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CHALLENGES FOR AFRICAN MISSIONARIES

Question: What are the biggest challenges for Africans serving as missionaries and how can those challenges be overcome:

Responses:

Rev. Andrew Bondo

Missionary leader of the Wesleyan Church of Nigeria and also leading a new missions work in Chad.



From the context of Jonah 4:1-2 one major reason why Jonah refused to go to Nineveh to preach was he hated their lifestyle. Jonah was inconsiderate of the culture of the people. He saw them as wicked people who deserved nothing else but punishment and condemnation

I consider overcoming cultural barriers as the major challenge for Africans serving on the mission field

When the Inland Church went to Liberia, their missionaries lived in barricaded communities, drank boiled water and gave their converts Western names / names derived from the Bible. Thus, a majority of the natives adapted similar lives by fencing their compounds with bamboo. Though they adhered to other Christian values, they considered living in barricaded yards and bearing Western / biblical names as evidence of conversion.

Today, overcoming cultural barriers remains a threat to the spread of the gospel by African missionaries. Trading our culture for that of others is still a major hindrance for many African missionaries. Language which is embedded within our culture is a major obstacle. Africa is plagued with multiple languages. Take an instance Nigeria has about two hundred and fifty (250) languages not to mention the several hundreds of dialects within each language.

One will notice that English is considered the official language of Nigeria but when you go to serve as a missionary in eastern Nigeria, the trade Language is Igbo and not English. This scenario is repeated all over the continent.

When we are sent to the West, their way of life becomes a barrier. A visiting Kenyan missionary to an all Kenyan congregation in the United States once made this comment when invited to preach. "I have been observing that you have abandoned your Kenyan way of life and have adapted the American way of life. But let me warn you, the day that i see any of you kissing dogs like them i won't eat in your home."

Conclusion

In order to overcome cultural barriers African missionaries should acculturate the culture of those they have been called to minister to whether theirs is inferior or superior. Let us heed to Paul's advice. (1 Corinthians 9:22 "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.")

We will win others to Christ when serving as missionaries only by becoming all things to all people in order to win them. Accepting cultures of others means a lot to them.

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### **Alusine Kargbo**

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Africa is multicultural and multifaceted. The problems of African missionaries vary from place to place and are dependent on the missionary, their country of origin and the country of service.

However, these are some of the key problems they encounter.

1. Discouragement with results of witnessing, progress in churches, growth in converts, uncertainty about lasting ministry.

Solution: The missionary should realize that the work is God's and not His personal work. (Colossians 3:23-24).

2. Distraction in the missionary's commitment, time, opportunities, and time alone with God.

Solution: The missionary must establish a plan to study, pray and read books and magazines. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

3. Barriers in language and communication. Africa has many tribes, traditions and customs and meandering through these as a missionary is usually daunting

Solution: The missionary should put in interest, effort and perseverance in learning new languages. (Philippians 4:13)

4. Immigration challenges and permit issues Because of the rise in terrorism and lack of job opportunities for the working class in most African countries, obtaining visas and working permits is increasingly becoming challenging. Some Islamic states even have special anti-Christian laws to keep Christian missionaries from coming into their countries.

Solution: Faith, patience, and prayer. (2Thessalonians 3:3-5; Psalm 105:14)

5. Social and cultural barriers. In most African societies there are expected ways of relating to people and doing almost everything. Everyone living in these societies must adapt to some extent or be treated as an outcast or disrespected.

Solution: The missionary should be adaptable, flexible, and ready to dress appropriately to be accepted so he can make an impact. (Proverbs 11:22; 1 Corinthians 9:22)

6. Being tagged with the identity of a foreigner which represents wealth. Many people in Africa have a misconception that foreigners have money and they may stick around not because they want to be disciples or anything of the sort but to exploit the missionary for financial favors and opportunities.

Solution: Always point people to God. Don't prioritize giving more than sharing the gospel through teaching. Tell them continuously that you are an ambassador of Jesus Christ and you only have Jesus. Don't give any financial assistance when it is not highly needed, or they will consider you to be a money making machine. (2 Corinthians 5:20 Acts 3: 12.)

7. Financial challenges: Because of the financial status of many African countries, raising finances from within to take care of the work and the missionary is a big challenge. The missionary will have to be dependent substantially on the sending church for support and livelihood. The absence of such support will eventually put an additional stress on the missionary and the work at large

Solution: Missionaries must demonstrate faithful stewardship of all resources and materials given to them. Teach and encourage the members of the work to support the ministry in their own way so that they can understand what it means to be responsible over time. (2 Corinthians 8:1-9)

8. Impact of the work on family life and responsibilities. The stress and demands of missionary work can knock out the time the missionary has with his family as well as his other responsibilities.

Solution: Live a balanced Christian life. Never sacrifice your family or family responsibilities in the name of serving God. The family is the first mission field. Leave time for family gatherings, outings, recreation etc. (Colossians 3:18-21)

9. Spiritual exhaustion: In many cases the missionary may feel exhausted spiritually and would need encouragement. It also even appears that he could be even forgotten by the sending church and with no strength left to face the uncertain future.

Solution: Spend time with God in prayers and through his word as much as you can. (2 Peter 3:18)

Stay blessed.

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Mohammed Said:

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Introduction:

This task seeks to answer the following two principal questions: What is the biggest challenge for Africans serving as missionaries? How can they overcome it?

As ministers and ambassadors of our Lord Jesus Christ we are mandated to obediently do the will of Him Who has sent us and completely finish His work irrespective of where we are (John 4:34). Paul also charged Archippus that he sees to it that he discharges fully the ministry which he had received in the Lord and that he fulfils it (Col. 4:17). However, there are great challenges especially in the cross cultural field. Some of these challenges have compelled men and women serving God outside of their cultures to question their calling to cross cultural ministry. On the other hand, some have gone beyond questioning and called it a quit, leaving the work of Him Who has sent them undone.

The biggest challenge for Africans serving as missionaries

There are many challenges in the mission field for African missionaries. However, one would like to give much attention to leadership and organisational structures within the context of a new mission field. My observations in Malawi and other mission fields that I have been directly or indirectly involved in, have compelled me to consider leadership and organisational structures as one of the biggest challenges for Africans serving as missionaries. This task does not see leadership and structures in isolation but as one entity. Leadership according to Cole

(2002) is understood as, "... a process within groups in which one person, either by virtue of position or personality or both, obtains sufficient commitment of the other members to facilitate the achievement of group goals" (or organisational goals). On the other hand structures should be designed to suit the need of the organisation as a whole. Therefore, these structures ought to be designed in a manner that is consistent with the vision and objectives of the organisation, and should be flexible to adapt to changing circumstances over time.

Building leadership and structures that are consistent with the vision of the Church that in turn models and embeds the vision in its practices, and leads and manages its people by the vision has been my biggest challenge in Malawi. This challenge finds its place in the minds of the local people whom we work with. Culturally, locals have a perception that missionaries have the following powers:

- a. Resource power: It has to do with the possession of valued resources such as: money, control over salaries, and access to valued resources
- b. Positional power: It is said to be the power of the office, or position as described by Weber in Cole, (2002:86). It is further believed that positional power relies closely on resource power. However, positional power does give access to what Handy calls "invisible assets", such as information, rights of access to key groups and leaders, and the right to organise work, people and transformational projects.
- c. Expert power: It is said that this power is attributed to those who seem to have possession of acknowledged expertise. Foreign missionaries are thought to be in possession of such (Biblical knowledge, administrative skills, Church planting and evangelism etc).

It is in the minds of locals that if they align or have access to the missionary, they will in turn have access or obtain favour of the powers that are in his or her possession. By so doing they override and despise the local leadership. On the other hand, the local leadership tends to slow down the process of local ownership under the pretext that they don't have what the missionaries have. This kills or retards the implementation of the vision or strategy for an indigenous Church that is: self-propagating, self-supporting, self-governing and "self-theologizing". The result is **DEPENDENCY** which in turn compels the African missionaries to stay forever in a mission field as pioneer fathers and superintendents.

How to overcome this challenge

African missionaries must be empowered to generate resources or to be supported to meet the needs in the missions field. The local leadership must also be given access to required resources for ministry if they are to gain self-esteem and followership. On the other hand, missionaries ought to refute this perception by being transparent and being sincerely part and parcel of the local leadership; hence, building trust. It should be noted that it is not only in the newly found missions field that locals perceive missionaries as being or having the resource power but even those who are in old established Churches cherish the same belief. Talking about positional power, the missionary has to see to it that the local leadership has all the powers to execute the vision. Furthermore, the missionary must not embrace people who overlook their local leadership.

Talking about expert power, African missionaries have to possess this power so that they could be accepted as such but not as superior to the locals. This should be in terms of being resourceful or being of help to the local church. On that note, this expert

power, must be transmitted also to the local leadership through education, coaching and mentoring. Without such power, leadership becomes an issue of position not a “fit” and structures become a traditional norm not for organisational efficiency. It should be noted that expert power and positional power are needed to have access to the ruling and powerful elite, needed to command followership and trust, and also for all sorts of paper work required by the laws of the host country.

The above elements are really needed in the process of building strong leadership and

structures for the Church and without it the African missionary is either despised or builds a weak leadership that in turn culminates in weak organisational structures that do not correspond to the overall vision for the church and to the external changing environment.

Strong leadership owns the process of church growth within and globally. Strong leadership understands the principles of self-propagating, self-governing, self-supporting and “self-theologizing” in the long run.

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## STOPPING BRAIN DRAIN IN THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

**Question: How can we stop the “brain drain of competent young leaders from the Wesleyan Church?”**

**Responses:**

**Peter Kollie**

*District Superintendent of the Wesleyan Church of Liberia*



Brain drain is the situation in which a large number of educated and very skilled people leave their own country to live and work in another one where conditions are better.

By our definition, the situation of brain drain is neither a recent nor an uncommon phenomenon. Human history reveals that it has affected families, institutions, communities and nations across centuries. Today, brain drain is even more pervasive and evident all over the world with the help of globalization and its varying facilitating

realities. Recorded in the Bible are vivid accounts of brain drain. The latter part of Ruth 1:1-2 reads like a restatement of the conventional meaning of brain drain:

*“In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him. The man’s name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. And when they reach Moab, they settled there.”*

A larger scale brain drain of Canaan into Egypt, earlier than the one above also as a result of serious famine involving Jacob’s 70-member family, was to become more pronounced and historically consequential in centuries to come: *“The total number of Jacobs direct descendants who went with him to Egypt, not counting his son’s wives, was sixty-six. In addition, Joseph had two sons who were born in Egypt. So altogether,*

*there were seventy members of Jacob's family in the land of Egypt." Gen. 46:26-27*

Because brain drain does affect any society and the lives of its inhabitants, as suggested already, an in-depth understanding of brain drain – especially its nature, patterns, causes and effects is very helpful. The present discussion, however, is focused on some of the common causes of brain drain, within the context of a country or an institution such as the church. The discussion will then conclude with a few ways we, as leaders, can guard against the negative effects of brain drain on the Wesleyan Church in Africa or the body of Christ in general. I have no doubt that the issues raised and the recommendations proffered in this discussion will be context relevant to Liberian Wesleyans as well as Wesleyans on the continent and around the world.

**Common causes and effects of brain drain.** Unhealthy competition within the body of Christ, inadequate understanding of God's call and its implications, lack of a supportive and enabling environment for ministry are three of the obvious root causes of brain drain. If these situations are not studied and addressed in a timely and calculated manner, they may become serious obstacles to achieving the goals and objectives of the church or any institution concern. Though not exhaustive, the following measures could help to respond to brain drain.

### **Resource and Responsibility Sharing.**

There is a poster in the office of the District Superintendent of the Wesleyan Church of Liberia (my office) that reads: "***Do not put period where God has put a comma.***" If God, in his infinite wisdom, has made us neighbors as evident by common geographic proximity, similarity of ethnic groupings and languages as well as shared

economic, cultural, social, spiritual and political prospects and challenges, what should prevent us from establishing strategic cross-border or regional partnerships that make 'spreading scriptural holiness' across our nations and continent easier, smarter and faster? We need to encourage ***responsibility and resource sharing.*** There are too many unhealthy competitions going on between Wesleyans and too many collaborative opportunities waiting to be taken advantage of by Wesleyans within the West African region alone, not to even mention on the continent of Africa.

Upholding the principle of ***responsibility and resource sharing,*** in my opinion, is one sure way to reduce or stop brain drain and its adverse effects within the Wesleyan Church. If we soberly reflect on the huge capacity-building challenges confronting us as a denomination in our various regions and on the continent, it would be prudent to, for example, establish a ***WUWNA*** (Wesleyan University of West & North Africa) – a strategically located advanced training hub where we would gather and support our PhDs, Masters, and other under-utilized, under-resourced or unutilized human capital to sustainably bridge our long standing manpower gap. I guess many of us leaders have somehow started hearing God speaking: "***I command you to have more teachers, preachers, missionaries, evangelists...***" Let us not be tempted to put full-stop where a comma or colon or semi-colon is divinely intended. God may well be commanding us to take advantages of the partnership opportunities available to us now. There is a saying I have come to love: "***If you want go fast, go alone; but if you want to far, go together with others.***" Two can put ten thousand to flight; one, a thousand. It is time Wesleyans worked together to reduce the negative effects of brain drain on the ministries of our denomination.

### **Unmistakable hearing & understanding of God's call.**

A caution to people considering ministry – for their own sake and God's Kingdom sake - is to ensure that they have actually heard God's call and what it means from that point on. No doubt, there is a huge exodus of ministers from the ministry today. What has become doubtful is whether many of the ministers exiting ministry for "greener pastures" actually heard God's call in the first place; and if they did indeed, did they also clearly understand the implications of that call for their lives henceforth?

I am totally convinced, if top leaders, ordination boards, and denominations prayerfully and diligently insisted on a little more rigorous process before the laying on of hands or commissioning of Christian leaders to various offices of the church, the challenges of brain drain could be half addressed. This proactive biblical measure of responding to brain drain is very critical in the wake of numerous resource challenges, especially human. We should not always compare our vocation with those of our engineering or accounting or non-Christian professional friends. Between them and us, there are differences too numerous for this discussion to accommodate. All I can say is that ours is a vocation founded on the supreme sacrifice of the One who has called us. We therefore cannot rule out the sacrificial element of the call to Christian ministry. Never! Remember David Livingstone, John Wesley, Hudson Taylor, John Bunyan, and the list goes on. If we stood on the shoulders of these pilgrims (and we are supposed to) we would be able to see that the 'greener pastures' we often clamor for are really not green pastures (Psalm 23:2). Scripture is abundantly clear that those are called to ministry should not always expect to find things easy for them as they appear for others.

A story is told of a retiring missionary returning home to America on the same boat as the president of the United States. Cheering crowds, a military band, a red carpet, banners and the media welcomed the president home, but the missionary slipped off the ship unnoticed. Feeling self-pity and resentment, he began complaining to God. Then God gently reminded him, "But my child, you're not home yet."

### **A Supportive And Enabling Environment.**

Brain drain describes the relocation of highly skilled persons to another country in hot pursuit of better opportunities or living standards which do not exist in their contexts; or even if they existed, they may not be accessible to them. This 'human capital flight' also takes place between institutions. The disadvantages it causes for the drained country or institution could be avoided or curtailed if its leadership gave attention to providing opportunities that could utilize their skills, motivate them to creatively and innovatively apply those skills for the advancement of their institutions. Research shows that institutions and countries that have prevented or addressed the issue of brain drain have succeeded by improving people's living standards, paying improved and attractive salary packages, increasing chances of promotion in the work environment, adding value and appreciating degrees or credentials obtained locally. Most often than not, foreign credentials are preferred to local ones regardless of the discipline. Intentionally engaging in economically viable initiatives is among best approaches to addressing the issue of brain drain. The Booker Washington institute (BWI) in Liberia is among the best educational institutions that have stood the test of time and continue to deliver quality, relevant education to young people over the years. It purchased a large area of land on which it cultivated cash crops mainly rubber. With or without government support, BWI

remains one of the best Technical & vocation school in the country simply because it has a sustainable local support base. The Wesleyan Churches can follow suit.

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Willard S. Mainza

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Brain drain is the leaving of competent or gifted human resource/personnel from one organization to another within the country or across borders.

Brain drain in the church will rise from different sources or root causes such as when young leaders begin to get frustrations, there is a lack of leadership equality and inclusion as well as a lack of recognition and reward for their expertise and contribution to the church organization. Furthermore, it can come from senior leaders not acknowledging the talents and gifts in the young people God has given to the church, so they move to another church which has a growing momentum and has provided room for their gifts to operate.

By this time, these young people have traveled a long road from tots to teens, and now are adults and others are parents. It's another adjustment! During this age many young people head to universities, join the armed services, becomes professionals or specialists, ICT experts and others are in employment while others are seeking jobs day and night. The youth are now dealing with world problem of economic crisis, lack of employment and injustice, lack of progressive and quality education. All these are a concern to many Africans and are

affecting their future prospects to develop into great leaders of our time . . . but there is hope.

Succession planning is the process whereby the organization proactively identifies potential leaders and prepares them through systematic career, skill and personal development. Knowledge management is the systematic process that supports the continuous development of individuals, group and organizational learning; involving the creation, acquisition, transforming and application of knowledge to achieve organizational objectives. To this end, the church needs to consider investing in young people in different ways but this needs to start by recognizing that we have a lot of gifts and blessed minds among the young people. The times we are in are a serious factor we need not to ignore; young people are exposed and so they need leadership exposure and what is appealing stimulates their mind interest

Talking with few young leaders, this is the feedback I got: "How do get effectively function where I belong? This is my battle cry! I have a real-life struggle. It is about creating my own identity. My mind is running all over about what kind of person I should be. How do I get a sense of belonging? How do I effectively function where I belong? This is my battle cry."

With that in mind here is are tips on how we can stop the drain brain of competent young leaders from Wesleyan Church:

- Recognize and reward them: Senior leaders need to show young leaders that they are valued and appreciated by offering them real time recognition that celebrates their gifts and effort. Make it specific, social and supported by tangible reward and you too will be rewarded with their loyalty

- Offer flexibility: Flexibility is essential leadership requirement in today's fast changing environment and this in turn means that designing leadership processes that are able to change and adapt to suit current demands of young people and different circumstances. The senior leadership may need not to be beauracritic. Today's young leaders crave a flexible life/work balance. That impacts retention directly. That means the church needs to have this atmosphere for young people
- Prioritize their happiness: This may sound soft but it's a great motivation. Their happiness is an indicator of job satisfaction, absenteeism and alignment with values – just for starters. Investing in their programs and church activities which stimulates their happiness will pay dividends in engagement, productivity and retention.
- Make opportunity for development and growth: We can't run away from the fact of investing into young people. Young people place HUGE value on opportunities for growth. If you are not investing in their growth why should they stay? Education and training levels the playing field for them. The leadership

should also value delegating some responsibilities to stimulate their sense of belonging to the church, growth exposure, knowledge management and succession curve

- Provide an inclusive vision: Equality and inclusion excites a sense of belonging beyond money. One key factor in young leaders both women and men engagement and happiness is to provide them with a sense of purpose and meaning to their work. Senior leaders may need to offer a strong vision and goals for their work and increase their sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization
- Demonstrate and cultivate respect: Finally, don't discount respect when it comes to creating a magnetic culture and this will pay off in higher retention. The Bible says do not despise the small beginning. Regardless of their mistakes, don't over criticize them in everything for they may become defensive and begin to get inspirations elsewhere and contemplate their exit strategies.

Thank you

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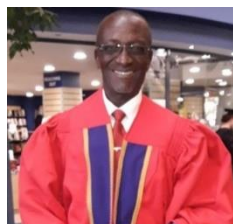
## WHAT WESLEYANS BELIEVE

**Question: What do Wesleyans believe about free will and why is it important?**

**Response**

**James P. Toga**

*President, Wesleyan College of Liberia*



### 1. Introduction

The doctrine of human free will has been a subject of debate for centuries. This debate might continue to the return of Jesus Christ. Reformed theologians and Wesleyan-Arminian theologians (hereafter referred to as "Wesleyans") agree that as the result of

Adam's fall, human nature is absolutely morally and spiritually corrupt in disposition and character' to the extent that the human mind, will, emotions, affections and conscience are 'wholly bent to indulge our natural corruption' (Reymond 1998:450; cf. Coppedge 1987:135, 147, 227; Cunningham 1994:586, 587). The two schools refer to this moral, spiritual corruption as "total depravity". Reformed theologians teach that because of this depravity, God has sovereignly predestined certain people to eternal salvation whom he knows are saveable and condemned others to eternal damnation that he knows are damnable. God also foreordains certain people to serve him, even before they come into existence, to the exclusion of their free will. In other words, God annuls all human freedom, whether for salvation or for serving Him (cf. Bird 2013; Peterson 2007; Pike 1977; Reymond 1998; Roach 2008; Sanders 2003:70-73).

Wesleyans on the other hand, argue that fallen humans have the ability to exercise their free will in matters of their salvation, eternal damnation and services to God (Coppedge 1987:133, 134). The basis for their position Paul's statement to the Christians in Rome: 'For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son' (Rom. 8:29; cf. Acts 4:28; 1 Cor. 2:7; Rom 8:30; Eph. 1:11). It is worth noting, however, that writings of the Reformed tradition indicate that humans do exercise their free will.

## **2. Reformed Tradition and Human Free Will**

### **2.1 The Westminster Confession of Faith**

The Westminster Confession of Faith is 'The most complete, the most fully elaborated and carefully guarded, the most perfect, and the most vital expression' of the

Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. Sections of this document support the doctrine of the use of human free will. For example, Confession XV.1 speaks of repentance. It states, 'Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached in season and out of season by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ'. The mentioning of 'faith in Christ', along with repentance, implies that the two terms are intertwined about salvation (cf. Acts 2:38; 17:30; Rom 1:16, 17; 10:9, 10, 17; Gal 2:15, 16).

In addition, Confession XV.5, 6, states, 'It is every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins particularly. Every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof, upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy'. The mentioning of man having a 'duty' to repent of 'his particular sins' and 'forsaking...them' offers one probable conclusion—'Man' is responsible for preserving his salvific relationship with God, granted that God has already predestined him (e.g. Confession iii.3, 4).

Calvin understood Jesus' words in John 3:18 ("Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (NIV) to refer to wicked unbelievers who will have exhibited open contempt for the Gospel of Jesus. They will be 'utterly ruined' (King 1988-2007:n.p). Calvin's statements suggest that wicked, unbelieving people are liable for their condemnation, rather than because God decreed their condemnation. In other words, he is suggesting that the 'wicked' are not predestined to be wicked so that they might be damned eternally. Rather, they are damned because they persist in their life of wickedness.

## 2.2 The Confessions of the Lutheran Church

Lutherans are regarded generally as part of the Reformed Tradition. Nevertheless, they differ particularly from Calvinists regarding the extent and nature of human free will, and on the doctrine of double predestination (Cooper 2015:6, 11-13, 22, 26, 33). For instance, while Calvinists teach generally that God foreknows all who will be saved and damned, and that he has saved those who are saveable and condemned those who are damnable (cf. Sanders 2003:70-73; Beek 2000:174, 175), Lutherans teach that people are saved by faith/belief, repentance and personally choosing God's offer of salvation, though not apart from God's enabling grace (Senor 1999:268-270; Cooper 2015:11; cf. John 3:3-21,36; 5:24-29). Several articles of this Confession support the doctrine of human free will to certain extent.

For instance, Article IV.1, 2 states that no one can be justified in God's sight by his/her 'own strength, merits, or works.' Rather, people's sins are remitted and they are justified through their faith 'when they believe that they are received into favour'. Article XVIII (of Human Free will: sections 1-7, 31) accepts that humans do have free will and do exercise it freely, even though their free will is limited to carrying out their civil duties and worshipping idols rather than worshipping God. Article VI (of Obedience: Section 1.3) states that faith enables those who have been forgiven and justified to do good works, which God commands. Finally, Article XII (of Repentance: Section 1) shows that repentance is necessary for forgiveness of sin. It sees repentance as consisting of 'contrition' and 'faith'. 'Contrition' causes people's consciences to be terribly smitten 'through the knowledge of sin', while 'faith' being derived from

hearing the gospel, causes people to believe that their sins have been forgiven (cf. Article XX.29).

## 3.3 Wesleyans' Belief about Human Free Will

The "Articles of Religion of the Wesleyan Church" (Section 8, paragraph 224 captioned, "Personal Choice") states:

We believe that humanity's creation in the image of God included ability to choose between right and wrong. Thus, individuals were made morally responsible for their choices. But since the fall of Adam, people are unable in their own strength to do the right. This is due to original sin, which is not simply the following of Adam's example, but rather the corruption of the nature of each mortal, and is reproduced naturally in Adam's descendants. Because of it, humans are very far gone from original righteousness, and by nature are continually inclined to evil. They cannot of themselves even call upon God or exercise faith for salvation. However, through Jesus Christ the prevenient grace of God makes possible what humans in self-effort cannot do. It is bestowed freely upon all, enabling all who will to turn and be saved.

This article may be analysed as follows:

1. It states that humans are incapable of doing that which is right by their own will and strength, because of the fall of Adam.
2. It states that humans are inclined to commit evil continually because of the fall of Adam.
3. It states that humans are unable to call upon God by faith to be saved apart from God's enabling grace ('prevenient grace').

4. It does not state that humans have lost their ability to choose between right and wrong, but that they 'are continually inclined to evil'.
5. It states that God provides his 'prevenient grace' to enable all humans 'who will turn and be saved'.

Concerning the final destiny of each person, "The Articles of Religion" (paragraph 250, Section 22) says:

The final destiny of each person is determined by God's grace and that person's response, evidenced inevitably by a moral character, which results from that individual's personal and volitional choices and not from any arbitrary decree of God. Heaven with its eternal glory and the blessedness of Christ's presence is the final abode of those who choose the salvation, which God provides through Jesus Christ, but hell with its everlasting misery, and separation from God is the final abode of those who neglect this great salvation.

#### 4.1 Why Does Wesleyans' Belief in Human Free Will Matter?

I asked a couple of lay and ministerial members of the Wesleyan Church of Liberia about why they thought believing in the doctrine of human free will mattered. Lic. Gloria A. Stevens gave a very interesting response:

Pastor, I hold to the doctrine of human free will because it is God's intention for us. It concerns salvation, damnation and serving God. Free will helps us to **think**; it helps us to **decide** which way to go. Free will helps us to **weigh options** that are before us. In other words, Free will helps us to make another choice when we realize convincingly that the first choice we made is not where we really want to be or where we really ought to

be. Free will makes us **responsible** for the choice we make. Free will can either **make us** or **break us**. Free will directs us to our destination (Emphases, mine).

Gloria's thoughts are worth considering. The Scripture indicates that the fall of Adam did not annul humankind's ability to exercise our free will. Thus, God holds individuals accountable for their decisions and actions. It is best therefore to believe this teaching and accept it, in order that we might seek out what God's will is and walk in accordance with His will.

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