Applicability of Translatability Theory to European Missionary Masculinity Performance in Africa: Contestations and Reflections

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Abstract

The article argues that the process of translation was deeply entrenched in the European missionaries' masculinity/ies ideological and political interpretation of Christian faith which was transposed into African worldviews. In this way, translation was not an innocent endeavour but was fraught with European gender and imperial ideologies as a given necessity for Christianity and as part and parcel of the gospel message for the African people. The article therefore proposes a way forward for emancipating African masculinities in African Christianity in the context of gender justice and equality.

Keyword: Kwame Bediako, African Christianity, Missionary Masculinity, Translatability, African Masculinities, Culture

Introduction

Kwame Bediako is numbered among the pioneers of African Theology. His work which is of great interest for this article centres on the African culture's contribution to the affirmation of African Christian identity in the midst of historical context of political and economic struggles. Bediako demonstrated that Christianity in Africa has become part of African religion and culture

which also acts as an interpretive category for its authenticity. It is this succinct observation that raised the interest to study the development of African Theology. Our encounters with Bediako have been insightful both through his various published works and in person when he was appointed as an Honorary Professor in the School of Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (now the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics). Yet Bediako became internationally renowned following publication of his seminal 1995 book, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-western Religion*. Isabel Phiri, who was the director of African Theology in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, used this book as key text in her postgraduate class on African Theology in 2009 in which Chammah Kaunda and Kennedy Owino participated as Honours and Master of Theology students respectively. One of the requirements for the students was to read this book from cover to cover and make a critical book review. Thus, in this article the aim is to continue this conversation with Bediako on the key translatability motif as an overview of his theology.

To engage Bediako's thinking fruitfully, the article is situated within the ongoing conversations in African Christian theology and African women theologies. Of significant in this conversation is the applicability of translatability to gendered questions in relation to issues of masculinity/ies. Within this framework the intention is to ask fresh questions from the past for the modern African era. Bediako (1992: xii) believed that:

> It is possible to ask fresh questions of the Christian tradition of the past, questions which can in turn illuminate the task of constructing local theologies and the doing of theology in our religious pluralistic modern world.

Bediako invites African scholars to consider the implications of modern history of Christianity in Africa and how it intersects with global Christian faith for constructing local theologies. Some pertinent questions for this endeavour may be raised: to what extent did the 19th century European missionary process of translating Christian faith in African worldview take into cognisance European gender ideological and political worldview? To what extent did the European missionaries self-perception as 'enlightened, superior and civilised' masculinities inform the process of translating Christian faith in a context such as Africa where men were perceived as

'primitive, un-civilised and labelled as boys (immature)'? There are no easy answers to these questions but are raised here as a contribution to an on-going discussion on the issues of masculinities within African Theology.

The European Missionaries' Masculinities: Framing the Topic

Bediako (1992:163) suggests that 'any absolutisation of the pattern of Christianity's transmission should consequently be avoided and the nature of Christian history itself be re-examined'. It appears that Bediako was grappling with the terms applied to the great commission related to concepts of 'conversion' and 'discipling' of the nations. For instance, he argues that:

> Applied to Christian history, the terms of the great commission ... would lead to the realisation that no Christian history anywhere ever ceases to be a missionary history—a history of conversion, a history of the constant seeking and application of the mind of Christ to the issues and questions within a particular context, culture or nation ... (Bediako 1992:165).

Emerging from this observation, European missionaries 'masculinities can only be understood from historical perspective. Hilde Nielssen (2007:48) argues that to understand the white fathers' construction of their masculinities should be seen in relation to the forms of knowledge production and consumption which formed a part of the cultural production of colonial era. This is in line with the observation by Newton Brandt (2006:39) who affirms that as we reflect on masculinity at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is imperative that we look back and analyse the general trends, ideas, ideals and traditions which functioned as substratum for Western missionaries' self-understanding.

Analysing the white fathers' masculinities requires that translation of Christian beliefs, traditions and practices be engaged through examining their endeavour. To this task we begin by asking the question: in what ways did the European missionaries translate their masculinities among their converts in Africa? Are there ways in which European missionaries' process of conversion and 'discipleship' was accompanied by translation of their masculinities into African men thereby colonising them?

To understand patterns of European missionary masculinities there is a need to look back over the period in which they evangelised among African people. The European missionaries came to Africa in the period in which 'racial' superiority and the notion of imperialism became a patriotic necessity (Beynon 2002: 47). John Beynon (2002:35) notes that during this period masculinity was associated with mobility, toughness, and adventurousness a 'manly virtue' that was a prerequisite for Christian inter-cultural missions. It is to this fact that Noll mentions the need for 'counting the cost' as regards to cross-cultural expansion and that missions did not take place without a high cost (Noll 2000: 283). Thus, the martyrology (list of martyrs and other saints) of these centuries of Christian missions in relation to 'Christian men' crossing frontiers to spread the gospel was to a certain extent a story of masculine toughness that despite the premature deaths of missionaries that was an endless recital in the West, men still gave their lives abroad for the endeavours of Christian missions. This in itself indicates that social, religious and cultural beliefs that could have surrounded missionary gender ideologies in specific historical conditions might have been inseparable from the translation process. To engage Bediako further on this, it is important to examine his argument on the theory of translatability by highlighting some of its contentions.

Delineating the Theory of Translatability

Scholars have framed Christianity in universal terms which ideally mean that Christianity both transcends and is culturally bound for assimilation and appropriation (Bediako1995: 123; Sanneh 1983:165-166). In this sense, Christianity as translatable refers to its ability to 'be articulated, received, appropriated and reproduced into potentially infinite number of cultural contexts' (Tennet 2010: 325). Lamin Sanneh (1993: 73) argues that Christianity is 'essentially translated religion linguistically and theologically', and this is the basis of its 'relevance and accessibility' to any persons in any culture where it is transmitted and assimilated (Bediako 1995: 109). Sanneh (1993:167) further argues that:

> Translation assumed that the abstract 'word of God' would find its true
> destiny when embodied in concrete local idiom, lending credence to the

> theological insight that the 'word of God' had always carried the burden of the incarnation, and that its historical manifestation in Jesus Christ concentrated and made visible a process that is occurring throughout history.

In other words, Christian faith finds its habitation and locus in the receptor culture through the process of indigenous assimilation and appropriation. In this regard, Sanneh (1993) stresses that Christian faith in Africa has not expanded at the expense of African religio-cultural values because the missionaries had no control or possession over its assimilation. For him, the missionaries were unable to be bias through the process of translation. Tinyiko Maluleke (1996) feels that this observation is debatable. He thinks that a rational desire to disentangle Christianity from the outworking of colonialism and imperialism does not erase the painful experiences of those who were at the receiving end of religio-cultural and political suppression and economic exploitation. This argument shows that translatability as a concept is a contested phenomenon. Four aspects can be identified from the above:

The first is Christianity is intrinsically translatable. Scholars contend that translatability theory is intrinsically the nature of Christianity. It is the basis for the universality of Christianity (Bediako 1995; Sanneh 1983). According to Bediako (1995), what is significant about Christian faith is that it takes on new forms and shapes as it incarnates in various cultures. In this sense translation is seen as being the inherent ability and vulnerability of the Christian faith in that the Gospel becomes one with the receptor's culture. The ultimate example of translatability is therefore the incarnation of Jesus who is perceived as becoming a human being at a particular time and in a specific socio-cultural and historical human reality.

The second point that Bediako and Sanneh make is that translatability is not just a translation of languages but also a translation of concepts and ideologies. This means that translation is more than the act of textual message translated from one language to another. Rather, it is also a translation of concepts, ideologies, meanings and world-views. Unfortunately, Sanneh and Bediako seem to view translation like a robotic and mechanical process were the passive missionaries' witnessed Christian faith extracting itself in its purity from their cultures and translating itself into Africa cultures. When we understand that translatability is a political ideology, then we begin to

understand that the missionaries utilised translation to achieve total control of the African mind and render them subservient to colonial domination and exploitation. For instance, in her research on translation of the Setswana Bible, Musa Dube (1999) insists that translation has often been used as an instrument of colonizing spaces and minds as the colonised begun to read the Bible in their own languages imbued with their subjugators' world-view and value systems. For Dube (1999: 41) translation was a nightmare planted in African cultural space, warning African Christians to detest from 'dangerous and deadly beliefs' of African cultures. It is a highly volatile theory laden process fraught with ideological and political endeavours that are concealed with personal interests and notions of power. Sanneh and Bediako seem to depict the process of translation of Christian faith like an innocent endeavour (Katongole 2005; Maluleke 1997; Ngodji 2010; Dube 1999). Birgit Meyer (1999:85) in her research among the Ewe people of Ghana discovered that the missionaries through translation constructed the Ewe culture and religious systems as 'heathendom' and implicated the Ewe people's personal conception. Meyer (1999:85) then argues that 'by diabolising Ewe religion as a whole, the moral entailed by it were declared satanic and inappropriate for Christians'. On the one hand, Meyer believes that the way the missionaries presented themselves as standard for Christian life, in turn had a great deal of influence on African converts' perception of Christian life who mimicked European missionaries' notions of political authority, economic power and male-dominance as was presented by European male missionaries as ideal masculinities.

Such an argument highlights the need to understand translation as much more than a technical translation of words and idioms from one language into another, rather the process itself is controlled by the translators who also have unconscious biases and often read their projected meanings in the translated idioms. The translator may also project their particular world-views, feelings, values, practices, beliefs and theo-ideological orientations in the process of translation. Maluleke (1996:9) rightly argues that 'a constructive way forward is not to attempt a denial' of missionaries' imposition of their cultural values and translating their world-views and ideologies in their proclamation of Christianity in Africa.

Thirdly, Sanneh and Bediako underline that African people assimilated and appropriated the Christian faith on their own terms and this

provided them with resources to occasion their liberation and social transformation, where colonialism had conceived to destroy their cultural life and heritage. Sanneh (1989: 1993) believes translation worked against both missionaries' cultural domination and colonial suppression and exploitation. Emmanuel Katongole (2002:215) thinks that the Sanneh and Bediako's idea of 'indigenous assimilation' is significant because it shows that Africans were not passive victims in mission but active agents who shaped Christianity according to their contextual needs and cultural experiences. This does not in any way sanction Sanneh and Bediako's seemingly perception of Christian faith like an independent entity unaffected by the carriers and completely protected from human manipulation. The fact that Christianity is translatable and indigenously assimilated does not in any way eliminate the crucial role of the missionaries in corrupting and destroying the value systems of African cultures (Maluleke 1997). The systematic destruction of the indigenous inhabitants and their way of life can therefore be only understood in interrogating imperial power at the disposal of the translators. Robert Young (2003:144) notes that in *the Wretched of the Earth* Frantz Fanon (1963) write of how Europeans translated black Africans into 'natives' 'and inscribed with the schizoculture of colonialism as devalued other'. They were de-cerebralization and 'made to see themselves as alienated from their own culture, language and land' (Young 2003:145). The process of translating black African did not begin with the translation of the Bible but translation of the people themselves as 'a copy of the original' European people (Young 2003: 139). The European missionaries sought to redefined and translate African way of life in European lifestyle. However, Sanneh (1989:51) and Bediako (1995:119-120) are right in their affirmation that translatability empowered African Christians to resist against the Western missionaries hegemony. Translatability in this case is understood as a catalyst for transformation and a key aspect in African struggle for emancipation.

Fourth, Christianity is an African religion hence it is now indigenous religion. Bediako (1995:123) persuasively argue that 'it is only by a serious misconception that we call it [Christianity] a Western religion'. There is something misleading about this assertion, especially when it is put under the microscope of the various researches that have been done on translation as demonstrated by Musa Dube (1999), Birgit Meyer (1999) and Martin Ngodji (2010). Some African scholars such as Katongole (2002:215) do not support this logic on two grounds: First, he detects that the language and logic of

translatability is not new, it has been propagated by missionaries and only serves to promote a presumed universality. Second, he affirms Maluleke's (1996) reluctance that the foreignness of Christianity cannot be resolved at an intellectual level, however sophisticated it might be because the empirical evidence suggests that African people continue to experience the foreignness of Christianity in their weekly Sunday worship. The contention over the indigeneity of Christianity poses a question whether translatability is a onetime event with a definite ending in the past or a process that leads to indigeneity? It seems that translating the Bible into the vernacular languages did not completely decolonize Christianity from the Western worldview. Both Maluleke (1996) and Katongole (2002) are under the impression that Sanneh and Bediako's attempt to prove the 'non-foreignness' of Christianity utilising the notion of translatability rest at an ambiguous premises and is not plausible. Thus, Ngodji (2010) stresses that in evaluating any translation; the agency of the translator should be put under scrutiny for they can easily manipulate the translation to fix into it their own agenda and endeavours. Ngodji (2010: 53-54) uncovers some of the current issues posing serious challenges to the Bible translation in Africa. Issues such as using gender sensitive language and HIV and AIDS remain at the fringes of Bible translation. Nevertheless, if we affirm Maluleke's (1996) assumption that Sanneh and Bediako as a merely proposing a mechanism whereby the search to unhinge Christianity from colonialism could finally be established, two issues can be raised: first translatability continues to happen at various levels in African Christianity. Second, Bediako's theory of translatability did not take into serious account the potential nature at which for instance, the translations of gender ideologies become apparent in the process of theological and linguistic assimilation. This raises a question: to what extend is translatability theory applicable in engaging a gendered analysis of masculinity/ies and in what ways does translatability emerge as a continuous process in African Christianity?

Contours in Theorising European Missionary Constructs of Masculinities

The contestation on translatability theory requires bringing on board the gender dynamics of the theory. It is worth noting that African women

theologians levelled accusations against African male theologians for ignoring gender injustice in their theology of liberation (Phiri 1997; Njoroge1997; Oduyoye 2002). To a certain extent Bediako's theory of translation could be categorised under such 'gender wanting' African scholarship. Thus, we seek to relate concepts of masculinity and hegemony to translatability theory by examining three issues as follows:

First, it is significant to understand masculinity/ties. Here masculinity refers to a specific gender identity belonging to individuals who have specific experiences of what it means to be a male person (Morrell 2001; Connell 2000; Whitehead 2002). According to Beynon (2002:56), masculinity is viewed as a set of practices into which individual men are inserted with reference to upbringing, family, area, work and sub-cultural influence. Hence, in the light of these definitions, masculinity/ties are an outcome when men configure their identities in diverse environments of social, cultural, religious, political and economic factors. These are variables that impact men as they seek to assert their masculine sense of self in the process of identity construction. Thus, there is no uniform masculinity but a multiplicity of masculinities. In fact, it is now accepted to employ the term 'masculinities' to match the cultural constructions and expressions of masculinity.[1] The conception of masculinities, as captured by Beynon (2002:2), entails that men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up; rather it is something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behaviour which they learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways. For the purpose of this article, the definitions are drawn from two sociologists of masculinity Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (2001: 15) who argue that:

> the nearest that we can get to an 'answer' is to state that masculinities are those behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organisational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine. So, masculinities exist as both a positive, inasmuch as they

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[1] Since there is no monolithic masculinities but 'masculinities' not all men have the same form of masculinity but a number of masculinities exist along a wide spectrum which comes to existence as men act (Morrell 2001: 4).

offer some means of identity signification for males, and as a negative, inasmuch as they are not the 'other' (feminine).

This shows that culture is not only imperative in examining how men seek to enact their masculine sense of self but also, equally central to re-examine is the 'religious cultures' and traditions as a process which men and women throughout history have engaged to understand their gendered lives. Christian theology and traditional beliefs as a 'sub-cultural influence' have formed a set of gender ideologies that are constantly being reproduced (and translated).

Second, the concept of hegemony as it applies to the studies of masculinities describes and differentiates diverse masculinities taking different forms. Connell (2000) examining the definite of social relations within masculinities argues that there are relations of power and hierarchy. There are dominant and others are subordinate or marginalised masculinities. He (2000:77) defines the concept of 'hegemony' in this way:

> The concept of 'hegemony', deriving from Antonio Gramsci's analysis of class relations, refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practices which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordinate position of women.

Sociologists have unveiled that not only do hegemonic masculinities applies to male domination over women, but also exert equally dominance over other forms of masculinities (McClintock 1995; Morell 2001; Connell 2002; Mbembe 2006; Lusher & Robins 2009; Mutekwa 2013). Empirical evidence suggests that 'hegemonic masculinity', as a form of masculinity that is currently ascendant and dominant, is constructed not only in relation to femininities but also in relation to subordinated and marginalised masculinities (Messner 1995). This defines successful ways of 'being a man' in particular contexts at a specific time.

Third, is the issue of hegemony and missionary masculinities? The

question of what constituted an ideal masculine identity among European missionaries in Africa leads to examination of what must have informed the construction of masculinities among European missionaries in modern period and how the resultant forms of masculinities were evident in their mission practices in Africa. However, one setback that we encounter is: how do we weigh or ideologically measure the European missionary character as relates to Bediako's theory of translatability? To address this concern, we argue that missionary masculinities were hegemonic masculinities.

The term 'hegemonic missionary masculinities' is one that has no popularity even though we intend to engage with this further within the context of Christian missions. The missionary adventure like its colonial counterpart was largely undertaken by European white males. Thus it was essentially a patriarchal mission adventure (McClintock 1995; Connell 2000; Mutekwa 2009, 2013; Tjelle 2014). Achille Mbembe (2006: 169) argues that 'the war between races was constructed as a war between men, but a war in which the main assets were women's bodies'. It is therefore not out of line to classified European missionary masculinities as hegemonic masculinity because the male missionaries themselves publicly presented their masculinities as ascended and dominant group of men and in a leading positions within the context of Christian missions in Africa during modern colonial period (Tjelle 2010, 2014). Kristin Tjelle (2010:3) noted on the mission field in Africa, the 'original and idealistic idea of a Christian brotherhood' between European missionaries and African pastors was abandoned by missionaries. Tjelle (2010:3) discovered that the notion of Christian brotherhood 'was replaced by an ideology of a father-son relationship between the white missionary and the black pastor, where the latter was understood as a youth who had not yet reached the level of manhood'. The missionaries functioned within the political paradigm of the colonizers that bequeathed boy masculinities on African men. As such, though their superior masculine sense of self as men perceived African women and men as subordinate and inferior within the context of Christian missions. The missionaries defined African masculinities as 'primitive' which were to be aided from un-civilization into civilized era (Reeser 2010:151). African men were perceived 'as full of libido and pre-civilized' because their gender and racial category were classified as underdeveloped and as such African men were categorised as boys (Reeser 2010:152; see also Mutekwa 2013). The modern prevalent idea of muscularity in Africa are

implicitly linked to 19th century European missionaries and colonialists definition of what meant to be a man which negated African own definition of manliness. Two observations can be derived from this: The first, and central to the thesis of this article is the observation that Christianity emerged and to a large extent was presented as a 'Western', muscular and manly faith and as such Christ was presented in masculine terms. In the way the missionaries presented Christian faith were gender overtones through which linguistic and theological ideas easily found penetration in the translation process. This established a departure point from which Christianity was perceived as superior religion. The perception that Christianity was superior created a nostalgic mind-set among European missionaries that at no value was the Christian faith to strike a negotiation and dialogue with any African 'primal' and traditional religions in that they were deemed as 'pagan' and 'primitive'. In this case, the thinking of the European missionaries towards the African world was influenced by their European sub-cultural thought that Christianity was superior and equal to none and that missionaries masculinities were in themselves superior and civilised and African masculinities savagery and uncivilised. This also shows that European missionaries defined Christianity as monotheistic religion. This resulted in missionaries' hostility and suspicious toward other religions and ways of life.

Even though Bediako has explicitly argued that Christianity is now 'a non-western religion' on the basis that Christian religion is translatable into non-Western context, the struggle to remain to what extent can translation be regard as an innocent endeavour which can epistemologically delinked from the influence of European missionaries hegemonic masculinities. The fact that African Christians did not discard most Western value-settings as the basis of assimilating the Christian faith is an indication that some translations of the gospel message were very Eurocentric. Hence, translatability as an appropriate historical framework is questionable on the nature through which missionaries masculinities persisted as hegemonic and Africans in this case perceived as subordinate at the receiving end.

The second reason is difficult to separate between the relationship of Christian missions and imperialism. Paul Gundani (2004) narrates this double sided undistinguished nature of imperialism and Christian missions by indicating that it is precisely because of the special relationship that existed between the cross and the crown that we treat missionaries and traders as bedfellows in their sojourn to Africa. They shared the same faith and world-

view, and bore one mandate from the crown. The argument is that the process of colonial domination embedded violence was evident in African colonies and was deeply entrenched in the process of missionaries approach to evangelisation which undergirded the basis of translation of Christian faith into local cultures. The question is: in what ways did such confusion convict and guide the views and hegemonic attitudes of the missionaries in the process of translation? Gundani (2004: 300) observes:

> The superiority complex was a by-product of centuries of European prejudice about Africa. Fantasy and fiction about Africa was an integral element of the perception embedded in the European mind of the Middle ages. The missionary and trader found themselves victim to this perception. A fixation with evil prevented the missionaries from seeing that God had been to Africa before them.

Although this is a fact that Bediako (1995) refutes, it leaves a desire to re-examine the issue. The fact that Africans sort not only for political independence but also for spiritual freedom is enough evidence that conversion through translation of the Christian faith went side by side with the imposition of Western cultural hegemony. The missionary hegemony was clearly seen in its resultant suppression of African indigenous thought patterns by labelling them as 'primitive, uncivilised, barbaric and of pagan origin'. This was done on the basis of articulating Christocentric claims of Christianity through the European cultural lenses as the criteria through which an African person must abandon their Africanness.

Way Forward for Articulating Masculinities in African Christianity

Finally, three abstractions can be suggested as way forward in an ongoing process of translation of Christianity faith into concrete African idioms.

The first is there is an urgent need to decolonise African masculinities. As highlighted above, many African men are now trapped in the masculinities that were introduced by European missionaries in the 19th century. The articulation of masculine domestic domination, economic control and exclusively male public leadership represent a double-

colonization for African women who were disempowered by both European missionaries and colonialist and African men. Although these masculinities have been critique by women, there is a still a need for decolonising them. The decolonization of African masculinities will require not only a restructuring of the way African men are to conceptualise themselves, but also the ways in which African masculinities can be gendered so that they do not reproduced pre-colonial power relations. The argument is that if missionaries' hegemonic masculinities were the organizing principle that structured African masculinities through translation, then any attempts at decolonization and theorising the possibilities implied by the notion of African masculinities must take account the missionary-colonial 'context in which these particular subjectivities' were constructed (Matahaera-Atariki 1999:111). In the words of Frantz Fanon (1963: 2):

> Decolonization never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History. It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men …. Decolonization, therefore, implies the urgent need to thoroughly challenge the [missionary-colonial] situation.

Secondly, there is an urgent need to rethink missions as gender reconciliation. A theology of Christian missions must begin with an understanding that mission is a mission of God—*Missio Dei,* in which women and men are called, first and foremost to the ministry of gender reconciliation in partner with God. Women and men are called to take part in Christian mission in partnership as agents of God's missions in the world. Women and men are sacred before God and their gender subjectivities and identities must be affirmed as sacred relationship with each other. The mission of God is a mission of justice and such a mission of gender justice and demands mutually respectful and loving partnership between women and men. This approach to missions seeks to curb the gender imbalance that was introduced and reinforced by missionaries in certain African receptor cultures, a phenomenon most common in some cases where missionary hegemony has persisted. A mission endeavour which begins with a

worldview that those at the 'receiving' end have nothing in common with the 'message carriers' (who are in fact part of God's mission) stands the risk of a dangerous theology of missions that will not withstand confrontation and aggression, a factor that contributes to failure. The arrogance that missions is primarily about bringing salvation and redemption to godless Africans who must emulate European lifestyle is the resulting Euro-centric mono-cultural missionary attitudes that could not escape the temptation of seeking to translate Western Christian values as part of the Christian faith. This is a fact that African people are still battling with even to the present age.

Third, the task of the African church is to challenge and critically, innovatively and creatively reclaim and reconstitute some life-giving and affirming aspects of African traditional models of masculinities within the context of emerging paradigms of life-giving-affirming-and-preserving masculinities informed by human rights and gender justice and equality. Speaking as an African woman theologian, Mercy Amba Oduyoye (2002) contends that a church that consistently ignores the implications of the gospel for the lives of women—and others of underclass—cannot continue to be an authentic voice for salvation. She (2002:97) further argues that 'not until that we can say that what hurts women also hurts the entire Body of Christ, will we in truth be able to speak of "one Body"'. The history of mission in Africa has been one of male superiority and dominance that were reinforced through translation of gender ideologies under missionary hegemony as part of the Christian faith.

Conclusion

This article looked at four key principles that underline Bediako's translatability theory as engaged with by African theologians. It demonstrated that missionary masculinity/ies were hegemonic masculinities in that African people and cultures were perceived as subordinate to European missionaries and culture. Missionaries worked tireless to suppress the forms of masculinities that seemed to hinder the process of evangelisation in the quest to civilise 'the dark continent' with the gospel message. The Implication of missionaries' hegemonic masculinities in mission was an ecclesial concern that either depicted the church as 'the church for the people' in hierarchical terms beginning with the missionaries at the apex and women relegated to the

very bottom of the pyramid. Centre to the life of the church is missions and this makes the church missional by its nature to all of God's people. To conclude in the words of Anthony Bellagamba (1992:63) who argues that:

> Mission does not exist to destroy what God has done in the world through people's cultures and religions. Rather, it consists in bringing all this to perfection, in and through Christ in an explicit or implicit way.

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