

# When prayer changes things

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identify as the island of Crete. At the time of the exodus, the Philistines were already well established in their territory in Judges and 1 Samuel and are finally conquered by David.

After Solomon, however, the Philistines seem to have a small revival of independence and resume their role as the bane-source of harm or ruin (per Merriam-Webster.com) of Israel. Although now gone, they left their name on

the region for Palestine is a derivative of Philistine. In matters of religion, the Philistines are often pictured as polar opposites to the Israelites. There seems to be no more degrading title than to be called an "uncircumcised Philistine" (see 1 Sam. 17:26).

The recovery of the precious Ark of the Covenant is the occasion for Samuel's call for national repentance. He challenged his fellow Israelites to put away their idol worship and serve the one true Jehovah God.

# African interpretation of the Bible in 1,600-page book

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**NAIROBI, Kenya**—Biblical scholar Tokunboh Adeyemo long ago decided something was wrong with how the message of God was being spread in Africa, a continent where competition for souls is fierce.

"The Bible was not written against the cultural background of Africans," Adeyemo told The Associated Press in an interview this week. "The Bible came through from Western missionaries, and the interpretation they gave was based on their own cultural background."

That prompted the Nigerian-born Adeyemo and other scholars and theologians to create Africa Bible Commentary, a new 1,600-page book by Africans, for Africans, using African proverbs and idioms to apply the Bible's teachings to contemporary problems such as AIDS, corruption and female genital mutilation.

Experts say the book is the newest way for African pastors to energize their followers. The tome was 12 years in the making and provides explanations of verses from all 66 books of the Bible.

Some of the book's essays give guidance on Christian behavior in today's world. Sicily Mbura Muriithi, who teaches at the Presbyterian University in Kenya, refers to Gene-

sis in her condemnation of female genital mutilation, which is practiced primarily in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and usually involves removal of a girl's clitoris.

"God created the human body and female sexuality and declared them both good," Muriithi writes. "Therefore, to abuse the body in a way that destroys the ability to appreciate one of God's gifts is an insult to his creation."

There are also passages denouncing witchcraft.

"The Bible does not support the doctrines of demons, evil spirits and witchcraft that derive from traditional beliefs, but many professing Christians are unaware of what the Bible teaches on this subject," writes Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, a professor at the Evangelical Church of West Africa Theological Seminary in Nigeria.

And a commentary on the Book of Job urges Christians not to lose their faith when confronted with the hardships of living on the world's poorest and most corrupt continent: "God has not promised that because we are believers we will not die a violent death or suffer disaster."

Joel Carpenter, director of the Nagel Institute for the

Study of World Christianity in Michigan, said the book is a signal of a maturing Christian leadership in Africa. Across Africa, home to an estimated 900 million people, Islam and Christianity are both estimated to have about 400 million followers, with traditional animist religions making up most of the remainder. As the animist ranks dwindle, Muslims and Christians are increasingly competing for converts.

Except for parts of northern Africa and Ethiopia, where Christianity is traced to the Apostles, missionaries only starting arriving in Africa in earnest in the 1900s, Carpenter said.

The Bible has been translated into several African languages and African scholars have established themselves as major theologians. But most commentaries on the Bible and general books on Christianity available in African bookshops are written by Europeans or Americans.

Africa Bible Commentary "is a matter of critical mass. Now you've really got the biblical scholars and the Protestant and evangelical churches that can do this work," Carpenter said. "And the Bible is really hot literature."

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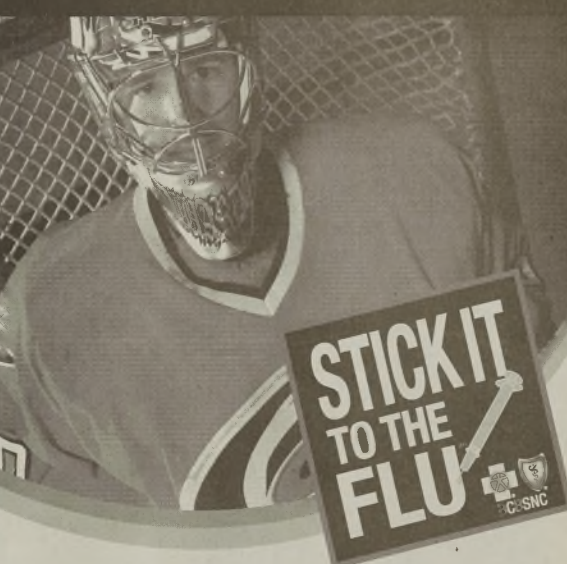
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