him and have helped him grow, such as Dr Iliya Majam and Dr Stanley Mukolwe. Also the Life Ministry helps him at Nairobi International School of Theology (NIST). In turn, he has started a discipleship group in Nairobi West, his former parish, and it is now growing. This is very encouraging.

#### 2.2.2.7 Important issues

##### 2.2.2.7.1 Leadership

Paul said, “Leaders in this country have a position of leadership but they are not leading as an example. They want to maintain a status quo.” In this, he is referring to both church and government leadership. Currently, he has devised a leadership training material of stewardship and has also created a draft for a leadership training organization called R.E.A.L (Raising and Equipping African Leaders). Paul wants to place a deliberate effort in identifying, training and mentoring those who have the leadership gift. He seems to be on the right track in that the leadership issue is an essential topic for this society. He wants to raise competent, God-fearing leaders who have integrity, character, responsibility, patriotism, etc. Furthermore, he wants to raise a core group of leaders who will give influence to others socially, politically and spiritually.

##### 2.2.2.7.2 Gender

He said Kikuyu was a matriarchal society. Historically, because most of the Kikuyu men died during the war for independence, most homes were left in the hands of women. So in most homesteads, women were the heads of family. He further explained about the gender roles as follows.

The traditional roles of man have been replaced by modernity. In the traditional community most of men used to hunt,

shepherd cows, or do security and all those other things. Women, children, young men and women were farming. But modernity has displaced those roles. You find that now men are in town and their wives are in rural areas. So roles have changed completely. We need to develop new roles that are biblically sound for men.

About the leadership of men, he said, “In practice even a casual observation will tell you that men have lost their position of leadership in the home. We men are in serious trouble.” As for the PCEA, they have started the Presbyterian Churchmen Fellowship with programs to help the elderly men mentor young men. At church Sunday schools, since most teachers are women, boys do not want to go to church school. In some sense, boys lack a male role model to imitate and aspire towards.

About women in leadership, Paul said, “More women are enrolling in and graduating from theological colleges than in the past, and women have been more active than men in the church.” For example, the women’s organization came into being before men’s and there are more women than men attending the church. According to Paul,

Within the Presbyterian Church of East Africa the women’s guild came into being before the independence because of the issue of FGM [Female Genital Mutilation]. It started to help those girls who came to the mission station to avoid FGM and grew to become the woman’s guild....In the Presbyterian church women have a voice and they have a place...in fact, even women have been ordained. So within the Presbyterian Church the gender issue is not a serious matter. At least now it is not. In fact, if you go to a parish and you don’t work well with the woman’s guild as a minister, you will not stay there long. That’s how powerful they are.

#### 2.2.2.7.3 Theological issue

There are many cultic groups in Kenya. Paul said, “Some indigenous churches are called ‘uniformed churches’ because they wear uniforms. Culture influenced them more than the word of God. So there is a need for correct theology.” The other major cults are also active in Kenya. According to Paul, “Mormons and Jehovah’s Witness build temples all over. They buy land all over too.” He also mentioned the danger of televangelists—that they

preach from any theological point and poison peoples' mind. Paul asserted that while the Presbyterian Church may have correct theology, the Reformed Theology, the independent churches of Kenya need correct theology. One thing he mentioned that could help the Kenyan church with theology was the Theological Education by Extension (TEE). However, what the Presbyterian Church needs to do is to integrate theology with the needs of people.

#### 2.2.2.7.4 The issue of poverty

He seemed to be learning something new through his involvement in the slum church. He was dissatisfied with the way things were, one of them being that the church expected its members to support their minister while they themselves were absolutely poor. He came to search his heart and his spirituality more in-depth to find answers to the problems. He said he would like to give the members hope and that his involvement in the slum church brought him a change of attitude. According to Paul, "The issue of poverty is very central...the church needs to be involved in government initiatives such as building better houses in the slum areas, sanitation matters, environmental issues...we need to connect at the grassroots." He also said,

The other issue is that the church can have a revolving fund for small businesses and train people to manage those businesses. It is not enough just to train them. We have to facilitate [help] them with tools to start work. In fact we should go further and train and empower them to become employers.

He is keen about economic issues. He has made concrete financial plans for his future ministry to become self-supported. Economic issue is very important to human beings and his sensitivity or awareness of this matter is legitimate. Perhaps he has gained this sensitivity from his awareness of the current environment in Kenya, and also from his Kikuyu cultural heritage, or perhaps it is simply a matter of survival. His interaction with the economically challenged also has made him aware of this issue. Although the issue of poverty is so complex and discouraging, Paul spoke with a positive tone. "Kenyans are workers. These people work seriously. There is one thing that you will find. Kenyans are workers." He keeps a positive attitude toward this disheartening problem.

#### 2.2.2.8 Summary of Paul's narrative

Paul is an action-oriented initiator. He translates his thoughts to actions quickly. He likes to interact with people. He is not overly charismatic but supports the Charismatic movement. He does not want to be a parish minister, but a scholar and a trainer of leaders. He is brilliant in organization and implementation of plans. He is a father of four children, two boys and two girls, an ideal situation in a Kikuyu family. As a young pastor, he struggles economically to make both ends meet, but he always keeps a positive attitude towards life and continues to try until he finds a solution. As a modern Kikuyu, Paul is not familiar with Kikuyu traditions and rituals but retains Kikuyu values. He speaks primarily English and learned the Kikuyu language from his wife after they got married. He is not completely satisfied with the PCEA, but like other young PCEA pastors, tries to bring changes to the denomination with hopes for the future.

#### 2.2.2.9 Themes of Paul's narrative

- Modern Kikuyu and changes in the Kikuyu tribe
- Areas of reform within the Presbyterian Church of East Africa
- The East African Revival Movement
- The Pentecostal movement in Kenya
- Church's relevance in society/integration of theology with needs
- Leadership and discipleship in society and in the church
- Gender issue in the Kikuyu tribe
- Poverty

### 2.2.3 Story of Grace the Resilient

#### 2.2.3.1 God's grace during childhood

For Grace, her childhood experience was not that pleasant until she met the church people who took care of her. Her father, although a rough man, seemed to protect her from all the harms that may have been done to her as a girl. She was protected from Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and also sent to school, although she was a girl. Her father did not allow her to participate or even watch some harmful Kikuyu cultural practices, such as drinking beer,

Kikuyu cultural dances, traditional cleansing ceremonies and traditional protective measures. It was God's sovereign plan that her father let her go to church along with her brothers and sisters, although he himself was not a Christian at the time. She said he was a half-Kikuyu and half-Christian. However, she told me that "They [her parents] were just there as parents." According to Grace, this was the general attitude toward children in Africa, but that "As children grow, parents consider them as a sign of wealth." Although leadership was transferred to boys, girls were valued as a source of wealth since they would generate income later on when they were married.

When Grace met the Revival people of the PCEA, she was introduced to the church and taken care of by them spiritually. They also showed her love, which was lacking in her life. This experience and nourishment laid a spiritual foundation in her life. She said, "They gave me a foundation." Grace seemed to exemplify the crucial nature of one's childhood experience as it leaves an indelible mark on his/her life. Talking about her childhood, she said, "Jesus Christ and the church were the only sources of my spiritual welfare." This experience was also a stepping-stone for her accepting the Lord as her Saviour when she was in secondary school later on.

Grace said, "It is the Holy Spirit who gave me the love for God, fear of Him and the desire to please Him." Since she gave herself to God in class 7, she felt that she was "going to God and serving him" and that "this has been continuing until today." This is a great testimony of her love and desire for God.

#### 2.2.3.2 Teacher's college and theological school

Grace was trained as a P1 (primary one) teacher. It took her two years to graduate. She met many people with different kinds of beliefs, feelings and behaviours; she thanked God that she joined the college as a Christian and left it the same. Afterward she joined the teaching career and enjoyed it until the Lord called her into full-time ministry. Then she joined the Presbyterian College Kikuyu for theological training. Her experience there was quite challenging and different from her former life. There she was able to see the reality of ministry as an insider. She had to stretch herself because of the

demand of both family and studies, but did well. By the time she left the college, she testified, “My faith became stronger.”

#### 2.2.3.3 Modern Kikuyu

Grace stated that she was a modern Kikuyu. Since she grew up in the Rift Valley, away from the Kikuyu land, she had exposure to other tribes and their cultures, and as a result, did not learn the pure Kikuyu culture. She said, “My Kikuyuness was diluted by other cultural influences while growing up,” and as a result, “I couldn’t teach my children any culture.” It seemed that she was struggling in regards to culture. She said, “I don’t know where we are heading to. I am now becoming worse.” However, Grace retained some essential Kikuyu cultural elements such as the values and norms that were shared by other Kikuyus. To be specific, those are commitment to God (Ngai), orderliness of leadership, generosity, respect for each other both the old and the young, hard working—leading to the capitalistic way of life, and courage.

She said that most Kikuyus still keep marriage and burial customs. The dowry system still existed. She also talked about the important place that Mt. Kenya held in the minds of Kikuyus as a sacred mountain. However, she did not subscribe to this belief. She rather thought of Mt. Kenya as a tourist attraction, or a source of life that provided people with water, timber, fruits, fresh air, etc. Regarding the age-old Kikuyu God Ngai, Grace considered Ngai the same as Yahweh.

Language wise, Grace feels most comfortable when she speaks Kikuyu. When she preaches, she switches to Kikuyu language when she wants to drive a particular point. Kiswahili is the second language and English is the third (of Grace or the tribe?). However, her children prefer speaking English and Kiswahili.

#### 2.2.3.4 Strong member of the Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church is the only church she came to know well. Although she still goes to other churches when she has time for worship and fellowship, her Presbyterian Church membership seems to be strong since it goes back

to her childhood years. She seems to be loyal to her denomination. She likes the Presbyterian Church because of its orderliness, its teachings and care for people, and advanced politics—use of P.P. (practice and procedure)—despite its shortcomings such as slow procedures and old systems. However, Grace seemed to lament the Presbyterian Church's lack of flexibility that caused many people, especially young people, to leave the church. But at the same time she is hopeful for the changes that are coming. She said "We are moving from a place to another one. It is a transition period." She said the Presbyterian Church is a reforming church.

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa is predominantly of the Kikuyu denomination and she talked about the advantages and disadvantages of it. The advantages of the PCEA being mainly Kikuyu are that they bring Kikuyus together, develop the language, and enhance or retain the culture. The disadvantages are tribalism and pride. Although the Presbyterian Church is trying hard to incorporate other tribes by eliminating Kikuyu service in urban areas, it does not seem to be easy.

#### 2.2.3.5 Experiencing God

Grace had a difficult time when both of her parents passed away and she took upon the burden of taking care of her siblings - nine in all. She did not have a choice in this matter. Nonetheless, she did well in raising them and they are currently all in adulthood. It seemed like Grace experienced God through this challenging process and built toughness as well. She said, "I have seen God working." This God she experienced in life's real situations became a powerful witness to her. Grace's conduct during this time also reveals her caring nature. Her caring character/attitude was shown as well when she said her vision/calling was for the needy. In talking about her experience within the PCEA system, she mentioned, "I am also rigid. If I am flexible, perhaps I couldn't have made it." This experience of hers as a woman pastor says she does not easily give up but continues on.

Grace seemed to have a good prayer habit. Daily prayer at three o'clock in the morning is not an easy thing. However, this seemed to have built her

spiritual muscle along with Bible reading. Regarding prayer, Grace said, “Things are not good but with prayer they will be....Prayer has given me comfort.” What impressed me when I interviewed the PCEA pastors including Grace was that prayer was a natural part of their lives. This is not as easily seen in the lives of pastors from the West. If this practice is not a form but a genuine expression of faith in God, it certainly is excellent.

Grace talked about the three visions she had in the past: a big cross coming down with a voice; small crosses coming down; and a fishing rod. She said that this was the first time she was sharing these visions. These visions altogether seemed to tell her that God wanted her to serve Him, as the voice said in the first vision, “You need to serve me.” After receiving the vision of the fishing rod, she decided to join the theological college. In this vision, someone was fishing in the church and the rod came to Grace’s shoulder. She interpreted this as God wanting her to serve Him.

Grace talked about her desire to serve the needy, such as children, women in slums, and single mothers. She said, “My direction is towards the needy not because I can assist them but because I can stay with them, encourage them, and be with them.” She singled out poverty and unemployment as the main problems along with AIDS. She also talked about the breaking up of the family because of poverty and unemployment. In order to alleviate these problems, she suggested free education to the highest level, better governance, job creation, and population control. She mentioned creating projects for the retrenched and the retired people as well.

#### 2.2.3.6 Woman’s issues

She talked about the Kikuyu tradition - that it was the women who were ruling in the Kikuyu culture originally. Then, the men vowed never to give leadership to the women because the women were so rough. According to Grace, this was the reason why, when civilization came to Kenya, the boys went to school but the girls were left out. Girls were also prepared for marriage at an early age by their parents. Women were also oppressed and not recognized

although they were also valued as being the source of life. Grace actually surmised, “They [women] were hated.”

Grace further said, “Even in ministry men frustrate women. It is tough for a woman to be in a leadership position since she is a minority in an atmosphere where democracy is never practiced. “Training for ministry for women is also hard because of, let alone the selection process, all the responsibilities women have including raising children while in theological school.” But she has taken all these pressures and is enjoying the ministry currently. She said, “So far so good.” She seemed to have acquired an attitude to view life a little bit from a distance now. Maybe it’s her age and experience that she is able to see the whole thing that way. Not giving up but *endelea pole pole*, which means in Kiswahili “Go on slowly.”

Grace also talked about the patriarchal nature of the Kikuyu home and society, in which the husband is the head and the wife is second in authority. She said, “A kikuyu man is a kikuyu man,” meaning he holds the position of a leader. He must be the leader. This cultural practice may coincide with biblical teaching but the actual working out of the value could be different. She said, “A woman is just subordinate, second to husband here in Kenya.” Although it was tough in practice, Grace seemed to have accepted this cultural practice. About the leadership role of woman, she said that women are bound by pregnancy and child rearing, which hinders their leadership role. Overall, she said, “I enjoy it [the husband being the head of the family], especially when he roars like a lion in the house. I like that.”

However, after long suffering in the hands of men, African women are raising their voices and are looking for equality in many areas, including the church. Regarding woman’s ministry of the PCEA, Grace said, “The church was saying the woman ministry was a success....There are also some women who have steered some major churches in Kenya and there are others as well at the background.” Although the women pastors of the PCEA may experience difficulty in rural areas, she was glad that she did not have such a problem in Nairobi. But she mentioned she had some trouble with the

neighbours in the house purchase process at Buruburu church. The men in the neighbourhood did not want to deal with a woman pastor in the property purchasing deal. They wanted a man pastor. However, that situation has thus been resolved.

#### 2.2.3.7 Yearning for becoming Charismatic

Grace said she wanted to be charismatic. She is not only open to the charismatic movement but desires it. She talked about early Scottish missionaries and their condemnation of African culture. She interpreted her charismatic experience and its influence on the PCEA as one of experiencing freedom. I have never thought of the charismatic experience or expression from that perspective. It is a very unique perspective. She said, “Being charismatic is growing out of colonial oppression to the freedom that God is giving us.” According to her, other PCEA pastors who desire reform feel the same way.

#### 2.2.3.8 Summary of Grace’s narrative

Grace has had many experiences as a woman and as a pastor in several parishes. These were tough experiences and helped her to build resilience in her life. She is calm but strong inside, and this inner strength is that which supports her. At the same time, Grace is a caring person who has compassion for the less privileged. She is not a revolutionary but seems to know her position and adapts well to the situation she is in. Although she may have had some bitterness about the situation of women in the male-dominated society or culture, she seems to have accepted reality and has managed to go on within the system. Actually she feels thankful to God for many things and keeps a positive attitude. Her perspective upon charismatics—that it is an expression of freedom—was fascinating!

#### 2.2.3.9 *Themes emerging from Grace*

- The East African Revival Movement
- The Kikuyu culture
- The PCEA (history, policy, structure, vision, mission, or issues)

- The issue of woman in Kenya (position, attitude toward them and vulnerability)
- Poverty/unemployment/AIDS
- Charismatic movement in Kenya
- Early missionaries and their attitudes

## **2.2.4 Story of George the Charismatic Kikuyu**

### 2.2.4.1 Life synopsis

George was born and grew up in central Kenya among Kikuyus. He was baptized as an infant and confirmed at the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. His upbringing was totally Kikuyu – he was surrounded by Kikuyu people talking the Kikuyu language. He also attended the PCEA church during this whole time. After high school, George attended a teacher's college where he received Jesus as his saviour and was born again. There at the teacher's college he experienced discipleship briefly in his last year of study. He also experienced baptism by the Holy Spirit around that time and started a personal walk with God. His spiritual foundation was formed there at the teacher's college through strong prayer ministry, discipleship, and yearning for the study of the word of God. After graduation from the teacher's college, he started teaching. Five years later he received a call from God and joined a theological college. Through theological training, his understanding of the word of God deepened and his spiritual life also became enriched through fasting and prayer, preaching to other pastors, and Christian literature.

### 2.2.4.2 Baptism of the Holy Spirit

His charismatic experience began with the baptism of the Holy Spirit when he was a college student. This left such an indelible mark that it has become a focal point in his Christian life and ministry ever since. He asserts firmly, "You can't deny what you are." Once when he was serving as a pastor in a town, his ministry became so charismatic that his denomination, the PCEA, did not like it and thought it was too much. As a result, he was disciplined for one year and had to stay out of ministry. However, this one-year disciplinary period built in him another foundation of studying the word of God. George did

not seem to be afraid of change at all. Rather he welcomed changes and expected them. George also possessed a strong, positive belief in the power of the gospel - that it would bring changes to the current Kenyan context. He said, “Definitely the church has to play that major role to give Kenyan people hope. We have to push and things can improve.”

#### 2.2.4.3 Total Kikuyu

George feels most comfortable when he speaks in Kikuyu. He said, “You feel good when you minister in Kikuyu. You have ministered to Kikuyu people and the response is good.” He said he had grown up as a Kikuyu surrounded by Kikuyu language, culture, and people. It was a hundred percent Kikuyu for him. Therefore, Kikuyu cultural values were deeply ingrained in him such as respecting elders and socializing with people let alone speaking the language. He also said, “Kikuyu are deeply religious and they are lively...they like singing and dancing and these build one’s spirituality.”

Even in his ministry context, his Kikuyu cultural influence was naturally at work. He says, “When you come as a pastor, you are not a boss. You are among them...we are a family...in African culture, no one says, ‘I will’ or ‘by myself.’ There is no independence. There must be interdependence among people...as long as Bantus are concerned...you just don’t live by yourself.” He also mentioned Kikuyu hospitality, which I can confirm by my own exposure to Kikuyu families. George was the purest Kikuyu man out of all the research participants. He has retained Kikuyu cultural values. However, he did not follow Kikuyu rituals.

One of the Kikuyu values that George has retained is a naming practice. Traditionally Kikuyus name their children after their parents. For instance, George has two sons and named his first-born son after his father and the second son after his wife’s father. If he gets a girl, he would name her after his mother and the second girl after his wife’s mother. If he gets a third son, he would name him after his eldest brother. This is their tradition. As demonic Kikuyu customs, George pointed out Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and traditional brew. Although Kikuyus are mainly agriculturalists, they keep some

animals such as hens, goats, sheep and cows. George also keeps several animals. He says, “You cannot miss those ones [animals].”

#### 2.2.4.4 The Presbyterian Church as an inheritance

George seemed to have strong ties with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and also had a very positive view of his denomination, despite some of its abuses and shortcomings. He said, “...There are a lot of good things in the Presbyterian Church....We are always reforming.” The positive things he mentioned were transfers and ‘we-system.’ He liked the many different experiences he had due to transfers and the value group decisions of the PCEA. “There is no absolute authority in the PCEA as for the individuals are concerned,” which tells about the importance of each individual within the denomination. One negative thing he mentioned about the PCEA, however, was a slow decision-making process. George also added that the PCEA was getting more decentralized. For example, from the year 2003, the presbytery took over from the General Assembly the responsibility of paying salary to ministers. Although this was an added responsibility to the presbytery, the presbytery now had more power than before. According to George, there was another issue within the PCEA, the issue of stewardship. People used to make a pledge and gave it to the church no matter how much they earned. Now people were being taught to tithe, manage their resources properly, and hold the ministry. George said, “That one is creating a great impact in the church...and they grew very much.” He summed up, “The PCEA is a heritage to us...It is our inheritance.”

Talking about the white PCEA missionaries in early 1900s, he had both positive and negative viewpoints. The missionary influence was positive in that they helped Kikuyu in the areas of education, health and agriculture. It was negative because missionaries condemned the African culture. George says, “[According to missionaries] anything African was bad...it was just kind of their culture brought to us, which was not in any way divine.” They introduced western culture such as hymnbook, English language, different house structure, etc. He continues:

Something has been lost. It was like a mutilation of culture. In those days anything that seemed African culture was condemned and people came to hate their own food, names, homes, etc. But now they are coming back. In those days there was no difference between a white priest and a white man.

About worship of the PCEA church, George said that they were changing from Kikuyu service to Kiswahili and English services in the urban areas. However, during the Kiswahili service, the preacher sometimes switches to Kikuyu language because the predominantly Kikuyu congregation wants to hear their language, and some old people know only Kikuyu language. According to George, the change has not been radical.

#### 2.2.4.5 Summary of George's narrative

Overall, George seemed to possess a balance between the ministry of the Word and the charismatic aspects of ministry, both being central to his spirituality. His spiritual formation seemed to have also been strongly influenced by the Kikuyu culture and the PCEA, which is predominantly Kikuyu. He advocates the African expression of Christianity and African values a lot, which is coming back after having been lost. In a sense he is not satisfied with the current status of Africa including Kenya. He feels that the position Africans are in today is not one in which they should be; also that the church should play a major role in giving people hope and in empowering them in their socio-economic-political context.

#### 2.2.4.6 Major themes of George's narrative

- Charismatic experience
- Reformation of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa
- Kikuyu cultural value
- Contextualization of the Gospel
- Centrality of the Bible

## **2.2.5 Story of Mary the virtuous Kikuyu minister**

### **2.2.5.1 Early Christian formation**

Mary was born into a Christian home with supportive parents. Her mother served as a role model, especially in terms of prayer. Mary also had a good memory of Sunday school and of the youth group of the PCEA church she attended. She said, “I had good teachers and I loved them, even the way they were treating us.” She learned the word of God from Sunday school teachers. She was also a part of the East African Revival Fellowship—same as the East African Revival Movement— which taught her spirituality and nurtured her spiritually. When she was in primary school at age 10, she was saved by hearing the gospel at a district prayer meeting. During her childhood, her father was away from home and it was her mother who raised her; and it seems that she did it well.

When Mary was in high school in Form 2 (10<sup>th</sup> grade), she heard the call from God. She had a vision and heard a voice calling, “Wambui, Wambui, I want you to be my servant.” She questioned the call since she had never before seen a woman minister but had peace after prayer. This call from God turned out to be genuine as Mary is now a servant of God.

### **2.2.5.2 Theological training**

Some time after receiving the vision, an elder in her church nudged Mary to join the holy ministry. Then he told her father about it. Mary felt uneasy about the entire process but finally decided to tell her parents of the vision she had received when she was in Form 2. When she told her parents, she found out her parents were very supportive, especially her father. Her mother also told her that there was a known woman minister. Although Mary already had a conviction that God had called her, she had to wait three years to attend theological training because of her age. After that, she went through a series of interviews and was admitted to Kikuyu theological college, where she studied for two years towards a certificate. In his sovereignty, God had guided and prepared her for his service.

#### 2.2.5.3 Contribution of the East African Revival Fellowship

There was a good movement called the East African Revival Fellowship in her area, Nyeri, and her parents used to go to the Fellowship. Early in her life it was these Fellowship people who led her to Christ. They taught her the word of God and Christian morals. Mary was a part of the Fellowship until the time she was getting ready to be married. Regarding the Revival Fellowship, the members were very conservative and did not want saved Christians to interact with non-believers for fear of backsliding. They targeted mainly churchgoers for salvation and once they were saved, wanted them to associate mainly with other believers only. They also encouraged ladies to be modest and simple. However, when Mary became a minister, she could not accept this teaching anymore. Moreover, the members wanted to have a parental influence over her when she was getting married. This she did not appreciate. Thus, she parted with them but continued as a Presbyterian minister.

#### 2.2.5.4 Loyal to the Presbyterian Church

Mary grew up as a Presbyterian because her parents were Presbyterians. She said, "I have never joined any other church all through my life. I am a Presbyterian." She went to the Presbyterian theological college and was ordained in the PCEA. She worked as a PCEA minister at different parishes and is currently studying for the BD (Bachelor of Divinity) degree at Saint Paul Theological College. Her study is being paid for by the PCEA, perhaps through the means of an anonymous sponsor.

She said, "I like PCEA...even my blood, my everything. It is the PCEA and I would not like to change. I work for it. I even pray for it...I feel the Presbyterian it is the only one I feel happy [about] and I feel comfortable when I am there." She seemed to be very loyal to her denomination. She liked the style of worship, the procedures, the government of the church, which she considers the best amongst the denominations, the courts that is, the General Assembly, the Presbytery, and the local church. She said she enjoyed Sunday school and the youth ministry. She also mentioned the sharing of ministry roles as another positive aspect of the PCEA. The only negative thing

she mentioned was the slow implementation process. But even there she said, “They are slow but sure.”

She talked about the transfers within the PCEA. Since she knew she would be transferred every three years, she was prepared for it. Overall Mary felt that the transfers were satisfactory except for a couple of times when she was transferred as an associate, which she did not like. However, although she seemed to accept the transfer system, Mary advocated a five-year term instead of three since a three-year term was too short to accomplish anything in a parish. Moreover, people were confused by the frequent changes that a new minister brought about. She said that the PCEA had already started implementing the five-year term. It seemed that Mary possessed a leadership gift because she liked to exercise autonomy and leadership.

The PCEA is more egalitarian than hierarchical. “If you are a moderator of the GA (General Assembly), you are just moderating as a chairman.” When it comes to decision-making, Mary said, “Although he is a powerful person, the moderator or chairman cannot hold sway in a meeting. Most of the time decisions are made as people have agreed in the meeting.” The PCEA also has a court in the GA and the presbytery so ministers can go to a higher authority. Within the PCEA, “Leadership is approachable. The moderator of the GA is like our father. On Wednesday anybody can go and talk to him,” Mary added.

#### 2.2.5.5 Christian Kikuyu

Since she grew up as a Christian, she did not follow Kikuyu traditions. She said, “When one joins a church, he becomes a Christian and he leaves the tradition.” She herself embodied this. She said she left the issues of tradition completely and followed the teachings of the missionaries, that of Christianity. The East Africa Revival Fellowship also discouraged many of the traditions. Thus she did not follow them. Mary also stated that she did not even like most “Kikuyu things”, referring to Kikuyu traditional rituals.

However, as a Christian Kikuyu, she retained the moral part of the Kikuyu culture - such as respecting parents, the old, and relatives; being an upright person; helping; working hard; etc. She identified these morals with Christian values.

Mary believes that the Kikuyu god, Ngai, is the same as Yahweh of the Scriptures. Their characters are almost the same. The only difference is that Kikuyus did not understand that Ngai was everywhere and not just in Kirinyaga (Mt. Kenya). Mary said, "It is wonderful that God revealed himself to Kikuyus as Ngai and prepared them for the gospel. They believed in one God and the only thing they didn't know was Jesus Christ."

It seems like Mary is a good, hardworking, Kikuyu woman who is committed to her work and family. When she talked about Kikuyu traditions and Christianity, she talked about the missionaries who brought education and health along with Christianity. She said, "They are together." She said it is this education that brings about change.

In regards to language, Mary feels the most comfortable with the Kikuyu language and she likes it. This reveals that in some sense her Kikuyuness is still strong since language is the primary vehicle of culture (Kraft 1996:247).

#### 2.2.5.6 Some issues

Denominationalism was one thing that she mentioned as something that hindered the love of God in Kenya. As a parish minister she experienced that people were not united. Within the PCEA, the present moderator encouraged PCEA churches to have district Sundays - on district Sundays, people did not go to church but had worship with those who lived in the same district and invited others to their meeting.

She also mentioned leadership. There were some leaders who misused their leadership. She said, "They are jealous and want to dominate but there are others too who encourage you." Since the church officers are elected in the

PCEA, the leadership is in check. She said, “The PCEA’s leadership is very good.”

Mary also said that the PCEA was trying to be charismatic. She attributed this to the young people who were coming up and wanted to be charismatic. Although the missionaries laid a foundation that was conservative, she thinks the charismatic movement is a revival. She said, “Without charismatic movement the church will be dull. Also if it is not a sin, it’s OK. I adjust myself to each different congregation.” Although Mary is not overly charismatic, it seems that she likes the movement and is pretty much accepting of it.

Mary criticized Christian nominalism in society and disunity within the church saying, “In society majority are Christians only by name. They do not follow Christian teachings but their own selfish gain. They are not caring for other brothers and sisters. Within the church, there is a division between the rich and the poor.” She has an experience of dealing with disunity caused by different educational, economic, and social levels in her congregation and district prayer groups. The rich and the poor did not want to associate with one another.

#### 2.2.5.7 Modernised gender role

In the Kikuyu culture the desired characteristic for a girl is that she grows up as a chaste girl who is obedient, social, and respectful of elders. Girls learn kitchen work from their mothers, such as fetching firewood and water. When they grow up and get married, they are expected to respect their husbands and care for the family. Men’s work include fencing, cultivating, feeding the cows, caring for chickens, etc.

However, as for Mary, she was brought up as a Christian and her mother used to tell her children that all work was for everybody. In her family, everybody, boys and girls alike, worked together. Even now when there is a family get-together, they work all together. She said, “There is no man. There is no whatever.” This is further evidence that Mary does not follow Kikuyu traditions.

Although she did not grow up that way, she follows the Kikuyu tradition in her own family because her husband did not have quite the same experience as her. She said, “I don’t expect him to do the work as I was taught...if I see him doing something, I appreciate.” She is showing great flexibility here. On her husband’s side, he does not seem to strictly follow the Kikuyu tradition either, but helps her with housework, and sometimes even with cooking. It was great to hear of their cooperation with each other in their family.

In Mary’s mind, the traditional male-female gender role has been replaced by the Christian virtue of husband-wife helping each other and sharing the burden of family work. She said, “We believe we come together...we both of us need to help one another to make the family happy and to bring up children in this family to make them happy. Both of us should work.” However, she also said “There are some Christians who still follow Kikuyu traditions: those who cannot go to kitchen and cook. They can’t hold a baby or change the nappy.”

#### 2.2.5.8 Vision for children’s ministry

Mary’s vision is to work with children. She said if she were given a position of church school on the denominational level, she would be happy. Her good childhood experiences of Sunday school must have affected her thoughts. She also thinks children’s ministry is the best ministry since children are open and innocent. The PCEA, however, is not doing well in this area. Teachers and elders are not serious. Children are neglected. Only very few are interested. Even the woman’s guild is not serious about children’s ministry although they have vowed to join it.

#### 2.2.5.9 Woman pastor’s experience

When Mary joined the ministry, she said that people thought she was in the wrong profession. People had not heard or seen woman pastors before so they could not believe that she was a woman pastor and not a “nun.” Then when she was assigned to a parish, people compared her with men pastors. She experienced prejudice. Men did not believe a woman could lead them and they also had fear of a woman leading them. So instead of accepting her,

they observed her. She had to prove herself. Mary must have developed endurance and resilience through all these experiences. Her struggle as a woman minister in the African context must have been quite challenging. However, she kept going and has come to the present situation. Hooray!

Mary shared encouraging news, such as that in recent times, women pastors were being appreciated, and were in more demand than men pastors, because of their hard work and serving. Furthermore, there were many women who were studying theology at St. Paul with their own money. Even on the GA (General Assembly) level, people were more understanding of women pastors. I could see that she had developed a very positive self-esteem as a woman pastor. She said, “I accept myself to be a woman...I am a woman and I should work as a woman not as man.” Including other women pastors, she also said, “We do enjoy the work [parish work].”

Mary also had the unique experience as a woman pastor whose husband was a pastor as well. She married her husband when he was an evangelist. She was already a pastor. People did not understand or accept the fact that a woman pastor married a man evangelist! If it had been the other way around, they would not have had any trouble. This was a gender issue. Moreover, people did not understand the situation of both husband and wife being pastors. For this reason, they blocked her husband’s way to theological college for 12 years.

However, Mary persevered and has arrived to her present situation. Her husband is in a parish as a parish minister and she is studying for a BA degree. She is doing her best in her current situation—it is tough for a married woman to study while raising children. She stays at school with her children and her husband is at his parish. Although the PCEA tries to place the two of them closer to each other, that is not always the case. There is also a financial issue. Since both of them receive their salaries from the same organization, the PCEA, when the PCEA struggles with finance, they are also vulnerable.

#### 2.2.5.10 Mentors

In her journey, Mary met many good people who helped her and provided her with guidance. Early in her life it was her mother who helped with her spiritual formation. Then she had Sunday school teachers and people from the East African Revival Fellowship who nurtured her young faith. When in high school, people from the Christian Union helped her spiritually. The teacher grandmother at her church was also her mentor. When she joined the theological college, lecturers also encouraged her, like Rev Jessy Kamau and the late Rev Waweru. The late Rev. Geoffrey Ngari from the East African Revival Fellowship was also a mentor to her. Rev Kariuki Stephen and other pastors from Nyeri were also there to help her. Looking back, she said, “I just landed to good ministers who were to encourage...they are there to work for the Lord and they are happy when they see another person coming up.”

In the African context where some leaders suppress and frustrate upcoming younger leaders, she was blessed to have many encouragers and mentors who were willing to come alongside her and walk with her for a time for a specific purpose. However, she said, “I also met those who were discouraging.”

#### 2.2.5.11 Summary of Mary’s narrative

I had the impression that Mary is a sweet, God-loving, strong, enduring, and experienced woman of God. She experienced prejudice, misunderstanding, and discrimination along the way as a woman pastor. However, through prayers and encouragement from the word of God, and through the counsels of godly men and women around her, Mary found the strength to continue the journey. Now she has become strong like other PCEA woman ministers. The Christian heritage that she inherited from her parents seemed to have laid a foundation for her spirituality. Her complete separation from the Kikuyu traditional rituals but the retention of the Kikuyu virtues is a good example to other Kikuyus.

#### 2.2.5.12 *Themes of Mary*

- The East African Revival Fellowship (Movement)
- The PCEA (worship, procedures, government, courts)
- Kikuyu culture (rituals, morals, virtues, Ngai, language, gender)
- Denominationalism, leadership, nominalism, disunity among people
- Prayer
- Children's ministry
- Woman pastor within the PCEA (struggles, victories, history)
- Mentoring

### 2.3 **Definition of spirituality by research participants**

My research participants defined spirituality in various ways. For Sam, spirituality is a way of life: "When someone accepts Jesus Christ as his own personal saviour, his entire life is devoted to God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He is not living in the two worlds, the flesh and the spirit. It has to be one. Then there is life." Sam says, "I continue to desire to be wholly engaged with God and every step I take and whatever decision I make I have to ask God to guide me and show me the way."

Paul said that spirituality is a state of being rather than doing. However, the actions of a person are those that agree with being. That is, his/her conducts and behaviours are shaped by the core beliefs of the Christian faith. A spiritual person exhibits spirituality when he/she practices Christian disciplines such as prayer, fasting and Bible study to a higher degree. He/she is also sensitive to spiritual realities such as the nudging of the Holy Spirit.

Grace explains her understanding of spirituality as follows.

Spirituality means God-oriented. It is growing in a godly manner from one glory to another. That is focusing directly to God and growing everyday towards God. Spirituality should not be stagnant but it should be something that you become more godly every time and everyday.

George emphasized balance in spirituality by saying, "Spirituality is not just a personal decision to keep for yourself...it is a question of giving out. It is a question of bringing forth results." However, he also had a good

understanding of its inner component by saying, “Without inner thing there is nothing outside...” and “What you are...precedes what you do. George strongly talked about the need for contextualisation of the gospel because he felt something valuable had been lost because of the condemnation of the African culture by missionaries. He also emphasized nurturing and discipleship for renewed spirituality. He said, “The Bible is central to all that we do...the word of God is the regulatory aspect of building spiritual life and so I hold it so dearly.”

Mary said, “Spirituality is faith: how it is growing and how you are going with your God and the fellowship you have with your God throughout your life.” She said she believed in prayer. According to her,

Through prayer you talk with your God and as you talk with God, things are revealed to you, what to do and you grow. In your inner being you have peace with God and you are counselled. When you pray, you also feel you have power and that your spirit is moving. The word of God and fellowship with other Christians also build you up. They help your spiritual being.

This prayer emphasis was shown in the ministry she had in her former parish. She had a prayer and fasting day on the first Tuesday of every month from 9 am till 4 pm. She also had district prayers. She taught people to pray alone and with the family, to read the Bible, and to have fellowship with one another. This prayer conviction, she said, came from her mother, who modelled prayer for her. She said, “She was a woman of prayer.” She learned from her mother and saw that prayer was working, that “prayer does things.” Her mother used to tell her, “There is somebody who gives us money. Therefore, let’s pray.” She also told her, “We have a healing God. Let’s pray.”

The definition of spirituality of the research participants can be charted as follows in the next page.

## 2.4 Summary of stories

I have listened to the stories of five PCEA pastors and listed their narratives. The following are preliminary summary statements with ensuing questions.

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Sam    | Whole engagement with God                                   |
| Paul   | A state of being supported by faith actions and disciplines |
| Grace  | Growing to be more godly                                    |
| George | Bringing forth results based on who you are                 |
| Mary   | How you are going with your God throughout the life         |

**Fig 2.1 Definition of spirituality**

### 2.4.1 Affiliation with the Kikuyu tradition

- None of them participated in Kikuyu traditional rituals as they grew up. None of them were exposed to traditional rituals and sacrifices.

*\*Further question: What are these traditional rituals and sacrifices?*

- However, one of the traditional beliefs that were carried over from the Kikuyu traditional belief to Christian belief is their belief in Ngai, the Kikuyu God. All of them believe that Ngai, the Kikuyu god, is Yahweh of the Bible. Many characters of Ngai are similar to those of Yahweh, which has made it rather easy for the Kikuyu to accept the Christian gospel when it came to them with fuller revelation.

*\*Further question: What is the concept of Kikuyu God Ngai?*

- As cultural forms are replaced with other forms, underlying values and beliefs in cultural structures can also change (Kraft 1996:65). However, in case of the Kikuyu, since many Kikuyu values were not much different from Biblical values, the Kikuyu values had a great chance of surviving at the influx of Christianity without causing much conflict. All of my research participants have kept Kikuyu values and virtues such as hospitality, hard working, respect for elders, etc. In regards to language preservation, except for Paul the modern Kikuyu, all of them were most comfortable with the Kikuyu language. That also confirms

the retention of cultural values and norms since “language mirrors culture at every point” (Kraft 1996:238).

*\*Further question: What are these values and norms for the Kikuyu?*

- My research participants have retained some Kikuyu customs, such as marriage and circumcision, but in modified forms and with different meanings. This is an anthropological process called “domination syncretism” when a new culture is introduced and a new form and meaning are created (Kraft 1996:377). However, the naming practice has been preserved intact.

*\*Further question: What are the Kikuyu social customs?*

- The degree of Kikuyu tribal affiliation has been different from person to person. This different cultural identity shows a different degree of acculturation on their part, after Christianity and western culture were introduced to them.

*\*Further question: How important do they think their tribal affiliation is? What is their primary social affiliation?*

- All my research participants were educated. They graduated from the secondary school and had more education of some kind either in theology or other disciplines. Except Sam, who is elderly, all of them have a desire for further education. Further education seems to be a priority for young pastors. The Church of Scotland Mission, that established the PCEA, had education as one of its focuses.

*\*Further question: How is education related to spirituality?*

Culture is dynamic and is always changing. The fact that each of the research participants stands on different cultural grounds and moves in different directions demonstrates that the Kikuyus are changing. It also illustrates the possibility and room for further dialogue and transformation. This was encouraging.

#### 2.4.2 Influence from Christian traditions

There were several Christian traditions identified in the dialogues that influenced the spiritual formation of the research participants. These traditions continue to affect their lives and spirituality.

- Although not everyone talked about the early Scottish missionaries, those who mentioned them held some negative impressions despite their contributions to the country and the tribe.

*\*Further question: What are the impacts of the Church of Scotland Mission on the Kikuyu?*

- All of the research participants possessed a strong relationship with the PCEA. Their affiliation with the PCEA was not just about membership but was about a lot more. There seemed to be something that kept them there despite various challenges. However, they all talked about the need of reform within the PCEA. The participants also talked about the need of getting out of Kikuyu tribalism within the PCEA but, at the same time, seemed to want to preserve their Kikuyu identity through the language.

*\*Further question: What is the history of development, structure and reform of the PCEA?*

- All of the research participants were affected by the East African Revival Movement either directly or indirectly. This movement played a positive role in forming their spirituality though the movement turned legalistic at a later stage.

*\*Further question: What is the East African Revival Movement and what impact did it have on the church of Kenya?*

- All of the participants were either overtly charismatic or condoned the movement within the denomination. However, there is an ongoing struggle within the denomination between the conservative and the progressive.

*\*Further question: What is the history of the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement in Kenya? What is its impact upon and its prospects within the PCEA?*

- Early in their spiritual development, the participants experienced God through Christian family or early Christian experiences, visions, and calls to ministry. They continued their development through discipleship and mentoring, experienced paradigm shifts towards the Charismatic, and nurtured personal disciplines of prayer and study of the word of God. All of them also possessed clear conversion experiences. Overall, their religious or spiritual foundations seemed sturdy.

*\*Further question: What does spirituality have to do with experiencing God?*

- They have different ministry visions or passions. For Sam, it is teaching the word of God. For Paul, it is the raising and equipping of leaders. Grace is called to the ministry to the less privileged. Pastoral ministry is George's passion. Mary has a heart for children's ministry.

*\*Further question: How are they going to fulfil their vision for God?*

### **2.4.3 Other insights**

- Out of all my research participants, only two were women pastors. My observations were that they were mostly satisfied with their current status despite the struggles they had had or were having. Unlike my expectation, gender-related issues were not a priority for them.

*\*Further question: Would the current understanding and practice of gender roles for these women be ideal for their spirituality?*

- The socio-economic constraints that surrounded these pastors were chiefly poverty, unemployment, and AIDS.

*\*Further question: How are these socio-economic constraints related to spirituality?*

#### **2.4.4 Major overlapping themes of the narratives**

Out of the many themes or threads from the narratives, some common themes were identified in relation to the formation and understanding of the spirituality of the research participants. These overlapping major themes of spirituality are the ones that will be described and interpreted in Ch. 3. They are:

- Kikuyu culture
- Early Scottish missions
- The Presbyterian Church of East Africa
- The East African Revival Movement
- Charismatic movement
- Socio-economic issues

#### **2.5 Questions formulated for Chapter 3**

The following are the questions formulated along the aforementioned major overlapping themes that will be carried over to Ch. 3 for description and interpretation of the context.

- What is the traditional Kikuyu culture with all its components?
- How much of that culture have the research participants retained?
- What is the impact of the early Scottish missionaries on the Kikuyus?  
What change did Christianity bring to the Kikuyus?
- What is the East African Revival Movement and what is its legacy?
- What impact did the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement have upon the Kenyan church or the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) specifically?
- What is the PCEA's contribution to the spirituality of the research participants?
- What social-economic constraints gave influence to the spirituality of the research participants?
- What does the spirituality of the research participants look like with all these cultural and religious influences? What are their beliefs and practices?

In this chapter, I presented the stories of five pastors. These stories are the unique description of their spirituality as lived experiences of Christian faith. Questions have been formulated along the major themes of their spirituality. These require answers, description, and interpretation for a thick understanding of the context, to which I will now turn.