


# A Theological Analysis of the Hymn “Teaching Everyone To Live Like Christ”



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## ABSTRACT

This article is a theological analysis of the hymn, “Teaching Everyone to live like Christ,” written in support of the 2020/2021 theme of Methodist Church Ghana (MCG). The hymn emerged from the author’s pastoral and theological analysis of the MCG’s theme, “Discipleship: Teaching everyone to live like Christ” (Col. 1:28-29). The hymn touches on two key functions of the universal Church, namely, mission and nurturing of believers. The author brings out the message embedded in the hymn through an expository study of the lyrics together with secondary sources such as books, articles, and others. The paper contends that the survival of the Christian Church now and in the years to come depends on effective disciple-making, which places high emphasis on the teaching ministry.

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## INTRODUCTION: The Theme in its Historical Perspective

The Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society (WMMS), founded in 1813, became operational in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1835 through Rev. Joseph Dunwell. The circumstances that led to Dunwell’s visit to the Gold Coast, in the words of Richard Foli, “were a demonstration of the role which African initiative played in the establishment of Methodist work in Ghana.”<sup>1</sup> The “Bible Band” or the “Meeting,” a group formed by William de Graft in the Gold Coast, requested Bibles from the WMMS through Captain Potter. In response, the WMMS sent Bibles and a missionary (Rev. Joseph Dunwell) who arrived in Ghana on January 1, 1835. Dunwell arrived on a fertile ground prepared by God through the other missionaries who came ahead of him. After a period of six months, Dunwell died and other missionaries were sent into the country. George Wrigley and Peter Harrop, who followed Dunwell also died soon after their arrival because of the hostile environmental conditions. Then came Thomas Birch Freeman, a mulatto, who could cope with the African weather and its ills. He worked both in the Gold Coast and other parts of West Africa, such as Badagry and Abeokuta.

The evangelistic zeal of the Wesleyan missionaries and their converts led to astronomical growth in the membership of the Methodist community in Ghana. By the year of jubilee (1885), the Methodist Church had 6, 855 members in Ghana.<sup>2</sup> Church attendance was very encouraging as more and more people were won into the Church. The following testimony about Ghanaian Methodism points to the success gained by the church in the early twentieth century:

There was a great deal to tell British Methodism. In the matter of numbers in the previous year, Ghana was ‘the most successful district in Methodism’. The Methodist Church in England reported a decrease in membership of 8, 000. The churches outside the British Isles reported a total increase of 1, 600, out of which the increase in Ghana was 961. The report for the year claimed that financial support had kept pace with expansion of the work, and firmly stated **in no part of the world was Christianity making more rapid progress than Ghana.**<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis mine)

<sup>1</sup> Richard Foli, *Christianity in Ghana: A Comparative Church Growth Study* (Accra: Trust Publications, 2006), 21.

<sup>2</sup> FrancisL. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 207.

<sup>3</sup> Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 172.

The British Synod of 1912 was very enthused about the historic achievement of a relatively young church in the Gold Coast. Foli attributes the initial expansion to the involvement of the indigenes in evangelism.<sup>4</sup> Gradually the number of foreign missionaries reduced as more Africans got on board. From the coastal areas, the Church spread to the middle belt and later to the northern belt of the country. Five years to the centenary (1930) the Methodist Church was the fastest growing church and the church with the highest membership in the country (as shown by the statistics below).<sup>5</sup>

Wesleyan Methodist	99,207
Roman Catholic	85,087
Presbyterian Church	50,167
Anglican Church	18,459
Evangelical (Ewe) Presbyterian Church	14,637
Salvation Army	9,396
A.M. E. Zion	5,478
Seventh Day Adventists Church	1,077
Other smaller churches	400

The year of the centenary (1935) recorded a total membership of 125, 225 and a total of 767 societies. The percentage increase in membership over the five-year period (from 1930-1935) was 26.23%. The number of societies grew from 45 in 1885 to 767 in 1935, an increase of 1, 604% in fifty years.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, this achievement would have a lasting impact on Ghanaian Christianity. Not only did the Methodist Church shape the religious landscape of the nation, it also prepared grounds for other missionary groups to get involved in the evangelization of the sub-region. Socio-economically, the Church performed very well. The Church's contribution to the nation's infrastructural development was great. The Church established many schools that served as means of evangelism. More so, the Methodist Church was noted for its sound biblical teachings, rigorous ministerial training, well-established administrative structures, well-equipped lay members, emphasis on personal holiness and the high evangelistic drive, among others. By the mid-twentieth century, a very firm foundation had been laid for further missions in the country. The MCG became autonomous in 1961.

At the peak of the growth of the Methodist Church, the nation experienced a new wave of Christianity which marked the beginning of the decline/stagnation in membership of the Methodist Church and other mission churches like the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and the Roman Catholic Church. The new form of Christianity included African Initiated (Spiritual) Churches and Pentecostal Churches. The decline in church membership in mainline historic churches in those days was so alarming that at the 1965 Synod of the PCG at Akropong, a committee was formed to find out why people were leaving the Church. According to the committee's report, the main issue that led to the mass exodus of people, particularly the youth, from the PCG (and other mission churches) was that the new churches offered more enjoyable and experiential services than the mission churches.<sup>7</sup> In addition, many people were attracted by the healing, prayer, deliverance, and teaching ministries of the new form of Christianity.<sup>8</sup> The report made the mainline churches realize the need to introduce certain liturgical practices like corporate prayers, dancing, clapping, drumming (and others) which, before this time, were forbidden. The immediate response was the adoption of a more flexible form of worship that allowed people to "enjoy" the services.

With time, various renewal groups were formed in various dioceses of the MCG. In Accra, a prayer group made up of Methodists and Presbyterians was formed in late 1979.<sup>9</sup> In Kumasi, a group, known as *Kristomu Enigye kuo*, was formed to revive the Church through the use of lyrics and prayers.<sup>10</sup> The Kumasi Wesley Cathedral formed a prayer fellowship that had charismatic persuasion. Through the activities of the charismatic movements within the MCG, the Church experienced some kind of renewal that stabilized its membership.

However, as time passed by, the problem of decline/stagnation in membership set in again. Various measures were put in place to avert the situation. In the early 80s, the Ghana Evangelism Committee introduced the New Life For All program which was highly patronized by the MCG. This program revived the Church and sustained its members. In 1983 the MCG participated in a special evangelism program dubbed "3 in 83." Two years later, in 1985, the Church

<sup>4</sup> Foli, *Christianity in Ghana*, 158.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Aboagye-Mensah, Address to the 2017 FK and Retreat of the MCG held at the Pentecost Conference Centre, Accra.

<sup>6</sup> Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 207.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson K. Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 32.

<sup>8</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 32.

<sup>9</sup> Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (The Netherlands: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 156.

<sup>10</sup> Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 158.

established the Division for Evangelism and Renewal which led to the establishment of the Methodist Prayer and Renewal Program (MPRP). The “5 in 95” program was another effort by the MCG to foster church growth and renewal. By this program each member was expected to witness to five people, each circuit was expected to establish five societies and each organisation was tasked to increase by 5%. In 1996, there was a special effort towards discipleship dubbed “1 in 1996.” It was expected that the souls won in the previous year would be disciplined effectively to help them firm their faith in Christ. A few years later, in 2013, the Church launched the “3 in 13” project which charged each member to witness to three people, each circuit to establish three churches and revive three as well. The results of some of these programs were remarkable as depicted in the table below.<sup>11</sup>

Year	Total Membership of the MCG	Change in Membership
1983	312, 001	+11, 618
1984	306, 928	+4, 927
1985	335, 749	+18, 821
1986	338, 563	+2, 814
1987	345, 021	+6, 458
1988	343, 012	-2, 009
1989	333, 924	-9, 089
1990	330, 787	-3, 137
1991	332, 804	+2, 017
1992	333, 452	+1, 648
1993	340, 916	+7, 464
1994	364, 651	+23, 735
1995	394, 084	+29, 433
1996	420, 583	+26, 499
1997	469, 368	+48, 785
1998	507, 422	+38, 054

Even though the MCG’s effort in maintaining growth has given positive results (in many instances), various scholars and churchmen/women, at various places and occasions, have raised concerns about the need to find a lasting solution to the fluctuating nature of the membership. These concerns are legitimate because if the Church does not improve its growth rate, in some few years to come, the MCG may lose all its members and cease to exist. The MCG, by her own assessment, had “the total membership increased from 739,800 in 2014 to 756,988 in 2015” representing an increase of 2.3% (17,188). Addressing the 2017 Annual Retreat and Fellowship of the Kingdom of the MCG, the Most Rev. Dr. Robert Aboagye-Mensah (former Presiding Bishop of the MCG) bemoaned how the MCG has lost its position of being the fastest-growing church (in 1930) to other churches over the years. Aboagye-Mensah noted that “[t]he main challenge confronting [the Methodists] as a church is how we can recapture, as it were, our past glory of being the first in terms of numerical growth.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, he intimated that the mandate of increasing church membership is from God,<sup>13</sup> and this is done through making disciples of all nations. Certainly, the MCG has lost some of its members to other churches and other religions. The need to intensify disciple-making is therefore a present pastoral concern.

High numerical strength is good and each church strives to have more members. However, the quality of members is more important than quantity. As a result of the lack of effective discipleship in many churches, many contemporary Christians are superficial. In his recent article, Abamfo Ofori Atiemo lamented over the over-concentration on mega revival meetings in some churches, which in effect do not result in shaping the conduct of participants.<sup>14</sup> Atiemo describes the situation as “Clouds that bring no rains.”<sup>15</sup> That Christian discipleship in the contemporary church is not effective in producing committed Christians is an obvious fact. The major problem facing the church today is that most Christian denominations are not teaching their members how to become true and resilient disciples and this has resulted in a community of casual/nominal Christians abiding in a weak and an ineffective church. There is therefore the need for the Christian Church to improve upon its disciple-making process to ensure that Christians live like Christ.

<sup>11</sup> Foli, *Christianity in Ghana*, 155.

<sup>12</sup> Aboagye-Mensah, Address, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Aboagye-Mensah, Address, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, “Clouds that bring no Rains: Religious Revivals and Corruption in Ghana” in *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, Vol. 18 No. 5 (2016): 6-23.

<sup>15</sup> Abamfo O. Atiemo, “Clouds that bring no Rains: Religious Revivals and Corruption in Ghana,” *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* 18(5) (2016):6-23, 7.

The 2020-2021 theme of the MCG (“Discipleship: Teaching everyone to live like Christ [Col. 1:28-29]) reflects the Church’s interest in both the quantity and quality of its members. Instead of moving on with a compromised majority, the MCG is determined to advance the Kingdom of God through effective disciple-making which equips believers with divine resources to be Christlike. The hymn “Teaching everyone to live like Christ” was written by Rev. Isaac Boaheng to support the efforts by the MCG in promoting effective discipleship through an effective teaching ministry. The hymn touches on two key functions of the universal Church, namely, mission and nurturing of believers. The hymn reflects a number of theological themes some of which are espoused in this paper.

### **The Concept of Discipleship**

Two terms, namely, “disciple” and “discipleship” need to be defined at this point. The word “disciple”, comes from the Greek word *matheetes*, which means “a learner, a student, an apprentice – a practitioner ... disciples of Jesus are people who do not just profess certain views as their own but apply their growing understanding of life in the Kingdom of the Heavens to every aspect of their life on earth.”<sup>16</sup> A disciple is learning under the tutelage of a master. According to Charles Dunahoo, a disciple is “someone who accepts a set of beliefs, and embraces a holistic, total, and intentional approach to life, based on those beliefs.”<sup>17</sup> From the Christian perspective, a disciple is defined as the one who believes in Jesus Christ, lives according to his (Christ’s) commands and expresses their faith in Christ (publicly) through baptism and church membership. The process of making disciples is what is referred to as “discipleship.”<sup>18</sup> Discipleship and apprenticeship are synonymous. Rather than a one-time event, discipleship is the on-going process of growth as a disciple. Discipleship means a basic desire to do the will of God as it is commanded in the written Word of God. The ultimate goal of discipleship is spiritual maturity for every true believer. With this background, the paper proceeds to examine some theological themes embedded in the hymn.

### **Theological Themes Embedded in the Hymn**

#### **The Great Commission, A Core Mandate to the Church (First Stanza)**

The first stanza of the hymn touches on the missionary task of the Christian Church. It reads:

Ye soldiers of Christ great Lord!  
Your duty is to preach the word;  
Let the world know Christ through your deeds,  
And come to him for their own feeds,  
Teaching everyone to live like Christ.

The God of the Bible is a missionary God. After the Fall of humanity (Gen. 3:1ff), God promised a Saviour who was to come as the seed of the woman to destroy the works of the devil (v. 15). Many other prophecies were given about the Saviour until he was finally born as Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Jesus’ life, ministry, his death on the cross and resurrection became the foundation upon which Christianity was built. After his resurrection, Christ commanded his disciples to preach his word to all people (Matt. 28:19-20 and its parallels). The Great Commission entails making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Triune God and teaching them all that Christ has commanded. Since God is a missionary God, his people are expected to be missionary people. The Church’s mission is therefore connected to God’s mission. Accordingly, in the Willingen conference,

...mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the *Missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another “movement”: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. As far as missionary thinking was concerned, this linking with the doctrine of the Trinity constituted an important innovation.<sup>19</sup>

The first stanza serves to remind believers (referred to as “soldiers of Christ”; 2 Tim. 2:3) about their missionary mandate or their mandate to preach God’s word. Here, the hymnist makes the point that Christian evangelism is not only done through words but also deeds. Even though salvation is by grace through faith, the faith that saves produces good works. The “world” in this context refers to unbelievers. This point reminisces the saying “action speaks louder than words.” Believers need to realize the huge influence that their deeds can have on others. As “the light of the world, and the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13), the believer’s life must make unbelievers thirst for the living water, which is Christ, “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14). An African interpretation of the salt metaphor given by John

<sup>16</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2006), xi.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Dunahoo, *Making Kingdom Disciples: A New Framework* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing Company, 2005), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 41.

<sup>19</sup> J. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), 390.

Susu, the General Editor of the *African Study Bible*, serves well at this point.

In my village, when there is drought, the monkeys know where there is water. But, they will not lead humans to that water. They will only go to the water when no human being is following them]. So, the people will trap a monkey and tie it up. Then, they will feed it [with] salt. After a day or two, the monkey will become very thirsty. At this point, the humans will release the monkey. Then, the monkey will not care if the human beings are following it or not; it will make straight for the source of water in order to satisfy its thirst.<sup>20</sup>

The hymnist therefore exhorts believers to be that salt that makes unbelievers search for Christ. To achieve this, believers need to live in such a way as to attract others who thirst and hunger for the living water and the bread of life to come to Christ for their own feeds. Therefore, the kind of Christianity that does not make people thirsty for the living water of life is worth nothing.

The term “feeds” in this hymn refers to all the benefits one can derive from the atonement of Christ. “Feeds” also recalls the shepherd motif espoused in John 10:1-18 where Jesus promises pasture (feeds) to those who follow him (esp. v. 9; cf. Psa. 23). The hymnist pictures believers as God’s flock who take their feeds from Christ. The call to unbelievers to come to Christ for “their own feeds” echoes Jesus’ call to those who are weary and burdened to come to him to be given rest (Matt. 11:28).

### Atonement as the Basis for Christian Soteriology (Second Stanza)

The second stanza reads:  
Human effort cannot save  
It is the atonement Christ gave,  
Which when preached with divine wisdom,  
Takes from human the sin syndrome,  
Teaching everyone to live like Christ.

The second stanza underscores the theological fact that salvation depends solely on the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Human wisdom and human efforts do not save; it is only Christ’s work on the cross that saves. The word “atonement” comes from the combination “at + one + ment” in the sense of causing two divided parties to unite. “The atonement Christ gave” refers to the sacrifice he offered to reconcile humanity to God. Christ’s atoning death was both substitutionary and penal, meaning, “that God gave himself in the person of his Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin.”<sup>21</sup> The biblical data available indicate that Christ died to pay a price he did not owe.

The death and resurrection of Christ are central to Christian soteriology, that is, the doctrine of salvation. The hymnist argues that Christ, being the Lamb of God who takes the sin of the world away (John 1:29), died to expiate sin (Rom. 3:25). This is a defence of the trustworthiness of the biblical account of the physical death of Christ— Christ actually died on the cross. The theological thought expressed in this hymn, therefore, has no place for false views such as the swoon theory which claims that Christ did not actually die in the process of crucifixion; he only fainted (swooned or went into a coma) due to the shock, pain and loss of blood and revived or resuscitated after several hours.

Salvation depends on what God has done rather than what humanity has done. Christian soteriology is therefore theocentric, not anthropocentric. As hinted earlier, the hymnist emphasizes the inability of humanity to do anything to merit salvation. This stanza is therefore a polemic against the work-based salvation preached by some Christians today. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is complete and final and without it, no one can attain salvation. Since salvation then is by grace, the believer cannot boast of any merit (Eph. 2:8-9).

The atonement as a divine salvific plan is a mystery that requires divine wisdom both to comprehend and to propagate effectively. It is important that the hymnist adds that though the atonement is the core message of Christian mission, one needs to apply divine wisdom in preaching it. In Colossians 1:28 Paul says that believers should proclaim Christ, warn and teach everyone in all wisdom (Greek: *sophia*). Here, the word *sophia* most likely refers to divine wisdom rather than human wisdom. Paul makes this theological point in a number of passages to draw attention to the fact that God’s ways are far above human ways (1 Cor. 2:1, 4). He says, “when I came to you, **I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom** as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God” (1 Cor. 2:1, emphasis mine). It is therefore important for the Church to apply divine wisdom in executing her missionary task. This implies the need to commune with God at all stages of the missionary enterprise. Prayer is therefore key to the success of the Christian mission.

The word syndrome is a medical term referring to a set of interconnected medical signs and symptoms which

<sup>20</sup> John Jusu and Matthew Elliott “The Africa Study Bible: God’s Word through African Eyes,” *Reading the Bible in Context* Issue 2 (2016):4-7, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas M. Wood, *Penal Substitution in the Construction of British Evangelical Identity: Controversies in the Doctrine of the Atonement in the Mid-2000s* (Doctor of Philosophy Thesis: Durham University, 2011), 50.

are often associated with a particular disease or disorder. Drawing on the field of medicine, the hymnist states that when the atonement is preached with divine wisdom, it “takes from human the sin syndrome.” The hymnist metaphorically considers sin as a disease that has a certain syndrome, referring to all that characterize the sinful condition of humanity. The atonement dealt with all the “signs” and “symptoms” associated with the sinner’s life.

### **A Wake-up call to the Church (Third Stanza)**

In *Jesus our Immanuel*, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu asserts that “anybody who has cared to pay attention to the life of the Church today is likely to see a Church that is committed not to the core business of mission or the things of the Spirit as defined by the Cross, but carnality that manifests in foolish jesting, ecclesiastical pomposity, and the exploitation of the Gospel for economic gain.”<sup>22</sup> Here Asamoah-Gyadu underscores the fact that contemporary followers of Christ are superficial. There is therefore the need for the Church to improve upon her disciple-making process. Many church members are not true followers of Christ. Aside from this, many souls are perishing outside the Church. The need for intensive Christian evangelism is obvious. The hymnist’s response to this urgent ecclesiastical need is the third stanza, which reads:

Church rise up to your task now!  
Leave no person on earth unreached;  
Go to the hinterlands right now,  
Let all souls know that which Christ preached,  
Teaching everyone to live like Christ.

This stanza serves as a reminder to the Church that seems to have forgotten her core mandate. The Great Commission commands the Church to reach every part of the earth. It is therefore important for the Church to go outside chapels to win souls from every nook and cranny of the world. Christian denominations that have no business to do in rural areas are to reconsider their ministries because every part of the world is important as far as the Great Commission is concerned. Like John Wesley, the whole world should be everyone’s parish. The charge to go to the hinterlands **right now** underscores the urgent need to evangelize the places which have been ignored in previous missionary endeavors. The message to the world is no other message than that which Christ preached. The core message of the gospel which Christ preached refers (though not exclusively) to “the sinfulness of humanity and the need for repentance, prophecies about the coming Messiah, the miracles and teaching of Jesus, the Christ, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross of Calvary, Jesus’ physical resurrection, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of the *Parousia*.”<sup>23</sup> These aspects of the Christian gospel are not to be compromised.

### **The Pneumatological Dimension of Discipleship (Fourth Stanza)**

The pneumatological dimension of discipleship is highlighted in the fourth stanza, which says:

Holy Spirit pour on us;  
Your Pentecostal great power now;  
We are eager to work just as,  
Your presence will grant us all now,  
Teaching everyone to live like Christ

The significance of the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism cannot be overestimated. Disciple-making is not about the Church involving the Holy Spirit in her outreach efforts. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit involving the Church in his efforts. Technically, the Christian mission is God’s mission, to begin with, as hinted earlier; therefore, evangelism/mission is the Holy Spirit’s mission. Humans are simply instruments in God’s hands, instructed to do their part in being an instrument. The prophet Joel promised the coming of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28). Jesus gave several prophecies concerning the Holy Spirit (see for example, John 14:16). Before his ascension, Jesus commanded his disciples to “tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49 NKJV). The expression “power from on high” alludes to divine enablement to accomplish a mission. To be “endued” or “clothed” with power means to have one’s weakness dealt with; that is to have a weak person empowered. The Holy Spirit serves as God’s power by which believers can be effective witnesses of Christ. This fact is underscored by Jesus’ assertion that when the disciples receive the Holy Spirit they will receive power to be his witnesses starting from their immediate environment, Jerusalem to other neighborhoods and eventually to the end of the world (Acts 1:8).

In Acts 2 (on the Day of Pentecost) the disciples experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit while they were gathered together in Jerusalem praying (v. 1). The Holy Spirit appeared as tongues of fire on their heads (v. 3). Filled

<sup>22</sup> Johnson K. Asamoah-Gyadu, *Jesus our Immanuel* (Accra: African Christian Press), 140.

<sup>23</sup> Isaac Boaheng, “Cross-Cultural Christian Mission in the Ghanaian Context: Challenges, Strategies and Prospects” in *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* Vol. 6 No. 1 (2020): 16-26, 20.

with the Spirit, they began to speak in tongues (v. 4). In his first post-ascension sermon, Peter linked the experience of the Holy Spirit to Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17ff.). He went ahead to make the point that the promise is for all believers who live in the post-Pentecost era. The entire experience was meant to empower them for ministry to both Jews and Gentiles. It is therefore not surprising that after this experience, the disciples obeyed Christ's command "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47 NIV). They preached the word boldly and effectively starting from Jerusalem and moving to other parts.

The fourth stanza therefore appeals to God to pour his power on contemporary believers to empower them for ministry. This appeal is founded on the fact that God's promise of the Holy Spirit is for "all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39 NIV). The hymnist is therefore asking for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This infilling is expected to provide Christians with gifts to witness to unbelievers. Paul refers to the gifts of the Holy Spirit as tools for ministry and evangelism. Gifts are essentially specific manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power.

### The means and goal of Christian discipleship (The Refrain)

The hymnist uses the refrain to highlight the means and goal of Christian discipleship. The refrain reads:

Teach them, about the Christ,  
Lead them, toward the cross,  
With the goal of presenting,  
each soul perfect to our Lord Jesus Christ;  
With the goal of presenting,  
each soul matured in Christ,  
a task for all.

The goal of Christian discipleship is Christlikeness. To be Christlike, that is, to be and live like Christ, one requires adequate knowledge about Christ and to practice what Christ has commanded. The significance of teaching in Christian discipleship is therefore evident. Teaching has to do with giving instruction, explanation, training and equipping. Teaching does not occur unless learning occurs and learning does not occur unless life change occurs. The biblical basis for teaching can be found in God's command to Moses to teach the people God's word (Deut. 6:1), Ezra's devotion to the teaching of God's word (Ezra 7:10-11), Jesus' command to his disciples to teach all nations (Matt. 28:19-20), among others. Jesus did not only command his followers to teach others, he taught a lot during his earthly ministry (see for example, Luke 19:47; Acts 1:1ff); the early Church emphasized teaching (Acts 2:42); Paul instructed Timothy to teach people who can also teach others (2 Tim. 2:2).

In Colossians 1:28 Paul shares the purpose for which he worked hard, namely, to present every person "complete" (NASB), "mature" (RSV; NRSV; HCSB; NET; REB; ESV), or "perfect" (NIV; NJB; NAB; NKJV) in Christ. The Greek word translated variously as stated above is *teleios*. Douglas Moo, argues that "perfect" with its connotations of absoluteness is too strong, but "mature" is too relative, because it makes people feel they are "mature" once they are doing better than some other Christians they know.<sup>24</sup> Moo therefore asserts that "*teleios* connotes the quality of being so wholehearted in one's devotion to the Lord that one can be said to be blameless in conduct (see esp. Matt. 5:48; 19:21; Eph. 4:13; Heb. 5:14; Jas. 1:4b)." In agreement with Moo, Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida aver that Paul's use of *teleios* ("perfect") is not meant to indicate "sinless perfection, but spiritual development and maturity, that is, a full knowledge of God's will and a devotion to follow it" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6).<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that no one can attain a state of sinless perfection in this age; that state comes only after glorification by which humans will be saved from the presence of sin. Therefore, the word "perfect" as used in the hymn should be understood as blameless, or a state of having complete and undivided devotion to God. Similarly, the word "mature" does not refer to physical maturity but to "completeness," for instance, "as a complete person", "as a person who is not lacking in anything [spiritually]" or "not lacking in any understanding."<sup>26</sup>

To help believers to live like Christ, Christian teaching ministry must, first of all, equip believers for works of service (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This requires believers to teach correct doctrines while rebuking incorrect ones, the result being the correction of wrong conduct and training in right conduct. Secondly, the teaching ministry must produce believers who conform to the image of Christ; in other words, teaching must result in changed lives in character, conduct and conversation (James 1:22-25; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2; Matt. 28:20; Luke 6:40). Thirdly, by teaching Christian disciples, the church aims at training believers to feed themselves on God's word and teach others. This means that Christian discipleship must have a rippling effect (2 Tim. 2:2; Col. 3:16; Php. 4:9). Finally, the teaching ministry must help Christians to develop a biblical worldview so that Christians may follow Jesus' teachings rather than the

<sup>24</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 161.

<sup>25</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *UBS Handbook Series: A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Colossians* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1977), np. Electronic edition.

<sup>26</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Colossians*, np.

teachings of and traditions of humans (Matt. 5:27-28; Mark 7:5-13) and hence live differently from unbelievers (1 John 2:15-17). The hymnist's emphasis on teaching is also evident in the expression "Teaching everyone to live like Christ." The full expression is "while Teaching everyone to live like Christ", meaning in doing all other things, Christians must teach others how to live like Christ.

Finally, the hymnist highlights the point that disciple-making is a task for all. No one can therefore exempt him/herself from it. It is therefore wrong to leave evangelism to a few people. All must get involved in this noble task. No one should find any excuse to exempt him/herself from disciple-making.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has analysed the hymn "Teaching everyone to live like Christ" from a theological perspective. The hymn touches on two key functions of the universal Church, namely, mission and nurturing of believers. The main argument of the paper is that the survival of the Christian Church now and in the years to come depends on effective disciple-making, which places high emphasis on the teaching ministry. Therefore, all Christians must be involved in ensuring effective discipleship.

Christian discipleship must lead to growth and maturity. There is however no "spiritometer" to measure the spiritual growth of the church. Some key indicators of spiritual growth include having an ever-deepening hunger for Christ; having a deeper discernment of sin; being responsive to the Holy Spirit and caring for unnoticed or difficult people; being satisfied with God and craving no more for what the world offers; being able to easily forgive others; having great faith; having an expanding concern for others' spiritual condition and having an increasing desire to obey the Lord. Certainly, the Christian Church stands a better chance of making a great impact on the world if theological principles outlined in this paper are developed and promoted.

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APPENDIX

THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA  
HYMN ON DISCIPLESHIP

Title: Teaching Everyone to live like Christ (Col. 1:28-29)

Doh=F  
4  
4

By: Rev. Isaac K. Boaheng  
November 30, 2020  
Transcribed by: Mr. Wesley K. Solomon  
(02483188173) &  
Mr. Isaac Gyau Kankam  
(0247581308)

1	2	3	4		
s : <u>f.m</u> / r : d m : <u>r.ta</u> / l <sub>1</sub> : l <sub>1</sub> Ye sol diers of	d : r / t <sub>1</sub> : — l <sub>1</sub> : l <sub>1</sub> / s <sub>1</sub> : — Christ great Lord	m : r.d / l <sub>1</sub> : s <sub>1</sub> d : t <sub>1</sub> .l <sub>1</sub> / f <sub>1</sub> : s <sub>1</sub> Your duty is to	d : r / t <sub>1</sub> : s <sub>1</sub> l <sub>1</sub> : l <sub>1</sub> / s <sub>1</sub> : m <sub>1</sub> preach the word. Let		
ta : <u>l.s</u> / f : f d : <u>r.m</u> / f : f <sub>1</sub>	<u>f.m</u> : f / <u>r</u> : f f <sub>1</sub> : r <sub>1</sub> / s <sub>1</sub> : —	s : s.s / f : m d : r.m / r : d	m : fe / r : d l <sub>1</sub> : r <sub>1</sub> / s <sub>1</sub> : d <sub>1</sub>		
5	6	7	8		
l <sub>1</sub> : d / t <sub>1</sub> : <u>m.r</u> f <sub>1</sub> : fe <sub>1</sub> / s <sub>1</sub> : se <sub>1</sub> the world know	d : m / r : f l <sub>1</sub> : d / t <sub>1</sub> : r Christ through your deeds and	m : s / f : l d : m <sup>l</sup> / r : d come to him for	s : ta / l : — d : d / d : — their own feeds;		
d : l <sub>1</sub> / r : t <sub>1</sub> <u>f<sub>1</sub>.m<sub>1</sub></u> : r <sub>1</sub> / <u>s<sub>1</sub>.f<sub>1</sub></u> : m <sub>1</sub>	m : s / s : s <u>l<sub>1</sub>.s<sub>1</sub></u> : d / s <sub>1</sub> : <u>s<sub>1</sub>.t<sub>1</sub></u>	s : ta / l : f d : de / r : f	s : s / f : — <u>m.r</u> : m / f : —		
9	10	11	1st Time DC	2nd Time	12
s : — / m : s de : — / de : m tea ching e	f : l <sub>1</sub> .l <sub>1</sub> / m : r r : l <sub>1</sub> .l <sub>1</sub> / <u>d.l<sub>1</sub></u> : t <sub>1</sub> very one to live like	d : — / — : — s <sub>1</sub> : — / — : — Christ.	d : — / — : m s <sub>1</sub> : — / — : d Christ. Teach		
ta : — / s : ta <u>m</u> : <u>r.de</u> / l <sub>1</sub> : de	l : fe.,fe / s : <u>s.f</u> r : r <sub>1</sub> .r <sub>1</sub> / s <sub>1</sub> : s <sub>1</sub>	m : — / — : — d : — / — : —	m <sub>1</sub> : — / — : — d : — / — : —		
13	14	15	16		
r : — / -m : f . r them a-bout the t <sub>1</sub> : — / -d : r . t <sub>1</sub> : s / s . s : s . s teach them	m : — / — : m Christ, Lead d : — / — : d s . m : s . f / m : a bout the Christ d . d : m . r / d :	r : — / - . m : f . r them to- ward the t <sub>1</sub> : — / - . d : r . t <sub>1</sub> : s / s . s : s . s lead them to ward the	m : — / — : s . , s Cross with the d : — / — : d . , d s . m : s . f / m : m . , m Cross to-ward the cross with the d . d : m . r / d : d . , d		

<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
l : d <sup>1</sup> / t : m goal of pre sen d : f / r : de f : l / s : s goal of pre sen <u>f.m</u> : r / m : <u>l<sub>1</sub>.de</u>	f : l / s : d ting each soul per <u>r.d</u> : d / d : s <sub>1</sub> l : f / s : m ting each soul per r : f / m : d	f : m / r : d fect to our Lord <u>r<sub>1</sub>.t<sub>1</sub></u> : <u>d.ta</u> / l <sub>1</sub> : l <sub>1</sub> l : s / f : fe fect to our Lord r <sub>1</sub> : m <sub>1</sub> / f <sub>1</sub> : r <sub>1</sub>	m : — / r : — Je sus d : — / t <sub>1</sub> : — s : — / s : — Je sus s <sub>1</sub> : — / <u>s<sub>1</sub></u> : <u>f</u>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<u>s</u> : — / — : s ., s Christ with the <u>d</u> : — / <u>t<sub>1</sub></u> : d ., d <u>s</u> : — / <u>f</u> : m ., m Christ with the <u>m</u> : — / <u>r</u> : d ., d	l : d <sup>1</sup> / t : m goal of pre sen d : f / r : de f : l / s : s goal of pre sen <u>f.m</u> : r / m : <u>l<sub>1</sub>.de</u>	f : l / s : d ting each soul ma <u>r.d</u> : d / d : l <sub>1</sub> l : f / m : m ting each soul ma r : f / m : d	f : m / r : d tured in Christ, a <u>r<sub>1</sub>.t<sub>1</sub></u> : <u>d.ta<sub>1</sub></u> / l <sub>1</sub> : l <sub>1</sub> l : s / f : fe tured in Christ, a r <sub>1</sub> : m <sub>1</sub> / f <sub>1</sub> : r <sub>1</sub>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>FINE</b>	
m : — / r : — task for <u>d</u> : l <sub>1</sub> / <u>t<sub>1</sub>.l<sub>1</sub></u> : t <sub>1</sub> s : — / <u>s</u> : f task for s <sub>1</sub> : / s <sub>1</sub> : —	d : — / — : — all s <sub>1</sub> : — / — : — m : — / — : — all d <sub>1</sub> : — / — : —		

**Discipleship Song**

1. Ye soldiers of Christ great Lord!  
 Your duty is to preach the word;  
 Let the world know Christ through your deeds,  
 And come to him for their own feeds,  
 Teaching everyone to live like Christ.

*Teach them, about the Christ,  
 Lead them, toward the cross,  
 With the goal of presenting,  
 each soul perfect to our Lord Jesus  
 Christ;  
 With the goal of presenting  
 each soul matured in Christ,  
 a task for all.*

2. Human effort cannot save  
 It is the atonement Christ gave,  
 Which when preached with divine wisdom,  
 Takes from human the sin syndrome,  
 Teaching everyone to live like Christ.

3. Church rise up to your task now!  
 Leave no person on earth unreached;  
 Go to the hinterlands right now,  
 Let all souls know that which Christ preached,  
 Teaching everyone to live like Christ.

4. Holy Spirit pour on us;  
 Your Pentecostal great power now;  
 We are eager to work just as,  
 Your presence will grant us all now,  
 Teaching everyone to live like Christ