

FROM SHEPHERD TO LAMB OF GOD
THEOLOGY:
**REINVIGORATING THE CATECHIST-
CLERGY RELATIONSHIP IN THE ACOM**
FROM A NUMU PERSPECTIVE

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the Pacific Theological College
Suva

In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology

by

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September 2019

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to disentangle the theologies concerning the Lamb of God, which have been largely omitted by the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM), particularly in the diocese of Temotu. To that effect, a Santa Cruz cultural concept of Numu will be employed. This Numu concept has been constructed in a way that not only reconciles my own cultural worldview with the Christian perspectives of the Lamb of God, but also as a protest against the dominant shepherd theology which has led to a problematic relationship between the catechist and the clergy. This misconception of the former being sheep and the latter being shepherds is so deeply embedded in the ACOM structure, that the mission of both groups have been heavily undermined by mutual mistrust.

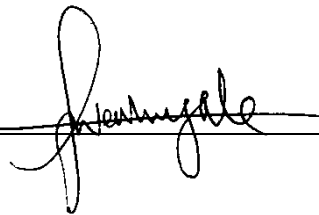
Through Numu, this thesis proposes an alternative way of looking at the catechist-clergy relationship, from one that was previously shaped by the shepherd theology to a Numu/lamb-like relationship that encourages the transformation of leadership, dialogue, and decision-making based on the inclusive life and servitude of Jesus. This is not to abolish the shepherd theology that is dominant in the ACOM, but rather a theological reinterpretation on the role of leaders, especially for the clergy—to which I also belong, to follow in the practical examples set by Jesus.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis, which is 29,050 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the result of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, in any previous written work for an academic award at this or any other academic institution.

I also declare that this thesis has not used any material, heard or read, without academically appropriate acknowledgment of the source.

Name: Ben Wea

Signed: 

Date: 24th September 2019

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late uncle Richard Papo who for the last 30 years has faithfully served our village church as a catechist despite financial, ministerial challenges during his time of service. He was committed to God's call and the mission of the church until he passed away early this year. I also dedicate this to my wife, Ellen Wea, and my three sons, Townsend Menalx, George Rowan Wea and Cyril Sebastian Wea.

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Acknowledgments

There are many people, I wish to acknowledge for their comments, advice and prayers during the time of writing which eventually led to the successful completion of this thesis. Before mentioning their names, I would first like to thank God for his love and care over my family and my life during the time of writing. At times, I wanted to give up but I believe and trust that God who called us to serve him will always empower us to overcome any challenge for the loves that continues to give purpose to our lives.

Firstly, I thank my Supervisor, Reverend Doctor Faafetai Aiava for his wisdom, encouragement, and advice in assisting me in the beginning of writing and his continuous guidance in getting me back on track when I strayed from the topic in the process of writing. I continue to thank him for sharpening my ideas through his comments and his encouragements towards the completion of this thesis. Any flaw in this thesis is my own and has no bearing on my supervisor in any way.

I also would like to thank the PTC faculty for imparting us with knowledge during the two years of study. We came with our own perceptions of theology but with the knowledge learned from them, a shift of understanding has taken place and I hope further changes will eventuate in my own personal ministry. I also thank the Library staff for their continuous support and assistance in providing the library books when I need them for my research.

I also like to knowledge my brothers and sisters in the MTH class of 2019. We arrived at PTC as strangers from very different walks of life, but the two years of study quickly bounded us together despite our cultural, racial and denominational differences. I am happy to say that we will be leaving PTC no longer as strangers but as friends. On the same note, I thank the whole student body for the many interactions in so many

different ways. Living and working together in this multi-cultural community has been an inspiring experience.

I also like to thank those people I interviewed in my home Diocese for their time and wisdom shared to me during our interaction. I extend my gratitude to the Anglican Church of Melanesia for sponsoring my two years of study. Thank you for caring for us.

Finally, I would like to thank my immediate family, my wife Ellen Wea and my three sons, George Rown Wea, Townsend Menalx, and Cyril Sebastian Wea for their support during my research up to the completion of this thesis. Last but not least, I express my gratitude to all people back in ACOM who continue to pray for us during our time of study here at PTC.

List of Abbreviations

ACOM	-	Anglican Church of Melanesia
D.O. T	-	Diocese of Temotu
NIV	-	New International Version

Introduction

Placing too much emphasis on a particular theology can make a person lose sight of the diversity in God and the world. Seeing God as merely King might blind one from appreciating God's servant character. Likewise, seeing God as all-powerful God could also make one forget that through Christ, God was also vulnerable. This tunnel vision leads to other theological problems. At times, we see the image of God as an archetype of how our churches ought to be structured and carry out its practices and so forth. This is the situation in the ACOM where the shepherd theology has cast such a long shadow over the Lamb theology, that it is often ignored when it comes to dealing with church relationships. The ACOM has relied so much on shepherd theology that it has had a detrimental effect on the mission of the church today.

In order to provide some correction to this situation, this thesis aims to propose a Lamb of God Theology through the Numu cultural perspective. In relation to my diocese in Temotu, I think that drawing from the elements of culture and the gospel is tantamount in providing a solution that is not only missing but also in making it more relevant to my context. The rationale in using such approach is that a deeper appreciation of Numu will not only help the clergy and catechist get along but also in understanding the theological significance of the Lamb who is Jesus.

The three main questions that will guide my research throughout this thesis are:

1. What has overreliance on the shepherd Theology caused in ACOM?
2. How can the problem of overreliance be addressed in ACOM?
3. How can Numu – Lamb reinvigorate the clergy- catechist relationship in ACOM?

In order to address these questions, I have structured the thesis as follows. In the first chapter, I address the research problem and provide more details of the

aforementioned struggles between the clergy and catechist. The second chapter discusses the Numu concept and its characteristic, which involves looking at the cultural practices that demonstrate the Numu life-way. The third chapter is a theological investigation of the Lamb of God Theology where I discuss the different sacrifices done in the Old Testament, how it relates to Christ's sacrifice in the New Testament and how that theology is parallel to the Numu concept. Finally, in the fourth chapter, I bring to light some of the implications of Numu Theology where I return to the prevailing problems found within the clergy-catechist relationships.

Chapter 1

The Research problem: Deep Misconception of Sheep Theology in the Anglican Church of Melanesia

Introduction

This thesis contends that the weakening relationship between the catechist and clergy in the ACOM has increased due to a lack of mutual understanding relating to the Lamb of God Theology. I will make the argument that when the Lamb of God theology is missing in this relationship (due to over reliance on the shepherd theology), there is unhealthy interaction between the catechist and clergy where both do not work together but in opposition to each other and subsequently, the mission of the church.

In his Master's Thesis, Anthony Ling (2017) looked at the relationship between the priest and the people, and identified dependence as being consequence of the Shepherd model of leadership. In it, he proposed the indigenous concept of *Pulsala*¹ which he believes would be a new way of shaping the relationship between the priest and the people. The evident issues I have with this undertaking was that it has impacted rather negatively on the Lamb of God Theology. This warrants, what I think, is a worthy reassessment of the sheep metaphor and its relevance to the ACOM context.

In this thesis, I will revisit the relationship between the catechist and the clergy instead of sidelining the shepherd metaphor as Ling suggests. The intent is to reconceive sheep Theology through an alternative lens of Numu, which I explain in Chapter two. This thesis argues that the problem is not so much the dominance of the shepherd theology

¹ Pulsala is a special type of friendship practiced in the Banks and Torres Islands in Vanuatu.

but rather the omission of the sacrificial Lamb of God and its role in harmonising relationships.

To that end, this thesis, will firstly look at the prevailing Sheep theology in the ACOM. Secondly I will look at the problem of dependency which runs rampant in shepherd Theology as well as in the catechist -clergy relationship of the ACOM. Thirdly, the process in which the clergy is elevated to authoritative positions will be examined. Here I will offer a critique of the obedience notion which has often been misunderstood as blind obedience. As an alternative, I will then discuss how sheep theology is not passive and powerless objects, but about standing in solidarity with the oppressed and the voiceless.

1.1. Prevailing Sheep Theology in the Anglican Church of Melanesia

Some writers in the bible have used the sheep image to depict people and their relationship with God as their shepherd. An example is the nation of Israel, whom God had appointed and labelled as God's very own sheep (Jeremiah 50:6).

Sheep are very important animals in Palestine for their economic, cultural and religious worth (Borowski 2009, 221). They have provided food for the people (1Samuel 14:32), milk to drink (Isaiah 7:21-22), wool to make cloth (Leviticus 13: 47; Job 31:20; Exodus 34:3), skins for tent covering (Exodus 26:14), as a medium for exchange (2kings 3:4; 27:18-19) and so forth.

There are over five hundred references to sheep in the bible. The first mention of domestication of sheep in Palestine is found in the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis Chapter four (Napier 1962, 316).

Very often sheep in the Bible metaphorically symbolize the people of God. An example has been given in the bible; the writer of Psalms states “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker! For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand” (Psalms 100:3). The psalmist identifies the role of God as the shepherd or maker, and the people as the sheep.

Sheep easily get lost when they are not looked after by the shepherd. God warns the foolish shepherd who scatters the sheep and feeds off them, “I am against the shepherd; and I will demand my sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves, I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them” (Ezekiel 34: 8, 10). This text, though God spoke against the foolish shepherd, also shows the dependency of sheep, and how this dependency can be abused by the uncaring shepherd.

Sheep are vulnerable to attacks of wild animals, and according to Kraus, “sheep are afraid of fast running water, and so very often the shepherd takes them to still water where they can drink without haste” (1988, 306-307). The author raises the importance of the dependency of the sheep on the shepherd to access water which is very significant for its survival. This also echoes well Psalm 23 where David is completely dependent on the Lord as is the sheep on the shepherd. Two aspects which stand so clearly in this Psalm 23, are serenity, as of lying down in green pastures and by restful waters - this is a suggestion of physical well-being and safety which results from dependence on God.

The sheep as an animal is characterized by certain features in relation to the shepherd. It is affectionate (2 Samuel 12:3), non-aggressive (Isaiah 53:7; Jeremiah 11: 19; John 10:3-4) and is relatively defenceless (Micah 5:8; Matthew 10:16). It is always in need of constant care and the supervision (Numbers 27:17; Ezekiel 34:5; Matthew 9:36; 26:31) of its shepherd (Napier 1962, 316). Such characters of sheep help to explain why sheep have to depend solely on the shepherd for their survival.

In other passages in the bible, sheep are cited as the lamb (Exodus 29:38), flock (Genesis 4:3-4) and ram (Genesis 22:1-18). Goldingay explains that “the sheep is not afraid when walking through canyons, even a very dark one. The sheep knows that in its shepherd, it has a courageous and tough person who is prepared to take on whatever threatens the flocks” (2006, 351). The author here is emphasizing the importance of the sheep’s dependency on the shepherd for their safety especially in the midst of danger; the presence of the shepherd is a great defence against their enemies. Like the Israelites, who in the presence of Yahweh, they feared not their enemies.

The bible promotes the element of dependency as in Sheep theology. John 15:5. “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing”. According to the Harper’s Bible commentary, the discourse’s fundamental point is the necessity and the nature of the disciple’s unity with Jesus (Mays 1988, 1068). Although unity and dependency do not mean the same thing, both exist within the relationship, and there is an element of dependency in unity, for those who unite depend on one another. So Jesus is basically emphasizing dependency on him as the chief shepherd of the sheep. In order for the disciples to bear much fruit, unity with Jesus is the way. Although this text may not connect to the Sheep theology, it tries to bring out the unity with Jesus as analogous to the sheep’s dependency on the shepherd, as in Sheep theology.

Very often when the bible equates humans to sheep, it points out and reminds us of the people who depend on God for their salvation (Ephesians 2: 8-9), His gift of wisdom (James 1:5). The greatest way to receive God’s blessing is to depend on him for almost everything (Psalm 104:27), and in everything (Proverbs 3:5-6). Now let us continue and look at the impacts of over-reliance on Shepherd theology, and some misunderstandings of Sheep theology in the clergy-catechist relationship.

1.2. Dependency

In this sub topic I try to discuss dependency as a notion that is being promoted by over reliance on Shepherd theology, which has suppressed the catechist to the position of dependency, which seems to have impacted on the catechist-clergy relationship in ACOM today. When we talk about a shepherd we cannot isolate him from his sheep, as they depend on him for their survival. According to the Oxford Dictionary, “Dependency is when someone is heavily reliant on something or other people” (Hornby 2000, 336). This is what happens in the case of Shepherd theology where the sheep depends on the shepherd to lead, feed, and protect them.

Gan in his book, “The Metaphor of Shepherd in the Hebrew Bible” outlines the functions of the shepherd in the priesthood, which equates to the priest leading the people. In the monarchical period the priest leads the Israelite to Yahweh, they depend on the priest to intercede to God on their behalf. The Israelites have to depend on the priest as one who stands in the gap between God and humans (Gan 2007, 50). It is only the priest who leads the people to heed the commands of the Lord to conduct themselves within the nation in the light of God’s justice and love.

Secondly, the priest leads and feeds the people, though not with physical food but the instructions of Yahweh. For example, Samuel as the priest led the people to live the requirements of Yahweh. (51) Another example is the case of the two women (1kings 3:16-28; see 1kings 3:12) where King Solomon, as a leader, uses his power to resolve the maternal dispute (1kings 3:12; 3:28). Also King Solomon as a leader filled with wisdom established peace with the surrounding nations, resulting in prosperity to the nation of Israel. (1kings 5:9-14, 10:1-13)

Dependency, as in Shepherd theology, can be very suppressing to a point where one cannot do things on his or her own. This kind of dependency can be seen as destructive for the Pacific island nations relying on the West. Hau'ofa explains dependency can be seen as “derogatory and belittling” by those in dominant positions over their subordinates (Hau'ofa 1993, 3). “Derogatory and belittling” are integral to most relationships of dominance and subordination, where those who are superior have ways or say things that are accepted by those who occupy inferior positions, who in turn, behave in the ways that serve to perpetuate the relationships” (3). A lot of things can happen in this kind of dependency. One is what Vaai described as “one truth ideology” (Vaai 2017, 218), where there is only one way of believing and doing things, such as the idea that there is more value in what is borrowed from outside than what is found inside in [one's] Itulagi” (220). This kind of dependency is not a good dependency for it drives the dependant to an inferior position where they can become passive and lack trust in themselves to do things on their own. Such dependency can most often also turn to exploitation of the resources of the people. Vaai, further described this when quoting his Tuvalu student who uttered, “Rich nations are enjoying life from our death” (Vaai 2017, 222). This is a true statement as we can witness today, where industrialized countries continue to produce pollution from factories that foster their economies while our small island states are suffering from the impact of climate change.

The Shepherd image of God as one who leads, feeds and protects his people has been applied to the church leaders as also having the role to lead, feed and protect the people entrusted to their care. During the ordination of priests in the ACOM, they become shepherds, and their role is to lead, feed and protect their congregations. Not only are they vested with the role of a shepherd but through their ordination they become elevated to a position of power in the church hierarchical structure, which also places them in power

where they make decisions, while the catechist remains only to carry out what has been agreed upon by the clergy. While this is good in some sense for the clergy, in looking after the people, over-reliance on the Shepherd theology in the ACOM, where clergy see themselves as the master, only to give orders, has reduced the catechist to a position of dependency.

Dependency on the clergy by the catechist is not only about leading, feeding, and protecting, and as far as their role in the church is concerned. It is also about instructing and directing the catechist in regards to church services. It sometimes seems, at least to me, that this responsibility of directing and instructing was meant for sharing responsibilities. However, some priests use it as an avenue through which to escape from their duty resulting in ill-feeling towards the priest. The impact of such a practice on the shepherd-sheep relationship is that one is viewed as a servant and the other a master.

1.3. Silence

The second point I wish to discuss here is silence. Silence can develop in a situation where dependency occurs in relationships, such as those experienced in the daily cultural interactions in the community we come from. Take for instance the case of one rendering support to another. If the supporter is engaged in some unacceptable behaviour(s) the one being supported, so as to ensure that the relationship continues to thrive, will not do or say anything in protest against the supporter.

In such a situation, even when the one who gives support does what is not right, the dependent will not say anything, for fear of losing help or support. Silence and belittling can also emerge in a situation where those in authority look down on those who are lower in society. The Oxford Dictionary defines silence as “a situation in which someone is unwilling to speak or discuss something” (Hawker 2006, 647). The context of silence I wish to discuss here is not about someone who is unwilling to speak or discuss something.

Rather, it is the silence associated with over reliance on the Shepherd theology that has led to the belittling catechists to the point of silence. Shepherd theology as we know it, is concerned more about leading, feeding and protecting the sheep who cannot look after themselves - they need the shepherd to care for them for their survival. Some shepherd-like leaders are more concerned about maintaining their status, and find it hard to go down to the level of those under their care while trying to understand the problems in their lives. Sometimes they become over reliant on the Shepherd theology; consequently, elevating leaders to the extent where they look down on those working under them.

Silence can be misinterpreted to mean different things for different people. In an honour and shame society like Melanesia, silence can be a way of demonstrating one's respect and honour to those in authority. For example, on Santa Cruz Island, respect is expressed by the observation of silence. There is no unnecessary shouting or playing around the village while the head of the village, is around. As leader of the village, all respect is due to him. In some instances, silence can also be imposed by those in authority. According to Acebo,

The church, though perhaps the institution that has done most to defend the weak, has also been party to the practice of ignoring those groups most disadvantaged by society. They are already passed over often in the Bible, as in the omission of any account of the possible calling of the women who followed Jesus of Nazareth. Even when these do make an appearance, there is a tendency to play down their significance (1999, 20).

I concur with the author because sometimes, the same institution or people which are supposed to defend the voiceless or the silent and should give them a voice are the ones that silences them to the point of their becoming submissive and oppressed. This can happen in the political, social, economic and religious spheres in some of our societies today.

In ACOM, the over-reliance on the Shepherd theology has caused belittling of the catechist to silence. In addition to leading, feeding and protecting the flock, there is an

element of the shepherd viewing the sheep just mere recipients. There is not much recognition in terms of a catechist's role and responsibilities. He is expected to be silent in terms of decision making and so on. In this way catechists are pushed into a situation where they see themselves as small and incapable of doing their work. In most instances, catechists will think that orders and instruction in regards to their work have to come from the clergy. For example, in ACOM the way in which the role of the Shepherd is understood can be seen in the way clergy treat catechists. Upon ordination, members of the clergy see themselves as elevated to a position of power and status in the church. While up there, they see themselves as superior and more knowledgeable than those below them. In the process they become bossier and show less concern for catechists viewing them as just servants who are supposed to do what they are instructed to do both inside and outside the church.

Silence here is not about a physical inability as catechists can communicate with the clergy. The emphasis is on the fact that clergy members force catechists into silence; catechists are to carry out what they are instructed to do and follow the conditions of the licence issued to them by the bishop.

The catechists' silence demonstrates the high regard in which they hold the ordained office occupied by the clergy who represent Christ through their ordination and work. On the other hand, the priest sees the silence as an act of submission to his authority and higher placement in the church's hierarchical structure which he believes is divinely ordained.

The over reliance on Shepherd theology in ACOM has led to, in some instances, where clergy members to view ordination as having bestowed on them special power resulting in their standing tall within the church and community. This is reinforced when the existing church structure places the clergy in a position of power where they are at

liberty to do whatever best suits them with no consideration of the needs of those working under them. In ACOM, it is very discriminating and unpastoral to see clergy making decisions that support their own welfare such as increases in clergy stipend, financial support for clergy's children and other church benefits while the poor catechist, who is also serving in the ministry of the church, struggles along without support from the church. The clergy seems to rise higher while the poor catechist continues to struggle. Over reliance on the Shepherd theology today has led to the belittling of catechists to a position of silence. As a result, the catechist and priest are not on good terms, though they continue to work together in ministry. Such issues between them sometimes weaken the mission of the church.

1.4. Elevation of Clergy to Authoritative Positions

The understanding of Shepherd theology is often associated with hierarchy, power or authority. The words power and authority are used interchangeably within the Church when referring to church matters in ACOM. Authority for that matter can mean the "right or power to persuade individuals or groups to obey precepts or recommendations" (Cross 1997, 134). I concur with this definition in relation to a shepherd kind of leadership in any organization. When leaders rule from a hierarchical position or pyramid kind of structure, they expect those under them to obey whatever instructions they give. Similar to what Pasquariello said, hierarchy usually has a responsibility of deciding what is best for the lower arch in the structure (1987, 89).

In the ACOM, Shepherd theology is deeply embedded in the whole structure inherited from the founders of the Anglican mission. It has been promoted through the sacrament of holy orders within the Church. For example, upon ordination to the priesthood the priest is vested with power. This is expressed during the ordination service when the presiding bishop reads prayers such as "..... you have given your son

Jesus Christ to be..... the shepherd and pastor of our souls” (Church of Melanesia 1999, 14). This prayer acknowledges that Jesus is the shepherd setting the example to those to be ordained to the priesthood. How well this prayer has been fulfilled is something that each ordained person needs to think about.

Furthermore, after the laying on of hands on the ordained, the bishop will pray for the newly-ordained priest by saying, “grant that as the true pastor he may watch over the sheep given into his care, gathering the scattered, bringing back the strayed and seeking the lost, until they are found” (Church of Melanesia 1999, 15). With that prayer, that the newly-ordained has strength to fulfil his role as a true pastor or shepherd, it also implies giving authority or power which also elevates the priest to an authoritarian position.

The ACOM, in her theology, tries to promote Sheep theology where its leaders are expected to live sacrificial, selfless lives. In practice, the ACOM is leaning more on Shepherd theology in its mission and administration structure. For example, at the top of the structure is the Archbishop who looks after the whole Anglican Province of Melanesia. Beneath him is the senior bishop who looks after one of the nine dioceses. Usually he is the longest serving bishop among his diocesan peers. Below the senior bishop are the diocesan bishops, and then below the diocesan bishops is the regional priest who represents the different regions in each diocese. Below the regional priest are the district and parish priests who look after the districts and parishes. Below the district and parish priest is the catechist who is a lay member like the rest of the congregation. He is licensed by the bishop to work with the priest by ‘reading and preaching the word of God, reading the common prayers and in such other duties as may be given by the priest in accordance to the laws and constitution of the church’ (ACOM 2002, VII). So we can see that priests do have the upper hand in terms of what kind of services and practices should

be done in the church and the catechist has to follow what has been directed by the church authority.

With regards to decision making in ACOM, the Shepherd theology is still very much advocated through its decision making process. For example, in the general synod, which is the highest decision making body in ACOM, the majority of its members are clergy (ACOM 2014, 6). Therefore, when it comes to decision making, clergy members make the decision while the laity just follow what has been approved. Not only is this process happening at the provincial level, it is also the same at the diocesan level where the clergy are the dominant group within the diocesan synod (Diocese of Temotu 2008, 6), So usually any decision passed by voting is very much under the strong influence of the clergy. Even in meetings where the laity have the numbers, we can still see the influence of the clergy. Despite the presence of laity in an ACOM decision making body, most of the decisions are made by the clergy.

With the already existing structure and through the ACOM decision-making mechanisms, the ACOM is strongly over reliant on the Shepherd theology which has elevated the clergy to an authoritative position in the church. As a result, members of the clergy do whatever they wish without really caring about their relationship with catechists. For example, there are times when some priests, who having drunk alcohol all through the night, do not attend the Sunday service the next day. He does not care in the least what the catechist or people will say but expects the catechist will take control of the church services. This is not what we expect the clergy to do for they are supposed to be good shepherds, but I believe such an attitude can be the result of elevating the clergy to a position where they are free to abuse it the power of that position. This kind of attitude by the clergy is very discouraging for catechists and the people.

1.5. Obedience

The next point I wish to look at is obedience. Obedience is a virtue and is a very important aspect of Sheep theology. According to the Oxford Dictionary, Obedience is defined as “willingly doing what you are told” (Hawker 2006, 469). This definition undermines the understanding related to the obedience that I wish to discuss here. For it is not the obedience in response to what one told someone to do but is a respect and loyalty to those in authority. For example, a cleaner in an office has to obey his or her employer because he employs him or her and this is where he or she earns a living. Obedience to their boss is paramount in order to continue working and securing his or her pay. It is directly related to his or her work. The boss has the power to hire and fire whenever he or she wants.

The concept of obedience can be seen in both the Old and the New Testaments. Obedience defines the Human-God relationship and is the supreme test of faith and reverence to God. The Old Testament concept of obedience is very important because it established a strong tie that held people close to God. This essential spiritual relation can be seen in Samuel’s utterance, when he raised the question, “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15: 22 NIV²). This text implies that there can be no right relationship with God without obedience. In Genesis 22:18, we can see how obedience can be a blessing, as Yahweh assured Abraham, “and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” In the Old Testament, the idea of future blessings and prosperity has often been emphasized by the prophets as conditional upon the obedience of the people to God. This can be seen in Isaiah which states that, “if you are willing and obedient, you will eat the

² Biblical references in the entire thesis are from the NIV translation.

best from the land” (Isaiah 1:19). Also on the intent to build the temple, the prophet assures the people that it can only happen if the people obey the voice of Yahweh..... “this will happen if you diligently obey the Lord your God” (Zechariah 6: 15). These texts emphasize the importance of obedience to the Lord and the blessings that come forth from Him.

In the bible, when David sings, “The Lord is my shepherd I shall not be in want.” (Psalms 23) he clearly defines his relation to God; it is one of shepherd and sheep, as one who leads and one who obeys. Obedience is vital for the sheep, disobedience means losing its way, it may get hurt or even be killed by wild animals. The shepherd’s role is to protect his sheep from these dangers, so he trains them in obedience. In the same way God loves his children and wants them to obey him because He knows it will lead to more joy and peace in their lives. Obedience is critical in Sheep theology because obedience leads to the leading and feeding of the shepherd, while disobedience forfeits the right to survive.

In the New Testament the concept of obedience is also clearly seen in Romans 5:19 which stresses, “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” The writer of Romans is referring to Adam’s disobedience, as through it, the world experienced sins and all kinds of sickness, and by that, man having dominion over the world, which is handed over to Satan becoming “the god of this world”, this means that when humankind disobeys God, everyone follows Satan and Satan becomes the god of this world because he controls everything and every human being (2 Corinthians 4:4). Then through the obedience of Jesus, the Kingdom of God was established in the world, and overthrowing the authority of Satan. So through this obedience, God established a new covenant (Matthew 26:28) which is based on the obedience of Jesus.

Also the victory of Jesus on the cross was based on his obedience. He said “but I do as the father has commanded me” (John 14:31). Even before his crucifixion, he prayed three times to his father, “yet not as I will, but as you” (Matthew 26:39). Paul also mentioned that Jesus humbled himself and become obedient to death, his death on the cross. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place (Philippians 2:8-9). Hebrews also says that Jesus learned obedience from what he went through, and made it perfect, and became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Hebrew 5:8-9).

When it comes to ACOM, with regards to the catechist-clergy relationship, obedience can be seen as blind obedience in the sense that catechists cannot decide for themselves, cannot make decisions but have to follow what the clergy have decided for them. Their work is directly controlled by the clergy as catechists see their responsibility as being obedient to church leaders, knowing ordained people represent Christ in his church and the world.

They understand their relationship to the clergy is some kind of obedience and service to God and his church. This is why they will do without complaint whatever a priest tells them to do. While on the part of the clergy, the catechists’ obedience to their instruction is simply because they depend on them, and they work according to the licence that is issued to them by the diocesan bishop which gives the clergy power to control catechists. Although catechists may link their obedience to that of being servants as espoused by Jesus, it is different from the perspective of the clergy. Looking down from their position in the church’s hierarchy, they see the catechists’ obedience as adhering to the conditions of work, as testament to their dependency on the clergy. Oftentimes, this obedience is not seen as humble obedience but misunderstood as blind obedience.

1.6. Sheep Theology Is Not About Passive and Powerless Subjects

The sheep and shepherd metaphor has been used in the bible to depict people and God, and has found its way into the Church, including ACOM. These imageries are crucial to their understanding of leadership and their relationship to people. Sheep, for one, is used to depict the people. For the purpose which I will be looking at in this sub topic, it refers to catechists. Below I will discuss sheep as passive from the different perspectives of the clergy and catechist.

The ACOM structure determines how its leaders relate to the people. On the part of catechists, they see the clergy as making decisions at the top of the structure. For example, in the general synod, which is the highest decision making body of the Church, it is the ordained who are in the majority (ACOM 2014, 6). So when it comes to decision making usually the decisions are made by those at the top, and then channelled down to those below for implementation. The catechist in this kind of system sees their relationship with the priest as one who provides support, and displays a life of obedience to the clergy while spreading the faith of the Church. Catechists do not see themselves as passive but as having a life of respect and obedience to their leader which they are always supposed to uphold as servants of Christ. With this simple faith, they work freely and gladly to announce the Good News of Christ to his or her fellow brothers and sisters wherever they work. In a way the catechists see their work and challenges as uniting their suffering to that of Christ.

On the other hand, the clergy looking from their position as a leader or shepherd see catechists just as followers of instructions. They cannot do things as they please. They can be seen as passive for their leaders. The clergy do not give them the space to address through their mission the needs of the church which they help look after. They are locked down to only do what is allowed by the church laws and its provisions.

Because of that, it has made those at the bottom of the structure passive, expecting those at the top to direct what is to be done. They cannot do things their own way which might go against the authority of the church. So all along the catechist will just wait on the church authority to instruct them what to do. So looking at the two different perspectives, it is the priest who sees the catechist as passive and dependent, which the clergy themselves have caused, while catechists display their obedience and trust in Christ through their work.

Another point of discussion is the sheep, understood as powerless, in that its safety, feeding and leading depends on the shepherd. The sheep does not have the power to keep itself from dangers. When Jesus saw in his ministry, that people were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, his heart was moved with compassion. In many of his parables, Jesus said the sheep got lost (Matthew 18:12 -14), fell into pits (Matthew 12: 11) were attacked by wild animals, deserted by those supposed to take care for them (1 Peter 2:24-25). They are helpless on their own. But the encouraging message is that Jesus is the good shepherd who really cares for his sheep (Simpson, 2005).

While the ACOM as a church is committed to Christ's teachings to reach out and care for those under her care on one hand, on the other hand its structure does not empower people. For instance, since the ACOM decision making body is mostly dominated by ordained men, the planning, decision making and programs of the church are mostly based on priests' insights, and wisdom. Seldom are the views of the laity taken on board when decisions are made. This makes the catechist powerless because they are not given equal opportunity in decision making so their ideas are not reflected in the meeting's outcome. As far as catechists are concerned, despite their having so much to contribute to the Church, the process dominated by priests effectively renders them powerless.

So long as the ACOM remains with this kind of pyramid structure, where order is usually given from the top down to those below, catechists will always feel powerless and inadequate to contribute to the planning and progress of the church's mission.

1.7. Oppression and Overpowering of the Voiceless

Shepherd theology involves leading, feeding and protecting as a shepherd who looks after the sheep. This metaphor has been used to depict leaders who look after the people such as a school principal and others. In ACOM, ordained ministers are called Clergy and these clergies are also called and known as shepherds. The bishops are called shepherds over the dioceses they look after. A symbol used to show the bishop as a shepherd is the presenting of the pastoral staff during his consecration. This pastoral staff resembles the rod used in biblical times by shepherds, a stick about five or six feet long, and may have a crooked end. The shepherd uses it to handle the sheep and to protect the sheep against wild animals (Wight 1953, 159). In ACOM this pastoral staff perhaps serves to uphold the notion of being led by the shepherd - the bishop. The sheep have to be led, implying they do not know the way and must always be guided.

Shepherds, just as Jesus referred to himself as the good shepherd, must take good care of those entrusted to their care (John 10:11). Jesus is not only a good shepherd but has a unique character (Psalms 23; Zachariah 13:7; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5: 4). When he spoke of himself as good, he was referring to his inner goodness, righteousness and beauty. As a shepherd, he is the one who feeds, leads, and protects his flock.

Jesus reference to himself as a shepherd also set an example for leaders to follow, he gave his life on the cross as the good shepherd for his own sheep despite having the power to save himself. Matthew 20:28, "Just as the son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." This text points out what the

characters of leaders should be like, to sacrifice in the service of others. For Jesus, in sacrificing himself, God made salvation available to all people who come to him in faith. In proclaiming he is a good shepherd, Jesus speaks of laying down his life for his sheep (John 10:15, 17-18) which is supposed to be the example for all leaders in all different walks of life.

Jesus speaks of himself as the good shepherd and a model for all leaders to follow. Sometimes some leaders misapply shepherding as overpowering the people under their care. In ACOM as a Christian Church her leadership tries to obey and follow the life and teaching of Jesus. This shepherding model that Jesus is promoting in the bible, for the ACOM has been institutionalized and perhaps has slightly missed the mark of good shepherding when it comes to the clergy-catechist relationship. In ACOM, being a member of the clergy means being raised to a position of authority in the church, being part of an elite group where members of this group run the church in terms of decision making. Sometimes this perspective can lead to priests seeing themselves with the power and authority so members of the laity should submit and listen to them. This kind of attitude has caused problem in the church where the clergy sometimes abuse their power. For example, in ACOM in the diocese of Temotu there are some priests who misbehave when taking alcohol, and some even gamble, although it is not allowed by the church. Nobody is going to penalize them because the catechist does not have the power to report them to the bishop. Only the bishop can penalize them for their bad behaviour.

Some priests, because they know nobody will talk to them because they have power over the catechist and the people, they take advantage of such situations and do whatever they would like to do.