

Hymns Translated by Berlin Missionaries in Southern Tanzania: Some Eschatological Implications of Translation

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Abstract

Congregational hymn-singing is an important part of all Protestant worship services. Luther himself famously co-opted popular drinking songs, turning them into cherished hymns. When the Berlin Missionaries came to Kingaland in Southern Tanzania in 1895, they brought with them a rich heritage of German hymnody. They also encountered a love of songs in the Kinga people. This meant that the missionaries could hope that translated hymns might help new Christians remember the doctrinal points the missionaries were trying to teach. However, translation is always fraught with danger. Words have not only denotation but connotation. It is often hard for new language learners to catch the latter. In addition, the Berlin missionaries were predisposed to regard Kinga traditional and customary beliefs and practices as “pagan.” Therefore, both translation and contextualization difficulties were present when the Berlin missionaries worked to provide hymns to their new converts. This work focuses on that endeavor and looks closely at four hymns that were failures, specifically from the standpoint of transmitting certain eschatological ideas to the Kinga. The research not only explains the semantic problems; it returns to a consideration of the lives and work of the original German composers in order to understand the eschatological message they were trying to deliver to their original 17thC German audience. By article's end, the reader should understand the role hymns in general and specific hymns played in Germany and later in the Kinga area. Based on specific examples of problems, the reader should be able to rehearse what kinds of problems might occur with translation. The reader should also be able to discuss the additional problem of how to do doctrinally orthodox contextualization when hymns, which have a history of their own, are utilized for a new context. Methodology applied for collecting data of this work is library based research.

Keywords: Berlin Missionaries, pagan, eschatology, doctrinally orthodox contextualization

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1. Selected Hymns with Eschatological Themes

In this section, I discuss the eschatological Christian message expressed in hymns and how the message in the texts of four selected hymns, gets reflected in the Kinga context when they are translated by the Berlin missionaries. To begin, the original German texts of the four hymns used by the missionaries will be discussed.¹ The intention of studying the German texts is to find out whether the texts are similar to those written in the Kinga language, or if they are different. Even where the texts look similar, an attempt will be made to find out whether the phrases used give a similar meaning in each of the two different communities, or if there are nuanced, but important, differences. If the Kinga text happens to be distinctly different from the German one, then there will be an investigation of whether the choice of language in the Kinga text matches the intention of the message to be conveyed. In this case, the Kinga text will be analyzed and the semantic implications of various words for Kinga will be shown. Although the history and content of the German hymn texts will be discussed, the primary intention is not to find out the impact of the message on Germans in the Brandenburg Region, but to find out the impact of translated German hymns on the Kinga people.

After discussing the choice of words used by the translators, the various eschatological themes that appear in the Kinga text and their impact on the Kinga audience will be examined. Since these eschatological themes derived from the composers' environment and theological background and from the message the composers intended to convey, it is important to look at the *Sitz im Leben* (life situation) of the Church in Germany when the hymns were composed, especially at events in the 17th century to which the Church reacted. I will discuss how several hymns composed in the 17th century challenged German Church members in the next centuries, particularly the Berlin missionaries of the 1900s. I will describe the type of missionary who worked in the Southern part of Tanzania and give my opinion on how the Berlin Mission might have chosen better worship hymns for the mission field.

2. Hymns originated from Livingstone Mountain Synod

A study of Kinga worship hymns shows that eschatology was strongly emphasized by missionaries through hymns, this emphasis was shown in their choice of German worship hymns that were translated into Kinga

¹ The four German hymns were sent to the author by Johannes Althausen of Berlin on 5th May 2020.

language.¹ Of the 140 written hymns, 127 originated from German background, while only 13 were of Kinga origin. The 140 hymns were divided into 19 various groups, most of which are related to the Sunday Gospel lessons.² Three of the 19 sections of the hymns have eschatological themes: Section 8, *Tsa lwidiko*, meaning hymns about hope; Section 9, *Tsa kwivalatsa*, about penitence; and Section 19, *Tsa kuswa nitsa vuhigi nitsa vwumi vwa siku tsoni*, about death, judgment and eternal life.³ The above three sections consist altogether of 40 eschatological hymns. For this study, only four hymns from Sections 9 and 19 were chosen because these four represent the rest; most of the eschatological themes found in the 40 hymns are present in them. In addition, this study focuses only on relevant stanzas.

2.1. Content of the first Hymn

The text of the first selected Kinga hymn is Number 95 in the 1954 hymn book.⁴

The hymn in Kinga language was adapted by missionaries from the following German hymn, Number 428 (Make yourself ready my Spirit) in the 1884 Brandenburg hymnal.⁵ The two texts from Kinga (95) and from German (428) have similarities as well as differences. The main similarity is that the message from both texts appeals to those listening to be alert because affliction is very near. Therefore, the poet tells the audience to wake up, to implore God to save them, and to be constant in prayer since Satan has approached many people in order to tempt them.

Despite the similarity of the main content, the two texts have some differences in wording (semantics) and phrasing. For example, in the first stanza of the Kinga text, the term "*Vi ntima*" which literally means, "Oh liver," continues saying "be prepared, pray and lament so that severe troubles that come soon shall not befall you." For Kinga understanding, the message is unfortunately ambivalent since the call to prepare or wake up is directed to *ntima*, the liver. Regarding this organ, the Kinga understand that it is located inside the human abdomen, produces bile and purifies blood, which therefore makes it a source of human life. With this perception of the liver as an organ responsible for blood purification, when the Kinga people give an offering to God or forebear they normally give the animal liver as a symbol of life.⁶

As the missionaries learned the Kinga language, they found out what the Kinga thought about the liver (*ntima*) and its symbolic force, so they thought it would be a good word for translating "spirit" (*Geist* in German). Thus the translation of the first line of Stanza 1: "*Mache dich, mein Geist bereit*". Unfortunately, the translation⁷ into Kinga ("*Vi ntima vwisavule ...*") which means, "Oh liver, prepare yourself ..." creates a challenge. Appealing to the liver to be prepared against difficult times sounds ridiculous to the Kinga people because they cannot imagine a mere human organ being able to understand this message. The difficulty is a deeply-rooted philosophical one. It would be quite easy for a German listener to perceive the intended meaning of such an analogy because Western societies understand a human to be divided into a spiritual and a physical part. However, the Kinga people, who perceive no such essential division, may not get the meaning of the message of the hymn. The German phrase "*Mache dich, mein Geist bereit*"⁸ can only be captured in the Kinga text if the Kinga text were written, "*twisavulage ...*" meaning, "let us be prepared ..." and not "*Vi ntima vwisavule*" as the missionaries translated.

Another term which is ambiguous is a phrase in Stanza 6, Line 1 of Kinga Hymn 95 which says, "*Pwu tusisimukage, twisaje tukute, lwakuv'uvukuvilwa vuhegelie sitso*," which means, "Let us wake up, implore and pray because affliction is very near." By using the term *uvukuvilwa*, meaning, "affliction," the contents of this verse may be understood by Kinga people as a way of alerting them against the coming of a great enemy who is preparing himself to attack the people. The only way to avoid the coming affliction (*uvukuvilwa vuhegelie*) is to pray (*twisaje*) and to lament (*tukute*) as signs showing their subservience in order to save their lives.

Unfortunately, the connotation of *uvukuvilwa* in this context, along with the imperative to show humbleness and to implore the Lord, does not create the mental image of a loving God with whom one is in relation as child to father, but rather an angry God who must be appeased lest, in his anger, he would desire to terminate people's life. The image of God's judgment as a day of affliction (*uvukuvilwa*) becomes the image of a

¹ The hymns were later on printed in Vuga 1954. The printed hymnal book was known as *Kalata va N'imbo za Yakilisiti: A Book of Christians' Hymns*. Before this book was printed, the Kinga used hand-written hymns which were also used in the whole Konde Synod, and also by the Moravians in Rungwe Synod. See also Kornder in p.128: He reports that in 1930 the two Mission Societies (Berlin Mission Society in Konde Synod and Scottish Mission Society in Malawi) prepared a joint hymnal book which was printed in April 1931. The book was written in Nyakyusa language and contained African, German and Scottish hymns.

² Ibid.1954.

³ Ibid. 1954.

⁴ The Kinga hymn is taken from, *Kalata va N'imbo tsa Yakilisiti*, 1954.

⁵ The German hymn is taken from, *Evangelical Hymn book*, 1884. (The copies and information about original hymns were sent to the author by Johannes Althausen on 5 May 2020. (Althausen lives in Berlin, is a professional musician, and has a close contact with Berlin Mission Society).

⁶ Interview with a Traditional Priest Kasim Kitumbika, 12th June 2020.

⁷ The phrase means, "My spirit, prepare yourself."

⁸ An English translation is, "My heart, prepare yourself"

day of torture caused by an enemy who has no close relation with the people. He tortures them only to oppress them. The Day of Judgment thus understood seems contrary to what the Kinga people had been taught about God's loving and forgiving response to penitent sinners. Furthermore, the Kinga see a person remaining as a member of a community whether she/he lives a moral or an immoral life. When he/she behaves contrary to the moral standards, he/she will be corrected but not destroyed.

Another semantic problem in the above hymn is found in Stanza 6, in the third and fourth verses. In these verses, the day of judgment is known as "*ilitsuva lya ntwa*," which literally means "the day of the Lord." However, the Kinga language adjective "*ntwa*," Lord or chief, when used without a noun has two meanings: (1) "Lord God," or (2) "human leader," especially a chief or a king. (In fact, both German and English have the same ambiguity in the use of the word "Lord," so that these languages have to disambiguate this term by contextual clues.) In order to avoid ambiguities in their own language, the Kinga people normally mention the adjective together with its subject, for example, *untw'uNguluve*, meaning "Lord God"; *untw'uJesu*, "Lord Jesus"; *untw'uMwemutsi*, "Chief Mwemutsi";¹ *untw'uMissionali*, "lord missionary"; etc. The semantic problem of the term *ntwa* standing alone may change the intended meaning of the hymn. For example, the phrase *ilitsuva lya ntwa*, meaning "The Day of the Lord," causes ambiguity from the fact that it has two kinds of possibilities regarding the Last Judgment: (1) the one who will judge people on the Last Day may be a human leader, or (2) the judgment will be done by God.

Since context can disambiguate "Lord" for German speakers who would thus clearly understand that God was the Judge, the Berlin missionaries may have been unaware of how the Kinga people would disambiguate the term *ntwa* when it stood alone. The Kinga people would default to understanding *ntwa* to refer to a human judge since they had a long experience of judgment given by chiefs and missionaries, whereas understanding God as Judge was much more complicated. In fact, the German text does provide the necessary context. There is no such ambiguity when conveying the message concerning the One who will judge the world since the German text provides the additional message, "*Da uns Gott wird richten*" which means, then "God will judge us."

2.2. Content of the second Hymn

A second example of problematic translation is Kinga Hymn Number 131, "*Jerusalem vutsenge kukyan'a*"² The second hymn was adapted from the German hymn, "*Jerusalem du hochgebaute Stadt*," (Jerusalem thou City fair and high) Hymn number 643.³

The above two texts in Kinga and in German have both similarities and differences in meaning. The general meaning in Stanza 1 is about a desire to go to heaven and leave this world. However, the attempt to translate the metaphoric language that has been used in this stanza makes the two texts differ from one another. A previously discussed for Kinga Hymn 96, the use of the expression "*untima*," ("liver") makes the meaning to be strange. For example, the phrase, "*Untima gwango gusukilwe kwave, guhumile mwane, guguluka pasihulu na pasidugala. Gukusileka syoni gwiwuma nkilunga*," means "My liver has missed you, it has gone out of me and flies through rivers and mountains out of the world leaving everything of this world". The use of the term *untima* with the limitations noted above makes the Kinga text quite different from the German text. For the Kinga people, the desire to do something comes from a human being as a whole⁴, so the term "*untima*," although it is a Kinga term, becomes a strange expression when used to stand in for "human consciousness."

In Stanza 1 of the German hymn Number 643, the term "*Herz*" has been used in relation to the term *untima* in the above Kinga text. The German text says; "*Mein sehnlich Herz so groß Verlangen hat und ist nicht mehr bei mir ...*"⁵ This metaphoric language that has been used in the second text may be more effective in conveying the message to the Germans because the imagery is more familiar to their people. However, to make the Kinga text closer to the meaning of the German original text, one could translate the second part of Stanza 1 using merely the personal pronoun "I," as follows: I have missed you, if I had wings I could fly through rivers and mountains out of this world, leaving everything of this world."

The fourth stanza of Kinga Hymn 131, *Jerusalem vutsenge kukyanya* also has similarities and differences to the German text of Hymn Number 643, *Jerusalem, du hochgebaute Stadt*. The content of the two texts is similar because they both describe a heavenly image of life whereby the elected people are seen having a crown that was given by Jesus. However, the two texts differ from one another since each presents a different number of participants in the heavenly kingdom. For example, in the first verse of the fourth stanza, the Kinga text says; "*Avanu vaki nikipuga⁶ iki ikiluta kukwa?*" This literally means, "What kind of people are passing away in a

¹ Sometimes the chief was called, "*untwa kuVukwama*," meaning "the Lord or the Chief who lives or lived in Ukwama." In this case everybody knows who he is or was.

² Kinga hymn, *Kalata va N'imbo tsa Vakilisiti*, 1954.

³ Evangelical hymn book, 1884.

⁴ In Kinga language, a human is called *munu*. This term is similar to the singular *mntu* or plural form *bantu* which is also used in other parts of Africa.

⁵ The English translation is; "my heart has missed you, it has gone out of me ..."

⁶ The term "*n kipuga*" is a compound word of two words: *n* which means "in" and "*kipuga*" which means "a small group." Therefore, the

small group?" Here the word *kipuga* means a very small group of people--from four to ten people. In the Kinga hymn, therefore, the elect form a really small group.

In contrast, the German text says, "*Was für ein Volk, Welch eine edle Schar kommt dort gezogen schon.*"¹ The German text creates an image of many people, since *Volk* can refer to an entire community, tribe or nation. Of course, this has serious doctrinal consequences. Is God going to save only a select few or save a large multitude? Since the Berlin missionaries, as orthodox Lutherans, intended to deliver the message that God saves an uncountable number from every tribe and nation (Rev. 7:9), this translation problem is serious.

Another similar problem occurs in the fifth stanza of Kinga Hymn 131 which has similarities and differences with the German Hymn 643. Both texts speak about the kind of people who are now enjoying the heavenly glory as the ones who faced hardship in this world. In Kinga translation it says; "...*avakuvilwe katala nkilunga nulukana lwoni ndikuvavona mbudwadwa na ndunotsehetso, viva ndugataluku ...*" which means, "The ones who faced great persecution in the world are now sitting in a glorified and peaceful place having a rest ..." This is a fairly literal translation of the German text, which says "... *Die weiland dort trugen des Kreuzes Joch und der Tyrannen Pein, schau ich in Ehren schweben, in Freiheit überall, mit Klarheit hell umgeben mit sonnenlichtem Strahl.*"²

Both the German and the Kinga text attempt to convey a similar message (that heaven is a comfortable place). The problem arises when one gives specifics about what a comfortable place looks like; German and Kinga specifics differ because of culture. The Kinga people had no trouble understanding that heaven -full of glory, peace and rest is a comfortable place. The problem was that, for Germans, a comfortable place is imagined as a place of abundant sunshine because sunlight in Germany is inadequate for many months each year. For the Kinga people, who knew all too well the dangers of their tropical sun, the presence of continuous sunshine suggest a dangerous place, not one comfortable for human habitation.

In addition to different visions of comfort, another part of the fifth stanza in Kinga text differs from that of the German text. The Kinga text does not mention patriarchs; instead it mentions saints, "*avagolosu*". Therefore, the order of participants in heavenly kingdom is as follows, "*Avagolosu, navan'amalago navan'akilisiti ...*" meaning, "saints, prophets and Christians ..." The German text mentions the order as follows; "*Propheten groß und Patriarchen hoch, auch Christen insgemein*" ("great prophets, high patriarchs and Christians together").³

The Kinga term *avagolosu*, "saints," does not seem to be relevant because it does not fit to the context of separable groups of people. If one considers that the prophets and Christians are groups which formerly lived in this world, with the inclusion of saints with these groups, one may wonder whether the saints are of human origin or angels. If they are of human origin, what makes them a group separable from the other two groups (prophets and Christians)? Here one can ask, "are not prophets and Christians also saints?" or "are they saints because they are redeemed by Christ or "since they all tolerated suffering in this world"?"

I assume the reason for avoiding translating the German word *Patriarchen* was to avoid the mentioning of forebears, the term which the missionaries were in the habit of translating as "devils." However, avoiding the term "forebears" by using the term "saints" could not help Kinga people to grasp what kind of people the saints were. In fact, the missionaries may have missed a significant opportunity to relate to the Kinga's strong and often-expressed desire to have continuity with their deceased family members (Ironically, this is in fact the subject of many European hymns, e.g. "...when we meet again at Jesus' feet," etc.) The missionaries could have taught more clearly that redeemed forebears are among the eschatological partakers. It would have been a much clearer way to give the Kinga people the conception of Heaven.

2.3. Contents of the third Hymn

The third hymn to be analyzed in this chapter is Kinga Hymn Number 135, "*Sisimuki muve miho.*"⁴ The Kinga text was adapted from the German hymn, "*Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme,*" (Wake up the voice calls us) Hymn Number 650:⁵ The texts of Stanza 1 of the Kinga hymn number 135, *Sisimuki muve miho* and the German hymn number 650, *Wachet auf* have got similarities as well as differences. The general content of the first stanza is about the imminent coming of the Lord. Therefore the message exhorts people to be alert for this coming. The Kikinga text says, "*Sisimuki muve miho man'ahegely'umpoki vitu, ... Napamun'i napakilo*" which means, "Wake up, our Saviour is near, ... Be awake in the day and in the night ..." The German text says; *Wachet auf! ruft uns die Stimme ... Wach auf, du Stadt Jerusalem! Mitternacht heißt diese Stunde ...*⁶ The message of these

compound word "*nkipuga*" means "in a small group"

¹ A literal English translation is; "What a kind of folk, what a noble flock coming wearing nicely!"

² An English translation is; "Those who carried the yoke of the cross in the world and bore the great pain, I see them enjoying freedom all over, they are surrounded by sunshine."

³ The English translation is; "The great prophets, the high patriarchs and the Christians in general."

⁴ Kalata va N'imbo tsa Vakilisiti, 1954.

⁵ Evangelical Hymn book, 1884.

⁶ An English translation is; "Wake up, the voice calls us...wake up you Jerusalem city. It is midnight time ..."

two texts differs concerning the expression about the one who is to come. The Kinga text tells that the one who is to come is our Saviour, *umpoki vitu*, while the German text tells the same message in the metaphoric language of Jesus' parable about the wise and foolish virgins who were waiting for the Bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-13) by calling the Expected One *Bräutigam*.¹ Another decisive difference is that the Kinga text is exclusive because it exhorts only the people who belong to the Saviour to be awake, "*Vi vamwene sisimuki*". Furthermore, the text continues, "The Saviour comes to take us who are his people; therefore, let us wait for him on the way," "*Man'itola twivanine tungonelage panzila*." The German text differs to some extent because it is more inclusive; it does not specify a certain group of people who have to be taken by the one who comes. For example the text says, "*Wachet auf! Ruft uns die Stimme ... Wach auf, du Stadt Jerusalem! ... Sie rufen uns mit hellen Munde ...*"²

In order to discover the primary intention of the German poet of the hymn, it is worthwhile to study the meaning of the text in Matthew 25:1-13 and compare it with the hymn text. The image of the wedding party seems similar to the one that is reported by Matthew in 22:2-14, which is about the heavenly banquet. In this banquet many are invited but few are chosen (Mt.22:14). In the long run the Church interpreted the text as the cosmic coming of the *parousia* when Christ was to judge the world. The Bridegroom is Christ, whose wedding party enters until the closing of the door which represents the Last Judgment, with the wise maidens prepared to greet Him representing Christians.³

As a point of departure, one commentator on the parable of the ten maidens says that it was given by Jesus as an encouragement. A wedding is a joyous event, and it is an honour to be invited. The parable would be relevant to Church members because the bridegroom is Jesus, who was telling his parables for his followers' benefit. The commentator supposes that Jesus' disciples wait for the judgment with Jesus, *Immanuel*, not separated from Him. All Christ's followers wait for the *Parousia*-Bridegroom with great joy.⁴

This commentator does not appreciate the way the story of ten maidens in Matthew ends. Therefore, he poses a question saying that, given the depiction of Jesus in Matthew, one can ask whether in God's history, love has not been the last word? Otherwise the question remains that, if history shows God's pure love and this love is contrary to the parable, then God's justice is misleading the people.⁵ However, the commentator believes that since God's love is above everything, there is hope for all people.

One can conclude that the composer of the hymn *Wachet auf! ruft uns die Stimme*, understood the text in Matthew as a message to a congregation with a *corpus permixtum*. In this case some of the members were active and some not; however, the message concerning the coming of God belonged to all of them. The poet believes that during the coming of God all shall receive him collectively. That is why the call to wake up and receive the bridegroom is directed to all people.

The translator of the German hymn under discussion into Kinga language seems to have understood the text in Matthew as referring to two eschatological possibilities: some will be saved and others will perish. This conclusion can be drawn from the fact that the translator directs his exhortation only the group which belongs to the coming God; he insists that God shall come to take only those who belong to him. In this case, it shows that the translator believes that God's congregation is not a *corpus permixtum*. Instead, it consists only of saints.

The third stanza of the above two texts (Kinga and German texts) shows significant differences also; each has its own different message. The Kinga text says; "Let us praise the Lord because he brings judgment. Praise him you angels. He has built habitation for all of us, but the ways to reach there are very tough. The Kingdom of God is very glorious and the only one. He will choose us who are his people, then we shall be with him in heaven." The content of this text is about the two-fold human destiny: of the elected and of the rejected ones. The need to praise the Lord and the promise about the abundant heavenly habitation are undercut by the remaining text telling about the difficulty of inheriting the kingdom of God. In contrast, the content in the third stanza of the German text has a universal eschatological perspective. The text shows how the heavenly community inclusively praises the Lord and how great the joy in heaven is.

2.4. Contents of the fourth Hymn

The fourth hymn selected as a sample is Kinga Hymn Number 136:⁶ The Kinga text was adapted from the German hymn, "*Es ist gewisslich an der Zeit*," (Lo He comes with clouds descending) number 641.⁷ The first stanza's text of this fourth Kinga hymn is similar to the German text. Both tell about the coming of Christ in his glory to judge all people. The message of the text emphasizes that it will be a difficult time when everything

¹ An English translation of *Bräutigam* is "bridegroom".

² An English translation is; Wake up! The voice calls us ... Wake up you city Jerusalem ... The voice calls us with bright mouths ..."

³ *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum neuen Testament*, Luz, Ulrich.; *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus 18-25*, 1997, pp.476-478. (The Evangelical-Catholic Commentary to New Testament, Luz, Ulrich: According to Matthews 18:25, 1997, pp.476-478).

⁴ Ibid. 1997, p. 486.

⁵ Ibid. 1997, p. 492.

⁶ *Kalata va N'imbo tsa Vakilisiti*, 1954.

⁷ *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, 1884.

burns into fire.

The third stanza of the Kinga text has also a similar meaning to the German text, although the wording is different. For example the Kinga text says; "Every deed which the young and the grown up people have done shall be revealed. All the sins we have committed shall be revealed." In this case the Kinga text differs from the German text in wording. For example, the German text says the sins of everyone shall be read from a book, while the Kinga text simply says the sins shall be revealed. However, this difference of wording does not change the meaning of the Kinga text compared to the German text.

The main problem for the Kinga's understanding of this hymn arises when it says every deed shall be revealed: what people have done in their whole life. Perhaps the Germans instinctively understood the doctrinal issue. But the Kinga people might reasonably have been expected not to know what exactly was being referred to. They might ask, "When shall the sin start to be counted; from the beginning of the Christian life or from the beginning of non-Christian life? If the deeds that shall be mentioned are the ones done during Christian life, then German Christians should have many sins since their Christian life is longer than Kinga who had been recently converted to Christianity. If the deeds that will be counted are the ones done during non-Christian life, then Kinga people are the most likely to have committed many sins because their non-Christian life was very long, most of them being baptized in their adult or old age. Therefore, although the two texts are similar, these implications can differ because the context of the audience is different.

The Kinga text in the fourth stanza also has similarities as well as differences to the German text. The Kinga text is similar to the German text from the fact that it tells about the difficult situation for those who have forsaken the Word and chosen earthly possessions and Satan's work. These shall have a great fear when they and Satan are going into the eternal fire. However the Kinga text differs from the German text when it says, "*Avasul'ilimen'u vala ndet'avene, ...*" which means, what will happen to those who have hated the word, *ilimen'u*. By writing only the term "word", *ilimen'u*, it may not necessarily imply the Word of God. According to the Kinga context of that time, one could easily think that "word" referred to any authority's pronouncement. Thus, one could face hardship if he/she would not obey the order of a chief, Missionary or Colonial government. To avoid the ambiguity of the term, one should write "*Avasul'ilimen'u lya Nguluve,*" meaning, "Those who have hated the Word of God." The German text shows no ambiguity because the phrase is written, "*...dem Menschen welcher hat des Herren Wort verachtet.*"¹

A survey of the above four Kinga hymns shows that the texts have semantic dissonance as well as theological ambivalence. The semantic problems arise from the fact that the terms chosen to represent certain eschatological concepts had no impact on the Kinga people who were just being evangelized. Some concepts ended up carrying a meaning contrary to that which was aimed at by a hymn's original composer. If terms used to convey an eschatological message have several usages and the context is not sufficient to disambiguate them, there can be misunderstanding. The theological ambivalence caused by problematic translation into Kinga language will be dealt with below under five heads: The Day of Judgment as a day of fear; the wretched earth; two-fold destinies; individual eschatology and exclusive eschatology.

3.0. Eschatological Hymns Contextualized by Leipzig Missionaries

Though the Berlin Missionaries incorporated very few traditional elements into daily worship and eschatological expectation, the Leipzig Missionaries working in Northern Tanzania did incorporate some significant ones. There the eschatological expectation was inclusive, as it was understood to include all living members of the Chagga community as well as the forebears who had died before the introduction of Christianity in Chaggaland. In his report about mission activities in Moshi, Bruno Gutmann asserts that the Leipzig missionaries starting the work in Moshi found the local people to have a diverse traditional heritage. In that situation, the missionaries did not see their task as uprooting the traditional heritage, but reforming it so that it would enrich Christian faith. For example, the missionaries found that Kibo peak of Mount Kilimanjaro was like an altar for the Chagga people. They were singing songs of praise to the mountain, believing that the place was a point of interaction with God and their ancestors.

Because of the importance of Mount Kilimanjaro to the traditional community, the missionaries included the texts of the traditional songs in the Christian worship hymns. For example, at Machame station, the missionaries added the praise to Mount Kilimanjaro to the German hymn "*Schönster Herr Jesu,*" The text of the first two verses was taken from the German hymn book. The third verse was reformed as follows: "*Herrlich schimmert Kilimanjaro, hebt sich sonnennah, in der himmelsbläue Wolken. Doch Jesus ist schöner, überdauert machtvoll alle Berge Gottes.*" Another song that was sung in the Church in Moshi was a German hymn, "*Wir treten zum Beten*". This hymn was modified to include the praise of Mount Kilimanjaro and its peaks, "*Lasst feste uns stehen wie Niederungseichen, gleich Kibo, Mawenzi vom Platze nicht weichen. Jehova ist mit uns, er ist*

¹ An English translation is, "the one who has forsaken the word of the Lord." According to the German language, here the term "*Herren Wort*" strictly refers to the Lord God.

unsere Stärke. Die streift unser Leben, zu bleiben am Werk.“ Which means, Let us stand together in solidarity like Kibo and Mawenzi peaks that do not move. Jehovah is with us. He is our power, the power to strengthen our life to continue working (God’s work).¹

The Leipzig missionaries put also a Christian text to a hymn including the importance of Mount Kilimanjaro and the inclusiveness of forebears in an eschatological statement:

Our fathers honoured the high mountain, the source of light. The dead also were directed by him. And when a child was born, it was held up towards Kibo by the hands of the elder so that it might love and honour it. We know that you stay with us in this mountain’s light. You greet all lands in its gentle light. It shows that you are the way that leads to you and you are a peace-keeper of life against danger. Your son Jesus is the only visible power what can lead us to salvation. He is the mountain full of eternal splendour that will lead us to heaven. His light shines over the dark world of people. He gives us hope, so that each feels safe in Jesus’ hands.²

The above text was contextualized for the Chagga. When translating the text of German hymns, the Chagga community life and the nature were included and so enriched Christian eschatological perspective. In this case the eschatological expectation was not only for the living; the forebears were part of the eschatological anticipation.

The study of Kinga hymns shows that many of the hymns would do a poor job of transforming the community from traditional to Christian belief. Due both to inadequate contextualization and semantically problematic translation, the texts of many hymns express no hope for eschatological expectation which relates to local traditions. Of course, this study does not suggest that the primary intention of the translators of hymns was to teach new Christians a hope-less eschatology. To understand the intention of the German translators, it is worthwhile to study the background of the hymns and to know what the original composers meant when they wrote such texts. It is possible to uncover the situation that compelled the composers to write such a particular eschatological message.

4. Background of the four German Hymns

4.1. The first Hymn

The hymn "*Mache dich mein Geist bereit*," (Make yourself ready my Spirit) number 428 was composed in 1694 by Johann Burchard Freystein. Freystein was born on 18 April 1671 in Weißenfels and died on 1 April 1718 in Dresden. He was a lawyer and composer of church music. His theological standpoint is not described beyond noting that he was influenced by Philipp Jacob Spener to be an active Pietist. The nature of Freystein’s hymn, the theological standpoint of Spener, and the nature of his other contemporaries, suggests that Freystein aimed at awakening Christians who were facing many social and economic problems and also re-enforcing personal piety and devotion.³

4.2. The second Hymn

The second hymn "*Jerusalem, Du hochgebaute Stadt*," (Jerusalem thou city fair and high) number 643 was composed in 1626 by Johann Matthäus Meyfart. He was born on 9 November 1590 in Jena and died on 26 February 1642 in Erfurt. He is known as a Lutheran theologian as well as a writer of edifying literature. In 1611 he got his Masters degree in theology at Wittenberg; in 1624 he got a doctorate in theology at Jena. In 1616 he was assigned to be a church school teacher in Coburg. In this school, he was not only supposed to keep the true teaching of the Church, he was assigned to take care of the moral life of the students. Through literature, Meyfart spoke of moral reform in the Church and schools. He criticized immorality in the schools and in pastoral ministry and the practice of witchcraft in society. He emphasized eschatological preaching through edifying literature, for example, in his book, "*Tuba novissima*" which appeared in 1626. In this book the main themes were, "*von den vier letzten Dingen des Menschen, nämlich vom Tod, jüngsten Gericht, ewigen Leben und Verdammnis*,"⁴

As a summary of his preaching and his literature, Meyfart composed in 1626 an eschatological hymn, *Ewigkeitslied*, "*Jerusalem, Du hochgebaute Stadt*". Through this hymn, he wanted to show that eternal life is a present reality. He wanted to encourage the believers in his time to stand firm in their faith since at that time there were many people who did not believe in God, people whose ambitions were purely secular. He believed that the coming of God was very near and that the "signs of the times" were being fulfilled. By giving eschatological hope, he wanted to convince people to overcome sin in their daily lives. Meyfart believed that, in order to achieve eternal salvation, one had to perform pious prayer and do good works.⁵

¹ Gutmann, Bruno, *Das Dschaggaland und seine Christen*, (Gutmann, Bruno, the Chaggaland and her people) Leipzig 1925, pp. 27-28.

²Ibid.1925, p. 29.

³ Compare Karl Müller, *Mission Theology*, 1985, p. 80.

⁴ A translation of the above German phrase is, "From the last four things of human beings: namely, from death, judgment, eternal life and condemnation."

⁵ Karl Dienst, "Mathäus Johann Meyfart," in Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz (ed.), *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, 1993, Vol. V,

4.3. The third Hymn

The third hymn is "*Wachet auf! ruft uns die Stimme*," (Wake up the voice calls us) number 650 composed in 1608 by Philipp Nicolai. He was a Lutheran Pastor as well as poet and writer, born on 10 August 1556 in Mengershausen and died on 26 October 1608 in Hamburg. In his lifetime, Nicolai experienced difficulties in his family, in society and his workplace. For example, in 1567 he experienced the outbreak of plague in his town. In 1576 he experienced the death of his brother. After this his mother died, too. As Nicolai was working in a Lutheran Congregation in Herdecke in 1583, his work was interrupted by the (Spanish) troops who invaded the town, and he was compelled to leave the place for Wetter.¹

Nicolai served the Unna Congregation in Westfalia. As he was working in this congregation, he had to comfort his people because the plague took the life of 1300 of his Parishioners. To comfort his members, he wrote, "*Freudenspiegel des ewigen Lebens*,"² This literature was a series of beautiful meditations with an appendix containing his two great chorales: *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* and *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*. The experience of death moved Nicolai to write literature that could comfort people whose relatives had died. Through his own experience, Nicolai developed a concept that God is eternal love and that His love unites God and human beings.³

4.4. The fourth Hymn

The fourth hymn is "*Es ist gewisslich an der Zeit*," (Lo He comes with clouds descending) number 641 composed in 1599 by Bartholomäus Ringwaldt. Ringwaldt was born on 29 November 1530 in Frankfurt and died on 9 May 1599 in Langenfeld/Neumarkt. He was a Lutheran Pastor and poet. He graduated in 1543 from Frankfurt University and worked first in schools. Then from 1566 on, he worked in Congregations.⁴

During his lifetime, Ringwaldt valued practical Christianity in the Lutheran spirit. He was therefore a keen observer and fascinating describer of men and events, giving a clear picture of morality in his time through his writings. For example, he wrote two long didactic poems: "*Die laute Wahrheit*" and "*Christliche Warnung des treuen Eckart*." The first poem was like a mirror of the morals of the times and was eagerly read by all classes of people. The real purpose of Ringwaldt's editions was to call men to repentance and a better life.⁵ When he did a study on the book of Revelation, Ringwaldt was convinced that the Day of Judgment could come in 1584. He wrote a handbook (1586) which contained spiritual hymns and prayers. When he composed the hymn "*Es ist gewisslich an der Zeit*" his aim was to nurture the Christian life among believers and to preserve Christian belief in daily life.⁶

The intention of the composer of the above hymn "*Es ist gewisslich an der Zeit*" would be relevant if it could be seen in the content of the text. However, there is not one word about sustaining or guiding the Christian members. Instead, the whole message is about the suffering that shall befall people when the Son of God comes to judge the world. From the content of the hymn, one can relate it rather to Ringwaldt's study of the book of Revelation. Without context, it appears that Ringwaldt has taken as real the metaphoric language that has been used to express the Day of Judgment in the book of Revelation, to the point of assuming this Day would come in 1584, during his lifetime.

5. Analysis

The study of German hymns shows that the composers aimed at preserving Christian ethics, awakening backsliding Christians, protecting faith in daily life and giving eschatological hope. The study also shows that the theological standpoint of the composers was connected with these contexts. Lehmann discusses the 17th century social and economic crisis and how this affected the history of Christianity. The crisis which occurred between 1600/20 until 1720/40 is called by Lehmann *Strukturkrise*. It affected all European countries and caused a weakness in European society for a long time. It caused a general reduction of the standard of life, a threat to life security and deterioration in people's perception of the meaning of life. The crisis caused demographic problems brought about by civil war as well as war among European states. Besides depopulation caused by war,

pp. 1429-1431. See also: Lehmann, 1980, p.125. He underlines that some Christians associated the moral and religious situation of their time with God's signs. For example, the Lutheran Johann Matthäus Meyfart in his extensive work, "*Das Jüngste Gericht*" in 1632, gave a long list of warning signs, which witnessed to the near end: „heresy is increasing, war and rebellion are increasing, in the daylight now the whole earth is full of indignation because of war, the whole of Europe uses killing weapons“ etc.

¹ M. Anne Steinmeier, "Nicolai Philipp," in Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz (ed.), *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, 1993, Vol. 6, pp. 671-672.

² A translation of the above title is, "Mirror of the Joys of Eternity."

³ Walter E. Buszin, "Nicolai Philipp," in Julius Bodensieck (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Lutheran Church*, 1965, Vol. III, pp. 1751-1752.

⁴ Karl Dienst, "Bartholomäus Ringwaldt," in Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz (ed.), *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, 1994, Vol. 8, p.384.

⁵ Ludolph, Ingetraut, Bartholomäus Ringwaldt, in: Bodensieck, Julius (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Lutheran Church*, 1965, Vol. III, p. 2065.

⁶ Karl Dienst, "Bartholomäus Ringwaldt," in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, 1993, Vol. 8, pp.384-385. Compare also: Ingetraut Ludolph, "Bartholomäus Ringwaldt," in *The Encyclopaedia of the Lutheran Church*, 1965, Vol. III, p.2065.

many people died through diseases since there were chronic food crises as harvests were destroyed by war. As a result of malnutrition, the population experienced a high mortality rate.¹

In the 17th century, these social and political crises also affected Christianity. This time of crisis was decisive in shaping Christianity between the Reformation and the Enlightenment. The Church was expected to show its position and reaction to the different groups that were affected by the crisis, for example in sustaining hope among discouraged people. This role was also played by the Church after the Reformation in Europe. The Church was supposed to give the last answer to the question about the meaning of life. Christian theology was to teach people how to overcome fear by giving a new hope, to comfort and help people who were in crisis and fear.²

Since the Church forsook its role of serving its members during crisis, the demand for *Erbauungsliteratur*, edifying literature, was high among Protestant as well as Roman Catholic Churches. The believers looked for connection between faith and life, which is why Pietism gained adherents. The attraction of the new pietistic literature arose because it provided guidance and encouragement to suffering Christians.³ Perhaps even more important for the future history of Western Christendom was that the edifying literature which spread in 17th century enhanced individual Christian pietism by teaching that individual believers could struggle for eternal salvation without the help of the Church hierarchy.⁴

The content of such edifying literature confirmed for readers that the world in which they were living was, for Christians, a passing period of trial; after it, they would inherit eternal life should they overcome the temptation of the devil. During that time it was also understood that life was transitory, and death for each person was very near-likely to come at any time. Therefore the edifying literature provided warning and admonition to Christians and called them to repent.⁵

Through the 17th century crisis, the Pietistic movement not only associated the situation of its time with God's signs, it revived the medieval themes of eschatology. The Day of Judgment was understood to be a day of punishment and reward, a concept which continued until the early 18th century when the pietistic hymn composers developed the same theme.⁶

The study of European historical background shows that the contemporary situation influenced the poets to compose the hymns the way they did. The composers developed a certain eschatological concept according to the prevailing situation in their time. This eschatological message was not irrelevant to the German audience. This conclusion can be supported by the following factors:

- The eschatological and edifying message was relevant to the situation of that time.
- Hymns were not the only means of conveying the message. Besides them, there were related sermons, prayers and other edifying literature. Hymns served only as appendices to the spoken form of message.
- Last but not least, the poets, preachers and writers were fellow victims of circumstance. Therefore, when conveying the message to their fellow members they used the language and symbols that were part of their culture and context.

From these factors the eschatological message could more easily be understood by the audience in Germany as well as by other audiences in European or American communities who were in the same situation as Germany. However, for an audience in Africa, the message could be not easily understood.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Considering the types of hymns translated into Kinga language, it is apparent that the type of missionaries working in Kingaland engaged in translating the texts of hymns belonging to the pietistic and revival groups, preferred the old hymns which were orthodox. When translating the German hymns, they chose only the ones that had no rationalistic influence. Further, in some hymns they added pietistic elements from their own standpoint which were not included in the German hymnbook. Very often, the text that was added by missionaries had a judgmental message and usually did not fit the context where evangelization was taking place for the first time. From the research of this article, we can conclude that the idea of translating German hymns into Kinga language in order to fit the mission field context was good. However, what the missionaries could have done was to make the process conducive. They could have considered the African cultural and world view aspect and not to relay only on Western perspective. Moreover, the Missionaries could have included more African melodies than European ones. The way the hymns were translated, does not appeal to African newly converted Christians. Furthermore, the message of text due to the fact that it is threatening Christians, causes African converted

¹ Hartmut Lehmann, *Das Zeitalter des Absolutismus*, 1980, pp.108-109.

² Ibid. 1980, p. 112. Compare also p.122. In the 16th century the church was important to its believers, it was sought by individuals for spiritual assistance. All believers of a certain territory were united in belief in their particular church.

³ Ibid. 1980, p. 114.

⁴ Ibid. 1980, p. 122.

⁵ Ibid.1980, pp. 121-122.

⁶ Ibid. 1980, p. 29.

Christians to accept Christian faith as additive and therefore make them continue practicing dual religions; Christianity as well as African practices and beliefs.

Due to the challenges caused by the translated German hymns more than one hundred years ago, the task nowadays is not to continue blaming the missionaries for what they did. I believe that the missionaries did their level best at their time and are no longer part of African Church members. The issue is to edit the hymns with doctrinal controversies so that they can fit our context of today. For the time being, the Church in Africa and Tanzania in particular has got enough scholars in various theological fields; it is their duty to edit the hymns to suit the African context. Moreover, nowadays many songs have been composed by African musicians and are sung in Sunday worship and other occasions. I believe that it is time to include such songs in the hymnal book to be used by all Church worshipers instead of these songs to be sung by only choir groups. The task of editing and contextualizing hymns is for both improving Sunday services (to be both indigenous as well as global) due to the fact that nowadays the Church in Africa is the fastest growing in the world and therefore has caused the shift of center for mission to be in the South instead of North as it used to be.

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