

SANCTIFICATION IN CONTEXTUAL EVANGELISM

- F. Tu'uholoaki

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Introduction.

Let us take the Kingdom of heaven (God) as the particular element of the Gospel that has led to a particular form of spirituality in Fijian Christianity. The objective of this application is to discern a Fijian spirituality that involves the gospel aligning with the historical trend in Fijian history which point toward what we consider as signs of abundant life witnessed in the Gospel.

The spirituality is not invented by the believers it is rather discerned from experience. Thus the steps include a reading into aspects of Fijian tradition from the point of view of 'eschatological hope' toward fulfilment, and a definition of the Fijian Christianity which provides the parameter within which she operate and brief probe into the impact on crisis in Fiji today.

The Contact.

I was visiting a village for the first time as the minister of the circuit. On arrival the village catechist took me to the spokesman who led us to the chief. The catechist presented our sevusevu (presentation of yaqona as the traditional ground where the guest notifies presence and requests permission to be. For the host, it is an act of reception and affirms your will to be). The catechist explained that I was sent by Conference to be watching

over the spiritual care of his clan and tribe.

The yaqona was received by the chief's spokesman who made the various traditional protocols and thanked my coming and assured cooperation from the chief and the people then towards the end began to sum-up by projecting into the anticipated future. It is the language used in the summation that appears as a formula in all; if not most occasions on receiving the traditional presentation. Having heard it in the first village and the circuit consisted 52 preaching appointments. All 52 had their expression of my reception but the ending fell into a particular pattern. It is this pattern or formula that continues to be heard in Fijian setting today. The formula is an anticipation.

<u>The Expression</u> <u>(Chief's spokesman)</u>	<u>Antiphonal Response</u> <u>of Hope</u>
1. Cabe tu na ika i takali lit. trans. Rise-ing the fish in Ocean	Mana May it be so
2. Ruru tu na cagi ni yabaki lit. trans. Calm be the wind of year	Mana May it be so
3. Sautu mada ga na vanua lit. trans. Prosperity over the land	Mana May it be so
4. Tubua tu ga na sala i nai bulubulu lit. trans. Over grown be the way to the grave	Mana May it be so
or Sau yawa ko mate Be afar o death	
5. Dua tiko ga na keda i wau lit. trans. One only be our club	Mana May it be so
6. Dei tikoga nai tutu vakaturaga lit. trans. Stability to the state Chieftainship	Mana May it be so

The meaning of each expression gives you an economical, social and political aspirations of Fijian life. The 6 expression is a hoped for future but finds a type of character in daily existence.

Look at Expression (1) it anticipates a time when the fish will just rise from the ocean - was this a wishful thinking?

The Fijian season is marked by the surfacing of the balolo fish (sea worm). This in our calender year is November.

There is also time marked by nuqa fish. These two types of fish rise at a level that is close to the shores, it becomes a time of plenty in terms of fish. The season gave to all the opportunity to come and gather. So Expression (1) is an anticipation and hope when fish first rose from the ocean. A time of plenty came during the reproducing season.

The Expression (2) calls for a time of clam. An island in the Pacific is aware of dry, very wet and hurricane seasons.

The Fijians calender anticipates 3 particular division:

- 1) blooming of flowers outside and the fish reproducing - This is February - September
- 2) time of harvest - March - April
- 3) preparation of beds for plantation - May - August.

That is why Expression 2 touches base because the 3 main concerns are for existence and can only be operative when calm was to be present.

Expression 3. There is a month of harvest. It

is the Fijian time of joy . The land brings forward plenty. This falls on our present March and April. The expression anticipates the land will bring forth abundance.

Expression 4. It is an expression that negates 'death'. If the path to the grave is to be overgrown then surely death has no place. They always had hope in a structure that will produce life. The months of the June to July are months for preparation, clearing, tilling and planting.

It is interesting to see how death is summoned to be at distance. So in their agricultural life they physically plotted out the possible harvest of the next season.

Expression 5. Let there be only one authority to which we all are accountable. And it is that authority which regulates our unity.

Expression 6. This is a crucial affirmation of chiefly role. The call on the chiefly status to be stable, unmoved (it does not mean static).

The picture envisioned in these expressions is very interesting, a village, where there is abundance of food for all. There is calm; and amazingly death has no place. Everyone is bound by one authority and it is in the chief that each find their role. It is in that role that one finds identity. It is this particular 'Identity' that gives a particular form to the village.

So the Expressions is grounded in a particular frame of reference. There is a particular base from which these expressions take form and the element of transcendence is very much related to their existence.

### The Gospel and Culture.

The Gospel entered this fertile ground and also spoke of transcendence in terms of the Kingdom of heaven (God).

Let us begin by establishing the possible condition of the Kingdom of heaven as proclaimed in the Gospel. Two aspects of the gospel that I would invite you to ponder upon are:-

- 1) Resurrection
- 2) Kingdom of heaven

The condition is best elaborated in Revelation 21:1-4. Eschatological hope was marked by vision that anticipated a time when:

.....He (God) will wipe away every tear  
from the eyes and death shall be no more,  
neither will there be anymore crying,  
mourning, pain and no more sorrow.

Acts 4:32-35. In presenting the power of the resurrection we see a striking feature on vs. 34. There was not a needy person among them.....(The reason being) vs. 32 that no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.

Revelation 22:5. God's Lordship becomes the stabilizing power forever. In the Fijian text the word for Lord in this verse is Turaga which is also the term for chief or Lordship. It carries more the overtone of centrality. Once the centre is affirmed, it is from there that the rest take strength and stability.

It is in this simple form that the gospel planted its seed in Fijian culture. No doubt there was

transformation of extreme practises. But in the basic expectation of life, there was in the Fijian culture with the elements of eschatological hope, already present was an abler for the Gospel.

#### Sanctification in Cultural Evangelization.

Without moving into any detail discussion on the term evangelism, it is generally accepted that it is the verbal proclamation of the gospel. I see this proclamation to have two distinctive features. Firstly an affirmation of all context that anticipates its struggle for life that has eternal continuity. Secondly, a challenge which is an invitation to meet this anticipation; this is the striking element, this is the gospel. The newness one meets in the Lordship of Jesus of Nazareth.

The point of entry of the gospel into Fijian culture must be from the angle of "giving up".

The 6 expressions show a community that is the results of a life style that is intentional in "giving up". But it looks to life having continuity and the paths to the grave will be overgrown so death will always be afar. The individual must 'give' with in the particular parameter that governed by time so harvest season may never become winter. There is a giving on the people's part and there is also a giving on the chief's part. The centrality of the chief is in the ability to reciprocate with the people. It calls for a 'giving up' of chiefly expectations however for the people the chief then becomes highly invaluable in their midst.

This is where the 'cross' becomes so meaningful and powerful. The cross as a goodnews of 'giving

up'. It affirms the value that is embedded in culture, however the challenge is the availability of this anticipatory life, through the Lordship of Jesus.

So with in the Fijian culture the gospel is news of affirmation; also the challenge for continual reaffirmation, maintenance and renewal in Christ's Lordship. It is in this context that the gospel functions as sanctification. The challenge for continual commitment to the Newness and totality of life anticipated. At this level the gospel as sanctifying culture. So the 'cross' challenges a 'giving up' that surpasses culture, to the giving up that is to be found in God. So in the Fijian culture the 'Classes' (SIGA) must be seen as the sanctifying structure finding base on a life patterned on a super - and infra-structure of 'giving up'.

This may be the aspect of Wesley's evangelism that should be put forward to an age that is bombard with the life imprisoned by a value of 'getting more' culture.