ESCHATOLOGY IN AFRICAN FOLK RELIGION

by

NGARNDEYE BAKO

submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

MISSIOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR**: PROF W.A. SAAYMAN**

DECEMBER 2009

DECEMBER 2009

Student number: 43053467

DECLARATION

I declare that "Eschatology in African Folk Religion" is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Ngarndeye Bako

Date: 5 November 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful for the loving support of our wife and four children.

Our Promoter, Prof W. Saayman, continually challenged us through his diligent correction. His promptness in processing the various chapters of this dissertation was especially appreciated.

We are thankful for Leanne Brown's typing and editing, Elsabe Nell's library assistance, Lawman's hospitality, and not least, our own spiritual mentor, Dr Djerareou Abel, for his committed guidance in the very beginning of our ministry.

We are also grateful to those who were always available to give whatever assistance was needed in terms of collecting data and documents. However, we would like to acknowledge, with gratitude, the help received from Calvain Mbernodji, Jeremie Ndissedmadji and Dr Scott Hafemann.

We gratefully acknowledge the support and encouragement provided by all our friends, members of the Evangelical Church of Chad (ECC) and staff and board members of Service Chretien pour l'Enfance et developpement du Tchad (SCPEDT). Special thanks go to the Wickberg family, Mission- Chad (MC) and Advancing Native Mission (ANM) in the United States of America.

To God, and His Son, Jesus Christ, above all be glory and thanks for their faithful love and guidance.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the eschatology of issues related to African folk religion. It argues about the eschatological understanding of time with regard to the afterlife, ancestors and the afterlife, Christ the eschaton and the incarnation of Christ as redeeming of the ancestors. Such a model of local theology can result from a comprehensive reflection based on the Scriptures. As such, this study suggests some principles and praxis that appropriately address mission in the African context.

This study also intends to challenge the church in Africa in particular, and cross-cultural workers in general, to redefine their missions and themselves in the face of theological issues, as well as social problems, which occur at all levels of African society.

The keywords in this study are: eschatology, African folk religion, ancestors, eschaton, culture, identity, incarnation, resurrection, mission, crucifixion, Ngambai, Christ, death, afterlife, worldview, morality, judgment.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Nelelem Efrancile, and our four children, as well as the orphans of Chad in general and of the “Village Altonodji” in particular.

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Title page **1**
Declaration **2**
Acknowledgements **3**
Abstract **4**
Dedication **5**
Outline of the study **6**

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study **13**
1.1.1 Research problem 13
1.1.2 The state of the debate 15
1.1.3 Aim and objectives of the study 15
1.2 Research Methodology **16**
1.3 Clarification of terminology **16**
1.3.1 Definition of terms 17
1.3.2 Popular religion 18
1.3.3 Common religion 20
1.3.4 Folk religion 20
1.3.4.1 Characteristics of folk religion 20
1.3.4.1.1 Worldview 21
1.3.4.1.2 Power(s) 22
1.3.4.1.3 Ritual 24
1.3.4.1.4 Myth and Symbol 28
1.3.4.1.4.1 Myth 28
1.3.4.1.4.2 Symbol 29
1.3.4.2 Folk religion and contextual theologies 32
1.3.4.2.1 Phenomenology of religion 32
1.3.4.2.2 Significant issues in the study of religion 33
1.3.4.2.3 A Christian Evaluative approach 34

1.4. Conclusion **36**

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTS OF TIME AND ESCHATOLOGY RELATED TO THE AFTERLIFE

Introduction 37

2.1 Perceptions of time and eschatology in African culture **37**

2.1.1 Debates about time in African culture today 37

2.1.2 Eschatology in African culture: hermeneutic issues 42

2.1.3 The Bantu concept of time: the Ngambai people as a case study 47

2.1.4 The philosophy of time 52

2.2 Biblical concepts of time and eschatology **53**

2.2.1 Old Testament concept of time 53

2.2.2 New Testament concept of time 57

2.2.3 The theology of time: biblical time 63

2.3. Conclusion **65**

CHAPTER THREE

ANCESTORS AND THE AFTERLIFE

Introduction

3.1 African worldview **67**

3.1.1 The sphere of human life 68

3.1.2 The spiritual sphere 77

3.2 Spiritual values in Africa **78**

3.2.1 Supreme Being 78

3.2.2 Ancestors 79

3.2.3 Spirit Beings 80

3.3 Transition from the visible world of mortals to the invisible world of spirit beings **81**

3.3.1 Death 82

3.3.2 Treatment of the corpse 84

3.3.3 The land of the departed 87

3.4 State of the beyond **89**

3.4.1 Reincarnation 89

3.4.2 Relationship between the living and ancestors 92

3.4.3 Morality 94

3.4.4 Judgment 97

3.5 Conclusion **97**

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRIST THE ESCHATON

4.1 Introduction **99**

4.2 Christ and Eschatology **101**

4.2.1 Christ the End 101

4.3 The foundation of eschatology **103**

4.4 The concept of eschatology with regard to the first coming of Jesus **107**

4.4.1 The Incarnation 107

4.4.2 The Crucifixion 108

4.4.3 The Resurrection 109

4.5 The signs of time **111**

4.6 The imminent return of Christ **113**

4.7 Christ's coming as fulfillment **120**

4.7.1 The resurrection of the body 120

4.7.2 The Judgment 124

4.7.3 The New Heaven and the New Earth 127

4.8 Conclusion **129**

CHAPTER FIVE

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST AS REDEEMING ANCESTORSHIP

Introduction 131

5.1 Jesus Christ as proto-ancestor 132

5.1.1 The concept of proto-ancestor 132

5.1.2 Proto-ancestor as Ancestor Grammar 134

5.2 Jesus Christ: the last ancestor and sole mediator 136

5.3 Jesus Christ: ancestor of African morality 140

5.4 Ancestor theology for a new ecclesiology 142

5.5 The question of ancestral function 144

5.5.1 Priestly function 145

5.5.2 Prophetic function 147

5.5.3 Royal function 148

5.6 Conclusion 149

CHAPTER SIX

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL WORKERS IN AFRICA

Introduction 151

6.1. Suggestions for contextualisation to the mission of the Church today from an eschatological perspective 152

6.1.1 The Kingdom is the gospel of the Kingdom, the coming eschaton 152

6.1.2 The Gospel of the Kingdom 155

6.1.2.1 Proclaiming this Gospel 155

6.1.2.2 Keeping the end in sight 155

6.1.2.3 Waiting for the eschaton 156

6.1.2.4 What does this mean in the African context? 156

6.1.3 The Kingdom as a dynamic concept in mission 157

6.1.3.1 Biblical foundations 157

6.1.3.2 Tension between evangelism and development (social concern) 158

6.1.3.3 God's plan for the poor 159

6.1.3.4 Jesus' plan for the poor 159

6.1.3.5 Practising justice 160

6.1.3.6 Prophetic role of the Church 162

6.1.3.7 What does this mean in terms of a traditional worldview? 163

6.1.4 Issues in eschatology 163

6.1.5 Biblical teaching ministry 164

6.1.6 Ethics of society 167

6.1.7 Authentic African expression in worship 171

6.1.8 African traditional social structures and the Church 173

6.1.9 The role of language and culture 175

6.1.10 The role of cross-cultural workers 176

6.1.11 Conclusion 176

6.2. Recommendations for further research 177

6.2.1 Religion 177

6.2.2 Role of language 177

6.2.3 Issues of eschatology 177

6.2.4 Local theology 177

6.3 General Conclusions **178**

BIBLIOGRAPHY **179**

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Understanding the variety of terms in religion 19
Figure 2: Understanding the relationship between local theology and Christian tradition 35
Figure 3: Understanding the history of redemption 61
Figure 4: Understanding the history of redemption 62
Figure 5: Presenting Jesus' roles 153

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Ritual Processes 26
Table 2: Rites of intensification 26
Table 3: Rites of transition 27
Table 4: Rites of crisis 27

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study

1.1.1 Research problem

This study attempts to examine the theme of eschatology in African folk religion. At this stage, we only refer to the very general definition of folk religion, as provided in the *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions (2000),* where it is simply defined as "oral religious superstitions based on pre-logical thought". This term will be further clarified later on in this study. It is clear, in any case, that folk religion will be related to specific African traditional religions.

In exploring the issue of eschatology in African folk religion, one has to take careful account of two dimensions in particular: the meaning and concept of time itself, and the question of whether or not the expectation of an afterlife is present. For this reason, this study attempts to determine how the concept of time raises issues about the afterlife and judgment, as well as the various ways in which Africans have tried to explain the experience of death. Of concern here is the meaning of death and the afterlife, ideas which are complex and which differ across cultures. The lack of precise contextual information in terms of time is problematic. Mbiti, in "*New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*" (Mbiti, 1971), suggests an ignorance of the meaning of time in African religion and culture. According to Mbiti, time for the African is composed of a series of events, so that time only really exists if something is happening. For this reason, he concludes that the future is actually non-existent and meaningless. There has been much criticism of his statement that "the African has no sense of time", as many observers are convinced that there is indeed a strong awareness of time and its meaning in Africa, and this will be explored in this study by looking at specific examples in African culture.

We take our point of departure for this study from Byaruhana-Akiiki, who believes that people in Africa, like everywhere else in the world, are very aware of the brutal fact that their time on Earth is limited (Byaruhanga-Akiiki, 1980). This is not to say that the concept of time is clearly understood and unproblematic in African culture, but it can help us to better understand African beliefs. In African culture, death is associated with mourning rites, funeral observation, burial practices, funeral furnishings and life after death, which all indicate an awareness of the possibility of an afterlife, in which the living and living-dead or ancestors are intimately involved.

At this point, we can briefly mention that the concept of time in the Old and New Testaments is also problematic. The Hebrew concept of time is different from the Greek concept, and the Hebrew concept may indeed be more understandable for Africans (Byaruhanga-Akiiki, 1980). Therefore, our study will deal with both these concepts, and will have to attempt to find an acceptable solution in this regard.

Our own understanding of eschatology in the scriptures is determined by the reality that the eschaton has arrived in the person of Jesus Christ, who has brought a new creation into being. All this has contributed to the ultimate and distinctively Christian belief in resurrection. Yet, in addition to the "already" aspect of eschatology, there is also a "not yet" aspect: Christ has come, but he will also still come at the end of time. And, as the Apostle Paul's addresses to the communities of Corinth and Thessalonica regarding death and the afterlife clearly show, a good understanding of the relationship between the "already" and "not yet" has presented a dilemma for believers through the ages, including in Africa.

Eschatological beliefs in African religion, in our opinion, necessitate an examination of at least the following four dimensions: the eschatological understanding of time with regard to the afterlife; ancestors and the afterlife; Christ the eschaton; and the incarnation of Christ as redeeming of the ancestors. We are interested in finding out whether or not there is a relationship between these beliefs in African folk religion and Christianity. What is the mission of the Church in this regard? How should eschatology be contextualised for mission in Africa?

One of the main reasons that the researcher has chosen to work on this specific topic, and eschatology in particular, is that the benefits associated with the hereafter affect the African people's way of life here on earth. In any event, this consciousness affects their morality, as reward and punishment are not limited to life on earth, but continue in the hereafter.

1.1.2 The state of the debate

The consideration of time in African culture has already been debated by leading African theologians. In this regard, Mbiti, in his book entitled "*New Testament Eschatology in an African Background"* (Mbiti, 1971), analyses this issue, whereas Kato rejects Mbiti's assumptions (Kato, 1975). In addition, most scholars who have worked in this field have their own viewpoints in this regard. The major criticism here is related to the role of ancestors in the afterlife. Examples of such scholars are Mbiti, Bujo, Bediako, Nyamiti and others.
A comprehensive analysis of their views is not provided here, but it is clear that the issue has indeed been debated, and we are aware of the most important viewpoints in this debate.

1.1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

In light of the abovementioned considerations, this study will aim at conducting an investigation into the understanding of eschatology in a specific African context: among the people of Chad, located in the centre of Africa. Eschatology is one of the most important elements of Christianity, and needs to be a symbol of African religiosity. The challenge for theologians and pastors in Africa is clear – for them to be aware of the cultural aspects and values of the people involved, and to be able to relate these to the Christian faith. A study of time in African folk religion is a good starting point for the genuine "inculturation" of Christian faith, and it is hoped that this study will make a contribution to the urgent need for other scholars to conduct research in this field. The question that one can ask is the following: Is our theology meeting the needs of people? In different cultures, there are analogies and symbols

that indicate God's preparation of His people for meeting Jesus Christ. How can the concept of time in African folk religion help Africans to understand the phenomenon of resurrection in the scriptures? How can biblical perception transform them?

The purpose of this study, as stated above, is to determine future expectations in African folk religion, and to contribute somehow to the present development of Christian theology in Africa. This leads one back to what the scriptures say about the nature and purpose of the Church (ecclesiology) in relation to relevant missiological implications of the future. There is no dimension of the future that does not have implications for mission. Mission is always performed with a tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet', which is what gives mission its dynamic nature.

1.2 Research Methodology

This research will be conducted by means of a literature review, in order to provide a theoretical background to the investigation. The literature will deal mostly with theological and cultural anthropology, as well as African history, African theology and so on. Of course, a useful but concise listing of the key literature sources should be as up to date as possible and cultural variety is a recommendation. References to websites are also important in this regard. As I am a Christian pastor among the communities studied here, and am a Chadian myself, there will obviously also be a dimension of participant observation to this analysis. I am one of the people, and have a theological background, which will hopefully enable me to maintain a critical distance from my people during this research.

1.3 Clarification of terminology

In this section, an attempt is made to clarify terms associated with the concept of folk religion. These terms are almost synonymous in certain contexts. It is essential to distinguish between terms and clarify those chosen within the context that they will be used. These terms are, namely: popular religion, common religion, and folk religion.

We will use some of the most important sources in this field for this study, among which are the following: Allen Douglas' "Phenomenology of Religions"; Encyclopedia of Religions (1987); Robert Schreiter's "Constructing Local Theologies" (1995) and Lewis R Rambo's "Understanding Religious Conversion" (1993).

1.3.1 Definition of terms

The focal point of this study of African traditional religion is on the fact that it is first and foremost nothing more discrete than that. In terms of both design and content, the scope provides evidence that the study of religion involves many subjects and employs many disciplines, as well as manifesting many intentions and gaining insight from many sources.

Africa is a large continent and is characterised by an ecological, racial, ethical and historical background. Basically, African religion is a way of life for African people. It provides a useful background for a study of the religious rites, institutions and values. In this regard, Ikenga-Metuh (1987: 1-2) notes a number of problems which are inherent to the nature of African religion itself, while other problems result from the historical development of it, the first of which is that African religions, unlike the so-called prophetic religions, are not religions of the Book. They have no written source, as is the case with other religions such as Islam or Christianity, which have been the objects of systematic study. In fact, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the profane. For this reason, different categories of people at different times – historians, anthropologists, sociologists and theologians - have claimed to be authentic interpreters of African religion, and have approached its study in various ways.

Secondly, African religions are ethnic religions. They are folk religions which have grown out of the experiences and practices of the people who, for the most part, live in small societies, and therefore these religions focus on the particular needs and situations of each ethnic group. As Mbiti remarks, there are about one thousand African tribes and each has its own religious system (Mbiti; 1969: 1).

Thirdly, the study of African religion has at various stages of its historical development been subjected to various historical currents – evolutionism, colonialism, African nationalism etc. Some of these have thus influenced the methodology and interpretation of African religions (Ikenga-Metuh, 1987: 1-2).

In this regard, we seek more to highlight, where appropriate, ideological currents which underlie these approaches. The purpose here is to call attention to some methodological factors that regulate approaches within the subject field. Indeed, the goal is simply to secure dispositions that are already present in the materials, so that ways of understanding can be traced, mapped and eventually committed to corporate awareness.

This section will review some of the major issues surrounding the use of the term "folk religion "in the development of contextual theologies. It will begin by examining the definitions and what they say about perspectives and underlying assumptions regarding religion. From there, it will move into the major frameworks that have been developed for understanding folk religion. This will lead to a discussion of specific questions that are of significance to developing theologies in their context.

What is folk religion? Where does it fit in?

It is necessary to preface the definition of folk religion in order to understand some of the problems faced by scholars who have tried to define and interpret it. To overcome this difficulty, a wide variety of terms have been coined by Schreiter to describe this concept (Schreiter, 1995: 124 -126).

1.3.2 Popular Religion

This term does not mean popular in the sense of what is fashionable, but in the sense of what is of the people. Literally, it means "of the people", and can be used to mean of all people in general, or of one class of people (usually the poor, majority class) in particular. It differs to official religion in three ways:

1.3.2.1 The non–institutionalised religiosity of the common person: those patterns of behaviour and belief that somehow escape the control of institutional specialists, existing alongside (and sometimes despite) the efforts at control of these specialists.

1.3.2.2 The non–elite religiosity of the common person: this refers to the more non – literate, nonverbal and (often) more energetic religious expressions of the non–elite. This is often seen in economic terms, with the lower end of the economic scale belonging to common religion.
The elite group will be identified with power and the control of resources, and the popular ones will often be known simply as "the masses" of illiterate people.

1.3.2.3 The less intellectualised religiosity of the common person: This deals with the quantity and quality of lore, particularly specialised lore.

These three contrasting uses of "popular" represent three different ways in which religion is interpreted: institutional, social and intellectual. They represent distinctive conceptions of the major role of religion in society - as one of institutional organisation, social formation, and intellectual achievement.

These three dimensions may be illustrated as follows:

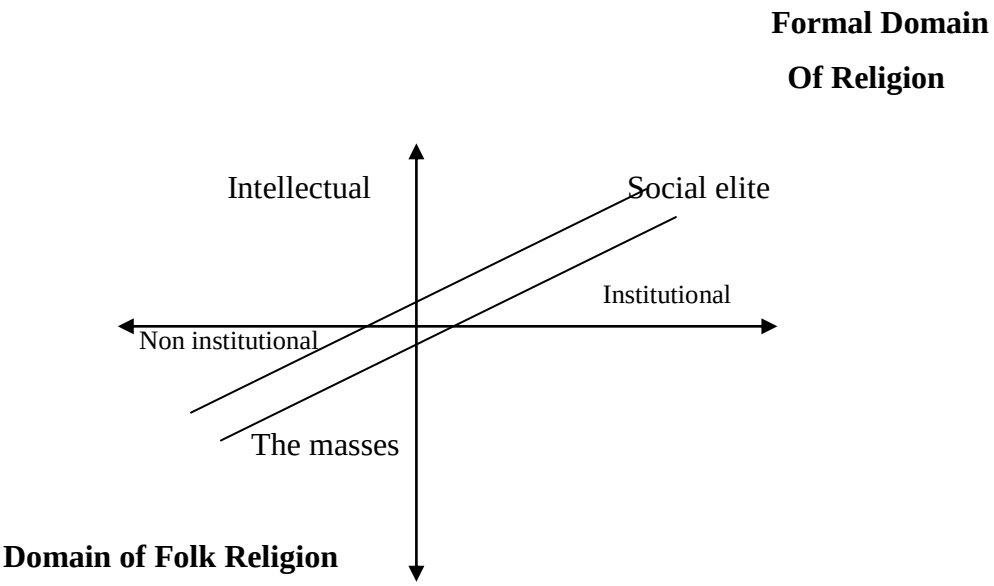


Figure1 (Adapted from Schreiter "Constructing local theologies", 1995)

1.3.3 Common religion

The more formal and doctrinal aspects of a religion are generally the domain of specialists. Common religion, on the other hand, is composed of the baseline of the average person's religious response to their daily needs. The sociologist, Robert Towler, quoted by Schreiter (1985), suggests that the religion of the greater part of the population will have various relationships to the religious institutions of that society, and those people will seldom identify all their religious experiences with social institutions.

1.3.4 Folk religion

By implication, folk religion again refers to the religion "of the people", though with the additional connotation of the lower strata of society as the particular "people". Thus, Hiebert (2000) portrays folk religions as a mixture of local religious traditions (or "little traditions") and animistic beliefs at a pragmatic level. They are thought to be ruled by pragmatism, with the main question being:"Does it work?"

In terms of the broader culture, folk religion (and associated animistic practices) is often found at the periphery, rather than the social core. In terms of the individual, we often see orthodox practices on the surface. However, these can be built on an animistic and folk religion core (Hiebert, 2000: 364-5). According to Schreiter's observations (1985), this suggests that religion is immensely complex part of human life. It is not a clear, isolated segment of social life. At the same time, there is a need to be aware of the fact that religion has distinctive economic, political and social ramifications, as well as the more familiar intellectual ones (Schreiter, 1985).

1.3.4.1 Characteristic of folk religion

As indicated in the above definition of folk religion proposed by Hiebert, a religion is best seen in its social context. In other words, this definition should highlight the social dimensions of religion. A religious belief thus comprises an institutionalised system of symbols, beliefs, values and practices. Having defined folk religion, we shall now go to examine its characteristics. Most of the research that has

been done in this field and the majority of the findings have developed an interpretive framework based on the principal characteristics of folk religion. This can be summarised in terms of the following stages involved in folk religion:

1.3.4.1.1 Worldview

A worldview is often defined as the way in which we understand the world around us. In the words of Ikenga- Metuh:

> A people's world has been described as the complex of their beliefs and attitudes concerning the origin, the nature, structure, organization, and interaction of beings in the universe with reference to man. A world view seeks to answer fundamental questions about the place and relationship of a man with the universe (Ikenga-Metuh, 1987:61).

Several writers have experienced different opinions in this regard. According to Schreiter, one cannot, of course, describe the view of the world in an exhaustive manner. There are, however, some elements that deserve special mention:

a) The world is seen as an interconnected and controlled place. Because of this interconnection and control, there is a limited amount of room for human manoeuvering.

b) Concerns are concrete, and requests for divine aid are usually based on immediate needs. Since the world is a hostile place if one is not protected, a good deal of energy is directed toward ensuring continued protection.

c) While concerns are to a large extent concrete, immediate, and this-worldly, there is as big a concern for death and the afterlife. Death is a major preoccupation because of the high mortality rate in poor areas. The afterlife will reflect how one has lived here, and how one has fulfilled familial and moral obligations (Schreiter, 1985:130).

However, a people's worldview is not only the combination of beings, concepts, beliefs and attitudes which they share, but also the underlying logic which holds them together. Thus, a proper idea of a people‘s worldview can only be obtained through a description of their whole life, especially in its social context. Besides, a people‘s worldview is never static - it is constantly changing as a result of contact from outside and inspiration from inside.

In terms of the African worldview, all beings can be said to belong to either of two worlds - the visible or the invisible world. Ikenga –Metuh (1987:67) is of the opinion that a survey of the world views of some African peoples shows that they model the organisation of their worldviews on perceptions drawn from the observation of the world around them, or some of their cultural experiences.

In some African worldviews, spiritual beings are closely linked to important natural phenomena which they are believed to control, while others define the powers and functions of divine beings in relation to the human needs which they are believed to fulfill. Ikeng-Matuh concludes that African traditional worldviews show a close relationship between spiritual and material realms. There is a network of relationships linking all beings in the ontological order. Furthermore, African worldviews are anthropocentric, since man is at the centre of the hierarchy of beings. God exists for man and not man for God, and even though the belief is that God transcends man, the aim of worship is for man to obtain God's blessings. The glory of God is thus not the primary object of worship. The deities also exist to help man achieve self-fulfillment (Ikenga-Metuh, 1987:80).

1.3.4.1.2 Power(s)

Although conceptually distinct, in practice, this distinction between power and religion is not always clearly defined. Some religious rituals include power, and it is studied together with religious phenomena, since it is also concerned with supernaturalism. Moreau (1995:32-33) has devoted attention to highlighting some characteristics of this power, as indicated below:

i) God's image

The focus of our world is on the fact that we are made in God's image, and we are given immediate rewards and punishment for good and bad deeds in this world. There is no distinction between levels of causality, and nothing really happens by chance. This concern has resulted in an almost infinite variety of cosmic powers.

ii) Identification of powers

There is a full range of powerscapes, but we will only outline the most significant aspects. People of every culture believe in a rich variety of power sources which influence their world. Their understanding of these powers forms the religion, and assumptions about these powers provide a range of answers to the questions that they ask about life.

iii) Types of powers

Three classes or types of powers may be identified:

a) Impersonal powers

This knowledge may require training and is usually kept secret

b) Social powers

Bridging the gap between personal and impersonal powers are social powers. In one sense, these are personal powers, in that they do not exist apart from people. In another sense, they are impersonal powers, because they do not have a separate ontological existence apart from social structures within human cultures.

c) Personal powers

These powers involve appropriate respect, means of initiation and methods of supplication. The rules for these are relationally founded and parallel the rules applied to normal human relationships - for example, respect for elders.

1.3.4.1.3 Ritual

Religious anthropologists have identified three stages in rituals: separation, transition and incorporation, although these often overlap in ritual activities (Smith, 2000:836). Ritual is crucial in several ways. It offers a form of knowledge that is distinctive from, but as important as, cognitive knowledge. Ikenga-Metuh (1987:197) asserts that man, in terms of African worldviews, can be defined ontologically and socially. Ontologically, he is a life-force in a vital relationship with other life-forces in the universe. Sociologically, man is defined with reference to his position within the different groups to which he belongs. It is not that one experience is superior to another, but that the physical, mental and experiential process is different in each case.

In fact, all religions have ways of attracting the attention of supernatural powers. Smith examines the rites of passage in terms of their order and content, and he identifies three main phases. The first one is separation, which marks the preparation for the transformation that is about to take place, and means that the person must be separated from normal life. It is the start of moving to another place or status, and this is expressed in different rites by different societies.

One such example is this is initiation ceremonies. These activities, in the context of some rituals, signify that a person has left behind one world or stage in life, and is about to enter another. The transition is the time between stages, having left one place or state and not yet having entered the next. After separation from normal life comes transformation, and until this stage is completed, the person is a non-person. He or she has been removed from the normal course of life, but has not yet undergone the transformation to the new form or stage of life. Transformation may occur physically or symbolically (circumcision, being given a new name etc). This phase of rites seems to be the most important because the candidate has left one state for another. In addition, rites during the transition phase are often collective, building intense community spirit. Sometimes, special conditions are required, such as humility, poverty, obedience, sexual abstinence or silence. The person has left his/her former status or position, but has not yet been incorporated into the new status. Incorporation, also called integration or aggregation, is the process of formally re-

entering society after completion of the rite. A new identity is recognised, which gives the person a new social status. In other words, once the transformation is complete, the transformed person is reincorporated into the normal social fabric. These rites contain symbols which signify that the initiate has achieved a new status. The ways in which this is ritually expressed vary from ritual to ritual and from one society to the other. It could be expressed by means of a public celebration to mark the end of the rite.

However, according to Shaw (2000:836), anthropologists recognise three main types of rituals. Rites of transformation include ceremonies associated with stages of life (birth, naming, initiation, marriage, retirement and death). Rites of crisis are associated with calamity, healing, decision making etc. Finally, rites of intensification answer the human need for order and identity (birthdays, ancestral traditions etc.).

1.3.4.1.3.1 What purpose do rituals serve?

Ritual not only helps teach important lessons about the new life, but also functions as repeated reinforcement. Ritual may have various purposes, such as affirming or establishing social identity, bringing order to the universe and facilitating transcendence, as well as storing cultural information. Rambo conducted an extensive case study on the importance of the socio-cultural context with regard to ritual. He found that rituals help people to learn to act differently. Attitudes toward life, other people, the world and God are all informed by the power of rituals. Ritual actions unite the community through singing, recitations and gestures, which give people a deeper sense of belonging.

Ritual also provides experiential validation of the religious belief system (Rambo, 1993:115). It is evident that Rambo considers ritual actions or processes to be fundamental, according to the diagram below.

Ritual processes

1	2	3
Separation	Transition	Consolidation
Disconnect Delete Reject	Reprioritise Assimilate Modify	Add Accept Affirm

Table1 (Adapted from Rambo "Understanding religious conversion", 1993)

1.3.4.1.3.2 Types of rituals

Ritual	Explanation	Characteristics	Examples	
			Individual	Group
(a) Rites of intensification	Restore order to a world which is degenerating into chaos and meaninglessness. Do this by providing worship with a high sense of order and purpose in the ritual. Metaphor: cleaning the house and restoring order and cleanliness	High order: of degree and predictability Religious community: Clearly defined social order with corresponding hierarchy Focus: leave all other concerns behind and focus on this event. Expectation: people expect to have their beliefs affirmed. Feeling of being at home, feeling of familiarity. Order and meaning: restore a deep sense of order, meaning and purpose.	Birthday Anniversary Feeding ancestors etc.	Festival Weekly and lunar rites National holidays etc

Table 2 (Adapted from Hiebert, "Folk religions by Moreau", 1995)

Table 3 (Ibid)

				Example
Ritual	Explanation	Characteristics	Individual	Group
(b) Rites of transition (cyclical, though in a different way to rites of intensification)	Change people from one state to another, or make some transformation in their beliefs, status or being.	Liminality: a feeling of being rootless, timeless, in limbo. Highly focused and open: change is expected, especially symbolic change. Ultimate question: ordinary life is left behind, and the focus is on the ultimate. Communication: ordinary social difference are lost in the common search Symbols highly condensed and multifocal: opposites may be combined in the same symbol (death and life in baptism) involving many senses High degree of inner change: profound change can take place	Life cycle rites: pre-birth, birth, naming, puberty, marriage, eldership, funerals, ancestral installation, pilgrimage, conversation revival etc.	Life cycle of the gods New year and fertility rites, etc.

Table 4 (Ibid)

				Examples
Ritual	Explanation	Characteristics	Individual	Group
(c) Rites of crisis (Repetitive though non-cyclical)	Ritual prevents or deal with a crisis	Social role: usually an expert is the one to receive help from the ritual. Mystery and dependence : these rituals in particular evoke a sense of mystery and dependence on non- human powers for the substances of life.	Healing to obtain success, guidance etc	Ending droughts, Success in war, choosing a ruler etc.

1.3.4.1.4. Myth and symbol

1.3.4.1.4.1 Myth

There are many definitions of the term “myth”, and it need not be assumed that one of them is right and the others wrong. We are concerned here with “myth” in the particular sense that we will now specify. Often, people operate according to a single notion of what the “truth” is, confining it to what can be analysed in laboratories. In this sense, of course, myths are not true. The term “myth” in the popular sense is a fiction or untruth (Shaw, 2000: 668).

It would be hard to find a definition of myth that would be acceptable and understandable to all scholars. In this regard, is it even possible to find one definition that will cover all the types and functions of myths in all traditional societies?

A myth is an extremely complex cultural reality, which can be approached and interpreted from various perspectives. Indeed, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic stories of the sacred within the world. It is as a result of the intervention of supernatural beings that man himself is what he is today, a mortal and cultural being. Every society has myths that at some level proclaim cosmic origins: folklore depicting family, cultural or national events and heroes; stories to explain how some things came to be, etc.

As we have seen, mythology can serve as a people’s history and represent their beliefs and values. It provides intellectual edification by communicating particular lessons or knowledge. The story narrated by the myth constitutes knowledge which is esoteric, not only because it is secret and handed down during the course of an initiation, but also because the knowledge is accompanied by a magico-religious power. Knowing the origin of an object, animal or plant is equivalent to acquiring magical power over them, by which they can be controlled. Mythology may also be used to validate appropriate behaviour or to punish inappropriate behaviour. Myths are passed down through the generations as oral literature or ritual drama, and thus provide a sense of identity and belonging.

A number of myths from different parts of Africa have raised questions and offered explanations about the origin and organisation of the universe. As we have stated, African myths affirm the existence of a good God. Thus, many myths try to offer some explanation for the presence of evil in a world created by a good God, and most of these myths are known as cosmogenic myths.

For example, our own tribe, namely the Ngambai people of Chad, has a myth which puts the blame on the chameleon.

God is said to have sent the chameleon to men with the message that they will not die. However, the chameleon walked slowly. Later on, God sent the lizard with the message that men will die, and the lizard got to God before the chameleon did. God confirmed the decree, and death has since then become the lot of man.

Many African myths go beyond the creation of man, and speculate about the creation of the world and the entire universe, including the sun, moon and stars. They not only provide the symbolic categories by which Africans understand the organisation of their universe, but also suggest patterns, as we have seen above, by which they try to maintain the balance and harmony of the world through rituals.

We have already attempted in this study to highlight the ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic social world to another, which have been divided into rites of separation, transition and incorporation. These three categories are not developed to the same extent by all peoples, or in every ceremonial pattern.

1.3.4.1.4.2 Symbol

After this brief survey of “myth”, one can say that myth and symbol are not isolated. They are held together by a common bond. Capps states that rites, myths and symbols are tied together, and that they constitute, in the first place, the language of the sacred (Capps, 1972:311).

Capps identifies (ibid) three areas in which symbols emerge. He places rites and myths together, while symbols form the language of the sacred, the expression of "hierophanies", to use Eliade's term. In his patterns of comparative religion, he uses the example of the sky as the symbol of the most high, elevated and immense, of the powerful and well-ordered, of the sovereign and immovable. Capps indicates that this symbol branches out into cosmic, ethical and political categories. He also identifies symbols in the area of the nocturnal and oneirotic. Symbols are those oneirotic representations that go beyond individual history-archeology, without a subject. They plunge down into the depths of the imagery which is common to every culture. Finally, the last area of symbols is the poetic imagination. According to Capps, this representation-image still depends on the thing that it makes unreal. He concludes that what is born and reborn in the poetic image is the time-symbolic structure that runs through the most prophetic dreams of our inner development.

Furthermore, Capps (1972:313-316) provides explanations which distinguish the symbol from a series of related structures, such as the sign, the allegory, the symbol itself in the sense of the symbolic logic, and finally the myth. It is perhaps important for our understanding to briefly explore these differences. Signs are expressions that carry a meaning, which is revealed through the intention of signifying that which is conveyed by words. Even though symbols are elements of the universe (sky, water, moon etc) or things (trees, stones), it is still within the world that these things take on their symbolic dimension. Capps remarks that every sign is directed towards something beyond itself and stands for this something, but not every sign is a symbol. He argues that this obvious and literal meaning therefore points beyond itself to something that is like it. The first (obvious and literal) meaning itself looks analogically towards a second meaning, which is found only in the first meaning.

His second remark concerning the distinction between a symbol and an allegory is a simple observation about the analogy made possible through the literal meaning itself. Symbols and allegories are therefore not on the same level. The symbol precedes hermeneutics, while the allegory is already hermeneutical. What the symbol gives transparently is in contrast to what the allegory gives by translation. The

third level of comparison he makes is that the symbols we are dealing with have nothing in common with symbolic logic.
However, we have to do more than make this statement - we must also understand why. On the one hand, signification is related to absence, because it points out things that are absent. On the other hand, however, it is related to presence, because it represents the present - that which is absent. In these two different forms, the symbol carries each possibility to the extreme.
The final comparison is that between myths and symbols. Some scholars compare myths to allegories, but do not clearly distinguish between myths and symbol. It sometimes seems as if the symbol is a non-allegorical way of getting hold of a myth. Symbols and allegories would thus be two intellectual attitudes or dispositions to hermeneutics. Symbolic interpretation and allegorical interpretation would be two directions taken by an interpretation of the same content of myths.

Indeed, human beings create symbols by which they associate mental constructions with events, ideas or forms found in the external world. As McElhanon (2000:923) states: a "symbol is something used to stand for something, such as an olive branch representing peace". Even though most scholars make considerable use of symbols to characterise the particular mode in a physical or spiritual world, Mc Elhanon‘s viewpoint reveals the need to use symbols for abstract concepts, which also makes us prone to idolatry. We have a propensity to visualise the object of our worship, to create images of our gods. Therefore, in a similar way, we need to keep in mind that the symbols we use to represent gospel truths have the potential to replace those truths. Moreau (1995:71) states pointedly that:

> Symbols enable us to categorize and analyse our world. They are intimately tied to our framework of making categories that enable us to make sense of the vast amounts of sensory data that we are constantly receiving. They help us to know what to pay attention to, what to ignore, what must be attended to, what can be put off.

However, many people regard symbols as having assigned meanings agreed on by a given society. The fact that the meanings are assigned by a given community does not allow a symbol to serve in communication within a society, and also militates against the casual use of symbols for intercultural communication.

1.3.4.2 Folk religion and contextual theologies

Religion is the sacred - the encounter with the holy that, according to many religions, constitutes both the source and purpose of a belief. Exploring the role of religion is methodologically difficult. How can we understand, predict and control that which is generally invisible to the outsider, mysterious and sacred to the insider, and more often than not subject to debate within the tradition itself?

If we are to be phenomenologically true to the experiences and phenomena of belief, we must take the religious sphere seriously, and we need to find ways of integrating religion into our analysis. We have covered a wide range of concepts, and principal with regard to folk religion is that all are meant in one way or another to help us to listen to and understand it. The final consideration here has to do with the role of transformation in assisting patterns of change.

1.3.4.2.1 Phenomenology of religion

As a discipline, the phenomenology of religion is often seen as a specialised discipline within the broad parameters of comparative or historical religious studies. The term only came to be widely used in scholarly religious discussion in the twentieth century. Therefore, as a discipline it is still relatively new, and even the term “phenomenology” does not have the same meaning for all religious scholars.

For some, the phenomenology of religion refers to an attitude towards or study of religious phenomena in the general sense. For others, it refers to the actual cross–cultural, comparative study and classification of religious manifestations. For still others, it expresses the commitment to a specialised method of religious expression. Although it is difficult to provide a universally agreed upon definition, phenomenologists of all types appear to exist (philosophical, psychological, sociological and so on). However, in spite of some methodical problems with regard to the phenomenology of religion, Moreau (1995:14) points out that:

The phenomenological approach to the study of religion has opened significant doors which are important in developing an empathetic understanding of the rich complexity of religious phenomena in the world. Missiologists regularly utilize phenomenological methodology in seeking understanding of religious phenomena in the world's context.

Because of its emphasis on truth and human insight, the role of a phenomenological approach will be limited to that of a basic step towards a biblical response to religious phenomena in our world today. Religious phenomena, as defined by research, include phenomena such as rituals, symbols, prayers, ceremonies, belief systems, sacred persons, art, creeds and other religious exercises.

1.3.4.2.2 Significant issues in the study of religion

The first question here is: "What kind of an interpreter am I?" How is one to interpret the phenomena that make up what is called folk religion? At this point, we may briefly mention issues such as the insider, the stance taken by proponents of religion, and the report or stance of an outsider, whose work is to objectively report on what he/she has seen and avoid subjectivity (This is similar to a scientist of religion). And finally, the specialist, essentially a reporter who goes beyond the normal reporting method and specialises in one religion or one aspect of a religion.

The danger in studying religion is that one may emphasise one aspect more than the others. It should be done on the basis of what Schreiter(1995:131) calls "the negative and positive aspects of religion".

The second question to ask is: "What does it mean to take other religions seriously?" A number of scholars of folk religion have mentioned issues such as respect, handling religious beliefs with care, showing humility and sensitivity (sometimes we are not sensitive enough to the religious commitment of others and oversensitive about our own), and advocacy, which is inappropriate during the data collection stage of religious research.

The third concern is related to the tools of research.

What are some of the major research tools we can use to understand folk religion? Most researchers have developed their interpretive framework of folk religion through scriptural analysis, participant observation, semiotic analysis, ethnographic interviewing or structural function analysis.

1.3.4.2.3 A Christian Evaluative Approach

In what follows we endeavor to be biblically Christian with regard to Christian tradition. We also do not intend to be bound by traditional models of theologising. We may accept the Bible as being both inspired by God and an accurate record of the spirit-guided perceptions of human beings who are committed to God.

In Schreiter'(1995:95-101) analysis of the relationship between local theology and Christian tradition, he encountered several problems. These may help to form the context for a discussion of the understanding of tradition as it relates to the problems being experienced in the Church today.

We believe that a biblical Christian model, contrary to the opinion of many scholars, is not a static model. We hold that the message, in addition to its historical-cultural specificity, has a cross-cultural relevance that original cultural forms do not have. The content must be expressed in linguistic and cultural forms that are understood by the receivers of the message. The cultural forms in which this content is expressed are therefore very important.

The church that we have seen in the New Testament is not the *status quo* or static, still less conservative, but rather adaptive and dynamic. For example, when the early church realised that there was a problem with regard to Greek-speaking widows, they did not look to the past but, claiming the leadership of the Holy Spirit, faced the problem and worked out a solution (Acts 6: 1-6). In addition, although the early church ordinarily required Gentiles to first convert to the Jewish faith in order to become Christians (Acts 1.5:1), Paul, Barnabas and Peter advocated a change in these rules. In a meeting of Church leaders in Jerusalem, they convinced the rest of the leaders to adapt their approach to the realities of the new situation (Acts 15: 19-29).

Because of the conceptual models employed, which could lead to confusion, Kraft(1990:42) provides us with a brief overview. The relationship between these areas is illustrated in the following process diagram:

A. Basic understanding (Perspective Models) concerning

↘

B. Culture (Anthropological Models) and

↘

C. Communication (Communication Models) to understand How

↘

D. God Works (Ethno-theological Models) in the human context

Figure 2 (Adapted from Kraft, 1990: 42)

As all would agree, any cultural form is automatically accepted as a vehicle of Christ in culture. Therefore, we can ask the following question: How and when does someone really face that challenge? What are the safeguards? What kind of criteria can be used? Moreau points out two issues that are relevant to a Christian evaluative approach (Moreau, 1995:6-5):

Firstly, the general Christian approach is to examine religious doctrines and/or ideas and evaluate them in light of divine revelation. There appears to be two fundamental tests of all religious claims:

i. Are they in harmony with God's revealed word? (Deuteronomy 13: 1-5)
ii. Do they work? (Deuteronomy 18: 20-22)

Secondly, this approach builds on significant presuppositions, including the following:

i. The Bible is God's revelation about Himself to all people of the world.
ii. All cultures have elements which the Scripture commends, as well as elements which the Scripture condemns.
iii. The Holy Spirit is at work today in the lives of all genuine believers who have the ability to develop a relevant, Scriptural approach to life in their context.
iv. All humans are affected by sin, and every human being's endeavours or activities are in some way tainted by its effects.
v. God is the author of cultural variations, and all cultures can be subsumed under His authority.
vi. The chief focus of history is not on human cultures or religions, but the kingdom of God (Matthew 24:9-4, Mark 13: 10).

1.4 Conclusion

The proclamation of the kingdom is to go to all nations. In our time of religious pluralism, and with many calling for a cessation of Christian mission under the motto of "all roads lead to heaven", the passage of Matthews 24:9-14 stands as a reminder that we must preach the Good News of Jesus to all nations, not just to those who already have a Christian influence.

In the same way, the important aspect is that many elements of religions are socially observable phenomena, but not all of them are. At the same time, many elements of religions are theological, but not all are. Therefore, the scientific approach reminds us of the need for careful observation. It also helps us to understand the context of the culture in which a religion is found. The theological approach, on the other hand, provides an evaluative paradigm or hermeneutical process by means of which our analysis will take place.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTS OF TIME AND ESCHATOLOGY RELATED TO THE AFTERLIFE

Introduction

In this chapter, we will deal with the perceptions of time and eschatology in African culture. Thus, we are going to interact with the different viewpoints of African scholars, using the Ngambai of Chad which is our own tribe as a case study, we will refer to them in the next following process and it will be shown that, contrary to the statement that "the African has no sense of time", there is indeed a strong awareness of time and its meaning in Africa. This will be done by examining the views of John Mbiti and Byang Kato, among others.

As we will show in more detail later on, the concept of time among the Ngambai people is determined by events that call for such interaction. The view has been expressed that biblical history is a manifestation of ordered historical tradition and specific occurrences in time. The biblical understanding of time seems to lie between the mythical and cyclic, on the one hand, and the merely linear and accumulative, on the other hand.

2.1. Perceptions of time and eschatology in African culture

2.1.1. Current debates about time in African culture

In this section, we will attempt to examine the debates regarding time in African culture. African theologians should be able to link time to people's activities and concerns, in terms that are understood by them. This will be done by examining the views of scholars such as John Mbiti, Byang Kato and others.

Mbiti is an African theologian of repute who has conducted extensive research on eschatology. His interest in eschatology is evident in two of his works, namely

Concepts of God in Africa (1970), in which he devotes an entire chapter to the discussion of eschatological concepts, and *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* (1971), which describes the effects of the encounter between Christianity and African traditional concepts. In his own words, this book pursues "a selective investigation in that it focuses upon the Akamba people on the one hand, and certain aspects of New Testament eschatology on the other" (Mbiti, 1971:1). It is interesting to note that in his introduction, Mbiti refers to the Akamba people of Kenya. He also constantly uses this community as an example, and this is because he is a member of this tribe himself (Mbiti, 1971:2). He is therefore in a good position to comment on his own community.

It is important for us to understand the African view of time and history. Without going into the debate regarding time as either linear or cyclic, Mbiti found that, for the African, "time is not an academic concern; it is simply a composition of events" (Mbiti, 1971:24). It does not really matter whether or not a day is twenty-four hours long, or whether or not a month is thirty days long. Rather, the events in a day or month are what matters. These events also determine its reckoning, and not the mathematics (Mbiti, 1971:29). Mbiti provides us with the following example of a day, which he says is:

> reckoned according to the major events: rising up, milking cattle, herding, working in the fields, driving cattle to the watering places, returning home for the night ….. and going to sleep (Mbiti, 1971:29).

In a similar manner, history is understood to be events and not dates. History is understood to be moving "backward, from the now moment to that beyond which nothing can go" (Mbiti, 1971:28). It is in light of such an understanding that an event which occurred in the past is held in high regard. This is because it is used to assist people in understanding the present with purposefulness. Mbiti observes that:

> Time as a succession or simultaneity of events "moves" not forward but backward. People look more to the past for orientation of their being than to anything that might yet come into history (Mbiti, 1971:24-25).

Connecting the African conception of time and history to other events in life, Mbiti declares that:

> Human life follows also another rhythm which knows neither end nor radical alteration. This is the rhythm of birth, initiation, marriage, procreation, old age, death and entry into the company of the departed (Mbiti, 1971:29).

This conception of time and history helps us to put things in perspective. It does this by pointing out that time and history as a process is to be understood to be moving "from the present to the past and not forward to some far-off event or goal" (Mbiti, 1971:29). Based on Mbiti's understanding of the African concept of time, we will explore this issue as discussed by various scholars who have their own viewpoints in this regard. Byang Kato is one such scholar, and his major work in this field is entitled *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (1975). In this work, he outlines what he considers to be a Christian view of eschatology in light of current trends in religion, philosophy and science. In this regard, Kato rejects Mbiti's assumption that the Akamba concepts are universal (Kato, 1975:61-62). According to Kato, Mbiti has generalised far beyond what the scope of his research permits. Another African scholar, Byaruhanga Akiiki, the head of the Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy at Makerere University in Uganda, states that:

> Bantu time concepts do not fully support this idea that time is only a mental reality. The Bantu seem rather to define time in terms of a succession of events. Thus when people talk of "good times", they refer to good happenings or good events taking place. For the Bantu, the succession of events is a daily experience taken for granted (Akiiki, 1980:365-366).

Kato points out, in his analysis of Mbiti's position, that the African lives a life which demonstrates an awareness of the future (Kato, 1975:60-61). Mbiti's thesis is a provoking one, and if he has correctly interpreted this evidence, then he may well be justified in his claim to have found the key to the understanding of African religious philosophy (Mbiti, 1969). It has, however, come under severe criticism. Scott Moreau, a Western scholar, comments on Mbiti's thesis, saying that his negation of the future may not be entirely accepted by some. Moreau goes on to comment that the

answer to this problem does not lie solely with linguistics, mythical analysis and planning (Moreau, 1998:312-313). Is Mbiti correct then in denying to African thought any substantial concept of future time? Parratt found that time in traditional Africa was not conceived of in linear terms, nor was it in any sense eschatological. He also found that African societies are predominantly backward-looking – the present is seen in terms of the past, and the social system and its relationships are determined by myths and 'history'. Rites, whether communal rituals or rites of passage, are also rooted in the past and conceived of in terms of primal events (Parratt, 1977:123).

Thus, on reflection, it appears to him that a good deal of evidence may be found to support Mbiti's thesis. Moreau assumed that Mbiti's understanding of the African concept of time cannot be regarded as definitive. At the same time, we must also recognise that Mbiti has indeed given us valuable insight to help us understand some of the traditional African orientations. As such, his contributions are not to be ignored, since they represent an insider's careful analysis and thoughts. In addition, they reflect aspects of a true understanding of the African mindset. There is little doubt that in general, the traditional African focuses on the past far more than is done in the West (Moreau, 1998:313).

According to Newell, "Further careful linguistic study is needed before any definitive statement can be made about the view of time in Africa as a whole. On the other hand, it may be asked whether there is even anything distinctively African about the view of time with which we are dealing. Perhaps traditional man – including African traditional man – is not so much seeking to abolish time or reject history as to affirm and celebrate the essential identity of past, present and future" (Newell, 1975:91).

As a result of Mbiti's African concept of time and its emphasis on the past and present, contemporary Africans return to the past when uncertain (in the present) about what is going to happen. Time moves by creating an ever-increasing past. The future is in fact a forthcoming event rooted in the present, an expression of time discerned only through the present, in which the passing of seasons is rooted, as well as the birth and death of human beings and the passing of day and night. History is not a linear process moving to some future point (Mbiti, 1968:16-17). In fact, to some,

“the end of the world” is inconceivable. Thus, many African languages simply do not contain a future tense or a future history.

In terms of Kwame Bediako’s interpretation of Mbiti’s African trilogy (Bediako, 1993: 22-23), the African concept of time has three main features. Firstly, it is two-dimensional, with a long past, a present, and virtually no future. Secondly, African reckoning of time is concrete and specific, related to events but never mathematically verifiable. And thirdly, African time is related to history, but it always moves towards the past – from the present (the now) into the past. This conception of time is related to a “religious ontology” where “to live is to be caught in a religious drama” (Mbiti, 1968:15). In African time, this sort of ontology is correlated to a five-fold division of reality: God, spirits, humans, non-human animate and non-human inanimate creations. Human actions, birth and death fall within the ongoing interaction among these five social categories. While there is a physical distinction between humans and spirits, they move within the same space and time, and therefore interact with each other. From this point of view, those who die maintain a certain interaction with the living, within the same social drama of a continuous social world.

These debates conclude with Byahanga Akiiki’s questions: “Who determines that one is conceived, born, lives and dies in time? What is one expected to do with one’s allotment of time, and by whom? What is time anyway, and what is life in time all about?” (Akiiki, 1980:357). There appears to be some uncertainty as to whether time “moves” or whether we move through time. At any rate, there is agreement that in some sense, we are “headed toward the future”. Men plan, work and struggle in order that the future may be better than the past. Some look for a “future life”, after death, or for an “end of the age” when God’s kingdom will be made manifest, while others have a more secular vision of a new world (Newell, 1975:81). While men may not agree as to what the future will bring, they at least agree that it is important and worth arguing about.

2.1.2. Eschatology in African culture: hermeneutical issues

In Kato's book entitled *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (1971), the two major sources are Christian doctrine and African traditional thought. If the former is elusive because of theological pluralism (though most African writers adopt a conservative approach), the latter is no less elusive because there is no tradition of written documentation in Africa. However, there are difficulties in deciding whether or not an African eschatology can be written, who may write it, and in what terms it can be written.

The consideration of the concept of eschatology in African culture has already introduced these issues. Mbiti has been particularly adventurous regarding the issue of eschatology, starting with a paper presented in 1966 at the Consultation of African Theologians, and then in his book entitled *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background.* Thus, for Mbiti, African traditional religion shows little sense of eschatology. There is no concept of the end of the world. African languages show an awareness of time beyond a short distance of months or years. The life of the future is identical to that of the present. As Kato states, Haring rejected the future second coming, and Mbiti highlights "eight eschatological symbols and words, to see how their meaning is understood in the Bible and by Akambe (and other African) Christians. The eight future expected events he calls symbols and not realities are Gehenna, Fire, Treasure, City, Country, and then Eating and Drinking, Tears and Pain, and Heaven" (Kato, 1971:83).

It is important to consider carefully Charles Ryrie's proposed eschatology for Africa, as he emphasises the importance of hermeneutics in the study of theology:

> Hermeneutics is that science which furnishes the principles of interpretation. These principles guide and govern anybody's system of theology. They ought to be determined before one's theology is systematised, but in practice the reverse is usually true (Ryrie, 1969, quoted in Kato, 1971: 77-78).

In his observation, Kato comments that:

Only by following the normal, grammatico-historical interpretation would one be free from extreme subjectivism. To follow the allegorical method or to spiritualize normal concepts necessarily leads to subjectivism and preconceived notions (Kato, 1971:78).

The move from the particular to the general is not easily accepted, however, by those who respond negatively or positively. These risks were also noted by Tite Tienou in his book entitled *The Task of African Christian Theology(1990).* According to him, the evangelical dilemma in Africa can best be described as a proclamation without reflection. Evangelicals generally perceive themselves to be proclaimers of the word. In this regard, they are concerned with making the Gospel universal. Since evangelicals concentrate on proclamation and hence contribute significantly to the growth of African Christianity, Mbiti's statement should be a stimulus to them to examine their relationship to theology in Africa. In their emphasis on gospel proclamation, they tend to neglect reflection and theological responsibilities. Sometimes reflection is even perceived as an adversary of gospel proclamation (Tienou, 1990:4). Who could undertake the writing of an African theology and would they be aware of the difficulties and objections to their projected work? Tienou makes the following important comments in this regard:

We must not only pursue a theology that is more adequately focused through the real life needs at the local level of African Christianity, but also a more comprehensive strategy for evangelical theological life and activity within the Church, and a strategy which seeks to facilitate such life at all levels of the Church, through a variety of approaches (Tienou, 1990:8).

"Culture" was used in a broad sense to describe every aspect of man's social life, preserve the best of his past, and rebuild it for the future, while embracing a particularity which connected man to his present condition. Culture, then, is itself in a constant state of development. It is in response to an awareness of man's control over his cultural setting that African theology and the independent churches have emerged.

They begin with a common awareness of the fact that the Christianity which they practiced is not their own, but someone else's expression of that faith. Christianity, as brought to Africa by the missionaries, on the one hand demanded

separation from traditional African culture and on the other hand, demanded an acceptance of Western European culture.

Contemporary Christian theology in Africa is illustrative of the general remark made by Tienou that the situation is critical but not hopeless. It is possible for evangelicals to move decisively forward towards theological responsibility and maturity. Evangelicals in Africa are best positioned to overcome the debilitating polarisation between academic and popular theology, and to show a new way forward for African Christian theology. To do this, they must place more emphasis not just on academic theology, but on academic theology that is in touch with, responds to, and facilitates popular theology through a range of creative approaches for the equipping and maturation of the Church. If it encourages more missionary proclamation, more discipleship and more faithfulness to our Lord, then this is assuredly the kind of theology that makes sense for Africa (Tienou, 1990:11).

In terms of suggestions for a continuing reflection between Christian and traditional thought, the same challenge is posed: "hermeneutics is crucial to a forceful and faithful impact of the biblical message in the hearts and minds of the African Christians in a contemporary African context" (Oleka, 1998:104). An even more precise challenge and instruction is offered by this author in an article entitled *Interpreting and Applying the Bible in an African Context* (Oleka, 1998:104-125). A close relationship exists between Scripture and human culture. A person cannot speak of Scripture without speaking of the human culture within and through which it was produced. A dual problem arises here, however. If the existing body of Christian theology is important for African theology, why then formulate new theological concepts for the Church in Africa? However, if existing Christian concepts are really relevant to African Christians, why then has Christianity remained more or less alien to the African Church? Muzorewa claims that:

> It is this dilemma that has caused some African theologians to reread, interpret, and reformulate the faith in language that is meaningful to the people. For us Africans, as for others in the Christian tradition, theology must be contextual. Though it is true that there are aspects of Christian theology that may be above contextual definition, other aspects are necessarily related to their surroundings (Muzorewa, 1985:94).

According to him, African theologians, while correctly observing the need for Africanisation and indigenisation, have yet to come up with an appropriate methodology and a relevant theological perspective (Muzorewa, 1985:100). At this stage, many would share Mbiti's view that theology should be developed and expressed through African symbols, color, art, music and sculpture, since we cannot do theology in a vacuum – we must employ the African cultural matrix (Mbiti, 1978; Muzorewa, 1985:91). This view is challenged, however. McVeigh claims that, given that the Bible is a primary source for African theology, theologians need to use a special hermeneutic to produce a theology that speaks to the African people (Muzorewa, 1985:92). This caution may allow Mbiti's New Testament eschatology to use the method of juxtaposing the Bible with African traditional religion on the subject of eschatology, when he says: "…But such biblical theology will have to reflect the African situation and understanding if it is to be an original contribution to the theology of the Church universal" (Mbiti, 1971:189). This indicates that not every scripture passage necessarily speaks to every African situation all the time.

In contrast to the above statements, Samuel Ngewa made the following comments in verbal communication, we normally have three elements involved: the speaker, the language used by the speaker, and the audience. When communication is in writing, as is the case with our interpretation of the Bible, we have the author, the text and the readers. Two of these, namely the speaker and the reader, determine how effective the communication will be. The sender must put his thoughts into accurate words, and the reader must accurately understand the speaker's words if any valid meaning is to be communicated. In between the two lies the text. Where is meaning located in this transmission? Is it in the speaker's thoughts, in the text, or in the reader's understanding? In other words, in our attempt to interpret the text, say as we have it in the Bible, where should our interpretation centre, on what the Bible writers meant to say, on the Bible independent of its writers, or on the audience for whom it is meant? (Ngewa, 1998:49). He concludes his concerns with what Appiah-Kubi said in *Jesus Christ: some Christological Aspects from an African Perspective* (1976, quoted in Ngewa, 1998:54): "unless the meaning of the biblical text has been researched and then the text applied in the African setting in light of its original

meaning, African theology will be sterile, bankrupt, and unworthy of the African tradition nourished by Tertullian, Cyprian, Tyconius and Augustine".

We would like to conclude this section with a summary and a challenge from Louis Luzbetak: "A true Christian is but another "Christ". In his word made us understand that a genuine Christian is made an image of Jesus Christ, he is an imitator of Christ (1Corinthians 11:1). The veritable question today that face the Church and missionaries in the field of mission is "what Jesus would be or teach if he were born now in this generation? What will say everywhere in the world to the nations not two thousand years ago but today? Contextualization is the process by which a local community incarnates the message of Christ. By "Christian living" we mean living as Christ would live here and now – that is, as he would behave, what he would teach here and now, and what his values and emotions, attitudes and drives would be if he belonged to the particular community we are dealing with. Despite the facts that God cannot compromise his unity and consistency (Revelation 3:16) and that the Church may not compromise a single iota of the Gospel (Matthew 5:18), God nevertheless delights in what a mission strategist calls "luxurious human diversity", a luxuriousness that God created when he created human beings. Every Christian community must experience Christ not as a foreigner who somehow, after two thousand years, has appeared in the community's midst, but as "one of us", as someone sharing the community's culture. (Luzbetak, 1991:133-134).

The Gospel message cannot be purely and simply separated from the culture into which it was first introduced (the Biblical world or, more concretely speaking, the cultural milieu in which Jesus of Nazareth lived), nor, without serious loss, from the culture in which it has already been expressed over the centuries. On the other hand, the power of the Gospel everywhere transforms and regenerates – when that power enters into a culture, it is no surprise that it rectifies many of its elements. The Church must never allow itself to be absorbed by any culture, since not all cultural expressions are in conformity with the Gospel. The Church retains the indispensable duty of testing and evaluating cultural expressions in light of its understanding of revealed truth. Cultures, like individual human beings and societies, need to be purified by the blood of Christ.

In response to the question: “Why should the Church be concerned about cultures?”, Luzbetak provides the following answer:

> We are concerned about cultures so that the Church may be as perfect a channel of Grace as possible, as worthy an instrument in the hands of God as possible, as good, wise, and faithful a servant as is humanly possible – this, and this alone, is our aim and our theological justification for a Church-related applied science of culture that we have called “missiological anthropology” (Luzbetak, 1991: 397).

2.1.3 The Bantu concept of time: the Ngambai people as a case study

In this study, we used an approach known as rapid appraisal. This method is designed to be as specific as possible, and in order to provide a general overview, we used informal interviews, as well as individual and group questionnaires.

The Ngambai people come from the Sara clan of Chad. The word “Sara” indicates the region and language, and through a process of generalisation, people called “Sara” are not only those who speak the language(s) of this group, but the entire population of South Chad.

According to the 1993 census, Moundou, the capital city of Ngambai, has a population of 282 103, but this figure is very outdated. We now look at the research with regard to Ngambai concepts of time:

1. [lokār] (daylight): divided into 3 parts:

- [ndōrad]: early in the morning

For example, when people want to go somewhere, they say: “ ar ci J’aou ndōrad” = let us go early.

- [kar ar dang dō]: it is noon or midday
- [karkametag]: it is afternoon

2. [lo ndul] (night time): divided into 3 parts:

- [lo ndul dzib]: the night has just come

Example: Poultry get ready to sleep in their hen-houses, and calves are near their mothers.

- [dann lo bab]: midnight

Example: It is the time when people are in a deep sleep. In the village, no noise is heard except for babies waking up from hunger.

- [ta lo kar, lo inja Jərərə, kinjadje aou non]: This is about 3am or 4am in the morning, when roosters begin to crow. It is a time for farmers to wake up and begin their work.

3. Seasons

There are two seasons, namely:

- [nain kar]: this is the dry season, which starts in November and ends in March. At this time, harvesting is done. In December and January, it is cold, but in March and April, it is very hot. At this time, there are generally many illnesses (chicken pox, meningitis, etc), and many children die. This lasts until the rain returns in April and puts an end to these epidemics.

- [bbar]: this is the rainy season, which begins in April and ends in October. During this season, agricultural activities take place, and people grow all kinds of crops. It is a time of hard work for peasants, but also a time of hunger. Food reserves are depleted, particularly in rural areas. People consider the rainy season to be a year, and the dry season is also regarded as a year, particularly in terms of the Ngambai understanding. Initiation, which is viewed as a religious practice, generally occurs during the rainy season. We will examine this traditional Ngambai belief in the next chapter of our study.

4. Ngambai year: this is divided into 12 months:

i. [nain kūl]: (January) – so called because it is very cool.

ii. [ngonn kār]: (February) – literally a small sun, which means that it is a bit hot.

iii. [Pal pal bo]: (March) – it is very hot.

iv. [sim tā dua]: (April) – this is when the first rains come and people sow crops. Seeds which grow are in the ground, and small insects are on top of them- this is where the meaning comes from.

v. [ndum kudu]: (May) – edible fruit called "kudu" fall from trees and become rotten.

vi. [sau ndo dō gabara]: (June) – the rain stops a bit, so that people can cultivate the marrow which has grown.

vii. [ndəl]: (July) – this is a very difficult time because of hunger.

viii. [bbul]: (August) – the hard times are easing a bit, but it is still difficult for people to find something to eat.

ix. [au bbe le koin]: (September) – this means literally "go to your mother's home". In other words, if a child is crying, the father tells him/her to go to see their mother in order to get something to eat.

x. [or yan kā-am]: (October) – this means literally "take the food and give me back the calabash". At this time, the crops of certain millets mature and there is something to eat. In the villages, neighbours give food to each other.

xi. [ngonn ringa]: (November) – this means literally "children are moving everywhere". In other words, they have eaten and are happy, so they play and run around.

xii. [ringa bo]: (December) – this means literally "a big moving". People have finished harvesting and there is plenty to eat. During this month, farmers sell some of their crops in order to get money and buy clothes for their families. In fact, this has continued to the present day.

5. Years ahead: how these are counted:

[bbaldze] or [ləbdze]: years

[bbal kara]: one year

[bbal dzo]: two years

[bbal munda]: three years

6. Past years: these are referred to by past events:

[bbal töl laudze]: the year of initiation

[bbal gə bbo on]: the year in which there was hunger

[leb gə Tchad inga ne dea]: the year that Chad obtained its independence

7. The concept of Ngambai time in terms of the past, present and future:

- Present:

[bbogəne]: today

[bbacine, Lam be]: immediate present

- Past:

[tagəne]: yesterday

[ndö kañuñã]: a day after yesterday

[ndzag ndzag ne, löi löi ya bei]: recent past

[ləou ndö gən, ləou- ləou ba, kal ne, kal nu]: far past

- Future:

[bele]: tomorrow

[kār gə aou re]: immediate future

[tēbē]: after tomorrow

[ñuñã]: a day after tomorrow

Before we proceed, a few general remarks need to be made with regard to the Ngambai's tones. They use musical height in distinctive ways, and there are 3 main tones:

- High tone
- Medium tone
- Low tone

1. High tone

The phonological identity of this tone results from the following comparisons:

V́/V̀

[kár]: stem [kàr]: sun

[ɓɔ́l]: bag [ɓɔ̀l]: man – lion

V́/V̄

[kɔ́r] : basket [kɔ́r] : madness

[kúl]: charcoal [kūl]: cold

2. Medium tone

The phonological identity of this tone makes the following comparisons:

V̄/V̀

[mbā]: foreigner [mbà]: milk,
[kú]: gourd [kù]: pond
[nī]: dream [nì]: jealousy

3. Low tone

The phonological identity of this tone makes the following comparisons:

V̀/V̀V́

[bà]: celibacy [bà á]: only

[tàr]: speech [tà ár]: high

In order to understand the Ngambai's concept of time, one needs to note that the elements of days, nights, months, seasons and years can all be viewed as an amazing creation of the universe. The philosophical thinking behind these elements is related to their meaning. Every day, month and year, there are numerous events and occurrences, which are all part of God's plan for the present, past and future.

2.1.4. The philosophy of time

As we mentioned at the beginning of this study, the issue of time has engaged many scholars over the years. One such scholar, Hendrik Bosman, in an article published in the book entitled *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa*, observed that:

> New trends in historiography allow theological reflection in Africa, and especially Biblical studies, to be grounded in history as the interpretation context. Believing communities across Africa must grasp the opportunity to interpret the Bible in response to their respective historical situation, making sense to their audiences within their own cultural frames of reference (Bosman, 1999:101).

What can an African understanding of history contribute to the interpretation of the Scriptures? Before we focus on the pioneering work done by Mbiti, Bosman makes a few general remarks about existing socio-anthropological research concerning African concepts of time. He notes that Bohannan (1953) wrote about the Tiv of Nigeria, and within this group of people, time is indicated by a direct association between two events. For example:

1) The word for "day" refers to the period between sunrise and sunset, and is the same word used for "sun".

2) The word for "moon" also applies to the period between two consecutive new moons, the approximate equivalence to "month". The role of genealogy among the Tiv is also significant to the understanding of time – it is more a question of social space and time than one connected with countable generations of ancestors. Thus, genealogies are said to explain social processes (Bosman, 1999:104).

Mbiti's explanation of the African concept of time as a two-dimensional phenomenon (actual and potential time) is shown to be controversial and not representative of the whole of Africa.

As a result of his research among the Bunyoro of Uganda, Akiiki was able to conclude that the Bantu understanding of time is not a mathematical one, but is rather phenomenological or descriptive. It is calculated in terms of daily, monthly or yearly activities (Akiiki, 1980:367). Furthermore, just as Mbiti interprets the absence of "end of the world" myths to mean that African time is cyclical, the history of its measure depends on the social activities of the group in question.

According to the Ngambai, time is defined according to a series of events. The daily events and activities that occur are used to determine time. According to Bosman, the image of a spiral is most appropriate to illustrating the essential element of African concepts of time and history, an image which incorporates both linear and cyclical dimensions (Bosman, 1999:105).

2.2. Biblical concepts of time and eschatology

2.2.1. Old Testament concept of time

Eschatology in the Old Testament was chosen as a focus area of this research. A positive view of life after death, in contrast to the views of most scholars, remains a dilemma. The future is something that fascinates the African mind, and our view in this regard takes many forms, based on the reports of some scholars who claim that there is no possibility of perfection with regard to the

future. They acknowledge that the concept of history which permits one to conceive of a time to come, which must be meaningfully different to the past and present, is to be traced back to the outlook of ancient Israel and the impact which the Old Testament has had on the Western mind. We will look at some key points in this regard. The concept of time is such an integral part of Christian thought that for dialogue between Christian and secular scholars seems to be potentially very fruitful.

What is eschatology in terms of the Old Testament? Why devote an entire section to this issue in this study? The term "eschatology" may have many connotations, and the topic has important implications for the study of Israelite religion and biblical theology. Gowan, in his study of eschatology in the Old Testament, revealed some characteristics that are typical of Israel's hopes. He indicates that the Old Testament's expectations are distinct from those found in other religions and cultures. Thus, they provide an opportunity for alternative forms of hope – Christian and otherwise – and insight into the nature of global eschatologies (Gowan, 1986: 121-123).

Firstly, Old Testament eschatology is a worldly hope. It does not ignore or abandon the kind of life that human beings experience in favour of speculation regarding some other, better place or form of existence to be hoped for after death. This places the Old Testament viewpoint in sharp contrast to other religions and cultures.

Secondly, Old Testament eschatology understands success or failure to be completely in the hands of God. The basis for hope in the Old Testament is not faith in human progress, but the assurance of a coming divine intervention that will introduce something new that people have failed and will fail to accomplish.

We have seen throughout that the hope of Israel was not an expression of faith in the essential goodness of humanity. Instead, it grew out of the conviction that human failure has so corrupted life on this earth that only a radical transformation initiated by God alone could rectify things. This point of view thus stands in sharp contrast to modern humanism and all "self help" projections of the future. The Old Testament places a strong emphasis on human participation in one

way or another. Repentance, for example, is seen as essential at some point in the process. The emphasis on obedience in the Old Testament portraits of the ideal future shows that at no time does the Old Testament think of human beings without responsibility. They actively participate in the new world, but cannot produce it – this will be God's work (Isaiah 59:20; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Isaiah30: 20-21; 33:24; 66:18-23; 2:2-4).

Thirdly, Old Testament eschatology emphasises human society more than personal salvation. This is in contrast to the strong emphasis in Christian teaching. We have noticed that concern for the fate of the individual after death, which has tended to dominate Christian eschatology, is almost completely absent in the Old Testament. Although the Old Testament does not ignore the redemption of individuals, it places the strongest emphasis on the truth that a full human life is one lived in community (Isaiah 33:24; 35: 5-6; 27: 13; Ezekiel 20: 33-34).

Fourthly, Old Testament eschatology is a comprehensive hope. It neither focuses on an improved social structure inhabited by the same kind of people who created the mess in which we are now, nor does it promise that personal salvation will somehow make social problems disappear (Isaiah 27: 13; 35:10; Joel 3:20; Isaiah 66:18-23; Jeremiah 3:17).

Gordon observes that most scholarly discussions on the subject differentiate between two kinds of dualism implicit with regard to eschatology. There is a temporal dualism, which contrasts the present evil age to the glories of the age to come in a very linear way. Biblical scholarship might do better justice to the material in the scriptures by defining eschatology as "the doctrine of ultimate things" (Gordon, 1997:55). This concept will be tackled furthermore in the chapter relating to Christ the Eschaton. According to Johnston, in his study of Psalm 49, "a personal eschatology" has stated that while there are obvious conceptual links between life after death in communion with God on the one hand, and resurrection on the other, it is important to distinguish between the two. There is ample evidence in Jewish and Christian history for the co-existence of divergent and even contradictory views over a long period, especially with regard to eschatology. Therefore, it is equally possible to regard the psalmist's conviction of ransom from death as a direct result of his own relationship with God and belief

that this would not be dissolved by death. In other words, his confidence that God would ransom him from sheol owes more to theology than to history, more to his personal experience of Israel's covenant with God than to the development of Israel's faith in response to exile. It is quite possible to see it as a genuine expression of pre-exilic personal eschatology (Johnston, 1997:83).

Van der Meer points out an important passage dealing with eschatology in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 36:16-38. It describes the reasons for Israel's Diaspora (Ezekiel 36:16-19) and return to their land as a way to rehabilitate YHWH's sacred name (Ezekiel 36:16-23), which will result in the internal transformation of the Israelite people (Ezekiel 36:24-32) and external restoration (Ezekiel 36:33-36), as well as the repopulation of ruined cities (Ezekiel 36:37-38) (Van der Meer, 1997:147). He concludes that:

> The eschatological ideas expressed in Ezekiel 36:23-38 need therefore not be dated to a late post-exilic, but fit the exilic or early post-exilic period (Van der Meer, 1997:158).

Van Wieringen, in *The Day beyond the Days in Isaiah 2:2* (Van Wieringen, 1987:256-258), examines this particular passage, and clarifies what the development of time in the book of Isaiah looks like. He starts by describing the central importance of the phrase "at the moment of time beyond the days" in Isaiah 2:2 to the development of time. He presents this as a future event at which time God's people and nations will go to the house of the Lord together and when God's Torah will go forth out of Zion. Whether or not this day is realised in the book of Isaiah is also connected with its relationship to other future days.

The first time that the future day is mentioned is in Isaiah 2:6-22. The day, which is described in this passage, is in contrast to the day beyond the days. It will be a day on which roles will be reversed. The day for the Lord is therefore not equal to "the moment of time beyond the days" in Isaiah 2:2, but must be situated before the day beyond the days. It is described in general terms, without any connection whatsoever to an Assyrian, Babylonian or other threat, as in the days of any other king. The question as to the realisation of the day is also important in

the last part of the book of Isaiah, namely chapters 40-66. Here, days are mentioned several times. On the one hand, days are mentioned in order to look back into the past. In this regard, the Lord speaks about a day of salvation in Isaiah 49:8. The same past perspective applies to Isaiah 51:9, 60:20, 63:9, 63:11 and 65:2. On the other hand, days that precede the day beyond the days are also mentioned.

In Isaiah 52:6, the future day is announced on which God's people will be made aware of God's name. In verses 7-10, a movement towards Zion takes place.

Nevertheless, this future day is not the day beyond the days, because it is only God who actually returns to Zion. The indication of the days of the servant in Isaiah 53:10 also refers to the day. Despite this, the day beyond the days has not yet been realised.

2.2.1.1. Conclusion

The concepts of eschatology in the Old Testament is related somehow through the ages of people in despair and confronted with the brokenness of creation and have set their hope on the consoling perspective of a salvific eschaton. These concepts have been present in the books of the prophets and have been contributed to the understanding of the redemptive historical process toward the fulfillment in a consummated new creation.

Anything that is truly future is inaccessible to any human being except as hope, but since the Bible's control message in speaking of the future is not time but evil, a limited participation in the eschaton as the end of evil is possible now, since God's redemptive work is already in the process. It is not yet the end of time but in faith we believe that we do participate in events and experience conditions that already possess something of the quality of the eschaton to come.

2.2.2. New Testament concept of time

The history of the New Testament concept of time has long been a hotly debated issue in biblical theology since Christian scholars started writing about it. The dissertation by John Mbiti entitled *New Testament Eschatology in an African*

Background (1971) needs to be acknowledged here because of the specific quality of this work.

The history of the New Testament view of time seeks to reveal the biblical authors' own understanding of events and their significance within the narrative context in which they are found. This should be clarified from the start in order to highlight what Ciampa refers to in his article entitled *The History of Redemption* (2007:253):

> Some biblical authors emphasise a programme of salvation history as the plan that God is working out for the redemption of creation and His people. Others assume that framework and address their readers in other terms, but they do so in the light of an awareness of where they stand in relation to the unfolding of God's redemptive plan.

This section will aim to further the argument of those scholars who are in favour of understanding biblical theology in terms of the narrative structure. Beale, in his well-known publication entitled *The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology* (1997), assumes that:

> The major theological ideas of the New Testament flow from the concept that Christ's life, and especially death and resurrection through the Spirit, launched the end-time new creation for God's glory.

Beale, in light of this hope of Christ's life, and particularly his death and resurrection, views this as a diamond that represents the new creation. The various theological ideas are the facets of the diamond, which are inseparable from the diamond itself. Some examples follow of how this is so, and how the eschatological enhancement of the various doctrines also provides insight into the practical application of these doctrines to our lives. This idea of a new creation is evident not only in Paul and the Apocalypse, but in the New Testament in general. The term "new creation" does not occur a lot, even in Paul, but the notion of resurrection is essentially a part of new creation – it is the new creation of humanity (Beale, 1997:23).

In the original creation of Genesis 1-2, Adam was to represent the authority of God on earth. The doctrine of Christ as the last Adam and the image of God's son and Messiah are to be understood as references to Christ re-establishing a new creation. As such, Christ is the son of Adam, or "the son of Man", who has begun what the first Adam should have done, and to inherit what the first Adam should have inherited, including the glory reflected in God's image. Consequently, God created a corporate Adam, Israel, who was to be obedient to God in the Promised Land, which the Old Testament repeatedly refers to as "like the garden of Eden". They were to go out from the Promised Land and subdue the rest of the earth. Israel had her fall, the effects of which were devastating for the nation's destiny. Lastly, God created another individual Adamic figure, Jesus Christ, who finally did what Adam should have done, and thus inaugurates a new creation, which will not be corrupted but will culminate in a new heaven and earth.

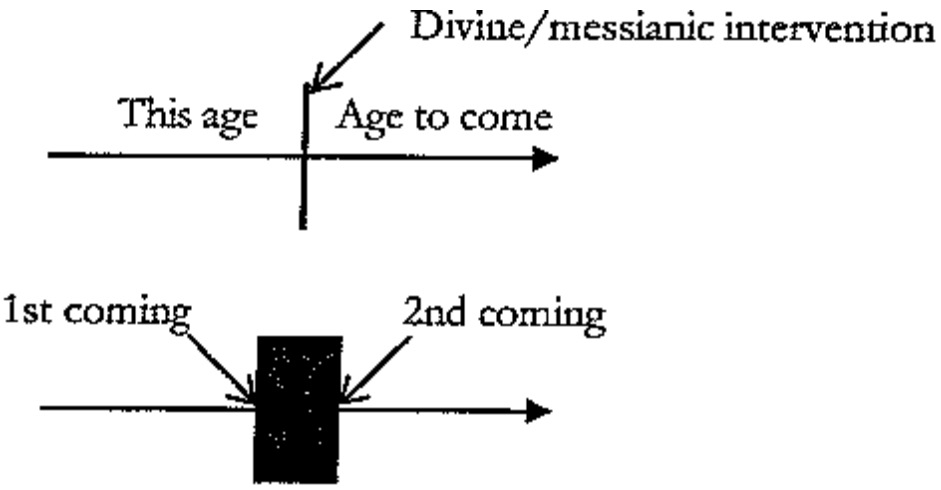
Indeed, how can we connect the eschatological language in the Old and New Testaments? As we have seen, the meaning of the Old Testament's expression of time can only be understood and fully explained with reference to the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the wording is prophetic and refers to a future time – there will be tribulation for Israel consisting of oppression (Ezekiel 38:14-17), persecution (Daniel 10:14, 11:27), false teaching, deception and apostasy (Daniel 10:14). After this tribulation, Israel will seek the Lord (Hosea 3:3-4), be delivered (Ezekiel 38:14-16, Daniel 10:14) and their enemies will be judged (Ezekiel 38:14-16, Daniel 10:14, Daniel 11:40-45), and God will establish a kingdom on earth and rule over it (Isaiah 2:2-4, Matthew 4:1-3, Daniel 2:28-45), together with a Davidic king (Hosea 3:4-5). After the time of tribulation and persecution, Daniel 11-12 says that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous.

The Old Testament also expresses eschatological hopes without using the term "end-time". For example, Joel 2:28 refers to "the pouring out of God's spirit" in the coming period of restoration. Likewise, Isaiah 65:17-18 and 66:22 refer to the coming new creation. All that the Old Testament has announced will occur in the end. The end-time began already in the first century and continues up to the

present day. The resurrection marked the beginning of Jesus' messianic reign, and the spirit at Pentecost signaled the inauguration of His rule through the Church (Acts 1:6-8, 2:1-43). The first time that the words "last days" appears in the New Testament is in Acts 2:17, where Peter realises that the tongues being spoken at Pentecost are the start of the fulfillment of Joel's end-time prophecy that the day will come when God's spirit will gift not only prophets, priests and kings, but all of God's people. In 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul says that the Old Testament was written in order to instruct Corinthian Christians about how to live in the end-time, since upon them "the ends of the ages have come". Likewise, in Ephesians 1:7-10 and 1:20-23, "the fullness of the times" alludes to when believers were redeemed and Christ began to rule over the earth as a result of His resurrection.

These brief observations reveal that the last days predicted by the Old Testament began with Christ's first coming. In another way, the great end-time predicted has already begun the process of fulfillment. Indeed, the resurrection was predicted by the Old Testament to occur at the end of the world as part of the new creation. God would make redeemed humanity a part of the new creation by recreating their bodies through resurrection (Daniel 12:1-2). Naturally, we will look forward to the time when our bodies will be raised at Christ's final parousia, and we will become part of the consummated new creation. Christ's resurrection, however, placed Him at the beginning of the new creation. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 15:22-24 states that the resurrection launched through Christ will be consummated when He returns. In this regard, Ciampa (2007:291) observes two comings – one that has already taken place, and the other which is still anticipated. In other words, most Jews have anticipated the coming of the Messiah to divide history almost into two parts – this age and the age to come. Both sides of the dividing line are defined in terms of the first and second comings of Christ (or by His resurrection and the general resurrection), which bring about the respective inauguration and consummation of the age to come. He illustrates this in the following way:

Figure 3 (Adapted from Ciampa. 2007: 291)



While the final periscope of Matthew's Gospel indicates that the time of restoration has been inaugurated, there are other elements that suggest the restoration is yet to come. It certainly seems that it has not come for Israel in the way that has been imagined. There are many indications that what Israel (or at least the Jewish establishment) can continue to expect is judgment, instead of redemption and restoration (Ciampa, 2007:294). Although Jesus informs the disciples that He has already received "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18), they must still wait for "the new world, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne" (Matthew 19:28).

With reference to Ciampa, we can summarise the biblical narrative proposed in this section, which is illustrated in the chart below (Ciampa, 2007:307):

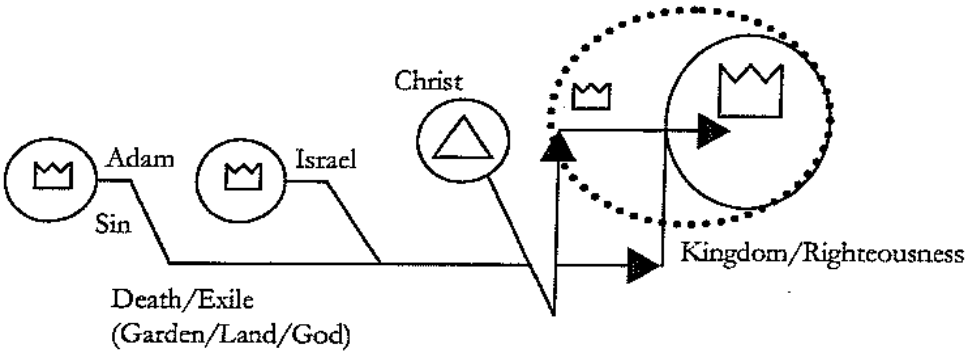


Figure 4 (Adapted from Ciampa. 2007: 294)

The crowns in the two circles (on the left) representing the garden and the land indicate the dominion for which Adam and Eve were created, which was subsequently granted to the Davidic king. The circle to the right represents Christ's presence in heaven, which he willingly leaves in order to identify with His people and all humanity through His life on earth and His death on the cross. The vertical, downward line from this circle represents Christ's identification with us in our exile. It extends below the original line of death and exile, since Christ's death goes deeper and accomplishes what human and Israelite exiles would not be able to achieve. The vertical, upward line represents the restoration of Israel and of humanity, which was accomplished in principle through His resurrection. It leads to a dotted circle with a crown, which represents Christ's present reign in heaven at God's right hand. The solid circle within the dotted circle represents the final consummation of the Kingdom of God and Christ, when all creation is fully restored, and all peoples and nations recognise that the God of Israel is the only true God, Creator and Redeemer in heaven and on earth. It is the God of Israel and the nations who therefore receive all the glory that is due to him as Christ, and His

people have dominion under His rule, a dominion which reflects His righteousness, truth and glory, and brings Him eternal praise.

2.2.2.1 Conclusion

As we have discussed throughout in this section about the concept of eschatology in the New Testament, let us conclude that in one side there are scholars who have seen the centre of the New Testament the notion of "new creation" as an important clue others in order side have contented themselves with a "multi - thematic" approach. We have seen ourselves that the Bible begins with original creation which is corrupted and the rest of the Old Testament is a redemptive historical process working toward a restoration of the fallen creation in a new creation. The New Testament then sees these hopes beginning fulfillment and prophesies a future time of fulfillment in a comsummated new creation which describes in Revelation 21:1-22; 5. Paul is saying that if we really have seen created as part of the new creation, which is incorruptible, then our love for Jesus will be incorruptible and never end (Ephesians 6:24; 2:10).

2.2.3. The theology of time: biblical time

In this section, we have explored the eschatological perspective of African beliefs, with particular reference to the scriptures. It has become clear that the viewpoints of African scholars are different in this regard. The most obvious difference is in terms of their geographical location, which also constitutes the context within which they are writing. In discussing the role of the Bible in African Christianity, Bosman argues as follows:

> African Christianity will have to grasp the opportunity to communicate their religious experience in a way that makes sense within their society, physical environment and religious or philosophical frame of reference (Bosman, 1999:110).

Bosman suggests that there are obvious similarities (societal and democratic dimensions, wholeness of past-present-future, a spiral metaphor for time that includes cyclical and linear aspects) between historical conceptualisation in the Old Testament and many parts of Africa. Although the scriptures make many

philosophical speculations regarding the nature of time, biblical views seem to concur with the Ngambai concept of time in terms of events and their significance. We can refer to the passage of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, which expresses this well: "there is a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to be born, a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to reap…..". In the Old Testament, time is filled by events. There is always a time for something, and the focus of prophetic literature in the Old Testament is clearly not exclusively on the past, but as a whole, the historical references serve as a justification for moral and cultural reforms required by the prophetic critique.

The Old Testament is about the chosen people, and constitutes "salvation history" for all people. The New Testament's concept of time is in line with that of the Old Testament. In this regard, God's gift of salvation is offered to people who have the freedom to accept or reject it. By giving the time of decision, Christ brings an enduring now, so that statements about both the present and the future stand side by side. In this regard, the Old Testament represents the time of promise fulfilled in Christ, the centre of time, the same yesterday, today and forever. This depends on the belief that all is possible because of the actions and promises of God, the Creator, which brings us back to a basic belief in Ngambai concepts of time and culture. This is what Christian eschatology is all about. Knowing that the future has already begun with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the reality of the age to come has already been introduced to this age through the first coming of Chris. Hence, as we have said, the Kingdom of God is here, but not yet in all its fullness. This is the concept of "inaugural eschatology". The term "inaugural eschatology" was previously seen by most scholars of the New Testament as the centre of New Testament theology, but the view point of Professor Beale is that the new creation is a plausible and defensible centre of the New Testament - that it is a needed refinement of inaugural eschatology (Beale, 1997:11). From this approach, we come along side of what has been established "already and not yet" eschatological in the New Testament by the scholars. The central element of the inaugurated new creation is understood as Christ's life, especially his death and resurrection. Thus, between the first and second coming of Christ, we are living in the "now but not yet" of God's rule – the overlapping of the two ages, whereby God's Kingdom is now existing in the midst of this evil age. One could ask the following question: "What is our destiny between now and not yet?" Apostle Paul, in his time, was faced with this question and replied

to the Thessalonians: “Our destiny will be in our confrontation with the returning Lord” (1 Thessalonians 2:15, 1 Thessalonians 15:25). This means that God is in control of our past, present and future in His creation (Psalms 102:25-27 and Hebrew 1:10-12).

2.3. Conclusion

In our discussion of theological methodologies, we noted that African theologians in general are agreed that the Bible is the foundation document of the Christian faith, as important and central to theology in Africa as elsewhere. It will be helpful, therefore, to consider the issue of the role that the Bible actually plays in African theology, and the way in which it has been used. Such a theology will have a pastoral focus, in order to make the Ngambai people feel at home in the Church. This can be achieved by adaptation in all areas. While all Christian theology must be based on biblical exegesis and the history of dogma, it must lead to interpretation in order to be relevant, and it is at this point that African Christians can make a significant contribution to theology.

We think that Mbiti could have made it clearer that it is not “time’ that moves into the past, but events. At one point, he states that “time as a separate reality does not “move” – only events come and go…”. However, not long after this, he says that “time as a succession or simultaneity of events “moves” not forwards but backwards” (Mbiti, 1971:24). These statements are not inconsistent though – when we put them side by side, it is clear that he is using time differently in the two statements. However, it would have been better if he had avoided referring to time moving backwards, as this leaves him open to the charge that he is representing the African view of time.

The point that Mbiti is really making here is that for the Akamba (and other Africans), there is no such thing as “time” in the abstract sense. For the Akamba, time is not an academic concern, but is simply a combination of events that have occurred – those which are taking place now, and those which will soon occur (Mbiti, 1971:24).

Accounts by other African groups support this view. Groups such as the Ngambai of Chad seem to define time in terms of a succession of events, which is a daily experience that is taken for granted. They talk about time in relation to these events and their succession. Thus, daily events are used to determine time. The challenge to Christian and other theologians is how to relate the Ngambai concept of time to doctrines such as eternal life, life after death, and heaven and hell. The challenge for theologians in Africa is also clear – for them to be aware of the cultural aspects involved, and of the deep-seated values of people, and to then be able to relate these to Christian doctrines.

The whole distinction between past, present and future is due to the abstract notion of time as an entity which, as we have seen, is alien to African thought. There is not time, but rather events. Completed events exist in the present and future, as well as the past, as they are "beyond time".

Sharing the Gospel or Christian life cross-culturally involves adjusting to another person's way of life and perceptions. The goal is to try and understand the other person's viewpoint to such an extent that communication becomes not only possible, but also effective.

CHAPTER THREE

ANCESTORS AND THE AFTERLIFE

3.1 African worldview

Africa is one of five continents in the world, with its visible and invisible realities. It used to be known as the "dark continent" because it was believed that Satan had had control over Africa for centuries. For example, evil practices such as human sacrifice, witchcraft, sorcery, spiritism and idolatry were found there.

Furthermore, African people were not only religious, but their traditional and philosophical wisdom from many tribes in relation to the universe of spiritual beings, natural objects, man, animals, plants and so on also constituted an important part of their lifestyle. However, the Gospel of Christ has brought light to Africa, and many Africans have abandoned African traditional religion, moving from darkness to light. The prophet Isaiah said that "those who live in a dark land the light has shone upon them" (Isaiah 9:2).

We salute the efforts of many authors who have written about this concept in different ways and from different perspectives. Furthermore, we assume that what African Christianity needs is more teachings from God which quote biblical texts that could provide it with transformational healing for its growth in Christ (Moreau, 1990: 12).

As we are thinking of how Africans can be encouraged once they turn from darkness to light, it is important for African Christians to know that they have been called upon to become a chosen race, royal priesthood and holy nation, in order to proclaim the Glory of God (1 Pet 2:9). African churches have already reached certain goals that could enable them to find ways of understanding the Gospel in their context, particularly through the daily practice of living the faith.

In the course of this chapter, we will identify in African beliefs certain elements of a dialogical approach towards a biblical perspective. The question here

concerns how African beliefs are related to scriptural teachings, or what can be viewed as Christian and non-Christian in the worshipping of God in the context of Africa. Firstly, this subject will be dealt with by studying the African worldview in general, but will also investigate the understanding of eschatology in the specific African context of the Ngambai people of Chad in particular. We will attempt to examine the worldview of human life and spirit, as well as spiritual values, in Africa. Finally, we will find a way to relate our reflections on African traditions to the biblical context of the new situation in the last chapter of this study.

In order to understand and be able to have effective communication with an African, it is extremely important to know about his perception of the world. Due to the importance of this issue, we aim to provide a detailed discussion of each aspect in this regard. However, in the African world, there are two distinct worlds that can be identified in relation to the Ngambai culture: the world of man and the world of spirits.

3.1.1 The sphere of human life

There is no doubt that African people believe in the visible world as a creation of the Supreme Being (Gehman, 1985:48-49). This world is the place where people and things deal with life. The village is the sphere in which there is unity of traditional and social life. Traditional life is composed of families, and is led by a chief or an elder. Furthermore, villages develop and become clans, and clans become tribes. The African worldview is dynamic and moves forward in its circumstances, but is sometimes shaken by natural and social calamities. As Gehman(1985:41) said:

> When people reach their limits, having first sought the assistance of the *mundu mue* without finding help, they reply: “Now the remaining part is for God to play”. While the ordinary problems were resolved, the incurable diseases and inexplicable catastrophes were brought to *Mulungu* for divine intervention.

African people believe in the physical world in which cosmic forces and social calamities are controllable and should be manipulated to their advantage. These

cosmic forces and social calamities elicit religious activities among African people. As a result, Mbiti(1970:81) observed that,

> Even when the immediate causes may be known or attributed to particular sources, affections are seen as mysteries which often defy explanation. For this reason, many people attribute them to God as either causing them, allowing them to happen, or being in some ways connected with them.

If one does not take this into account, it can cause misunderstandings and misconceptions regarding African beliefs. African religions have been a major force in the lives of people through the ministry of diviners in times of crisis. In order to better understand the situation, we will discuss the religious and philosophical rituals performed by the Ngambai tribe in Chad.

This section is the result of research undertaken in Chad from 1973 to 1975 (confidential and anonymous document), where, after a lapse of thirty years, initiation rites were revived and made compulsory by a presidential decree. It was central to ancestor worship and the rite was given an equal status to Christian baptism. Throughout this study, we obtained information from informants by means of group and individual questionnaires (2009). In addition, we are Ngambai and our deceased grandfather was one of the chief initiators of our clan, so we write this as a participant-observer, in order to describe and explain these rites.

3.1.1 Religious rites of girls

Mag was the word used for the religious rites of girls. The Ngambais called these rites *Kundamag.* The girls were culturally prepared for womanhood by *Kundamag,* a word which is interesting because it is composed of two words:
Mag – an idol or symbol of the one or ones being worshipped
Unda – a verb with several shades of meaning, but which in this context means to proclaim. Prefixed by the letter ‘k’, this verb is intensified.
Kundamag involved a lot of dancing and singing, not simply for the fun of it, but to proclaim the benevolence of their ancestors and through their ancestors, the creator – God.

Women and mothers, as well as men and husbands, had ancestors. This was emphasised in the religious rites of girls, and it therefore complemented the rites of boys. Apart from this, however, the custom of "nourishing the spirits of the dead" was reserved for women and this was taught to girls, who learnt to "nourish the spirits of the dead". Offerings of food and beer were put under family trees, and these offerings were minimal and symbolic. More was eaten by the initiates and initiators, in company with the departed dead, than by the honoured guests.

It is commonly believed that the dead were in intimate contact with their most distant and revered ancestors, whose dwelling place was in or under the earth. It was also believed that the dead had power or influence over the creator – God- to make conditions right (or not) for the living.

The Ngambai rites of initiation for girls were concluded with abdominal tattoos. This was a painful experience, but they were persuaded to believe that it enhanced their beauty and made them more attractive to men. The girls then received a new name, and when they got married, their in-laws called them by this name.

3.1.1.2 Stages of religious rites for men

In the Ngambai dialect, the word for "death" is *yoo*, and the word for "dead ones" (plural) is *yô-Je*. In this phase of the religious ritual, the "dead ones" are their ancestors, who, in the dead of night, emerge from the bush to "kill" the initiates. Their cries are supposed to prove that while they died on earth, they live in the nether world and have power over their earthbound "sons".

According to Ngambai beliefs, there are three ancestors standing in the direct line of succession from the distant founder, and they are called the following:

- *Uma*
- *Ngalakag*
- *Yoodonda*

In the meticulous ceremonies and rituals of initiation, boys were introduced to these ancestors. The first two stages were mandatory, and third was voluntary. We will examine them in order, each stage bearing the name of the particular ancestor.

a. Uma

A boy's education during the first year of his life was provided in the environment of his home, and especially near to his mother. In the open spaces, by the rivers and streams, and around their huts and compounds, the children were free to play and dream. Tomorrow was always so uncertain - in their own world, the children had their own problems and pains.

A shock was needed, shrouded in mystery and related to the spirits of their ancestors, in order to make the children aware of the anguish that so often took hold of the hearts of their elders. This shock was called *And Uma*, and was the first stage of the religious rites for boys. A closer look makes certain things very clear:

- *Uma Deouje*: spirits of ancestors
- *Bbee Uma*: temporary dwelling for departed spirits
- *Ngonn And Uma:* the first phase of rites

When used in a figurative sense, we get a clue to the real meaning of the word *Uma*. We will now look at the ritual, which generally took place once a year, about the time of the annual festival of joy for the harvest.

According to the Ngambai's traditions, a boy aged 10-15 years old was ready to *And Uma.* His father gave the responsibility to the boy's paternal uncle, as it was assumed that the boy's real father would be inclined to be indulgent, and that would not be right. Thus, the uncle was the guardian, educator and initiator, under the authority of the hierarchy of all initiations.

At nightfall, all the boys of the village ready for initiation rites gathered in the appointed place and were given calabashes filled with dumplings made of cornmeal,

known as *Kore Muru Uma*. With this previously prepared food, the boys went to a place well removed from the village, called *Doban Loo Kand Uma Le Ngannje*. This was a sacred place to them, and it was there that wisdom was to be communicated to them – *Loo Kula Dee Kemkar*. The boys waited patiently at the *Doban*, and were joined at midnight by the initiators, wearing cowry-bordered goatskins and carrying throwing knives on their shoulders. The ceremony then started, and they feasted on the food, had fun and danced through the night.

A few of the acolytes then hid themselves in the bush and transformed their voices of men into a high falsetto, emitting strange cries which scared the boys. The initiators would then say "Fear not, it is the voice of *Uma*, your eminent ancestor, calling back to the land of the living from the dwelling of the departed dead". But the boys were still afraid, and some of the joy had gone out of the ceremony's rites. It was then time to stop the dancing and proceed with the serious part of the festival. Then the beatings would begin. The initiators were careful to let the initiates feel the burning sting of it, but without breaking the boys' skin.

In the village, the women and non-initiates would hear the cry of *Uma*. After the beatings, the boys were crowded into leafy bowers. The chief initiator, standing in their midst, then began to sermonise. Before the teaching began, the voice of *Uma* was raised plaintively nearby. The initiates would look around to see if they could see their revered and illustrious ancestor. However, their teacher would call them to order, saying "You cannot know him. *Uma* speaks through human voices in a language that you do not yet know. If you do not listen, he will be angry and will punish you". The initiator, *Njelao*, was eloquent and the boys listened with attention as he praised their ancestors and described their extraordinary qualities of courage and strength of body and soul.

Warnings were given to reveal none of the "secrets" to women and girls and to non-initiates. The penalty prescribed by their ancestors for such unfaithfulness would be death. After this, the boys were allowed to wear a small goatskin around their loins, and of this they were very proud. Instilled into their minds were many words of wisdom coined by their ancestors, and they really believed that their revered ancestors

lived on just beyond the veil which hides the departed dead from the land of the living.

When a boy had gone through the first phase of rites, *And Uma*, his brothers, sisters and parents called him for two or three years by a nickname – *Laoman*. He was then ready for the second and most important cycle of rites for a Ngambai boy or youth.

b. Lao

The transitive verb *d'aou sea wala ge mba tolee lao* means "they initiated", and the intransitive verb *ma le' m'tol laoya* means "I have been initiated". *Tol Lao* is a compound verb, and *tol* means "kill". It is a simulated cultural killing, and there is a simulated rebirth, which is also cultural, in contrast to biological birth.

Lao was the traditional boy school of the Ngambai people, in which women and girls played a very minor but necessary role. However, it was more than a school. It was a socio-political organisation and an occult science with a well-defined hierarchy which dominated the whole of society.

Each clan of the race had its own institution, with varying practices according to region. In each one was an assembly which assumed all powers. They made the decisions and assumed the execution. The publication of each decree was made by the voice of *Ngalakag*, the second ancestor, with *Uma*, in a direct line with the founder of the race, who was presumed to be in close contact with God.

The ancestors were invisible to women and non-initiates, but known to the initiated, or so they claimed. The rules of *Lao* were immutable, and the breaking of them was punishable by death – real, biological death.

We will now examine the ritual:

The household or compound of the one who supervised the actions of the boy in *And Uma* was the one from which he went to *Tol Lao*. The initiator, in addition to being the boy's uncle, was also his *Njedolao.* The boy revered and obeyed that one as

long as he lived, and would never do anything to offend him. This is expressed in a Ngambai proverb: *Njeteen ngonn esé njedolao wa,* meaning "The one who "delivers" the boy at his biological birth is not as important as his *Njedolao*, who "delivers" him at his cultural rebirth.

When a youth was ready to *Tol Lao*, he caught one of his chickens and went with it to all the houses in his clan, saying: "Today I am going to *Tol Lao"*. At nightfall, always that mystic hour, initiators and initiates walked in single file along a path that was almost invisible, and made their way to the place outside the village called *Nad Lao*. The initiators and previous initiates gathered with the new candidates for initiation. When all were gathered, the ceremony began with a dance, accompanied by the Lao band. The songs were unintelligible to the new initiates, for they had not yet learned the language of *Lao.* Suddenly, the music stopped, and dead silence followed the dance. The chief initiator then shouted: *Ngalakag*. This was the name of their illustrious ancestor, and the meaning of the name is "tall as a tree". The *ngalakag* cry would melt into the air, and another initiator then explained the mystery. Thus, the time for the "killing" had arrived. The boys were ordered to lie flat on their stomachs in the dust and close their eyes.

For the "resurrection", silence reigned. It was the stillness of the grave, a stillness that could be felt in the village. Mothers and fathers could see their sons awakening from the sleep of death. However, the silence was short-lived. There were songs of triumph in the camp, and a shout of triumph in the village. Night was the time for "killing" and for being resurrected. Then, very early the next morning, the initiates were taken into the bush to gather leaves (*Kamkudu*) and create costumes of leaves (*Kamlao*). This typical *Lao* dress reached below the boys' knees and left them headless. They really believed that in the mysteries of cultural death and resurrection, the boys had been in communication with the *Yô Je* (ancestors).

c. Laobèl

We now come to the third and final phase of initiation in the Ngambai clan of the Saras. It is called *Laobèl* or simply *Bèl*. The word *bèl* means "feathers". Thus, the

candidates, in addition to graduating, got a feather or feathers in their cap. Admission was restricted to those who had gone through the mandatory rites of *And Uma* and *Tol Lao,* as well as mature men with more than average intelligence, proven by their success in the affairs of tribal life. One of the proofs was their wealth in grain, goats and all the other things that constituted riches in the society of the Ngambai race many years ago.

As *and-uma* admitted a boy to *tol-lao,* so *illa-bèl* admitted a man to "graduate school", a place of honour in the tribe. The verb *illa-bèl* is in the singular, even though many participated in the rites. This is consistent with the two previous phases – *and-uma* and *tol-lao*, which are compound verb-nouns.

The course began with a copious meal prepared especially for the "students". Only those who had qualified could eat. If, by accident, someone came when the ceremony was taking place and ate unworthily of the sacred food, he was forced to go through the course. If he failed to graduate, he was poisoned. Elders who had already succeeded and gained their feathers were present, and led the activities. When the beer had been consumed, the elders stood up and initiated the candidates for *Laobèl*. They called it *illa-bèl*, since it was the opening ceremony that would lead to the successful scholars gaining their feathers.

The rite was simple. First was the make-up of the initiates. Pastes of *poro* (white clay) and *niba* (red clay) were used. This represented the image of their venerable ancestor *Yô Donda* (death personified). The make-up artists, when satisfied that their cosmetic art would captivate the people, led the initiates back into the village where dancing took place around them by the elders, to the rhythm of the *Dalé Laobèl* (drum of laobèl). Women and children in particular appeared to be terrified by the faces of living men with the face of death. However, in all seriousness, the initiates were presented as representatives and living images of their revered ancestor *Yô Donda,* who had already begun to transmit to them all the wisdom, courage and know-how of past generations.

What did they learn? They were taught the uses of plants as remedies for poison, and some specialised in divination and the management of people. Without

graduating from *Laobèl*, they could not become eligible for the most important positions available in their villages or clans. We will now name a few of these positions:

- *Njebee*, founder of a village or group
- *Njedonang*, human representative of the God of the earth
- *Njendi*, human representative of the God of the sky and rain
- *Njelao*, director of initiations and education
- *Njeang*, mediator between man and God of the river named *Ang*
- *Njetoboi* or *Damori*, miracle men who were said to metamorphose their human bodies into those of lions and back to human bodies
- *Nje-er*, the diviner who foretold the future by means of sticks (kabera) or stones (jèr).

The degree accorded in the *Laobèl* phase of initiation qualified a man to specialise in those areas of leadership outlined above. Indeed, we have assumed that *Uma*, *Ngalakag* and *Yô Donda* are the names of the illustrious ancestors of the Ngambai clan. The process of initiation occurred in three stages: death, resurrection and discipline.

What was fundamental to their traditions?

- Liberation – after a period of two months, during which the initiates at home in their villages or towns adjusted to life once more and were closely watched by their uncle-initiators.
- Education – they obtained all the knowledge and know-how of the race: rules of life, means of defense, folklore, hunting, fishing and farming skills, etc.
- A new name – this was selected from names of ancestors that were still known, and was prefixed or suffixed by the word *Lao:* Laokein, Laokura, Laomai, etc. There was also the highest degree given by Ngambai men, which was called *On Mbai.*

- A new language – this was one of the dark secrets of Lao. Only initiates could speak or understand it.

All these sacrifices were made for selfish reasons, in order for them to gain more power and prestige.

3.1.2. The spiritual sphere

As we may remark, there is no clear separation between physical and spiritual sphere as already said, but like nearly all other African people, the Ngambai people were animists. They believed in the spiritual world, which means that they believed in God, from whom all things flowed. In their beliefs, there was also the vague notion that when they left this present existence, their spirits were reunited with the "life force", but like their forefathers, who lived on in a place called *Njabao,* they would retain their spiritual identity.

As was previously mentioned with regard to the *Uma* rite, the term *Njabao* is a substitute for *Lao. Bbee Uma* was the temporary dwelling of the departed dead on the outer edge of the nether world, while *Njabao* was the final place of the departed dead in the inner circle, and was close to the abode of the supernatural divine power.

This concept and a comparison between *Bbee* and *Njabao* were used by the Catholics of the Logone area in Chad to teach the Ngambai people about purgatory. However, the comparison ended with the temporary nature of *Bbee Uma*, since, according to Ngambai dogma, those who dwelled in that place did not suffer, but from their vantage point, they could inflict suffering on those who were still in the land of the living.

Again this description can be better understood with the following context in spiritual values in Africa.

3.2. Spiritual values in Africa

3.2.1. Supreme Being

There are already several studies on understanding the concept of God in terms of African beliefs. For example, there is a case study related to the concept of God in African religion which was conducted by Mbiti (1970), as well as one concerning the gods of Africa and the God of the Bible by Nyirongo (1977). In addition, there is a comparative study of African traditional religions by Ikeng-Metuh (1987), as well as one on ancestor relations within three African societies by Gehman (1985), and so on. Mbiti used Western theological terms to understand the nature of God as the Supreme Being in terms of traditional beliefs. On the other hand, Gehman described the Supreme Being according to His actions. After all, African peoples believe that this Supreme Being is for all people everywhere, according to how they are named. As Sawyer states:

> At the same time, one cannot but be impressed by the fact that among all the tribes which have been studied, there is always some reference to God as the centre of the Supreme Authority which controls the world. Indeed, all the various tribes possess a name for God (Sawyer, 1970:3).

In any event, our objective is not to prove the existence of God in the African concept of the term. There is a strong belief in a Supreme Being in African tradition that needs to be understood in this context. This God is at the top of the hierarchy of divinities. By his names and attributes, he identifies himself to both the spirit and the human world, but belongs to neither. He is a transcendent God who must be reached by mediators. He is, however, seldom worshipped, except in the case of the Akan, as Sawyer suggests (Sawyer, 1970:6). It is in this context that we need to ask whether or not African people do in fact "believe in God". We recall the remark made earlier that God is generally thought to be far removed from the affairs of man. However, the fact of God's existence is never questioned. In this regard, Sawyer comments that God is thought to be the creator of the world and of man. He is therefore the oldest imaginable Being, like a grandfather, and is the one person who feels concern for His children. He is therefore man's ancestor. Furthermore, God, like the early ancestors of

man, is now far removed by time and space from man, and is therefore not closely associated with their everyday activities. He is therefore thought of as being distant (Sawyer, 1970:8-9).

As previously mentioned, the Ngambai people, like nearly all other Africans, believe in a High God through whom all things were created. He was seldom regarded as being human in form, but rather as a supernatural divine power of the most general and undefined nature. The attribute of High God does not mean high in the esteem of men, but one who is far removed from them and plays only an indirect role in human affairs. As a result, they do not worship him.

3.2.2 Ancestors

African peoples believe that most spirits are spirits of their ancestors. Therefore, ancestors are closer to human beings than spirits. For African peoples, death is not the end – it is the transition to joining those who went before to the invisible world. This invisible world is an active world. The ancestors also possess a supernatural power that can be used on human beings, for good or for evil.

For this reason, African peoples try to earn the favor of the ancestors through sacrifices, offerings and worship ceremonies. Neglecting the ancestors can result in curses such as accidents, unemployment, sterility, and so on. However, ancestors are also a source of blessing and protection. As a result, Gehman (1985:222) concludes that “to love one’s parents and grandparents is moral to humanity”.

The blessings from ancestors could be in the form of cattle, children or health. Therefore, the ancestors are honored in the same way as God when worshipping takes place. The only difference is that the worshippers offer sacrifices or offerings to the ancestors, but not directly to the Supreme Being. Ancestors are mediators between the living and the Supreme Being. In fact, the intermediary role of the ancestors is important in African beliefs. Offending them can result in misfortune, so it is wise and prudent for the living to obey them (Gehman, 1985:172). This is the way to maintain good relationships with the ancestors. We are reminded of the names of the three

ancestors of the Ngambai clan, who stand in the direct line of succession from their distant founder – *Uma*, *Ngalakag* and *Yoo Donda*.

Religiously speaking, these three illustrious ancestors, sometimes referred to as *Yooje* (death personified), were present in person and supervised the rites with great dignity. Invisible to human eyes, they were perceived by the eyes of the soul and the hearing of their voices. Their language was unintelligible to ordinary humans, but the initiators were the interpreters and mediators.

3.2.3 Spirit Beings

Who do the Ngambai people worship? They direct their attention to a host of lesser gods or demi-gods who control the mysteries of nature. They are the spirits of those just under ancestors to whom an appeal is made for help and protection against the unknown. In fact, they are of primary importance because they are near to the people and their activity is seen, heard and felt.

They preside over the workings of the known universe – the rain and lightening (*Ndi*), the river (*Ang*), trees and all growing things (*Donang*), and animals and living things of the bush (*Kor).* There are idols that represent these gods. In addition to idols, there are human representatives of the gods – *Njend*i (rain and lightening), *Njedonang* (earth, trees and all growing things), *Njekor* (animals and beasts of the bush), and *Njeang* (who was equipped with artificial claws).

In general, however, the practice is ancestor worship, and it is situated at the bottom of our list of their beliefs, although it should be at the top, since it is for them the most important. If faithfully served, the ancestors are powerful mediators with the power to secure a prosperous life. However, if ignored or insulted, they may become dangerous enemies.

Ancestor worship is not simply a case of awe and respect, but is also in the form of a contract. In times of trouble or distress, worship takes place under an appropriate tree, and offerings of food and beer are made. The assumption here is that

grief has occurred because the worshipper broke some code of ethics which upset the ancestors.

A person does not worship all his/her ancestors indiscriminately, but rather only those for whom recognition must be given as standing in the direct line of a distant founder. Only authorised ancestors can act as mediators between human beings and the original ancestral spirit, and through him, the High God.

It has been argued in the above that the Ngambai's religious beliefs are founded on a belief in the High God. However, they believe that the High God interacts with his people through the intermediation of the ancestors. The significance of ancestral spirits in the Ngambai's religious system is based on a fundamental belief in the immortality of the soul. They perceive the existence of the ancestral spirits to be real, and not part of the imagination. It is a common belief among the Ngambai that when a person dies, he or she becomes a spiritual being and acquires the characteristics of immortality and eternal life. The nature and role of ancestral spirits among the Ngambai can be best understood in relation to the general concept of ancestral spirits among African peoples.

3.3. Transition from the visible world of mortals to the invisible world of spirit beings

Having some background to the various spheres of existence, it is now time to examine the phenomenon of death.

3.3.1 Death

As an agent of transition from the world of mortals to the invisible world of spirits, the nature of death has made people think about the question of its origins (Ogedengbe, 1995:99-102). In the context of African beliefs, there was a story which always talked about the origin of earth and death. We will now relate the story of the origin of death in the Ngambai culture:

The origin of death is explained through a myth that is well known throughout the Ngambai area, and indeed other areas of africa- the myth of the chameleon and the lizard. According to this myth, *Sù*, the creator, one day entrusted the chameleon to go and tell death that men will die and come back again to life, and that the moon will die forever. The lizard intercepted the message and hurried to go and tell death the opposite: men will die forever, but the moon will die and come back to life again. The chameleon, which was very slow, came to the village of death very late. He transmitted the true message to death, but death treated him as a liar and believed the first message delivered by the lizard. Since that day, men have died forever and the moon has died and come back to life again. We can learn something important from this myth. Firstly, the creator did not want the death of men in the beginning. His message actually gave man immortality. Man was not the cause of his own death – rather, death came from contradictions which existed in the midst of created beings. This idea is suggested to us by the inversion of the message by a creature. Death thus made its appearance in the lives of men, and since then, men have been doomed to die and the activity of *Sù* is not seen. When Ngambai people remember him, they know that he only created them, and this is all. Secondly, the first speech will take precedence for Ngambai people, but what they will remember for a long time and to which they will always turn is the founder element of their social group contained in the myth, which explains renewed mankind.

The general concepts of God enable us to understand the subsequent eschatological concepts. Many scholars have studied the concept of death from theoretical and practical perspectives, and each scholar approaches the subject from his or her own perspective. For example, eschatology has a number of topics that it deals with, and one such topic is death, on which we will now focus our attention on. Mbiti(1970) conducted a detailed study on the African concept of God in general and eschatological concepts in particular. He examined this topic in broader terms and did not confine his observations to the Akamba people. Instead, he studied a number of African tribes and noted their respective views.

In all these statements, death is viewed as a terrible phenomenon which causes interruptions in normal life. According to Mbiti, the Buchwa of Congo believe that death is the exiting of the soul from the body through the pupil of the eye (Mbiti, 1970:253). They believe that the soul is as small as the pupil of the eye. Thus, for them, the eye breaks at death and provides an exit point for the soul.

On the other hand, the Akamba and the Bambuti of Congo believe that at death, the soul leaves the body through the nose. After this, it is carried to God by bees or flies. The Barotse of Zambia strongly believe that God calls people to himself and no one can ever say 'no' to this call, namely death. In Sudan, the Nuer view death as God's way of calling away old people. He calls them so that they can find their way back to heaven, since this link between heaven and earth was broken by a hyena, according to popular belief. By holding such a belief, the Nuer accept death as God's will for the old (Mbiti, 1970:253-254).

Commenting on these African conceptions of death, Mbiti, with deep insight, notes that "In practice the people rarely attribute death to God since there are other actual causes of death, except that of old age" (Mbiti, 1970:255). This testimony may be true, as it is a common occurrence to hear old people in general say at the time of dying: "I am going home". The death of an aged person is usually an occasion for joy, particularly when he or she has lived well and left children behind to survive him or her. People rejoice because they believe that the person has run his or her normal course of life and is going home. On the other hand, if a young person dies, it is regarded as a tragedy. Relatives and friends go into deep mourning, and all efforts are made to prevent such a death from occurring.

Like any other people, Africans know that sooner or later, one must face the fact of death. We concluded therefore that for the Ngambai people, no one dies in the sense of being totally annihilated, and every community of the living includes the spirits of the dead. Thus, the Ngambai bury their dead around their houses and right in the village. For this reason, they fear it. They believe that the soul of the departed is still around the house and will only leave after the mourning period, when the final parting ceremony between the departed and the living takes place.

From the foregoing, we can conclude that death is part of the rhythm of life. It is an acceptable human phenomenon which marks the separation of the body and the soul. Because it is believed that death does not annihilate life, it is seen as the beginning of the journey to the land of the departed.

3.3.2 Treatment of the corpse

Death is a detestable reality in the consciousness of the human heart. The practical phase involves a brief review of a complete funeral, in order to understand how these theories affect the treatment of the dead and the living. In the African conception of time and history, as we have noted before, one event leads to another. This is also true of death – it is truly part of the rhythm because it comes before a funeral. Mbiti says that "Some African peoples make preparations for the journey to the land of the departed. This is done mainly in the form of funeral rites. Among many, however, there are no special preparations, probably because the land of the departed is thought to be close and similar to this" (Mbiti, 1970:255). Obviously, the journey to the land of the departed is marked by funeral rites. These funeral rites reveal the people's understanding of the land of the departed.

We will now look at how a few selected tribes view the journey to the land of the departed, which is in the form of funeral rites. Ogendengbe(1995:116) describes the Yoruba funerary elements. The Yoruba people have many forms of funerals, but two factors are of central importance: the type of person who has died, and the circumstances of his/her death.

- Type of person who died

The lifetime attributes of the deceased are always considered, including age, social status, special affiliations, health status, and others.

The age of a person at the time of death is often given the most consideration, and the age variable determines whether a person is old or young. A person who died very young usually does not have a funeral in the Yoruba culture. The social status of

the deceased also determines the nature of the funeral that he/she is given. Age and wealth attributes may add to the intensity of these rituals. The special affiliations that a person had also determine the type of funeral that he/she is given. The Yoruba culture also considers the health status of a deceased when planning his/her funeral. People with special or abnormal health conditions (physical or mental), such as lepers and pregnant women, are given a special kind of funeral.

- Circumstances of death

Ogendengbe(ibid) observes that the Yoruba always consider whether the circumstances of a person's death are normal or abnormal. Let us first look at the normal circumstances:

As previously mentioned, the most commonly accepted normal circumstances of death in the Yoruba culture are those of an old person who has a natural death. This person is an elder of elders who, by virtue of longevity in this material world, has lived long enough to have elders as children. If such a person dies at home in peace, the Yoruba would say that he or she "dies a peaceful death", which is considered to be a normal death. If a younger person dies, even if it is peaceful, it is never considered to be so. The Yoruba, in this case, would suspect and attribute such a death to witches and sorcerers.

Abnormal circumstances of death in Yoruba culture include death by types of accidents. The Yoruba believe that certain events, such as types of accidental deaths, are signs that threaten the stability of the world. These events require serious propitiation to restore order to the realms. Otherwise, the calamities will continue and may lead to the extinction of human beings. For example, death from a fall from a palm tree or drowning in a river is not given a normal funeral. In this case, both victims are buried close to the sites of the accidents. They also consider death by lightening to be abnormal. Dishonourable circumstances of death in the Yoruba's view include those resulting from execution, as in the cases of acts of treason, robbery and witchcraft. These victims are not given any funeral, and in most cases, they are denied burials. Ogendengbe(ibid) correctly observes that:

The ultimate goal that the Yoruba seek when they perform funeral rites for their deceased is to secure a proper place for their beloved one among their ancestors in the intangible world. The general principles that underline funerary rites among various groups are the same. There may be variations in the ways each group applies those principles when they perform funerary rites.

These descriptions of death can also be applied to the case of the Ngambai, circumstances surrounding the death of a person, as well as the age and social status of the person, are important factors that determine the way in which corpses are treated. There are some kinds of deaths that are viewed as bad, and others that are regarded as being good. For example, as in the case of the Yoruba culture, if a person is struck by lightning and he or she dies as a result, they would quickly conclude that the victim had done something wrong. This type of death is seen to be bad or a curse. A person who dies under these circumstances has received his or her judgment here on earth. Such a person cannot join the group of ancestors that are invoked and invited to participate in the regular communal meals. As previously mentioned, the three illustrious ancestors in Ngambai culture are *Uma*, *Ngalakag* and *Yoodonda*.

When a child dies, the body is quickly disposed of because it is usually a tense moment of great sorrow and mourning. There is not much ceremony associated with this. They quickly wash his or her body, dress it in one of the child's casual outfits, wrap it in a mat and bury it in the family compound. If a chief dies, the way in which his corpse is treated and the funeral rites that take place are different from the way in which the body of a commoner is treated. The chief has both spiritual and political power over the communities that he ruled, and his throne, place and body is sacred because these have been anointed.

Great importance is attached to the washing of the corpse, as it is believed that a person has to be cleaned up in order to be admitted into the abode of the ancestors. It is also believed that if a corpse is not washed, it will not have a place with the ancestors, but will become a wandering ghost. The dead were expected to enjoy in the afterlife the same social and economic advantages which they had possessed in this world. For this reason, the body was carefully prepared, dressed and buried in a grave in the family compound. Therefore, a woman could be buried with her earrings,

necklaces, cooking utensils, food, clothing material, etc. A hunter was accompanied by his weapons, among other things, and so on.

There is a general belief among most African tribes that the dead are not gone forever. They are believed to form an integral part of the family. This kind of belief, declares Mbiti(1971:10), makes the preparation for the journey (burial) even more serious. Commenting on the need to follow correct funeral procedures, Mbiti(1970:257) says that:

It is the general feeling that if the dead are not properly buried they may take revenge upon the living or remain unpeaceful in the land of the departed.

Indeed, the treatment of the corpse for the African people is a very important and integral component of eschatology. Consequently, it is meticulously carried out, because it has a bearing on whether or not the deceased reaches his or her proper destination, namely the land of the departed.

3.3.3 The land of the departed

There is no doubt or ambiguity about the afterlife and the world of mortals as the two spheres of existence, as previously mentioned. This view expresses the general concept of the hereafter among African peoples. They in fact believe in heaven, even though their viewpoints are sometimes different with regard to the nature of this heaven (Ogedengbe, 1995:106-109). When a person is properly buried, it is assumed that he or she goes to the land of the departed, which is believed to be the place where the dead are gathered. It is interesting to note that many African tribes hold different views regarding its location. Mbiti's analysis presents a picture of this (Mbiti, 1970: 257).

Tribes such as the Abaluyia and the Banyarwanda, among others, hold that the land of the departed is under the earth. The Abaluyia call it "the country of the dead", while the Banyarwanda call it the land "ruled by the one with whom one is forgotten". For them, burial is regarded as an entrance into the land of the departed – hence, the grave serves as the doorway. The view that the land of the departed is in the woods,

the bush, the forest or the wilderness is held by other tribes, such as the Akamba and the Chagga. The Bamilike , the Bemba, the Shona and the Ndebele believe that the land of the departed is anywhere but not far. Instead, "it is around the home of the human beings". They believe that the departed move around the homes of the living human beings without being noticed. For this reason, the departed are believed to be part of their living families. They dwell here because they are also still interested in the welfare of their living members.

They show these characteristics by protecting their living from evil forces. They can offer this protection because they are believed to be "clothed with supernatural power". On the contrary, if they were not properly buried, they could cause discomfort and/or punish their living for their mistake (ibid). We consider this to be an authentic view is that this must be closely related to the Ngambai view of the tangible world. In their beliefs, there was also the vague notion that when they left this present existence, their spirits rejoined the life force, but like their forefathers who lived on in a place called *Njabao*, they would retain their spiritual identity.

The difficulty seems to arise in the consideration that African peoples believe that there is no place without spirits. Spirits could be heard or seen in the mountains and rivers and among trees at any time of day or night. They could appear in the form of different animals or other objects. However, this example refers to the idea that African peoples believe in the existence of heaven, which represents a place of blessedness. In addition, there is no doubt that Africans believe in the visible world as a creation of the Supreme Being. This world is the place where people and things deal with life. Wherever the land of the departed is located, the belief is that the inhabitants are spiritual. It is in this light that Mbiti (1971:72) observes the following:

Information about the African societies seems to show that even where the dead are buried with some of their possessions, the goods of this life are not transferable into the next. Without clear explanation, however, many societies believe that if a person is rich in his human life he will continue to be rich in the next life, just as the poor, or thief, or kind-hearted person etc. continues to be as he was.

There are two things to remember about the land of the departed. Firstly, it is linked to the present world. Secondly, funerary rites play a major role in the maintenance of this link.

At this point, we will look at the nature of the land of the departed. The areas of similarity and difference are clearly determined when considering the views of individual tribes in Africa.

According to the Bachwa, in the next life, people do not suffer hardships such as hunger, thirst, sickness or death. The Banyarwanda see life in the hereafter as being similar to this life, and people retain their names, but do not eat, drink or mate, and class distinctions are dissolved (Mbiti, 1970:262-263). According to Ngambai beliefs, those who dwell in that place do not suffer, but from their vantage point, they may inflict suffering on those who are still in the land of the living. Furthermore, they believe that their departed dead live on, just beyond the veil that hides them from the eyes of the living, and in this environment, they can influence those in the nether world who have occult powers and a line of contact with the one or ones who have control of the elements and forces of life.

In view of these observations, the land of the departed is clearly believed to be an established place that is characterized by peace and happiness.

3.4. State of the beyond

3.4.1 Reincarnation

The precise mode of entry into the beyond remains uncertain. It could be either by judgment or through rites. In fact, death is not the end of existence, but only a change of state. There is no doubt about this belief among African peoples. The remaining problem that we have to tackle is the dilemma of reincarnation. Most African tribes generally have no expectation of a resurrection, even though they believe that death does not annihilate life. This notion of resurrection is mostly preserved in myths and stories, according to Mbiti (1970:265). Commenting on this,

he says that "man has neither the hope nor the promise to rise again – he lost that gift in the primeval period, and he knows of no means to regain it".

On the other hand, the belief in reincarnation is held by many tribes. In fact, Osovo's (1979:61) observation in this regard is that:

It does not stand the rigor of logic to have the same person existing in two different spheres … when a person dies he remains in the afterlife and that what is believed to be reincarnation is, according to Idowu, that there are certain dominant lineage characteristics which keep recurring through birth and ensuring the continuity of the vital existence of the family or clan.

In spite of this viewpoint, there is always a sense in Africa in which death is a form of rebirth. Shorter's(1983:16) declaration confirms this: "the dead are planted and they bear fruit in lives and the procreation of their descendants". When a grave is dug before a funeral, it is carefully oriented so that the corpse, when it is buried, will be pointing towards the deceased's natal village. In fact, a literal belief in reincarnation occurs in several African tribes' traditions. Mbiti (1970:265), with insight, notes that:

This type of incarnation means that certain traits of character, personality or physical marks of the departed are reproduced in a child generally born in his immediate family.

He further observes that the concept of transmigration is reported "among a number of African peoples". For example, the Bavenda believe that their chiefs return. Mbiti(ibid) comments that the spirits of the chiefs "return to this life in the form of animals like lions, leopards and snakes".

As a result of his research among the Chewa in Malawi, Van Breugel(2001:85) tells the following story:

We have already seen that a child who dies before it is "taken" will be reborn in another child. When the mother is pregnant again (in such circumstances and dreams of her deceased child), she has to make an offering the next morning at the foot of a tree. On the day of the birth, the mother or a sister of the pregnant woman puts an offering at the foot of the tree which, in this

case, consists of flour mixed with water, since there is no time to make beer. There are some people who think that they are a reincarnation of some Mizimu. Denis reported that near Likuni Chief Mlima claimed to be the reincarnation of former Chief Mlima etc.

Van Breugel (2001:86) further comments that some people, when they die, can become a wild animal, such as a wild pig or a leopard. A leper is believed to become a hippo, and a witch a crocodile. There are even people who obtain medicine in order to become a certain animal. As we have observed with regard to Ngambai beliefs, there are human representatives of the god of the river, and they are referred to as *Ang*, *Njetoboi* or *Damori*, miracle men who were said to metamorphose their human bodies into those of lions, and from lions into lizards, and then back to human bodies. This myth of events helps Mbiti (1971:24) to explain the perception of time and history in the context of Akamba and other African peoples. Following his research, he concludes that:

From this basic attitude to time, other important points emerge. The most significant factor is that time is considered as a two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long past and dynamic present. The future as we know it in linear conception of time is virtually non-existent in Akamba thinking. My findings from other African peoples have not yielded any radical difference.

In terms of the conception of the future in African beliefs, Osovo (1979:10) disagrees with Mbiti's conclusion. He claims that African peoples are very preoccupied with the distant past, and the dynamic present, as well as the future, although they lack the vocabulary for the distant future. This is not the same as saying that they lack a futuristic orientation. In contrast to Mbiti, Bujo (1995:124) declares that:

The emphasis upon the fullness of life indicates that Africans have a concern for the future. The African outlook is therefore eschatological in the sense that it looks beyond death, for the welfare of the living depends upon those who have passed beyond death.

In the next section, we will refer to these viewpoints in relation to the concepts of time and beyond time. However, it is difficult to examine the concept of the beyond without referring to the cult of ancestors.

3.4.2. Relationship between the living and ancestors

Africans believe in the active existence of deceased ancestors. However, as Emefie asks, "Who are the ancestors?" The question as to who could be an ancestor and how one becomes an ancestor is answered differently by different African societies, since the qualifications for and process of attaining ancestorship vary from society to society. However, it is generally accepted that death by itself does not make a person an ancestor. In some African societies, old age, a life lived according to accepted moral standards of the group and appropriate funeral rites are some of the essential requirements (Emefie, 1987:147).

There is constant communion and communication between those who have gone into the life beyond and those who are here on earth. Socially and religiously speaking, ancestors are regarded as active members of the family. Each lineage keeps in touch with its own ancestors through ritual sacrifices. Mbiti(1965:83) describes the role of the ancestors as follows:

> They return to their human families from time to time and share meals with them, however, symbolically. They know and have interest in what is going on in their family. They are guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities. Offence in these matters is ultimately an offence against the forefathers who, in that capacity, act as invisible police of the families and communities. The living do not drink wine or water without first pouring a libation for the ancestors. In this, there is an unbroken link between the departed and the living. In addition, there are special festivals during which the ancestral spirits are invoked. If people show great respect to the elders who are living, one would expect greater respect to be accorded the departed ancestors who now return in a material form to visit and bless their descendants.

As a result of his research, Emefie (1987:149) concludes the following:

The funeral rites of their descendants have helped them reach the spiritual home of the clan which is in intimate communion with its living members. As spirits, the ancestors have enhanced powers and influence. With their better knowledge of the affairs of the spirit world, they constantly warn their descendants and kinsmen of an impending disaster and counsel them on what to do to attract the most favorable fortunes.

Therefore, in Bujo's (1992:23) view, Africa knows no distinction between individual, social and political life, but life can only be enjoyed in its fullness when the ancestors are remembered and honored. Communion with the ancestors has both an eschatological and a salvation dimension. Salvation is the concern of both living and dead members of society, as each person affects the other and depends upon each other. The dead can be happy when they live on in the affectionate memory of the living.

African peoples believe that most spirits are those of their ancestors. They are therefore closer to human beings than disembodied spirits. Shorter (1983) identifies three categories of ancestral spirits. The first are the companion ancestors. These ancestral spirits act not only as companions of the living in their everyday activities, but also accompany them in their invocations of the Supreme Being. This means that prayers are not addressed to the ancestral spirits themselves, but care is taken to pray in harmony with them. The second category of ancestral spirits is the ancestor intercessor. This type of ancestral spirit is addressed through prayer, and acts as the bearer of messages to the Supreme Being. The third category is the ancestor plenipotentiary of God, mediating his creativity and providence, and receiving worship in his name.

With regard to Ngambai beliefs, they also classify their ancestors according to three categories in the direct line of succession from the distant founder, and they are named *Uma*, *Ngalakag* and *Yoodonda*. The roles played by these ancestors have previously been discussed.

In general, ancestors possess a supernatural power that can be used upon human beings. For this reason, African peoples try to earn their favor through sacrifices, offerings and worshipping ceremonies. The ancestral spirits are somehow

in need, and need to be remembered. Their names must be perpetuated, and they are especially interested in the births and marriages of their descendants. Thus, choosing the right name and thereby perpetuating the memory of the right ancestral spirit is very important.

In terms of the dynamic view of eschatology in African folk religion, Shorter (1983:18) states that "Death is transcended through the device of reincarnation, literal or nominal, and life continues to be transmitted through physical birth" . Bujo (1992:24) declares that:

There can be no denying that Africans are above all interested in earthly life, and that they emphasize good fortune and blessing. Yet even in this concern for earthly prosperity, there is an eternal, or eschatological, dimension, for it involves a participation in that other world where the dead live and where is to be found the key to this fate of the living. Further, a person's prospects of ultimate membership in that other world depends on the degree of communion established with it while still living the earthly life. The world in which human beings live is a spiritual universe, a world of spirits in which living and dead both have roles to play for their mutual benefit. This is the way to maintain a good relationship with the ancestors. However, in the world order, the Supreme Being is superior to the ancestors.

3.4.3. Morality

In terms of time, morality in traditional African societies is believed to be linked to the relationship between the living and the hereafter. Thus, the African moral code is tied to judgment after death. Emefi(1987:243) has indicated that a balanced assessment of African morality should situate it within the context of their whole system of beliefs, as expressed not only in the behavioral patterns of a number of individuals, but in the total framework of the ways in which Africans express themselves individually and in traditional groups. Ethics embraces every aspect of life. It governs man's understanding of himself and his relationships with others. A person's ethics should therefore emerge in his daily conversations, sayings, proverbs, myths, folklores, and names, which sometimes express his ideals and aspirations, as

well as his philosophy of life. These ethics are seen especially in the norms which regulate relationships between individual members of society and different social groups. A people's morality can also be determined by the sanctioning or observance of these norms. From all that has been said, according to Bujo (1992:33), many tribes in Africa are in fact convinced that a human being cannot offend God, and this principle also applies to the consequences of sin. Africans believe that they can neither add anything to God, the creator, nor take anything away from Him, and this means that moral behavior and its consequences only concern human being. Bujo (1992:34-36) goes on to say that God is, however, not completely absent from the moral thinking of the African. Names have a sacred meaning, and to call a person's name without good reason is to dishonor him or her.

Generally speaking, "duty" for the African refers to the mutual obligations of human beings. The duties of children towards their parents and the related obligations towards ancestors constitute a major part of African morality. The good life depends not only on the ancestors, but also on the degree of esteem which a person shows for his/her parents and clan elders. We can therefore see why an African is so careful about looking after the elderly and infirm members of the group – they are still life-givers, in the sense that they have wisdom and experience to pass on to their successors. The focus of African religion is life, and it is therefore easy to understand why killing is among the most serious of crimes. Human life can only be taken in self-defence or when there is a threat to the common good. Even then, an individual would never take the life of a clan member on his or her own initiative.

The following principle must therefore be adhered to: since the common good takes precedence over the individual good, an individual who is really a danger to the community or threatens the clan with the loss of life or goods must be simply removed. It may be that this person is unaware of the danger which he or she represents. Thus, sorcerers and persons with physical or mental defects, who are unconscious of their position, are grouped together with murderers and thieves, and are removed from society. It is not that death is sought for its own sake, but only that killing is justified when it contributes towards the welfare of the clan as a whole. The clan can only prosper when it cares for the individual.

In terms of sexuality, the main goal is to provide for the continuance of the clan. For the most part, sexuality is viewed in the context of procreation. To separate sexual activity from its procreative function or to be incapable of performing this function is to inflict serious damage on the clan, including its dead members. The community of ancestors is composed not only of dead members of the family, but also of its living descendants, who form, together with the dead, a single mystical community. The dead live in the memory of the living, and the latter take part in an ongoing dialogue with them. For many Africans, childlessness and celibacy are crimes against humanity.

Traditional Africa had strict rules about speech. Lying was regarded as an abomination, especially when it harmed the clan. Obviously, this meant that there was a danger that people would lie when this could further the interests of the clan. Indeed, such an act was not regarded as lying at all, but rather as clever and virtuous, a sign that one loved one's clan. Otherwise, however, lying was regarded as morally wrong and harmful.

Thus, in terms of the African moral code, a morally good act reaffirms the right relationship between God, man and the ontological order, whereas a morally bad act negates and disrupts this relationship. For example, adultery is expiated not only by compensation, but also by rituals to put things right (Emefi, 1987:248). In some cases, such as murder, alienation of family property, disobedience to tribal authorities, and antisocial behavior, social and religious sanctions are applicable.

Morality is therefore the source of the most sacred act of judging men after death in accordance with their actions on earth. The ancestral spirits are seen as effective controllers of the moral norms which regulate the lives of the people. Offending them can thus lead to misfortune, so it is wise and prudent for the living to obey them (Gehman, 1985:172). Indeed, they have a tremendous influence on the daily activities of the people. They control and rule under the authority of the Supreme Being.

3.4.4 Judgment

The issue here is not the opposition between eschatology and judgment, but the form taken by their interrelationship in African beliefs. The concept of judgment in African traditional belief is not excluded from the view of ancestral spirits as successful human beings. It is also seen as social growth. Human success is evaluated in Africa in terms of general and family relationships. This is a result of the transmission of life. To be invoked, a person must have descendants to invoke him/her. Therefore, success is not seen in purely moral terms, but through the fear and respect that a human being enjoyed in life.

We have already briefly examined the concept of judgment for those who cannot share the company of ancestral spirits, depending on what kind of death they experienced. There are some practices that symbolize the recognition of a person who has been spiritualized and has entered into the company of ancestral spirits (Shorter, 1983:12). The idea of judgment is clearly expected after death. The soul returns after death to the Supreme Being to be judged according to the person's deeds, and then sent back to the world for reincarnation. Indeed, the question of judgment is not new to African societies. It can happen at any time, even here on earth. The divinities punish wicked people, which could result in a bad death for them. However, the final judgment lies with the Supreme Being. In the hereafter, the ancestral spirits will ratify the judgment made on earth, but never rectify it. The judgment is based on deeds of individuals while here on earth. If a person dies a bad death, his or her descendants do not commemorate the person, and do not invoke his or her spirit during ancestral worship. Consequently, the reward and punishment are not limited to this life, but continue in the hereafter.

3.5 Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, we would like to refer to Pretorius' declaration that "the notion that paradise has been lost and that people with or without supernatural intervention should look forward to recover a romanticized past, has been popular through the ages" (Pretorius, 1987:31). In view of this, it is fitting to

investigate the concept of eschatological belief in African folk religion, and respond in an appropriate way in order to obtain an understanding of the African concept of the future in terms of Christian beliefs.

There is a concept of the future in African folk religion that suggests that benefits in the hereafter affect the African people's way of life here on earth. This consciousness also affects their morality, as well as judgment. The rewards and punishments are not limited to this life, but continue in the hereafter. This openness to the future must be a message to challenge the African perception that faith finds its focal point in the spiritual world. Thus, the African people will agree with Kenneth that a restoration of the biblical orientation to the future may also have much to contribute to Christianity in Africa (Kenneth, 1990:209). There is a hope and expectation of the fulfillment of a divine promise, even a glorious future. Unfortunately, the danger is that the future is misunderstood as being the realization of secular desires which are connected to the religious past. The resurrection of Christ restores the past and present dimensions of life for those who live in Him and gain a new perspective of the future.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRIST THE ESCHATON

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will investigate the significance of Christ the eschaton as the motif which supports our interpretation of eschatology. It has been shown in chapter two of this study that some scholars contrast the cyclic to the linear concept of time. John Mbiti is a leading proponent of this position. The contrast seems to be rooted in varying metaphysical beliefs that are held by people. As we previously mentioned, the Hebrew concept of time is dynamic, the world is in motion, and God and man appear to be active in terms of what they do. All people and cultures operate within certain understood notions of time. As Sobanaraj (2007:21) has noted:

In the various cultural traditions of humankind, time has been evaluated not only in terms of its significance for the individual, but also in relation to a specific community.

The inevitable phenomenon of death strikes people of all age groups, irrespective of their religious thinking. The belief in immortality, or at least in life of some kind after death, seems to have been rooted in the human conscience. Thus, various groups of people have different views on life after death, which has resulted in the science of future life, which is widely known as eschatology (Sobanaraj, 2007: 1-2). Eschatological beliefs constitute an important creed in all the major religions of the world. This is the reason that we will deal with selected aspects of eschatology from the Scriptures which deal with the issues of Parousia, the End and the time of the resurrection of the body and its theological corollary. Before we can proceed, however, it is important for us to refer to some definitions of the term "eschatology" by Wright, quoted by Sobanaraj (2007:12):

1. Eschatology as the end of the world, the end of the space-time universe;
2. Eschatology as the climax of Israel's history, involving the end of the space-time universe;

3. Eschatology as the climax of Israel's history, involving events for which end-of-the-world language is the only set of metaphors adequate to express the significance of what will happen, but resulting in a new and quite different phase within space-time history;

4. Eschatology as a major event, not specifically climatic within a particular story, for which end-of-the-world language functions as a metaphor;

5. Eschatology as "horizontal language" whose actual referent is the possibility of moving upward spiritually to a new level of existence;

6. Eschatology as a critique of the present world order, perhaps with proposals for a new order;

7. Eschatology as a critique of the present socio-political scene, perhaps with proposals for adjustment.

These definitions are currently employed by biblical scholars and theologians. In quoting the above definitions of the term "eschatology" by various scholars, Wright opts for the third one. As a result, Sobanaraj states that the term "eschatology" is defined in both its narrow and broader senses. While the narrow definition is governed by the belief that the world will come to an end, the broader definition endeavors to include all future hope for "a new order of things". However, it calls for clarity of the definition (Sobanaraj, 2007:13). In light of these assessments, König (1989:1) observes the following:

> Jesus Christ occupies a central place. If the gospel is about him, so too is its message about the end. If he is the one around whom the whole New Testament revolves, then he is the one, too, around whom God's plans for the world revolve.

Indeed, he comments that eschatology must be about Jesus Christ, because he is the realisation of God's purpose in creating the world. Therefore, the New Testament forges a direct relationship between Jesus and the last days. The following question has been asked: What does the coming of the Eschaton mean? Kummel (1966:25) states that "this usage shows clearly that this petition expects the Kingdom of God to come into existence in the future; therefore Jesus can be applying it only to the future coming of the Kingdom of God". This can be confirmed and defined more precisely by considering a few more terms in the following sections.

4.2 Christ and Eschatology

4.2.1 Christ the End

The phrase “Christ the End” is a good starting point for explaining eschatological language in the New Testament. There are also other terms which have an important place in eschatology, such as “the end of the age”, “the last days”, “the times of the End”, “end-times”, “latter days”, etc, and these describe end-times as already beginning to emerge as a concept during the first century. They will help us to identify the end times, which refers to the time immediately before Christ’s coming. This is a very interesting and important aspect of Christian eschatology. But what exactly makes it important? König(1989:5-6) draws the following conclusions from his study of eschatological terms in the New Testament:

1. The expression “the last days” is never used in the New Testament for some period. This means that the last days are those in which Jesus and the apostles act, and that there is no other separate period called “the last days”. The last days have already dawned- we no longer wait for them. Nor have they begun recently – they began almost a thousand years ago. We are still living in “the last days”, in which Christ was born and worked.
2. The entire history of Jesus Christ is described in such end/eschatological terms as these. His birth, earthly life, crucifixion, resurrection, work through the Holy Spirit and return are all described in the same radically eschatological terms. This means that eschatology includes the entire history of Jesus Christ. If eschatology deals with the end, the last days or the consummation, it must also involve the past (Jesus’ earthly work) and the present (his work through the Holy Spirit).
3. It will come as no surprise that the New Testament names Jesus himself the Last, the End and the Omega. The apostles describe his history in eschatological terms, because he himself is the end and the last. Thus, through faith, we are “in Christ”, united with him as members of his body, as Paul states. In the same way, we, through faith, are members of Christ, the end and the last. We live in the end as part of the end, which is Christ himself. In this regard, the end is a person

and we are already in him and united with him. This keeps the relationship alive because all the members of Christ's body must be aware of "Christ, the End" and the relationship between this age and the age to come. We can also conclude by seeing the two sides of the first and second coming that this brings about the inauguration and consummation of the age to come.

In the above survey, we have identified the reasons why these expressions in the New Testament are important for our understanding of Christian eschatology- these reasons have been proposed by König(1989:17), who draws the following conclusions:

…every part of Jesus' history is couched in characteristically eschatological or "end" terms, that these terms are used without system or distinction throughout, and that the New Testament regards as eschatological his incarnation, earthly work, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Christ's future return".

We have shown in the background study that eschatological beliefs in diverse religious traditions are linked to particular theological postulates. Here we stress that eschatological teachings influence our present conduct and make our lives meaningful and goal-oriented. It also reminds us of the significance of the present, which determines the future. Likewise, Christian eschatology is inseparable from Christology. Eschatological beliefs explain the functional role of Christ in history. Accordingly, Christ not only governs the lives of believers for the interim (1 Cor 15:25), but also intercedes for them (Rom 8:34). It was primarily in the eschatological Kerygma that "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God" was exalted as the heavenly Christ (Act 2:22). Thus, this highlights the unbreakable link between apocalyptic eschatology and Christology, as König mentioned in his conclusions above.

4.3 The foundation of eschatology

In this section, we do not intend to analyze the different viewpoints of scholars on the subject, but rather focus only on a few of the most important points that will help us to correctly understand the eschatological message of the New Testament. Before attempting to clarify what the foundations of eschatology are, it is important to once again understand how König(1989:37) defines the term "eschatology". It is clear that he interprets eschatology in two ways. The first is that the entire history of Christ is discussed in radical eschatological terms. These terms are applied to all parts of his history, so that no reason is left for limiting eschatology to any one part. The tendency is to confine eschatology to the future, particularly to those "last things" which have little direct connection with Jesus and his significance. The second is that Jesus himself is called the last and the end. Since his entire history is described in the same eschatological terms, he himself must be the eschatos (the last). The reverse is also true – since he himself is the eschatos and telos (end or goal), his whole history must be eschatological. In terms of this understanding, we can draw the conclusion that it is clear that Jesus is the last, the end and above all, the goal of creation. It is clear that there is an intimate connection between eschatology and Christ himself.

Now we can move on to some issues which are obviously the foundation of the end for all creeds. In order for us to have a better understanding of eschatology, we have suggested, in our previous study on the Old and New Testament view of time, some issues that lay the foundation for Christian eschatology. As Beale (1997: 11-52) has pointed out, the new creation is a plausible and defensible centre for the inaugurated eschatology. This point of view has been seen as a helpful paradigm which sheds new light on the New Testament. Beale (1997:18) says that the resurrected Christ as "the foundation-stone of the new creation has come into position". We should think of Christ's life, and especially his death and resurrection, as the central events which led to the latter days. These pivotal events of Christ's life, death and resurrection are eschatological because they launched the beginning of the new creation. Of course, the Old Testament prophesied that the destruction of the first creation and the recreation of a new heaven and earth were to happen at the very end of time. Christ's work reveals that the end of the world and the coming new creation have begun with his death and resurrection - 2 Corinthians 5:15 and 17 states that

“Christ died and rose again…so that if any are in Christ, they are a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come”. Revelations 3:5 refers to Christ as “the first-born from the dead”, and Revelations 3:14 defines “first-born” as “the beginning of the new creation of God”. In Galatians 6:14-15, Paul says that his identification with Christ’s death means that he is a “new creation”. These strange phenomena are recorded by Matthew to signal to his readers that Christ’s death was the beginning of the end of the old creation and the inauguration of a new creation (Matthew 27:50-53). Likewise, 1 Corinthians 15:22-24 says that the resurrection launched in Christ will be consummated when he returns.

Whereas Beale focused on this precise point in order to build the foundations of eschatology, König’s (1989:47-63) reflection is related to the three relationships of Jesus Christ: to God the Father, to creation, and to the covenant. By investigating these, he introduced a broad theological perspective regarding the sense in which Jesus is the goal of creation and thus the foundation of eschatology. According to König, this preference, particularly with regard to the points mentioned above, can be attributed to the following factors:

Firstly, there is Jesus and the Father. In 1 Cor 8:6, Paul asserts that “there is one God, from whom all being comes, toward whom we move, and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came to be”. Then there is Rev 21:6, which calls the Father “the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End” (cf Isaiah 41:4; 44:6). There are designations elsewhere applied to Christ (Rev 22:13), and these are very important in terms of his relationship to creation. It is correct in principle to assert that in meeting Jesus, we meet God, since the former is the revelation of God. In Jesus, humanity is God’s humanity. This is the covenantal relationship, the goal of creation, which is attained in and through Jesus Christ.

Secondly, there is God and creation. There is no consensus regarding the relationship between God and creation, since eschatology speaks of the goal of creation. God’s sheer goodness is in creating us to be his creatures and covenant partners. God not only creates but also reconciles. However, creation itself is grace, which is God’s favour.

Thirdly, there is the covenant as creation's goal. Since God's creative activity was a work of grace, the covenant was his goal in creating. The New Testament calls this covenant by two names: the new covenant and the covenant with Abraham. Whenever it is called the new covenant (Jer 31:31; Heb 8:8-9; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:5-18; Gal 4:21-28), it is contrasted with the old covenant (the Law), which, as Judaism had come to interpret it, offered salvation through work. And whenever it is called the covenant with Abraham (Rom 4; Gal 3), it corresponds with the covenant with Abraham in the Old Testament, which is seen as one of grace and in which God receives a person through faith. It can therefore also be called the covenant of faith. Genesis 3 comes as a shock because of the unexpected reaction of the recipient of grace against the gracious Father. The covenant of grace plays a role from Genesis 2 until it is realized fully in a world made new (Rev21:1-8). Because of this, one is justified in seeing the covenant as one way in which creation's goal can be defined.

Fourthly, there is Christ and the covenant. In the covenant relationship, God is truly for us. John 3:16 says: "God loved the world so much…", and in John the "world" is sinful humanity. God's love for the world is finally and fully revealed in Jesus. This is how God is, since Jesus is God's revelation, and this is how Jesus is. Jesus is for humanity. His entire history on earth was a revelation of his involvement in our needs. This is the only history of Jesus – he had no other history except this history of love. In him we can learn to know God only as our God: "I shall be your God". He is the saviour of the world (John 4:14, 42), the atonement for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), the "Lord of all" (Acts 10:36; Rom 10:12). Jesus is thus the man for God, the man who is on God's side. He became a human not for himself, but for us, to be our representative before God. Thus, in Jesus, God reaches his covenant goal for creation.

Fifthly, there is creation and consummation. These two things have indeed been strongly linked in theological thought for centuries. The Bible begins and ends with the same covenant of grace: there is one true insight to be gained from the idea that consummation is a restoration of the original creation. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that consummation is far more than creation. Creation was the

beginning, the necessary stage at which God could begin history with his creatures in general and with humankind in particular. Although the goal of God's work was known from the outset in the covenant, human response has been for the most part unexpected, incomprehensible, sinful and guilty.

In Gen 3:8, God visits Adam, and in Rev 21:3, he makes his home with humankind on the new earth. In Gen 2, God builds a lovely garden in which Adam can live and work, and for the new humanity, he builds a new city on a new earth. In Gen 2, we read of the tree of life, and in Rev 22:2, this tree becomes an orchard of "trees of life", which bears fruit not once but twelve times a year. Naturally, these images cannot be taken literally, but the meanings must instead be interpreted in their context, when Revelations was written, and their purpose was somehow to depict the marvels of promised glory, infinitely greater than those of the first creation. The most profound link between creation and consummation can be found in Jesus Christ himself, who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the creator and the consummator. In his own person, he unites creation and consummation. In him, they are not two separate events in time, but a single reality bound together in him, the living Lord by whose power creation proceeds to consummation, and consummation comes from creation. All is created by him, and by him all is renewed.

Sixthly, there is the Kingdom of God. This is certainly a central theme of Jesus and his apostles, for whom the confession "Jesus is Lord" conveyed the same content. It is also true that that kingdom occupied a central position in the Old Testament, where it is signified by the declaration: "Yahweh is King and by the message that the power of other gods cannot be compared with his. The early church confessed that Jesus is himself the Kingdom of God, it could not be otherwise, for in him the Kingdom of God had come" (Matthew 12:28). Thus, he could say as he stood among the Pharisees: "The Kingdom of God is among you" (Luke 17:21).

As we have described, these scholars did attempt to explain, in pragmatic ways, how eschatology was inaugurated. Beale sees creation as the central theme of both the Old and New Testament. However, König identifies six major themes throughout both which are interrelated through their common relationship to the Bible's concept of eschatology.

These scholars understood that eschatology had a crucial influence on the thinking of New Testament writers. We must content ourselves with their relevant and multi-thematic approach, as already proposed. The New Testament then sees these hopes beginning to be fulfilled, and prophesies a future time of fulfillment in a consummated new creation, which Revelations 21:1 and 22:5 portrays. Each theme is not to be viewed as being of equal importance, but they are the most important ones in the Bible. Nevertheless, the concepts of a new creation and covenant are to be preferred over all.

4.4. The concept of eschatology with regard to the first coming of Jesus

As we have seen in the preceding section, König(1989:17), in his conclusive remarks on the question of eschatology, insists that the New Testament regards as eschatological Jesus' incarnation, earthly work, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Christ's future return. In this light, it is also very important to examine the relationship between the various parts of Christ's work in this history. There are various ways of understanding this relationship of eschatology to the first coming of Jesus, by focusing on the terms incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. König (1989:69-95) describes these events in eschatological terms. He discusses both the eschatological character and meaning of Jesus' first coming. We can sum up our appraisal of these viewpoints by assimilating and adapting language and concepts from the Bible. The following can be emphasised in this regard:

4.4.1 The Incarnation

Jesus announces his own arrival in these words: "The time has come; the Kingdom of God is upon you" (Mark 1:15). Prior to Jesus' birth, Simeon looked forward to the consolation of Israel; now his own eyes have seen the deliverance which God has made ready (Luke 2:30). When Jesus reads in the synagogue at Nazareth the prophecy of Isaiah 61, it is no longer a promise, because the fulfillment

stands before the congregation (Luke 4:21). The reality of salvation has appeared in Christ so radically that the time of salvation is now (2 Cor 6:2). Christ has come "in the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), and through him God speaks "in these days" (Heb 1:2), since he has appeared "at the end of the age" (Heb 9:26). Paul reminds his readers that "upon us the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11). He also says that "when anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun" (2 Cor 5:17). Christ himself saw his exorcism of demons as a sign that "the Kingdom of God has already come upon you" (Matthew 12:28). Paul further affirms that Christ has "broken the power of death and brought life and immortality to light" (2 Tim 1:20).

A further aspect of John 1:14's eschatological power is found in the way that "glory", "fullness" and "grace" are emphasised. Jesus is among us full of grace. This fullness of overflowing grace is a strongly eschatological theme. The entire fullness of God is with us in bodily form (Col 1:19, 2:9). This evidence that the incarnation is eschatological should come as no surprise. How could it be otherwise, since all this refers to the incarnation of Jesus, the eschaton?

Thus, Jesus reveals God as the God who cares, who comes to live among us, who shares our lot, who makes our lost cause his cause, and adopts us as his children. Jesus also reveals the true human being, who serves God from love, who finds life's meaning in service to God and neighbours, and who exists for others. We are the people around whom all this revolves. He became a human for the sake of other humans. For this reason, it is not enough, and we will find this same need in both the crucifixion and the resurrection.

4.4.2 The Crucifixion

The New Testament also presents the crucifixion in eschatological terms. Jesus refers to people finding him scandalous and to love growing cold (Matt 24:10, 12), and all this comes to a head with his arrest, when the disciples forsake him and flee, and Peter denies him (Matt 26:56, 66). Jesus also prepared his disciples for strange phenomena in nature at the end, and during his crucifixion they occurred. The

Old Testament prophets spoke frequently of Judgment Day as being accompanied by such extraordinary phenomena as the darkening of heavenly bodies (Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:10, 31, 3:15) and earthquakes (Isaiah 13:13; Joel: 2:10, 3:16) . When these very signs occur during the crucifixion (the sun is darkened (Matt 27:45) and there are earthquakes (Matt 27:51), it is hardly strange that John declares the crucifixion to be the judgment (John 12:31). Furthermore, before Jesus is crucified, he is betrayed by Judas (Matt 26:14-16; Luke 22:48).

These prophesies about the end, fulfilled in a sense during Jesus' crucifixion, show just how clearly the New Testament writers saw the crucifixion in an eschatological light. God's goal, the same one, must be reached in the crucifixion. Thus, the message of reconciliation must go forth to "all the nations" with the call for repentance and faith. Only in this regard is any limitation of salvation of God's goal implied not in the first mode (the eschaton for us), but in the second (the eschaton in us). We find an important statement about the reconciliation of the universe in Col 1:20, which states that: "Through him God chose to reconcile the whole universe to himself, making peace through the shedding of his blood upon the cross, to reconcile all things". This is why Paul speaks of reconciliation and creation, deliberately including all things on earth and in heaven. In this sense, the goal has indeed been reached through the crucifixion.

4.4.3 The Resurrection

The eschatological nature of Jesus' resurrection must also be examined. The apostles lay particular emphasis on the resurrection as a symbol of the end, as the beginning of the general resurrection of the dead that is expected at the end of the world. On the one hand, Jesus' resurrection is a part of the general resurrection. We tend to think of Jesus' and our own resurrection as being separate events which therefore have little in common with each other. Some members of the Church in Corinth evidently thought so too. While they accepted the truth of Jesus' resurrection, they denied that there would be a resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12). According to Paul, this is impossible: "If there be no resurrection, then Christ was not raised" (1 Cor 15:13). Paul could only reason like this if Christ's resurrection is a real part of the

general resurrection. If they were independent events, there might indeed have been the possibility that Christ could rise while others would not. Yet Paul repeats: “If the dead are not raised, it follows that Christ was not raised” (1 Cor 15:6). The primary issue here is general resurrection. One who does not believe in this cannot believe in its beginning, Christ’s own resurrection.

Paul assumes throughout 1 Corinthians 15 that there is a unity between Christ’s resurrection and general resurrection. He calls Christ “the firstfruits of the harvest of the dead” (1 Cor 15:23). The concept of “firstfruits” comes from Old Testament sacrificial terminology. When crops had been harvested, the Israelites had to bring the first yields to the priest as an offering to the Lord. The entire harvest was sanctified by these firstfruits (Lev 23:10; Deut 18:4, 26:1-10). Just as the first sheaf, part of the harvest was cut when the gathering began, so the general resurrection begins when Christ is the first to rise from the dead.

And then it happened to Jesus. After death and burial, he appeared to certain women, brothers and disciples (1 Cor 15:4-8). They could have said that they had seen the ghost of Jesus or his angel (Mark 6:49; Acts 12:15). However, they chose an entirely unusual explanation. And, since it was thought that resurrection would occur at the end, they were interpreting Jesus’ resurrection as the beginning of the general resurrection at the end of the world. Acts 4:2 has particular significance in this regard, while Romans 1:4 is also very important.

It is indeed Christ, the risen Lord, who here and now gives us victory over death – this is how Paul’s classic chapter on Christ’s resurrection ends (1 Cor 15:57). The same message, expressed in apocalyptic language, is: “I am the First and the Last, and I am the Living One; for I was dead and am now alive forever more” (Rev 1:17).

How important is the resurrection of Christ? The resurrection of Jesus Christ is fundamental to the Christian faith. In the Gospels, Christ himself predicted his resurrection. Each of the three times that Christ predicted his passion, he linked his resurrection to it (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:31; Matthew 20:19; Mark 10:34; Luke 18:33). Again, all four Gospels record the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20).

The apostolic message was based on the fact of Christ's resurrection. Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, declared that the Messiah whom the Jews had crucified is raised from the dead, and that God has made him both the Lord and Christ (Acts 2:24, 36). New Testament writers are unanimous in their assertion that Christ did rise from the dead.

Olowala (1998:169), in his essay entitled "The person and work of Christ", provides evidence of the bodily resurrection of Christ as follows:

1. The resurrection appearances provide overwhelming historical proof. There are seventeen post-resurrection appearances of Christ in the Scriptures (the four Gospels and the Epistles).
2. The empty tomb is evidence of Christ's resurrection. Clearly, the tomb was empty, otherwise the apostles could hardly have preached about the resurrection in the very city where Christ's body had been laid to rest.
3. The change in the lives of the disciples is witness to Christ's resurrection.
4. In terms of circumstantial evidence, Paul's list of those who witnessed the resurrection of Christ cannot be ignored (1 Corinthians 15).
5. The fact of the Church. The early Church emphasized the teaching of resurrection. If this could be proven to be false, there would be no Church today. This is because the resurrection is the origin of the Church, and the observance of the first day of the week by the Church is testimony to the resurrection.

   Therefore, it is surely not for lack of evidence that the modern African may doubt the resurrection. Only a bias against the Christian faith or the idea of the supernatural can explain any modern scepticism regarding this key saving event, as Olowala concludes (Olowala, 1998:169).

4.5 The signs of time

In his work entitled *Living at the End of the Ages,* Klassen(1992:22) calls those who do the end-time calculations calendarisers:

Although every spokesman and writer in the 16th century reminded his readers that according to Scripture no one knew the exact day or hour of the End, nevertheless Jesus himself had told his disciples of signs to watch for by which one could at least attempt to establish the month or year.

It is remarkable to see how Klassen enumerated the traditional approaches to signs by some interpreters. Servetus listed no fewer than 60 signs of the nearness of the End in his *Restitution.* Martin Luther drew attention to the general fear in which everyone lived in 1520. In one list, he identified as specific signs general moral decay, repression and persecution of Christians, and constant universal warfare. He also believed that the prevalence and spread of syphilis was a sign of the End, while natural disasters and famine were more signs of the approaching End. Although he kept insisting that all of these things have happened throughout human history, they are signs of the End because they are now all occurring together. These same signs are encountered again and again in the writings of the Radical Reformation. Hutter wrote in a letter in 1535 about the unbridled godlessness and villainy of the time, the coldness of Christian love, the many false prophets and anti-Christs, the great shedding of blood, and the abomination that desolates. The expected early conversion of the Jews to Christ was also regarded as a sign by many. Hutter also noted this phenomenon: "Many people say that time passes and every vision comes to nothing. As the days pass, many scoffers say: Where is the promise of His coming? Everything is the same as it has always been. These scoffers deliberately refuse to listen" (Klassen, 1992:23). However, we can learn and consider these, but carefully keep our distance. Far more important for our study is the fact that König (1992:191-193) felt compelled to provide a careful scriptural basis for the conviction that we are in the midst of end-time events.

The signs of the times are pointedly announced by Jesus. He spoke to his disciples as such, and opened his prophetic discourse on the signs of the times with the urgent warning: "Take care that no one mislead you" (Matt 24:4). This means that his original audience, the first disciples, would themselves experience the fulfillment of the signs. He was not referring to a distant generation two thousand years beyond them in history. His whole prophetic discourse is aimed at "You, my hearers" (Matt

24:6, 9, 15, 20, 23, 26, 32). Throughout the sermon, in all three synoptic accounts of it, Jesus is engaged with his disciples and the signs they would see. Matt 24:33 is an example of this: "in the same way, when you see all those things, you may know that the end is near at the door".

The message about signs was therefore not directed at remote generations. It was an urgent word to the Church of there and then, irrespective of which century a particular congregation happened to live in. König (1992:191) points out that we must pay attention to the following:

In fact, any view of the signs which makes it impossible to preach Christ's return is a distortion. If in a golden age of tranquility and prosperity the signs are not preached but are postponed for a time of catastrophe and disaster, the biblical message of the signs will have been misunderstood.

One consequence of this would be that the message of the Church would lose credibility, since the world could only think that the Church merely exploits times of distress, shrinks back when peaceful times return, and then waits for more catastrophes. Whether such calculation is done with detail or approximation makes no difference. Both have led unbelievers to reject the message of the Church. In contrast, we are struck by the consistently and pressing prophetic utterances of Jesus and the New Testament writings about the signs of the second coming.

The Church at Thessalonica, for example, seems to be unable to relate the death of some of their members to expectations of Christ's imminent return. Paul does not solve their problem by proclaiming a far-off coming of the Lord, but simply by assuring them that Christians who have died will be raised when Christ returns and thus lose nothing (1 Thess 4:15). It is important and consistent with Jesus' use of "you" that Paul does not speak of "those" who will be alive at the second coming, but of "we". In truth, he reckoned on the possibility that the Lord would come before he died (Note also the use of "we" in 1 Cor 15:51 – on the other hand, Paul took equal account of the possibility that he would die before the second coming, as witnessed by the "we"of 1 Thess 5:10). And, when it appears that the Thessalonians have the mistaken notion that the day of the Lord has already arrived (2 Thess 2:1-2), the

apostle does not, once again, solve their problem by referring to a far-off return, but continues to speak of things which will shortly take place (2 Thess 2:7).

The same is true of Revelations. They had to be ready, for it spoke of things that "must shortly happen" (Rev 1:1) because "the hour of fulfillment is near" (Rev 1:3), and because Christ is "coming soon" (Rev 3:11). Three times in Revelations 22, Jesus says: "I am coming soon". This is another instance, not of distant things, but of signs which lay before the door, since the Judge was at the door (James 5:9). In light of all this, König (1989:193) disagrees with and rejects the calculations of the signs of the times:

It is a grave misunderstanding of the signs of the times and of the nearness of the Lord's return to interpret Israel's return to Palestine as a sign that the second coming is about to take place or to expect the prophecy of Antichrist to be fulfilled in one personal Antichrist. This undermines the message which the Church has had to preach during every one of the past nineteen centuries, which is that Christ's second coming is near and may happen at any time. Such a doctrine as the "rapture" is open to the same criticism.

As a result, there is no sense in calculating when his return will be imminent. What are meaningful and necessary are signs which serve as continual reminders that his return is always near. This is the function of the signs of the times.

4.6. The imminent return of Christ

We have stated in the previous section that the function of the signs is to encourage people to be vigilant about the nearness of Christ's coming. Many scholars would deny that Paul offers various remarks on the future of the world and of believers, and on the role that Christ will pay in those end-time events. In relation to Paul's view on the parousia and resurrection of the body afresh, Sobanaraj (2007:3) declares the following:

Pauline eschatological teaching presents a complex picture even to an ordinary lay reader. The degree of the complexity appears to be so fluid that it can be detected not only from the

juxtaposing of two of his letters, but also from within a single letter. It seems that Paul is using a variety of languages and appropriating diverse sources while formulating his thoughts on the intricate, unknown and invisible mysteries of the future.

Is there any debate that Paul also speaks in terms of some eschatological events having already transpired? This, however, leaves the following question: What is the relationship between the eschatological "already" and the eschatological "not yet"? Witherington (1997:172) has shown that one common way of framing an answer to this question has been to speak of a tension between imminence and delay. Holman has drawn attention to expectation and delay in Jewish apocalyptic writings (Holman, 1996:39-86). Whatever the merits of this sort of conceptual framework for analysing other early Jewish and Christian documents that contain eschatological and apocalyptic remarks, Witherington (ibid) observes that there are several problems with this entire way of framing the question if the subject is Pauline eschatology. He lists these problems as follows:

Firstly, when one encounters the language of eschatological imminence, one must determine whether Paul is speaking of spatial or temporal nearness. It cannot be simply assumed that temporal nearness is being referred to. Secondly, when temporal nearness is the focus, one must be able to determine whether Paul is reflecting or correcting eschatological views of a certain imminence of the return of Christ. Thirdly, when the language of temporal nearness is used, and Paul's own views are the issue, the question becomes whether Paul is referring to the mere possibility of the nearness of the end, or of Christ's return, or whether he is asserting the definite nearness of such events. If it is simply the real possibility of such events in the near future, then we cannot frame the discussion in terms of imminence and delay. The term "delay" implies that there is a certain time schedule which has not been met.

Here we must briefly reflect on Paul's own eschatology. We have already shown that it is wise to avoid the conclusion that Paul believed it was possible that the Lord might return soon. In addition, Paul's temporal remarks cannot simply be understood as meaning that the tension between the temporal "already" and "not yet" has been eliminated.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:2-11, Paul describes the Day of the Lord as something which comes "like a thief in the night". We can gather from 1 Thessalonians 5:3 (which says: "There is peace and security", then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman") that the force of the metaphor and the analogies drawn to make its meaning plain mean that this day will come suddenly and unexpectedly. Preparedness is urged by Paul. It is significant that 1 Thessalonians 5:2 suggests that Paul had already taught the Thessalonians about the issues of time and seasons, and how Christ's coming would be like a thief in the night.

Several texts in Romans also deserve our consideration at this point, because they too reflect this tension between "already" and "not yet". Working backwards through Romans, we come to Romans 16:20. This verse involves a word of encouragement that evil will not prevail forever, and more to the point, there is an emphasis on how much greater God's power is than that of Satan. The eschatological basis and framework of all of Paul's practical advice is seen clearly when we look at Romans 12-13. In Romans 12:2, Paul emphasizes that Christians are not to be conformed to the world, the form of which is after all passing away, but rather be transformed by the Holy Spirit, which enables the renewal of the Christian mind, heart, will, emotions and habits. The transformation of the mind allows for clear Christian judgments about what is and what is not the will of God. Christians also know, since they have the eschatological spirit of God in their lives, that they are living in the eschatological age.

In Romans 13:11-14, Paul is reminding the audience about what time is already is, not what time it will soon be. It is the time to wake up, since the possible nearness of the conclusion of God's salvation plan means that one must be awake and alert. Witherington (1997:183), in reading 1 Corinthians 16:22, in which the "marana tha" utterance can be found, strongly argues that: (1) there was a fervent hope among the earlier Jewish Christians who spoke Aramaic, which is to say probably the earliest Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem, that the Lord would return and possibly soon, and (2) this event was often a subject of prayer.

It is clear not only from 1 Corinthisans 16:22, but also from texts such as Galatians 4:5-6 and Romans 8:15, that Paul was in touch with the worship life of the

earliest Jewish Christians as they adored Christ and prayed as he taught them to pray. The term "marana tha" in Paul's letter enables us to see that he was in contact with the thinking of the earliest Christians with regard to the return of Christ.

Summing up the declaration of Jesus himself when he told his followers: "When all this begins to happen, stand upright and hold your heads high, because your liberation is near" (Luke 21:28, 30; Matt 24:33; Mark 13:29), König (1989:200) observes that:

Wherever the imminence of the second advent functions properly in its biblical context as a call to unceasing vigilance and service, there God's people cease from their calculations and are no longer confused. The compassion of God, who desires all to be saved, remains the most profound and satisfying answer to the question of why the Lord has not yet returned (2 Peter 3:9).

As a result, we can draw the following conclusion – that God's freedom and his way of surprising us by how he fulfills prophecies allow us to cling to his promises and remain constantly ready for the return of the Lord Jesus.

We saw at the beginning that Jesus predicted its coming to be near, indeed to be arriving within the lifetime of his generation. Can this statement be confirmed or defined more precisely? The notion that Jesus felt the end to be critically near is also seen in the calls for watchfulness. We are concerned here with a very intricate complex of the tradition from a literary point of view. On the one hand, we find general calls for watchfulness: "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning" (Luke 12:35; Mark 13:33, 37). On the other hand, the tradition contains, in several variations, the parable of the absent householder, for whose return the servants are to wait (Mark 13:34-38; Luke 12:36-38; Matt 24:42), and there is also the parable of the master of the house who would have watched, had he known when the thief was coming, with the application (Matt 24:43; Luke 12:39), and finally, the parable of the ten virgin admonishes (Matt 25:1-13).

The parable of the absent householder is handed down in two essential forms: firstly, the servants are to be found watching by their Lord when he return from the

marriage feast, and secondly, the Lord has given the servants definite tasks for the period of his absence, and when he returns unexpectedly, he will ask about their performance. Both forms are characterized by a strong predominance of metaphorical features which are meant to suggest the application of the picture language to the relationship of the returning Jesus to his disciples. The evident meaning of this imagery is that the disciple must at all times be ready for the arrival of the Lord (Mark 13:34-38; Matt 24:42; Luke12:26-28)

Thus, there is no doubt that these parables are intended to urge preparedness for the day of the appearance of the parousia, which may occur at any time of the expected eschaton. Moreover, the parable in Luke 12:58 also seems to point in the same direction. This instruction to be reconciled with one's adversary before the beginning of legal proceedings, because one might otherwise be obliged to pay the last mite is clearly added in Matt 5:25, attracted by a catchword, to the exhortation to be reconciled before offering a gift, and in this context cannot be understood as anything but a prudential maxim.

This also applies to the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1). There is no doubt that the parable enjoins readiness for an event of which the time is not known, but is certainly very near. It is clear that this is intended to point to the parousia o f the Son of man, as is indicated by the metaphorical words of the bridegroom(Matt 25:1-13).

While attempts have been made to understand, in various ways, the imminent return of Christ, Kummel (1966:54-64) emphasises the significance of the relevant texts, which show that Jesus proclaimed the proximity of the eschaton (within a limited time) or at least its coming in the future.

Before we end this discussion regarding the nature of the coming of the Eschaton, it is important to note that due to the varying viewpoints on this issue, it is difficult to present a single and coherent picture. However, König (1989:202) comments that:

In truth, the second coming of Christ is itself a repetition of the fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, a prophecy fulfilled in his incarnation and in the coming of the Holy Spirit and due for fulfillment again in his return.

Thus, in this debate, König (1989:203-209) observes at least four characteristics of the manner of the eschaton's return, which can be expected to be:

1. Visible. There is a fairly general expectation in the New Testament that Christ's coming will be visible. In Rev 1:7, it is stated that: "Every eye shall see him". Through the synoptic gospels, it was also mentioned that "All people of the world will make lamentation, and they will see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27). One is led to conclude that he will visibly return.

2. Sudden. Christ will come suddenly and unexpectedly. This is not a question of the nearness of his coming, but rather of the fact that it will evidently be a sudden event, not a gradual process. The image of a thief is frequently used for the same purpose (Matt 24:63; Luke 12:35; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:1-3). It is precisely because a thief breaks in unexpectedly that he is so dangerous. The son of man's coming is sudden, everywhere at the same time, without warning, and thus unexpected (Matt 24:44).

3. Cosmic. Jesus' prophetic discourse mentions earthquakes (Matt 24:7), the eclipse of the sun and moon, the falling of stars, and the shaking of heavenly powers (Matt 24:29). In 2 Pet 3:10, we read of the heavens vanishing with a great rushing sound and the elements disintegrating in flames. In Rev 6:12-17 and Rev 8:5, a considerable number of such cosmic phenomena are mentioned.

4. Glorious. The Eschaton's coming will be in glory. This is not the manner in which Christ came before. In his incarnation, he was rejected (Luke 2:34) because he came in humility (Phil 2:5-8). He was mocked (Matt 10:25; Matt 11:19-24). However, at his second coming, "every knee will bow to him and every tongue confess him Lord" (Phil 2:10-11; Rev 5:13). The glory in which Eschaton will come has nothing to do with the glorification which awaits us (Col 3:4; Rom 8:18-23). Indeed, Christ will not come for his own sake – he will come rather to take us to himself, so that we can be where he is (John 14:3) and see his glory (John 17:24).

4.7 Christ's coming as fulfillment

We have analyzed the development of the concept of the imminent return of the eschaton in the previous section, and its significance. In dealing with the fulfillment of this return in this section, we will focus on the realisation of the eschaton. In this study, we are faced with three considerations which have emerged in the Scriptures as important aspects in this regard.

4.7.1 The Resurrection of the Body

The hope of the Church is based on the belief that the Messiah has already come in the form of Jesus, and that hope is now directed towards a salvation promised by Christ, to be reached through redemption in a life to come. Christ's kingdom is thus already established on earth, and at the same time, is expected in the future.

The concept of resurrection can best be defined when treated as part of the term "eschatology". This is the doctrine of last things: death, resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell, and a new life in a new world. Biblical eschatology is concerned not only with the destiny of the individual, but with history as well. God reveals himself through redemptive history, such as the advent and life of Jesus Christ and redemptive acts. Since God is the Lord of history, the consummation of God's redemptive work will include the redemption of history itself.

In the Old Testament, the prophets looked forward to the day when the God of Israel, who has repeatedly visited his people throughout history, will finally visit them to judge the wicked and redeem the righteous. In the last days, God will come to establish His kingdom (Isaiah 2:2-4). The New Testament sees in the incarnation of Christ the fulfillment of the Old Testament hope, and in his second coming, the consummation of that hope. The resurrection of those in Christ is therefore guaranteed by the fact of his resurrection. Stephen (1993:43) claims that Jesus' resurrection can best be understood according to a bodily transformation model. The following points are important in this regard:

1. Jesus' resurrection was a bodily resurrection – the tomb was empty; the resurrected body could be touched; and it was a genuine physical occurrence, not an apparition or figment of the disciples' imagination (Luke 24:37).

2. Jesus was one and the same person before and after the resurrection: he claimed to be Jesus; he recalled events that had taken place before his crucifixion; he was recognised as Jesus by the disciples, and his wounds were still there.

3. There were also differences in the form that Jesus took after his resurrection: his body was transformed (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:31; John 20:14-15; John 21:4-5, etc).

Thus, Jesus was genuinely dead and later, genuinely alive, so that the tomb of Jesus was empty (Stephen, 1993:57). We share this view. Stephen observes that we live in an age in which many theologians, biblical scholars and clergy are expressing doubt about the notion that Jesus was bodily raised. This, he says, is because such doubts usually revolve around apparent inconsistencies in the New Testament's accounts of Jesus' resurrection and the belief that bodily resurrection is outmoded, old-fashioned, far-fetched, or the like (ibid).

Christ's death and resurrection are together the central focus of Christian theology. His death was one of salvation, since he died for the sins of others. König (1989:226) says that all this is apparent from the ministry of Jesus who, in the same breath, speaks both of the forgiveness of sins and the healing of the body (Mark 6:34). Salvation is strongly linked to physical healing in Acts 4:9. Thus, physical healing is an essential part of the salvation made possible by Jesus. It is thus clear that Christ's salvific death and resurrection form the basis of Christian theology.

In terms of Paul's beliefs, death was a departure to be with Christ, which is believed to be better than continued life on earth. Death is not to be feared, but to be welcomed, because it is the gate to eternal fullness of life. In 1 Corinthians 15:56, "the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". It is in relation to this conception of death as the entrance into fullness of life that Paul develops his doctrine of resurrection.

Christ died in order to save man. The death of Christ is the price for man's salvation. Since the believer is in Christ, he dies in him and is resurrected in him. In this way, death is defeated. Indeed, were it not for the account of his resurrection, Jesus' claim to be the resurrection and the life would be in question. Andrew (1998:143) sums up the Christological focus of the resurrection message of the Fourth Gospel. This message is Christological, and also has both Trinitarian dimensions and consequences for humanity. Resurrection life has its source in the Logos, who is one with the creator God. It is manifested in the body of Jesus, the incarnate Logos, and is mediated through the risen Jesus' bestowal of the Spirit. Faith in Jesus as the Christ, who has a unique relationship with God, now makes life possible for believers. And, just as the incarnate Logos' divine life overcame death in a bodily resurrection, so too for believers, eternal life will triumph over physical death through resurrection. Thus, König (1989:231) convinces us that biblical appreciation of the body is really its esteem for the person.

It is in this light that we can clearly see why, for Paul, the gospel is at stake with the resurrection of the body (ie. of the person): "of the dead are never raised to life, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor 15:32). In terms of Paul's thinking as a Jew, the dead were dead but they would be brought back to life by the power of God on the day of resurrection. Little is said about "the intermediate state". Guthrie (1981:837) points out that there are various opinions about Paul's view of the state of believers between their death and parousia. In view of the fact that there are four views, with no unified opinion, we need to briefly mention them:

- Believers exist as disembodied spirits who await the resurrection, when they will be given glorious and eternal bodies.
- Believers receive a "temporary" body at death, which will be replaced by a glorious resurrection body at parousia.
- Believers enter into a state of unconsciousness until resurrection, when they will be roused and given a glorious body.
- Regardless of these different views, it seems that fundamental to Paul's teaching is the notion that believers will be "with Christ".

König(1989:232) believes that this is an exceptionally difficult issue, because the consolation of early Christians lay in the belief that the second coming of the eschaton was imminent and with it came the resurrection of the dead. When a few members of the Thessalonian Church died, the others were deeply distressed, as they feared that the departed might miss Christ's return. Paul's answer was not a discussion of what happens to the dead until Christ's return – his message of comfort was that they would rise again when Christ returned. Anyone living in expectation of Christ's near return had no further need for comfort, because Christ had himself risen from the dead and, through his resurrection, conquered death.

Paul is reticent about the intermediate state. In fact, he uses the same concepts for it as those he applies to our fellowship with Christ, both now and after resurrection. He longs to depart and be with Christ (Phil 1:23), but believers are already with Christ (2 Cor 13:4; Col 2:13, 20; Col 3:3), and on his return, will also be with them (Col 3:4; 1 Thess 4:14, 17; 1 Thess 5:10). In 1 Thess 5:10, Paul uses exactly the same expression for the living and the dead, when he asserts that both will live in fellowship with Christ.

Of concern is the issue of "the notion of two resurrections", one for the faithful and the other for unbelievers. König's (1989:233) view suggests a vast difference between the experience of resurrection by believers and non-believers. Resurrection means, particularly for Paul, to be given a share in the risen life of Christ, who conquered death. It means receiving a new resurrection life and the resurrection "body" spoken of in 1 Cor 15. Therefore, it is not surprising that Paul does not speak about unbelievers in this regard – their resurrection must be something quite different. Nevertheless, from the death and resurrection of Christ, the idea of salvation arose. For the early Church, the death and resurrection of Christ was the issue in terms of which Christianity stood or fell. Thus, his death and resurrection ensures for the believer a new life after death.

What is relevant here is whether or not the faithful who are still alive at the time of Christ's coming will take any precedence over those who have already departed. The answer given in this regard is that they will not, because the faithful

departed will rise first. Afterwards, those who are still alive will join them, caught up in the clouds to meet the Eschaton and Lord in the air (1 Cor 15:17).

4.7.2 The Judgment

In Luke's version of Paul's speech before the Roman Felix, Paul affirms that "there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15 cf. Rom 14:10). In addition, the fourth evangelist records Jesus as saying: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the deed will hear the voice of the Son of God… Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:25, 28-29).

But what will happen to people after general resurrection? What will be the fate of "those who have done good" and "those who have done evil"? Davis observes that Christians have traditionally believed that at least some people, after death, live eternally apart from God. He calls those who believe this doctrine "separationists", because they hold that these people are eternally separated from God and from those who are with God. Others, who espouse the doctrine of universalism, believe that all human beings will live eternally with God (Davis, 1993:147). The debate between separationists and universalists is an important theological debate in itself. However, it also seems to have many implications for other areas of theology, and for Christian life and practice. In his study, Head makes some remarks about the biblical aspects of the judgment of God as follows:

> Nevertheless, we should also remember: (1) that God will judge justly and in accordance with deeds and knowledge (leading to a more and less tolerable experience of judgment); and (2) that the eternal fire is designed for the Devil and his angels (God is not a sadist). Human beings experience this judgment by virtue of their association with the Devil as children of wrath and their opposition to Jesus Christ and his gospel (Head, 1997:227).

This seems to be a strong argument in favor of God's judgment upon people after general resurrection. König (1989:216-220) responds to this argument in favor of the claim that what happens at the final judgment is no more than the disclosure or

manifestation of this decision. The real decision is taken in this life. The New Testament emphasises the fact that believers are free from judgment, but also says that they will be present at the Judgment, just as unbelievers are.

"He who puts his faith in the Son has hold of eternal life" (John 3:36). "There is no condemnation for those who are united with Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). We will now look at how König responds to the biblical argument of the judgment. This must be briefly described, because it is a much more compelling argument. In terms of the texts cited in connection with the first argument for the judgment of believers and non-believers presented above, König states that in 1 Cor 3:13 and 1 Cor 4:5, it is clearly shown that the decisive element is what believers have done in their earthly lives. This will only be made known at the time of the Judgment - the decisive events have already been played out in this life, the interim period, and on these grounds, the final verdict is to be announced at the Judgment. Moreover, the Bible knows no tension between justification by faith and judgment by work. The fact that the object of our work is the Lord himself shows at once the decisive unity of faith and works. The latter are the result and vindication of faith (James 2:14).

Paul says that God "has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged, and justly judged, by a man of his choosing" (Acts 17:31). Although Christ has saved us from judgment, we shall nevertheless be tested to see if we have indeed been saved and how we have responded to this salvation. The first of these tests ought to hold no tension, doubt or uncertainty for the believer. The New Testament speaks in terms of the assurance of faith. It is evident that no conclusions about the quality of Christian lives can be drawn from the fact that they have been freed from judgment. They may have built on that foundation with gold, silver and fine stone, or with wood, hay and straw. And, when the work is tested, Christians may well suffer loss, though they themselves are saved (1 Cor 3:15). This is similar to the parable "For when I was hungry, you gave me no food…". Thus, it is clear that for the lost as well, the decision is taken during the interim and reflects their attitude towards Jesus, not their works as such. This is evident from the fact that although on Judgment Day people claim that they prophesied and cast out devils in his name, he will reject them, saying: "I never knew you; out of my sight, you and your wicked ways" (Matt 7:22-23).

Therefore, works as such have no intrinsic value. What is important is that which results from the relationship with God in Christ.

From the foregoing, we can clearly see that eternal judgment upon the faithless is grounded not in God's reluctance to save them, but in their attitude towards Jesus (Matt 25:41-46). He has not even prepared for them a place of their own in eternity, since their damnation was not a part of his creative purpose. He simply sends them away to the place prepared "for the devil and his angels" (Matt 25:41).

The reality of hell and even of eternal hell is spoken of often in the New Testament (Mark 9:43-50; Matt 25:41, 46; 2 Thess 1:7-9; Jude 6; Rev 14:11; Rev 19:3; Rev 20:10), and seems to be inextricably tied to such major themes in New Testament theology as God, sin, judgment, and reconciliation. Indeed, there seems to be a strong connection between the reality of hell and need for atonement and a saviour from sin (Matt 25:41; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Thess 1:8-9). Thus, König (1989:221) has argued that:

> … it is still God who pronounces the verdict. It is he who in his grace and love determines to relieve us in this hopeless situation and bring us back into fellowship by virtue of his son's merits. But he also determines to abandon the unbeliever, who refuses his help and will not tread the path back to happiness opened by God in his goodness. In this way, God remains the King, the Sovereign Lord, but the lost have no one but themselves to blame for their condition.

Nevertheless, the way in which Scripture speaks of these two realities (people being saved or lost) does not permit us to be silent regarding the reality of hell when speaking of the reality of the new earth.

Ellis'(1997:217) understanding of the biblical teaching on the destiny of those outside Christ is that it will be God's judgment. This judgment will be God's act on the last day of this age, when the "just and unjust", the living and dead raised to life, will stand before Jesus Christ to receive this verdict, each according to what he or she has done on earth. God's last word is not judgment, but salvation (1 Cor 15:53). It is

the magnificent biblical teaching of resurrection to immortality and everlasting life in a "new heaven and a new earth" (2 Pet 3:13; Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22). At that wonderful time, the whole of God's creation will be in perfect harmony and will resonate with God's praise and prospects.

4.7.3 The New Heaven and the New Earth

However difficult the subject might be, we cannot avoid paying some attention to the fact that in both the Old and New Testament, as time comes to an end, there will be "a new heaven and a new earth" (Smith, 1980:223). To begin with, we must give some consideration to what König (1989:234) observes as a degree of contention in theological circles. He provides two reasons for this. Firstly, it is a reaction against an otherworldly Christianity's longing for heaven and a neglecting of mundane responsibility. In other words, König's view is that Christians do have an important task in this world, and not one which is restricted to spiritual matters (Matt 10:42; Matt 25:31; Luke 10:25-37). A second reason is the technological achievements of this century, especially the conquest of space, which render such depictions of heaven as being "up there". In this regard, Phillips (1972:75) says the following: "But 'heaven', whatever it is, must be fundamentally different. It cannot be a space-time environment. It cannot in any normal sense of the word even be regarded as a 'place'…". Therefore, let us begin by determining what heaven is. Smith (1980:27) reflects a lot on heaven's meaning in the Bible, and found that the use of the word 'heaven' in the English Bible was almost always a translation of the Hebrew world 'shamayim' and the Greek word 'ouranos'. The Hebrew word literally means "the heights", while the Greek word has a related but different meaning – "that which is raised up". Considering the various shades of meaning which may be said to attach themselves to the original words, Smith concludes that it is undeniable that the primary meaning of the word 'heaven' is "that which is above". By this is meant, of course, that which is above the earth. Thus, heaven refers to those phenomena that are above the earth.

In contrast to this viewpoint, Phillips (1972:77) declares that heaven is not above. He quotes the magnificent twenty-first chapter of Revelations as an example of

this: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God …” (Revelations 21:1-3). Consequently, Phillips concludes that:

The important thing is that heaven is where God is (the dwelling of God is with men), and in this new heaven God has drawn his people into a community in which he is going to dwell. In such a community, God will wipe away every tear, and abolish pain, sorrow, and death … for the former things are passed away” (Revelations 24:4).

Thus, heaven is not “up” in strictly literal terms, but “up” is a very good word to describe something which is greatly superior to that which it replaces. Our normal usage of the word “higher” thus confirms this. König (1989:235) explains this in detail in the following statements regarding the “creatureliness” of heaven. On the one hand, we must emphasise the reality that the Bible mentions heaven in various contexts. Sometimes it is mentioned together with the earth as God’s creation, where it is described as being too small (Gen 1:1, 8; Gen 2:1, 4; Isaiah 42:5; Isaiah 45:18; Acts 4:24; Acts 14:15; Acts 17:24; Rev 10:6; Rev 14:7). Heaven, like earth, stands under God’s rule (Matt 11:25) and will vanish (Mark 13:31; Rev 20:11; 2 Pet 3:10, 12). At other times, heaven is said to be much higher than earth, to be the dwelling and throne of God: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth…”, “God is in heaven, you are on earth”, and “Heaven is my throne and earth my footstool” (Ps 115:16; Eccles 5:1; Isaiah 55:9; Isaiah 66:1).

Heaven is where God is, as mentioned earlier with regard to its place. Heaven is also when God is, as He is everlasting. For this reason, König (ibid) declares that:

Because of the “creatureliness” of heaven, spiritualizing solutions to the problem of where heaven is are unacceptable. Because the being of God is love, and space is the space of love, we must insist on the spatiality of heaven. God is more than the relationship in which we find ourselves, and heaven is more than a point in this relationship. Heaven is the place where God lives.

We are introduced to the theme of a new heaven and a new earth, and the emphasis of this theme is on the word "new". In the New Testament, there are two Greek words which can be translated as "new", namely 'neos' and 'kaines'. It is the latter word which is used throughout the Apocalypse in speaking of various things that are new (Rev 3:12), and it is used three times in this particular passage (verses 1, 2 and 5). At other times, this same word refers to things that have not been used (Matt 9:17; Matt 27:60). Sometimes, it refers to phenomena that were not previously present and are thus remarkable or strange (Mark 1:27; Mark 16:17). It is the word used by the Apostle Paul in speaking of the new creation and the renewal of a person (Eph 2:15; Eph 4:24). Smith's commentary suggests that:

….according to God's promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth the righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight (Smith, 1980:227).

Thus, König (1989:243) may help us to fully understand that the Kingdom of God has come in the person of Christ. He is the Lordship of God personified, and there is no rivalry between Father and Son. It is the Father who commits all power to the Son, and who gives him the Name above all names (Phil 2:9-11). And it is the Father who subjects all things to him (1 Cor 15:20). Therefore, this relationship is depicted on the new earth as God and the Lamb. This means nothing more than that God's goal in the act of creation has been fully achieved.

4.8. Conclusion

There are many parallels to be seen in this chapter, in which we have examined the concept of Christ the eschaton as it emerged in the Old Testament and was developed through New Testament thinking.

The hope of Christianity is based on the belief that the Messiah has already come in the person of Jesus, and that hope is now directed towards a salvation promised by Christ to be reached through redemption in the life to come. Christ's kingdom is thus already established on earth, and is at the same time expected in the future.

Christ is both the beginning goal and the consummation, as seen in the eschaton event. The Christian belief in Christ and his death and resurrection ensure for the believer a new life after death.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST AS REDEEMING ANCESTORSHIP

Introduction

Before proceeding with this study, let us ask ourselves the following question: "Why are ancestors important to the study of eschatology?" The answer to this is that, according to the findings of the previous chapter, without ancestors, the afterlife is unthinkable, if not impossible, although early missionaries did not accept this. Parratt, in his book entitled *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology today (*1995), observes that it was only recently that Christology was given its central place by African theologians. One reason for its initial neglect lies perhaps in the discontinuity between the two religious systems in terms of their view of history. African religions are not "historical", nor do they have a tradition of "sacred history". What Parratt seems to be suggesting is that their foundations are to be sought elsewhere, in the authority of the ancestors in the case of most Bantu systems, or in the combined authority of ancestors and deities in many parts of West Africa (Parratt, 1995:78). Furthermore, he states that Christological titles, as used in the New Testament, have not provided a promising basis for an African Christology. He refers to Mbiti's comments that most of these titles - Messiah-Christ, Son of Man and Son of David - have no major significance in Africa, since they do not fit into the thought patterns of African peoples (Parratt, 1995:80). As we noted above, Parratt drew attention to this aspect of African culture when he discovered the focal point of religious thinking of the Bantu in Africa.

In noting the biblical Christological titles mentioned above, this does not mean that they are not at all helpful to a present-day understanding of the significance of Jesus in Africa. There are partial points of contact with these titles in African traditional beliefs, which can be used as a starting point for our reflection.

The death of Jesus is often regarded as simply a stage in the process of redemption, the compelling part of which finds its resolution in the raising of Jesus from the dead. The African view of death, in contrast, is one of fulfillment. It sees death as the gateway to a greater life, both for the deceased, who becomes an ancestor who is able to grant benefits to the living, and also for the community, which receives

such benefits. Furthermore, the deceased remains an integral member of the community of which he or she was a member while alive.

Foremost in this approach have been Christian scholars such as Nyamiti (1984) and Bujo (1992). They take their points of departure from the role of ancestors and their place in the community, which unites the living and the dead.
Let us now look more closely at their viewpoints.

5.1 Jesus Christ as Proto-Ancestor

As it has been seen, Nyamiti and Bujo's Christology is securely rooted in the traditional concept of the ancestors, and at the same time seeks to show the impact on the ethical life of the community. To recognise the fundamental role of the ancestors is to acknowledge that one's point of orientation lies in the past. It is the ancestors and elders who taught us the art of living, and our decisions for or against the fullness of life depend on the extent to which we embrace or neglect our ancestral heritage.

New Testament writers expressed the significance of Jesus in titles that had meaning within the culture of their time. Such titles, says Parratt, now need to be reinterpreted in terms of the African context (Parratt, 1995:129). Similarly, Bujo(1992:76) says that Western theologians are today calling these titles into question. They seek to speak about Jesus and about his Good News in terms which modern men and women can understand. They believe that these titles, even if they originate in the Bible, are puzzling for people today and often serve to obscure rather than to illuminate the message. Christian thinkers today are striving to recover the genuinely human dimension of Jesus, so that his message may really be relevant to modern people and modern problems, instead of being wrapped in some ancient and often incomprehensible metaphysical idiom. Thus, given the centrality of the ancestors to African thought and practice, Christ may best be expressed in term of what Bujo calls the "Proto-Ancestor".

5.1.1 The concept of the Proto-Ancestor

In this context, it is meaningful to speak of Jesus as the ancestor "par excellence", since in him are found all the qualities and virtues that the African ascribes to his or her ancestors. According to Nyamiti(1984:19), Jesus is the perfect ancestor, more specifically, the brother–ancestor of African tradition. The idea here is that in traditional thought, a person's relationship with the family is continued,

although in an enhanced form. Similarly, after death, the relationship of the Christian to God is transformed by the death and resurrection of Christ. At this point, however, one could disagree. Jesus differs from the ancestors because, unlike the ancestral dead of the African people, Jesus Christ, once dead, now lives.

Like the African ancestor, Jesus shares the human nature of his descendants, and like them, he achieves this ancestorship through death. He is also, like an ancestor, a mediator between the living and God, and by virtue of his human and divine life, the model of conduct for his descendants (Nyamiti, 1984:15-16). Consequently, Nyamiti emphasises the solidarity of Christ with his Church ("his descendants").

In the African context, as Bujo (1992:79-80) suggests, the last words of the father in particular have decisive meaning, for they are regarded as exemplary and life-giving, and they are in a sense normative for those left behind. The historical Jesus fulfills the highest ideals ascribed to the ancestors in African thought, namely that he heals, cares, raises the dead, and so on. In a short time, he imparts his life force in all its fullness. After his death, he left this love and power to his disciples. However, Jesus is not merely any ancestor, not even the original ancestor. Instead, he is the proto-ancestor, which means that he fulfills within himself the authentic ideal of an ancestor in a complete way, but at the same time transcends this ideal and brings it to a new, full realisation. In this, he is Unique.

In the New Testament, the person of Christ is inseparable from his proclamation of the kingdom - the kingdom is in fact ratified by his death and resurrection, and his raising from the dead initiates a new creation. It is precisely through his death and resurrection that Jesus transcends the ancestors. He is the proto-ancestor, the proto-life that can never be superseded. The Jesus of history and the Christ of faith come together in the concept of the Proto-ancestor, whose life, death and resurrection has brought about a new relationship between God and man, and thus between man and his fellow human beings (Bujo,1992).

Nyamiti (1984:65) also uses the ancestor-descendant analogy to elucidate the relationship between God and Jesus, and indeed, he views it as being more helpful

within the African context than the biblical father-son analogy. In this regard, the life of the Godhead within the Trinity becomes the exemplar of all human ancestorship - God is the ancestor, not only because he generates the Son who is the "Prototype" of the Son, but because there exists between Him and the Son an intimate relationship of sacred communication of nature and love through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is thus the expression of mutual love and self-giving between God and Christ, which corresponds to the traditional notion of sacred communication between the ancestor and descendant.Therefore, the spirit becomes an essential element in the ancestor-descendant analogy, as applied to the Godhead.

This question has been commented upon with some criticisms by Bujo (1992). The kingdom was the fundamental determinant of Jesus' life and being, and made him what he was. Everything that Jesus did, taught and promoted found in the kingdom its final grounding. It was his own meaning. All this was sealed by Jesus' death and resurrection, which validated his proclamation and the uniqueness of his person. Through his death, Jesus became the means of salvation.
Furthermore, concludes Bujo (1992:81), Jesus Christ is the Proto-Ancestor, the Proto-life force, bearer in a transcendent form of the primitive vital union and vital force. Through his resurrection, Jesus is taken up once and for all into the glory of God. He not only has life, he is life, and awakens others to life (John11:25). Appropriately, Bujo (1992) states that:

To establish a relationship with Jesus Christ, we have to keep the earthly Jesus and the Christ of faith in a kind of dynamic tension. Both dimensions must be taken into account if the implication of a "Proto-Ancestor Christology are to be made clear. We shall then understand how Jesus, through his proclamation and through his way of living, culminating in a death sealed by resurrection has opened up a new relationship of human beings to God and in so doing has established a new relationship of one human being to another in the world in which they live.

5.1.2 Proto-Ancestor as Ancestor Grammar

In the same way, Jesus Christ, himself the image of the Father, by becoming like us, has shared our human heritage. It is within this human heritage that he finds us and speaks to us in terms of its questions. He challenges us to turn to him and

participate in the new humanity for which he has come, died, been raised and glorified (Bediako, 2004:24). Once this basic, universal relevance of Jesus Christ is granted, it is no longer a question of trying to accommodate the Gospel in our culture. As Bediako (2004:25) says, the Gospel then becomes our Story. Our Lord has been from the beginning the word of God for us for all people everywhere. He has been the source of our life, but like all people everywhere, we have also failed to understand him. However, now he has made himself known, by becoming one of us, one like us. By acknowledging him for who he is and giving him our allegiance, we become what we are truly intended to be, by his gift - the children of God. Our response to him is crucial, since becoming children of God does not stem from, nor is it limited by, the accident of birth, race, culture or lineage. It comes to us by grace through faith.

Thus, our meeting with God is in the incarnation of the word, in which God becomes part of the world. Such an act of becoming flesh is, however, as much an act of revealing the nature of humankind as it is of revealing the nature of God. This comment refers to Bujo (1992:82), who believes that the incarnation is the grammar of God's possible self-expression. He says that:

In the incarnation God really assumed humanity in a decisive way. In uttering God's word, which became our flesh, God immersed himself in the void of godlessness and sin, so that henceforth it is impossible for us if we wish to meet God, to ignore the man Jesus. Not to acknowledge the man Jesus is also not to acknowledge human at all.

Bujo (1992) strengthens this debate and pursues the question further. He considers that in identifying himself with humankind as the incarnate proto-ancestor, Jesus takes upon himself all the strivings and longings of the ancestors, and, as it were, makes their history his own. Not only is our place of meeting with the God of salvation therefore in him, but at the same time only in him can the ancestors be fully grasped. God has spoken to us in different ways and times (Hebrews 1:1-2). In this reflection, Bediako (2004:16) shows how a new vision of church history is necessary, in which Africa needs to be recognised as a new centre of world Christianity. He asserts that:

The translation of the Gospel takes place in a process of communication, interaction and refinement of theological understanding that gives rise to a new Christian idiom. Indigenous languages provide dimensions of perception that are none existent in the English language. No Akan will pray to Jesus as

“Ancestor Jesus” but will do so to Jesus as “Nana Yesu”, which translates into English as “ancestors Jesus”. The “Nana” has resonances that “ancestor” does not.

According to Bediako (2004)), the use of “Nana” is legitimate, drawing a parallel with the Christology of Paul, who uses Greek terms to describe Christ, enabling the Gospel to take root in the Greco-Roman world. Bediako (2004)) also makes it clear that giving Jesus African titles, such as ancestor, enables Christ’s song to ring out in many languages.

Now, however, a process of rehabilitation of this religious heritage has begun. Bujo (1992) states that God now speaks to us through the Son, the ancestor from whom the whole community stems. According to Bujo (1992), the concept of the proto-ancestor as a model for Christology has several advantages. As a Christology, it fits in well with the anthropocentricity of the African worldview. It is, furthermore, basically Trinitarian.

These are the issues that concern Bujo (1992) and shape his thinking with regard to Africa. He deals explicitly with ancestors and describes Jesus as the Ancestor from a biblical and theological perspective. As we have seen, both Nyamiti (1984) and Bediako (2004) support this view. It is through this will to be vulnerable that Jesus is the Lord. Bujo (1992) focuses on the significance of Africa in the history of Christianity. He continually emphasises the importance of this world- view in these terms.

It is important that Christianity shows Africans that being truly Christian and truly African are not two opposing things, because to be a true Christian means to be a true human being, since it was Jesus himself who was truly human and who humanized the world (Bujo, 1992:84). In Bujo’s (1992:83) view, the community also includes the ancestors themselves, since Jesus, in his work of bringing to completion and fullness the whole created universe, also brings the ancestors into this fullness of life.

5.2 Jesus Christ: the last ancestor and sole mediator

In the third chapter, we have discussed the African worldview with regard to the ancestors. In African life, the ancestors play an important role. They are the living

dead who are present in people's lives. Ancestors provide identity and protection. One could ignore the ancestors and condemn the rituals connected with people, but the result would not be that the ancestors disappeared, but that they continued to appear in people's lives at significant moments, although separated from Christian faith and expression (Bediako, 2004:14).

In this section, we deal explicitly with ancestors, and describe Jesus Christ as the last ancestor and sole mediator from a biblical and theological perspective. As we have shown above, Jesus fulfills and transcends the functions of the ancestors. Bujo (1992) and Bediako (2004) have revealed in their reflections that Christ is the word of God translated. Bediako (2004:15) suggests that God's divinity is translated into humanity, humanity being the receptor language.

Bediako (2004) states that three aspects of his life and ministry make Christ unique. Firstly, the incarnation through which God becomes a vulnerable man. Secondly, the cross, in which God's will for reconciliation through redemptive suffering is expressed. And thirdly, the Last Supper, in which communion with the Lord is celebrated in a human community that transcends all brothers, nations and languages. Thus, Christ is the vulnerable one who accepted the way of the cross. Bediako (2004) thus sees an African understanding of the cross as an event that heals and confirms relationships within society (1 Corinthians 10:16-18). He also points out that African religion understands sacrifice to be, as in the Bible, a means of cementing the relationship between the worshipper and God. Jesus' death, as the perfect sacrifice of one who lived an exemplary life, leads to him being regarded as the perfect Ancestor, who has died yet lives to have communion with his people. Thus, Bediako (2004:26) has adopted a more pragmatic approach to Christology. How does this death relate to our Story and to our natural "Spirit-Fathers" in particular? Bediako (2004) replies that some suggest that ours is a 'shame culture" and not a "guilt culture", on the grounds that public acceptance determines morality and consequently, a "sense of sin" is said to be absent. Bediako (2004) sees a close parallel between the roles of Jesus and those of ancestors. He regards this symbolism as useful, since it represents a "royal, priestly Christology ". He does, however, comment on this. Such a view of morality does not resolve the problem of the assurance of moral transformation that the human conscience needs, as the real problem of our sinfulness is a soiled conscience, and in view of this, purification rites and sacrificial offerings to achieve social harmony are ineffectual. However, the view

of sin as anti-social is also biblically valid: sin is indeed sin against another person and the community's interests. Yet, human beings are the creation of God, created in God's image, and social sin is therefore also sin against God. Sin is more than antisocial acts - the sinner ultimately sins against a personal God with a will and purpose in human history. Seen from this perspective, the insights about Jesus Christ in the epistle to the Hebrews are perhaps the most crucial of all. In this regard, Bediako (2004:26) states that:

Our Saviour is our Elder Brother who has shared in our African experience in every respect, except our sin and alienation from God, an alienation with which our myths of origins make us only too familiar. Being our true Elder Brother now in the presence of his Father, he displaces the mediatorial function of our natural "Spirit Father".

This is an important testimony to the depths of the understanding of Jesus as sole Lord and Saviour. Jesus Christ, the Second Adam from heaven (1Corinthians 15:47), becomes for us the only "mediator of a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6), linking our destiny directly to God. He is truly our High Priest, who fully meets our needs. Jesus is the Lord over the "living and the dead", and over the "living-dead", as ancestors are also called. He is Supreme over all gods and authorities in the realm of spirits, embodying in himself all their powers and cancelling any intimidating influence they might be assumed to have over us.

The guarantee that Jesus is also the Lord in the realm of spirits is that he has sent us his own Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to dwell with us and be our protector, as well as the Revealer of truth and Sanctifier. In John 18:7, our Lord's insistence on going away to the Father includes this idea of his Lordship in the realm of spirits, as he himself enters the realm of spirits. It also includes the idea of the protection and guidance that the coming Holy Spirit will provide for his followers in the world. The Holy Spirit is sent to convict the world of its sin in rejecting Jesus Christ, and to demonstrate, to the shame of unbelievers, true righteousness which is in Jesus and available only in him. He is also sent to reveal the spiritual significance of God's judgment upon the devil, who deceives the world about its sin and blinds people to the perfect righteousness in Christ.

As Bediako (2004:27) continually emphasizes the importance of this worldview, it may be helpful to consider this cry from his heart:

Our Lord therefore, entering the region of spirit sends the Holy Spirit to his followers to give them the understanding of the reality in the realm of spirits. The close association of the defeat and overthrow of the devil "ruler of this world" with the death resurrection and exaltation of Jesus (John 22:31) is significant, and the thought of the "keeping "and protection of his followers from the evil one forms an important part of Jesus' prayer recorded in John 17, aptly described as his high priestly prayer.

According to Milingo (1984:78), former Archbishop of Lusaka, the spiritual is found especially in the ancestors. To be a person is to take these givens and incorporate them into the framework of life. He seems to be arguing that giving Jesus the title of Ancestor is not just giving him an honorary title. Jesus fits perfectly into the African understanding of an ancestor. He is more than that - we can find in him all that we Africans are looking for in our ancestors. Milingo moves on to his central thesis, in which he suggests that referring to Jesus as an ancestor is a very noble title. It means that he is to us an elder in the community, a mediator between God and the community. He is able to be a citizen of both worlds. This is the availability of Jesus, and he therefore deserves the complete commitment of the human race. He is truly the elder of the human family, the first-born of them all.

When Paul was speaking to the Jews and Greeks, he had to take into consideration the fact that they had their own beliefs. Among the Jews, the coming of Jesus had been looked forward to, but they had their own concept of what He, as their Messiah, was going to do for them. When Paul speaks to the Jews and Gentiles, he accepts that he too is what he is, after his conversion, only by the grace of God. He confesses that he himself was subject to incorrect beliefs, and thus was a sinner. As he preached to them, he confessed his sins, enumerating the vices which had controlled him. In this way, he was able to help both Jews and Greeks to listen to him and accept Jesus Christ and his message (Ephesians 2:2-14).

Let us summarize the argument of Milingo (1984:79) in this way:

It is no longer a kindness to say of the African, they are naturally religious; when our altitude as we preach to them is that of giving them a 'new god', one they

do not know .The altitude of anger, sometimes called ‘zeal for the glory of God’, which is a false justification for a spiritual superiority complex, has to be wiped away from within us. We must plead with our people and ask them for a hearing. The roots of their beliefs in the power of the spirit –world are not just a social accommodation in their community, but are convictions that their ancestors give them guidance to plan their destinies.

This will depend on how Africans accept Jesus and his message and relate it to their own way of life. There is no doubt at all that Jesus is an elder, not only by being the first-born, but also by the fact that he took over the responsibility of an elder after being raised from the dead. He deserves to be an elder, not just because he died and rose from the dead, but also because he is victorious over all his enemies - death, sin and Satan. He is the all-powerful elder, and we are clearly right to seek protection from one who is all powerful.

5.3 Jesus Christ: Ancestor of African morality

The concept of Christ as the proto-ancestor has consequences for ethics and practical behavior. As we have seen in the third chapter of this study, in terms of the African way of looking at things, it was not God but man who was responsible for the appearance of sin and evil. The moral order is thus seen as a matter, not of the relationship between man and God, but of the relationship between human beings themselves. In fact, many tribes in Africa are convinced that a human being cannot offend God, and this principle also applies to the consequences of sin (Bujo, 1992:33). Africans believe that they can neither add anything to God nor take anything away from Him, and moral behavior and its consequences therefore concern only human beings. It is important to mention some features of African views on morality, as we have already mentioned.

God is, however, not completely absent from the moral thinking of the African. It has already been shown that prayers may be directed immediately towards God, even through the mediators. The duties of children towards parents, and the associated obligations towards the ancestors, constitute a major part of African morality. The good life depends not only on the ancestors, but also on the level of esteem which a person shows for his/her parents and clan elders. Killing is among the most serious of crimes, and sexuality is seen in the context of procreation. To separate sexual activity from its procreative function, or to be incapable of performing this

function, is to inflict serious damage on the clan, including its dead members. Another element of Africa's anthropocentric ethical system concerns the transmission of property. The right to private property is deeply rooted in the traditions of Africa (Bujo, 1997:35).

Parratt (1995:131) addresses the fact that a keynote of Jesus' message and actions was the value of a human being. He advocated the rights of women, and he showed his solidarity with sinners without himself sinning. At the same time, Jesus called for a real change of heart. The radical teaching of the sermon on the Mount focused upon interpersonal relationships and the humanization of all life. If one puts this in the African context, Jesus can be seen as the one who fulfills all the values of what Parratt(1995) calls "African anthropocentricity", as exemplified in such characteristics as hospitality and concern for one's family, parents and orphans, as well as for the underprivileged - in other words, Jesus' ministry to the poor. However, at the same time his ministry transcends the limits of Africans, in that he extends these ethical values to all humankind, regardless of race or ethnicity.

This transcending of the traditional limits should characterize the Christian ethic. For the imitation of Christ, the proto-ancestor must personally assume Jesus' own deeds, passion and resurrection, and all the possibilities which this brings. This will be to experience a kind of dynamic that will enable us to break and transform a tradition that has lost its power of creativity. Thus, Parratt (1995:132) argues that:

To accept Jesus as the Proto-ancestor, then means not just to stand by the cross and observe from afar, but to be on the cross and to suffer along with Jesus, for it is this crucified one with whom the believer can identify himself, the crucified as proto-Ancestor. In him is the life-giving spirit, and by the passion and resurrection he liberates, purifies, and humanizes African culture.

It must be concluded, therefore, that this is the basis for an ethic in Africa today, which will enter the ancestral ethos into a dialogue with the Christian faith.

Bujo (1992) places a greater emphasis on the ethical and moral responsibility of the church, as the community of life, towards all the poor, and its responsibility to become involved at all levels in the social and economic tasks of transformation. This consecration is the goal of the absolute commitment of Jesus of Nazareth to the restoration of human dignity. At this stage, he transforms or changes certain aspects

of the traditional morality of Africa. The moral perspective is for the whole human race, in loving service to the Father. Bujo (1992:91) comments on what it called "modern African sins". For example, corruption in public service is holding back human development and human progress in Africa. The same is to be said of the way in which authority is exercised, and of political takeovers, which only involve enriching oneself and exploiting the weak. He concludes by saying that:

Modern Africans can only follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ if they see in Jesus, not some proud tyrant, but rather the Proto-Ancestor whose last will was an appeal for human love and untiring effort to overcome all inhumanity.

In his letter, Paul is encouraging Timothy, responding to the power of God, to be ready to receive, as he says, the hardship for the sake of the goodness. It is this that all us Christians should know: that as Christians, we are expected to be the true reflection of Jesus Christ, which means that in our lives, Jesus has to be shown to be the suffering servant as well as, later on, the triumphant, resurrected Jesus (2 Timothy 1:6-11).

5.4 Ancestor theology for a New Ecclesiology

Christology, however, cannot be separated from ecclesiology, just as the ancestor or "clan founder" cannot be separated from his descendants (Bujo, 1992:92). Bujo therefore proceeds to examine the significance of Jesus as proto-ancestor for the conception of the church. The exalted Jesus is the means by which God imparts his divine life to the world - he is the proto-life source. The same comparison appears in Paul's interpretation, when Bujo (1992:93) says:

The theme of Jesus as life-giver is central to New Testament, and especially to Pauline, theology. Paul draws a parallel between the first and second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45; Romans 5:12). And speaks of Christ as the first born from the dead, as the Head of the body, the church (Col 1:18), as the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep (1Corinthians 15:20). In him resides the fullness of God, who has chosen to use him to reconcile all things (Col 1:19-20).

This is because, for Bujo (1992), the divine life in Christ is conveyed primarily through the eucharist. The eucharist is the means of nourishing and renewing the life of the community, and as his followers share this divine life, they too become a means for the proto-ancestor to give this same life not only to the

church, but also to the clan and nation. The church thus becomes the focal point from which the life of the proto-ancestor spreads out to all humanity.

Thus, the purpose of the eucharist is to impart life in all its fullness for the welfare of the whole community. Bujo (1992:95) argues that:

The Eucharistic meal, as the basis of an African ecclesiology, must take these Conceptions seriously if it is so be truly Incarnated in Africa. At the last supper, Jesus shared bread and wine with the apostles. In anticipation of his death, filling them with what had been entrusted to him by the Father that they might find courage to go on living and announce to the coming generation the life-giving memory and the vital power of their Lord.

This life is the Spirit. The ancestral model is again seen to be Trinitarian, in which the Father, Son and Spirit are the source and substance respectively of divine life in the community.

An ecclesiology based on such an ancestral model presents a number of challenges, and the life of the church and each member therefore has a role to play in transforming the situation in Africa by contributing to the divine life force of the whole community. One cannot honestly speak, argues Bujo (1992:97-99), of a living Christian community when the laity is systematically excluded from any part of decision-making in its own church. So also does a lifestyle on the part of the clergy that is alien to the Gospel. In an impassioned plea to church leaders, Bujo urges them to renounce materialism and bourgeois values, and to live in a way that will demonstrate their solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

To take the life of the Eucharistic community seriously is not simply to speak and write about the oppressed, but to work with and for them. These values need to be fundamental to training for the priesthood, so that theological theory will be combined with praxis, and seminarians will have experience of sharing the real and basic needs of real people. He believes that an ecclesiology based on the model of Jesus as proto-ancestor will be able to relate in a meaningful way to Africans today. It is a model based on religious experience of the significance of the ancestors, and at the same time is founded on the biblical concept of the Word of Christ, who brings life to his people and leads them through the Spirit into fellowship with the Father.

The choice of ancestral theology for this role is not, of course, new to Africa, as it has been explored, in one way or another, by Nyamiti, Bediako and others. However, Bujo develops this concept with rather more attention to its significance to

the totality of the traditional thought system. However, there is no doubt that the role of the ancestors is in all African cultures, and is the foundation of their religious life. Such a choice of ancestral theology is not, however, without its problems. If Christ is to be seen as a proto-ancestor, do we not need to honestly tackle the negative side of the ancestral cult, and ask why Christ is not like other ancestors? This issue warrants further research.

5.5 The question of Ancestral function

In our view, ancestral function seems to be the one aspect to which Jesus Christ less easily answers. Ancestors are lineage or family ancestors, and are thus by their very nature ours. Therefore, the cult of ancestors may be said to go beyond the reach of Christian argument. If the cult of ancestors is valid, there is solid ground here on which traditional religion can stand. It is precisely here that the problem lies.

Bediako (2004:30) emphasizes the importance of realizing that since ancestors do not originate from the transcendent realm, it is the myth-making imagination of the community itself that sacrileges them, conferring upon them the sacred authority they exercise through those in the community such as kings, who also expect to become ancestors. The potency of the cult of ancestors is not the potency of ancestors themselves - the potency of the cult is the potency of myth.

In this regard, more significantly, Bediako(2004) is convinced that once the meaning of the cult of ancestors as myth is grounded and its 'function' is understood within the overall religious life of traditional society, it will also become clear how Jesus Christ fulfills our aspirations in relation to ancestral function.
Bediako's(2004:30) point of departure is that ancestors are considered worthy of honor for having lived among us, and for having brought benefits to us - Jesus Christ has done infinitely more. Jesus, reflecting the brightness of God's glory and the exact likeness of God's own being (Hebrews 1:3), took our flesh and blood, shared our human nature and underwent death for us to set us free from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15). His incarnation implies that he has achieved a far more profound identification with us in our humanity than the mere ethnic solidarity of lineage ancestors can ever do. Jesus Christ also surpasses our natural ancestors by virtue of who he is in himself. Ancestors, even described as "ancestor spirits", remain essentially *human spirits*, and whatever benefit they may be said to bestow is effectively contained by the fact of their being human. Jesus Christ, on the other hand,

took on a human nature *without loss to his divine nature*. Belonging to the eternal realm as Son of the Father (Hebrews 1:1, 48; 9:14), he has taken human nature into himself (Hebrews 10:19) and so, as God-man, he ensures an infinitely more effective ministry to human beings (Hebrews 7:25) than can be said of merely human ancestral spirits.

Thus, the concluding thought of Bediako(2004:31) is an exploratory search for an authentic faith. With regard to Africans today, he argues that:

Since ancestral function as traditionally understood is now shown to have no basis in fact, the way is open for appreciating more fully how Jesus Christ is the only real and true ancestor and source of life for all mankind, fulfilling and transcending the benefits believed to be bestowed by lineage ancestors.

By his unique achievement of perfect atonement through his own self-sacrifice, and by his effective eternal mediation and intercession as God-man in the divine presence, he has secured eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12) for all who acknowledge who he is for them and what he has done for them, who abandon the binding of merely human traditions and rituals.

As mediator of a new and better covenant between God and humanity (Hebrews 8:6; 12:24), Jesus brings the redeemed into the experience of a new identity, in which he links their human destinies directly to the eternal. No longer are humans bonded by lineages, clans, tribes or nations. For the redeemed now belong within the community of the living God. For this reason, we will refer now to the following reflection on the ancestral connotations of Christ's priestly, prophetic and royal functions.

5.5.1 Priestly Function

Through the incarnation, Christ is as man both Mediator and Priest. As Priest, he is chosen by God among men and delegated by Him to offer up sacrifice for us (Nyamiti, 1984: 41). Therefore, the priesthood, mediation and hence the salvation that Jesus Christ brings to all people everywhere belong to an entirely different category to what people may claim for their clan, family, tribal and national priest and mediator (Bediako, 2004: 28). The quality of the achievements and ministry of Jesus Christ for and on behalf of all people, together with who he is, reveal his absolute supremacy.

Here, we will indicate above all the ancestral qualities of Christ's priestly function, as manifested in particular in his sacrificial death and resurrection. As one who is fully divine, he took on human nature in order to offer himself in death as a sacrifice for human sin. Jesus Christ is unique, not because he stands apart from us, but because no one has identified so profoundly with the human being as he has, in order to transform him. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ is rooted in his radical and direct significance, in human person, to every human context and every human culture.

According to Bediako (2004:28), within the context of African culture, sacrifice as a way of ensuring a harmonious relationship between the human community and the realm of divine and mystical power is a regular event in Ghanaian society. It is easy to assume that the mere performance of sacrifice is sufficient, but the real issue is whether or not sacrifice achieves its purpose. As Bediako (2004:29) suggests, since it is human sin and wrongdoing that sacrifice seeks to purge and atone for, no animal or sub-human victim can stand in for human beings. Nor can a sinful human being stand in for fellow sinners. The action of Jesus Christ, himself divine and sinless, in taking on human nature in order to willingly lay down his life for all humanity, perfectly fulfills the end that all sacrifices seek to achieve (Hebrews 9: 12). No number of animal or other victims sacrificed can equal the one, perfect sacrifice made by Jesus Christ himself for all time and for all people everywhere.

If the quality of Jesus' self–offering in death sets his sacrifice above all and achieves perfect atonement, so his priestly mediation surpasses all others. His divine origin ensures that he is able to mediate between the human community and the divine realm in a way that no human priest can. As God–man, Jesus bridges the gap between the Holy God and sinful humanity. It actually ends priestly mediation, by bringing into the divine presence all who by faith associate themselves with him (Hebrews 10: 19-20). This unique achievement renders all other priestly mediation obsolete, and reveals their ineffectiveness. To disregard the surpassing worth of priestly mediation of Jesus Christ for all people everywhere, and to choose ethnic priesthood in the name of cultural heritage, declares Bediako (2004), is to fail to recognise the true meaning and end of all priestly mediation, to abdicate from belonging to the one community of humanity.

Part of the reason for this situation is, according to Nyamiti (1984:54), that:

At the same time, this sacramental sacrifice shows in a particularly brilliant manner how through Christ's sacerdotal officer, the gap caused by our sins between Him and us was not only definitively bridged, but also the damage brought about by that gap was most generously and superabundantly repaired. Thus, the redeemed now belong within the community of the living God - they are united through their union with Christ in a fellowship infinitely richer than the mere social bonds of lineage, clan, tribe or nation, which exclude the stranger as a virtual enemy.

5.5.2 Prophetic function

We have already seen that in African culture, the ancestors play an important role. Nyamiti (1984) is the one author who has dealt mostly with ancestors, and he describes Jesus as the ancestor. In terms of the ancestral significance of Christ's prophetic function, he defines this office of Christ as a "Teacher of all mankind". This function is ancestral, in the sense that through it, Christ exercised his ancestral mission. Hence, through his teaching, Jesus exercised the redemption function, because as a Redeemer he was sent to destroy the works of Satan, and to free us from his slavery by bringing us liberation through truth (John 8: 32; 1 John 3:8).

Nyamiti (1984:37) goes on to state that Christ's teaching invites men to decision and action. It does this by encouraging our agreement to it through living faith. It also provokes our supernatural hope because it is a promise of eternal realities. In addition, Christ's prophetic word is more than the simple expression of an idea. It is something which is active and dynamic (Genesis 1:3; Matthew 26: 26-28). Through it, Christ performs miracles and drives out the devil, both of which are signs of God's kingdom (Matthew 8:18; John 4:50-13). Through his words, Jesus forgives sins (Matthew 9: 1-7), gives his power to the twelve disciples (Matthew 18:18), and institutes the redemptive signs of the new covenant (Matthew 26:26-29).

In Nyamiti's (1984:38) view, the ministry of Christ's word "leads to contradiction, persecution and even loss of one's own life". His word is not accepted

by the world, which prefers darkness to light (John 3: 19-20). Already in the Old Testament, the prophets underwent persecution on account of God's word. This is why its announcement requires heroic fidelity, and is the cause of suffering (Jeremiah15:6). Thus, Christ's passion and death were not only due to his Father's positive plan for him, but were also brought about by the nature of the content of the message. In this regard, *Christ differs radically from the African ancestor, whose death is no more than entry into the ancestral condition.* Thus, he finds that:

> Being the divine Word personified He is prophet by His very being. But since as Word incarnate He is Brother- Ancestor, we must conclude that He is our Brother- ancestor in as far as He is our prophet, and vice versa.

Therefore, since activity is the manifestation of being, Christ is a Teacher and prophet, not only through his spoken word, but through all his activities. Through his prophetic function, the God-man is revealed as the absolute Model of Christian life, and as our eschatological Mediator whose teaching naturally led to his death and glorification. In other words, by exercising his prophetic ministry, Christ manifests himself as our true Brother-Ancestor.

5.5.3 Royal function

There are obvious parallels between Christ's Priesthood and the royal functions of the African ancestor. Hebrews is the one book in the New Testament in which Jesus is understood and presented as the High Priest, on the basic of Old Testament prophecies and anticipation. The fact is that he was born a member of the tribe of Judah, and Moses did not mention this tribe when he spoke of priests (Hebrews 7:14). The writer of Hebrews shows that the High Priesthood of Jesus is not the order of Aaron, the first Hebrews High Priest, but that of the enigmatic non-Hebrews, and greater priest king Melchizedek (Hebrews 7 and 8). Therefore, there is the priesthood, mediation and hence salvation that Jesus Christ brings to all people everywhere (Bediako, 2004:28).

As Millingo (1984:80-81) comments, Melchizedek was the mysterious figure who came into the midst of Jews in a strange way, and they could not trace his

ancestral origin. They were happy that he was one of them, offering sacrifices on their behalf. Thus, the writer immediately places Jesus in relation to Melchisedek (Hebrews 6: 19-20). It is important to note here the analysis of what the Jews gained from the presence of Melchisedek. Melchisedek, king of Salem, Priest of the most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his names, king of Righteousness, and he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life (Hebrews 7: 1-3). Nevertheless, it was felt to be necessary to prove that Jesus was more than a high priest, and a higher priest than Melchisedek (Hebrews 7: 21). Therefore, he is the mediator of the new covenant.

The value for us of the presentation of Jesus in Hebrews stems from its relevance to society, especially in terms of its deep tradition of sacrifice, priestly and royal mediation and ancestral function. In African traditional religion, kings are held in high esteem. They are thus given high positions and titles, and people believe that they have the power to make laws and execute them. Kings have dominion over the area in which they reign, and above all, demand obedience from their subjects. Similarly, Christ as King of Kings demands total obedience from his followers. The royal function of Christ as Lord means that he has authority which has been given to him (Matthew 28:19-20). He has authority over the angels (Hebrews 1:4-13), all things (Ephesians 1:21-22), and over the church (Ephesians 5:30-32).

If Christ is God's ultimate Prophet, Priest and King, he demands one's commitment over the opinion of one's father, for the latter is not the highest authority. Christ stands above one's own tribe, clan, family or nation. The royal function of Christ in all of life is non-negotiable. To submit to this true Ancestor's function is to discover the spiritual, moral, cultural and political renewal that our wounded continent longs for.

5.6 Conclusion

Ancestorship in Africa is now studied widely and we are finding better concepts to analyse and describe it. These eschatological symbols are certainly a rich method of portraying what is otherwise beyond physical reality in Africa.

Our intention in this study was to raise questions regarding Christian theology in Africa. This theology is a commitment to the fact of Christ. How do we interpret Christ in terms that are relevant and essential to Africans? In other words, how can the same Christ prove himself to be the life and fullness, with the power to liberate people from evil and death?

As we have seen, in the African experience, the words, rites and acts of ancestors have a special significance. They are an abiding rule of life, a rule that must be repossessed by the living for their welfare. In this context, it is meaningful to speak of Jesus as the ancestor by Excellency, for in him are fulfilled all the qualities and virtues that the African ascribes to his or her ancestors.

The choice of ancestral theology for this role is not new to Africa. It has been explored and discussed, as well as agreed on, by many African scholars, such as Nyamiti (1984), Bujo (1992) and Bediako (2004), etc. It is interesting to note, however, that much of the "new" concern with Christological explorations began with categories such as Christ as Healer, as Master of Initiation and as Ancestor, which all derived directly from the apprehension of reality and of the Transcendent, as experienced within the worldview of African traditional religions.

CHAPTER SIX

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CROSS CULTURAL WORKERS IN AFRICA

Introduction

The present study proceeds from the conviction that it is necessary for the church to formulate a biblical basis for its mission. Moreover, the church ought to be focused in the understanding of its mission. Its activities should be understood in terms of what helps others to come to believe that Messiah, the son of God, is the eschaton to come. Thus, the church and individual believers should be set apart from the world in order to be effective in their mission to the world.

This is essentially eschatological, yet its primary focus the transformation of Africa is coming as a result of God's promise. It will happen as we are celebrating the past, enjoying the present and planning for the future, looking forward in Africa time. This can be related to this proposed theological focus of Christ's life, the eschaton, and especially about his death and resurrection through the Holy Spirit, as the beginning of the glorious end-time of God. As we understood that God's glorious presence will be with his people in a way as never before, the mission reminds us the Great Commission of God as one reason Apostle Paul says in 2Corinthians4:6, God who said, "light will shine out of darkness", is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Otherwise, this conception of time is to indicate the role of the Church in speeding on the spread of the kingdom of God in Africa, and in the latter case also to encourage and prevent the Church against false teaching. It is said that the primary aim of theological eschatology, in any context is that of the kingdom of God. This kingdom has already come, but we have not yet experienced its full consummation (Saayman, 1987). According to Saayman (1987:10), mission does not only announce the end but is in itself an eschatological entity as most scholars have asserted. As such, mission is characterized by the fact that God's kingdom has come in Jesus, and has broken into time to be fulfilled with his second coming. Thus, mission becomes a sign of the times in the sense that in mission the kingdom of God as promise of the end times has come. Saayman's (1987:13) view is consistent with our argument that

the eschatology is such an everyday reality, it is clear that in our mission, we have to be involved right now in the things that concern the world.

At this stage, how does our understanding of eschatology in Africa illuminate different perceptions of mission in term of the kingdom of God to come? I would suggest the following:

6.1 Suggestions for contextualisation to the mission of the Church today from an eschatological perspective

6.1.1 The Gospel is the gospel of the kingdom, the coming eschaton

The Great Commission of Jesus is presented in the Gospel as unique in a very important sense, and his work is also unique (John 17:4). Jesus the Logos becomes flesh, the Son of the Father, and the Messiah speaks of "the work you gave me to do". The whole book of John, for example, is given to this task. Chapters 1-12 present Jesus as the doer of signs, while chapters 13-21 present Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection as the Son of glorification. In all of this, the disciples are, in a sense, only in a secondary position. Nevertheless, as will be seen, Jesus' followers have a significant place in the presentation of mission (John 4:34-38; 14:12; 15:1-17; 17:18; 20:21).

Referring to the signs and works of Jesus, according to the Gospel, we deduce from the Scriptures that the signs are public works of Jesus with symbolic significance, designed to lead others to faith in Jesus as the true representative of God. Jesus' doing of signs is tied to the Old Testament work of God, especially in the exodus through Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18; John 1:17), but also in prophetic actions and words. Indeed, Jesus' disciples saw his glory (John 1:14) and believed (John 2:11).

As was argued, Jesus' death and resurrection implied a new perspective of believing without seeing (John 20:29). In this regard, Jesus' death and resurrection are not presented as signs, but rather as the realities to which the signs refer. Thus, this new era will see no more signs, but witnessing is still needed to complete the signs of Jesus, in order that others may also believe in the Messiah, the eschaton to come. In this new era, Jesus and the Father will be glorified in and through the mission of Jesus' disciples (John 1:14; 14:13; 15:8; 17:20; 21:19). If Jesus' task is solely one of

revelation, the disciples could simply continue their task under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

After a brief overview of the relevant passages, the evangelist's overall purpose is to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, "the eschaton" (John 20:30-31).The evangelist carries out his general purpose by presenting Jesus in the following roles: "Jesus as the sent Son", "Jesus as the coming and returning one", and "Jesus as the eschaton" (Messiah).

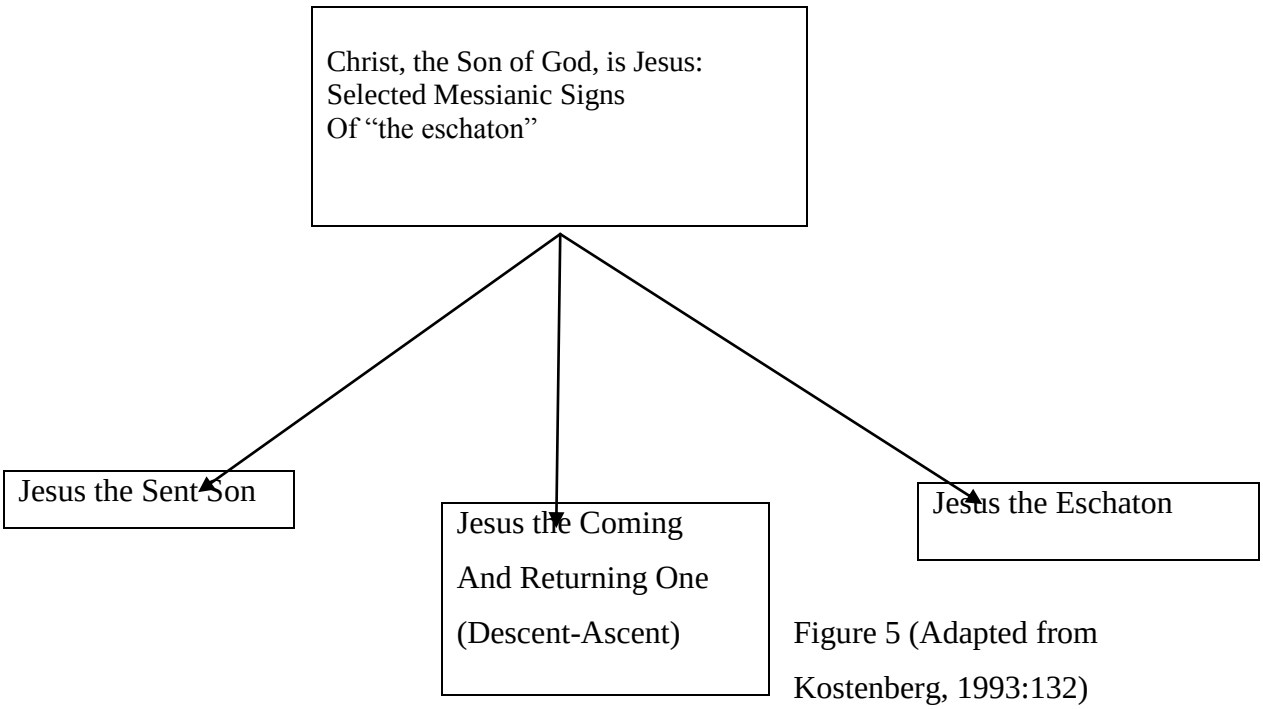


Figure 5 (Adapted from Kostenberg, 1993:132)

If this is an accurate representation of the forms of Jesus' mission, the question remains: How are these three characters related to one another? In fact, some scholars of mission have focused on the sending of the Son, while others have emphasised his coming and returning, but not too many have drawn attention to the eschaton.

Through these three portraits of Jesus outlined above, the purpose is to present Jesus, the Messiah as "the eschaton", by clarifying what kind of Eschaton Jesus is: He is not just a human figure, but heaven sent (coming – returning). He is not just a healer or wonder-worker, He is the eschaton who calls upon followers to bring in his Messianic harvest (Kostenberg, 1993:134). This can be confirmed by looking at some biblical examples. The first person in John 4:25 to refer to Christ is the Samaritan woman, who asks "could this be the Christ?" At the Feast of Tabernacles, some of the people in Jerusalem deliberate: "Have the authorities really concluded that he is the

Christ?" It is very interesting to note that their concern regarding Christ's origin: "when the Christ comes, no one will know where He is from" (John 7:27).

With the aim of identifying what kind of the Messiah Jesus is, we can observe some concepts related to Jesus' mission. Under the larger theme of Jesus' obedience and dependence, the following emphasis on sending can be identified. Generally, the sent one is to bring glory and honor to the sender (John 5:23;7:18), to do the sender's will (John 4:34;5:30,38;6:38-39) and works (John 5:36;9:4), to speak the sender's words (John 3:34;7:16;12:49;14:10,24), and to be accountable to the sender (John 17). He is to bear witness to the sender (John 5:36, 7:28), to represent the sender accurately (John 12:44-45; 13:20,15:18-25), to exercise delegated authority (John 5:21-22; 27;13:3;17:2;20:23) and finally, the sent one is to know the sender intimately (John 7:29; 15:21; 17:8; 25), live in close relationship to the sender (John 8:16; 18; 29; 16; 32) and follow the sender's example (John 13:16).

These principles should be adhered to in the various contexts of Jesus' mission. For Jesus, doing the will of His Father and accomplishing his work is his food (John 4:34). By implication, the disciples are also to follow Jesus in His evangelistic mission. In John 8:12, Jesus promises that anyone who follows Him will not "walk in the darkness" but have "the light of life". He refers to "His sheep" who know His voice and who follow Him (John 10:4, 5, 27). Then, Jesus' public ministry ends with his call to a radical commitment on the part of his followers (John 12:26). Finally, Jesus' disciples are to follow him until his return (John 21:22).

It is most significant for our purpose to observe that Paul was able to distinguish between the priorities of the gospel and the issues of relative indifference.

There were, in the mind of Paul, at least two categories of concerns: (1) matters of central significance, which must be proclaimed and appropriately applied to the lives of people and (2) matters of relative indifference, which were not to be confused with the central issues, and about which one could be relatively flexible (Longenecker, 1985:157). With regard to this same ability to distinguish between the central priorities and indifferences of the Gospel, Peterson helps us to understand Paul's teaching on maturity, which must be understood in relation to his eschatology and viewed as the outcome of his Gospel preaching (Peterson, 1985).

6.1.1.1 *Proclaiming this Gospel*

In Romans 15:16-21, there is an important statement made by the apostle Paul regarding the aim and scope of his missionary work. Together with the term "the obedience of faith" (Romans 1:16:26), this suggests that, in addition to primary evangelism, Paul's intention was to establish the church with converts, and lead them to maturity in Christ.

Paul describes himself as a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Paul's Gospel ministry enables the Gentiles to present themselves in a way that is acceptable to God (Romans 6:13; 16; 19). He goes on to reinforce the idea that the Gentiles self-offering to God is directly related to his preaching, which means that the Holy Spirit is at work through his ministry (Romans 15:17-19). In another way, Christ himself has been at work through the ministry of Paul, drawing the Gentiles into relationship with himself by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonder, and by the power of the Spirit of God.

The result of Christ's work through the apostles is such that he can say: "from Jerusalem as far as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the Good News of Christ" (Romans 15:19). This is done through his practice of mission (Corinth and Ephesus) and nurturing of churches (1 Thessalonians 2:17; 3:13; 2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 10:13-16), and through his description of his assignment (Colossians 1: 24: 2:7; Romans 1:1-15; 15:14-16) in relation to teaching believers in order to bring them to full maturity in Christ.

6.1.1.2 *Keeping the end in view*

In Philippians 3, the apostle warns that the final perfection will come when we share in the resurrection from the dead. Paul puts himself forward as a model of Christian maturity and urges believers to imitate him in terms of their thinking and behaviour. Whatever others may claim, the apostle affirms that he has not yet reached perfection (Philippians 3:12), and he thus keeps on pursuing this ambition.

That perfection here refers to eschatological consummation is confirmed by the following verses. Paul does not rest secure in his present experience, but constantly sets his sights on what lies ahead (Philippians 3:13). Like an athlete in a race, he presses on towards the goal, which in this case is the prize of the heavenly call of God in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:14). The apostle is arguing that those who regard themselves as having already received the fullness of eschatological blessing in

Christ should seek perfection in humbly acknowledging their imperfections. In Philippians 3:16, believers are being urged to move together. This is reinforced by the use of "to walk, live" in verse 17, where the challenge is for believers to be imitators of Paul's lifestyle.

6.1.1.3 *Waiting for the eschaton*

In Paul's statement to the Thessalonians, we find a recurring motif in the richest variations: "waiting for His son from heaven "(1 Thessalonians 1:10). Since we already hear "Maranatha" at the very beginning of the first letter, the issue that filled Paul's mind at the time cannot escape us: it is the return of Christ. Paul thanked God that among the many good things he had heard about their faith (1 Thessalonians 1: 2, 8-9), was the report that they looked forward to Christ's glorious return.

We are waiting for the day when Christ comes again to "judge the living and the dead". Therefore, Paul praises the Thessalonians, not because they have accepted the fact of Christ's return as incontestable, but because they are waiting for Christ's return. Let us think about this question: What is this waiting, this expectation?

Expectation involves tension. Do we know what it means to wait for God's Son from heaven? Jesus, the eschaton, is on his way. It may take a while, or He may arrive tomorrow. No one knows the hour. Thus, we are expecting an important visitor, God's Son from heaven, the King of all Kings. If this is how we understand expectation, the return of Christ will never be a dead word in the distant future. Those who wait for the Lord will not be put to shame, but from heaven will come the shining figure of the eschaton to glorify those who live in expectation of His coming.

6.1.1.4 *What does this mean in the African context?*

In the African context, the Great Commission or evangelism presupposes a strong concern for the future in its emphasis on our eternal destiny. Whether the motivation is to avoid Hell or to get into Heaven, the focus is on some time unknown to the respondent (Judgment before God). The emphasis is on a future punishment or reward given for present acts. How would this occur in terms of African folk religion?

As we have mentioned in our previous chapters, Africans look to past events in order to discern their way into the future - the Gospel, in their view, must link the past to the future. We can emphasis once again that the Gospel itself is the same in all cultures and everywhere in the world. To have the best possibility of effective use by

the Holy Spirit, our presentation must show the traditional African how it offers him a more solid link with his past, and how it will help him in his future eternal life. Furthermore, the idea of heaven and hell should not be neglected when we present the Gospel to the traditional African. In this sense, the presentation of the Gospel will refer circumstances, events and stories, as well as relationships, as God's plan, which will enable Africans to fully participate in their heritage and cultural responsibilities.

6.1.3 The Kingdom as a dynamic concept in mission

Mission in the perspective of the kingdom, can be called holistic mission. Holistic mission, as defined by McConnell, is concerned with ministry to the whole person through the transforming power of the Gospel. It is multi-dimensional, including the spiritual, physical, intellectual etc.. While holistic mission affirms the functional uniqueness of evangelism and social responsibility, it views them as inseparable from the ministry of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, holistic mission is the intentional building of the church and transformation of society (McConnell, 2000:449).

6.1.3.1 *Biblical foundation*

This missiological and theological praxis has its foundation in the Scriptures. Holistic mission begins with creation in perfect harmony under the Lordship of God (Genesis 1-2) and humans in relationship with their Creator (Genesis 1:27-30). The entry of sin and consequent judgment affected every aspect of creation (Genesis 3, Romans 3:23; 6: 23), yet God did not abandon humankind, but sought to redeem them by calling out people for himself (Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 15:2-13). His people were to be an obedient and holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6), living as stewards of the land that He gave them (Deuteronomy 4:1-8, 32-40), so that in obedience they might enjoy life (Deuteronomy 6:1-3).

The law prescribes the theological, social and economic dimensions of God's rule, symbolised by the Hebrew word *Shalom* (Malachi2:5; Bosch, 1991; Saayman, 1987).

Throughout his ministry, Jesus announced the Kingdom (Mark 1:15; Luke 16:16). As the fulfillment of the prophetic hope, Jesus brought shalom (Luke 1:32-33; 2:14), which includes reconciliation with God through repentance (Matthew 4:16), leading to salvation (John 1:1-18; 3:16) and transformed relationships (Matthew 5-7,

Luke 6; John 13:34-35). In establishing the Kingdom, Jesus reclaimed that which was lost in the fall (Matthew 13:31-33) and called on his followers to do the same (John 20:21). The church, as the community of God's redeemed people (Matthew 18:20; Romans 12: 5-8; Ephesians 4: 1-16), is called on to fulfill the task of Christ in creation (Ephesians 1:20-33; 10-11).

Holistic mission is the commitment to all that the church is called on to do, which includes the Great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). This approach is enough to disillusion us about false expectations regarding the future. Paul was an idealist and therefore a realist in the best sense. He proclaimed that Christ is coming soon on the clouds, but he also exhorted the Thessalonians to continue working faithfully (1Thessalonians 4:11-12). Indeed, anyone who understands the Gospel of Christ's return (Parousia) is fully equipped for any good work (Saayman, 1987; Bosch, 1991).

6.1.3.2 *Tension between evangelism and development (social concern)*

Most Christian missions and Christian development agencies have struggled with defining the relationship between development and evangelism. This dualism sees evangelism as addressing spiritual needs, while development addresses physical needs. This separation of evangelism from development creates a crisis in the mission field today, which handicaps the redemptive work of Christ within a culture.

We have seen in the biblical foundation that there is strong relationship between evangelism and development. This relationship exists because Christ's redemptive work includes the entire creation, things seen and unseen. In this sense, redemption is defined as restoring the elements of creation to fulfill the purpose for which God created them.

The inauguration of Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:18-19) illustrates the holistic nature of Christian ministry. In it, Jesus affirms that the poor will hear the Good News, the prisoners will be freed, the blind will see and the oppressed will be liberated, and he proclaims Jubilee, the year of the Lord's favor. Understanding the nature of Jesus' ministry in fulfilling his mandate is establishing a relationship between preaching, advocating justice and ministering to the poor, hungry and oppressed.

A holistic approach to mission affirms that ministering to the poor, sick, hungry and oppressed, as well as preaching the message of eternal salvation, is Good

News. The biblical concepts of evangelism and development are not separate. They have physical and spiritual connotations.

A concept of development that is both Christian and holistic emphasises God's presence and empowers people to experience the principles of the Kingdom that shalom embodies. Holistic Christian mission, characterised by shalom, recognises that the Gospel has present and future tenses. We look forward to the day when the Kingdom of God is with us and brings peace to our present life. Because of the present and future hope of the Gospel, the Good News of Christ cannot be revealed without looking at these issues. Bosch (1991:117) points out that in Luke, the verb "save", from which the noun "salvation" comes, includes healing the sick. For Luke, salvation has five dimensions: economic, social, physical, psychological and spiritual.

6.1.3.3 *God's plan for the poor*

The concept of the poor is present throughout the whole biblical revelation, and it is easily spiritualized through the understanding of spiritual poverty as having a humble and contrite spirit. Understanding the plan for the poor and what is said in the Bible concerning the poor must be interpreted in terms of different historical contexts.

The Hebrew slaves in Egypt were the original poor people of the Bible. Their poverty was material and economic, which was a direct result of the structural oppression of Egyptian society. God favors the oppressed and is clearly against the oppressor.

There is no sense of God trying to reconcile Pharaoh and the Hebrew slaves. God liberates the oppressed from the oppressor, and this is seen throughout the Scriptures (Psalm 103:6). The prophet Samuel resisted and warned the people of Israel of the oppression that a king would bring to them. However, the people insisted and God allowed them to have a king (1 Samuel 8:1-22). The result for almost all of the pre-exilic prophets was persecution and martyrdom (Jeremiah 20:13; Matthew 23:29-32; Luke 6:22-26).

6.1.3.4 *Jesus' plan for the poor*

Jesus' plan for the poor was to get them to make decisions for their own benefit. He taught them that it was their faith that would heal and save them (Mark 2:11-12; Luke 17:19). His preaching of the kingdom restored their dignity by

breaking their dependency and giving them hope (Matthew 25:42). These were the sinners, who included people who were hungry, thirsty and begging on the streets.

A number of passages in the Scriptures are of particular importance in this regard. Jesus demanded from the rich, young ruler a complete renunciation of his possessions for the sake of the kingdom of God (Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22). Those who would choose God would have to sell their possessions (Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:33-34) and join with the poor in sharing a community in which no one would be in need (Acts 2:44-46; 4:32; 34-35).

As those who have become objects of exploitation with no power and no one to help them, the poor have no one but God to turn to for help. Therefore, they totally depend on Him. They learned to accept God's compassionate acts and hope in God, for God is understood to be the God of the poor, the orphans and the widows. In this sense, poverty gains a spiritual significance. Hence, the church in this regard has a greater potential for holistic mission, by addressing the cause of poverty.

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, it is clear that poverty cannot be confined to the spiritual realm. It is also directed towards humanity in its total context, which implies the physical, spiritual and social aspects. This meant that it was part of the proclamation and that it lived in solidarity with the people (Mark 12:29-30; John 8:32; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5; 1Peter 1:13). Our goal or aim in holistic mission should be nothing else but transformation.

6.1.3.5 *Practising justice*

If the most fundamental cause of poverty is the impact of sin (Romans 3:23), then dealing with sin must be part of the Christian process of transformational holistic mission. Justice refers to the conduct that a person owes towards God, the principle on which human conduct towards one another is based. Righteousness refers to mercy and innocence before the norms of a society (Isaiah 56:1). We are called upon to remember those who suffer injustice (Hebrews 13:3; Galatians 2:10; Colossians 4:18). Christ taught us that to love our neighbors was to treat people the way we would like to be treated (Luke 6:31).

Besides all this is the often forgotten reality that poverty in Africa is more than an economic issue. In comparison with the situation on other continents of the world, the extremes of Africa's poverty are an outrage. For lack of hope, many Africans live from one day to the next, grateful if they have something to eat and a place to sleep.

From an external perspective, Africa is the ugly, unlovable member of the family, whose existence creates endless discomfort and evokes embarrassment, shame and fear. However, for those on the inside, there is only the echo of their own voices as they cry out in desperation to be understood as deserving more than the daily ration of crumbs thrown at them, with the primary aim of appeasing the conscience of the throwers. The poor African is also in a prison, a prison that he does not understand – the prison of poverty within the structure of injustice. For better or worse, we are not separate from the continent of Africa. If Africa is facing a crisis of injustice, we are part of this crisis. The troubling question is this: How much do we care about justice in our society? Our prayer is that God will challenge us to seize the many opportunities we have to use our time to achieve positive change in Africa(Ondeng, 2003:26-30).

Hopelessness is the place in which hope is born. "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, so shall your offspring be" (Romans 4:18). In a hopeless situation, Abraham had hope – hope not in his circumstances or his own ability, but in the One who made the promise. The One who created Sarah had the ability to bring life into her dead womb. As God reminded Abraham during their years of doubting, "is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). Paul tells us of Abraham: "he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God" (Romans 4:20). Despite the seeming unreasonableness of the promise, Abraham focused on the larger reality – the person, nature and trustworthiness of God. In spite of the hopelessness, he was "fully persuaded that God could and would do as he had promised" (Romans 4:21). He glorified God for what God could and would do. Against all hope, Abraham believed that God would, as He had promised, give him a son.

It is also essential to realize that this promised blessing will not come to Africa through the United Nations or foreign aid. It will come through the Church. God promised to bless all nations through Abraham's offspring. As Paul makes very clear, Abraham's offspring are not primarily those of common blood ancestry. His offspring are those who share the same faith in God that he possessed (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:23-24; Romans 4:17).

The following questions can be asked: Is the Church in Africa fully persuaded that God has the power to do all that he has promised? Does the Church in Africa

truly believe that God is able to bless all the nations of Africa? If the answers are not 'yes', then the Church in Africa needs to read more again of the testimony of God, and Hebrews 6:13-18 is a good place to start:

When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants". And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged (Hebrews 6:13-18).

God wants the nations of Africa to be greatly encouraged. Transformation is coming as a result of the complete trustworthiness of this promise. God's promise to Abraham means that through the Church in Africa, all nations will be blessed. It will happen as we celebrate the past, enjoy the present and plan for the future, looking forward in African time. It is also believed that no amount of money thrown to Africa will solve Africa's problems, until both the givers and the takers have a change of heart. It is not the lack of resources or the lack of human capacity that keeps Africa trapped in the prison of deprivation. We believe that the best way to make a difference and help Africa to escape from poverty and injustice is a change of heart (Miller and Allen, 2005:45-47).

6.1.3.6 *Prophetic role of the church*

As reflected in the section above, the church must have a prophetic mission in society, both at an institutional and humanitarian level. Adeyemo(1995:13) points out that with its size, one would expect the church to have a tremendous influence upon African society in terms of its politics, laws, economics, social affairs and cultural expressions. However, this is not so. Reasons for this may include the extreme form of separation between church and state, which was inherited from the founding missions. The church is called on to seek God's kingdom and its righteousness or justice. As salt and light, the church has been placed in this world to exercise influence on it (Matthew 5:13-14).

For pastoral leaders in the church, change is at the heart of their calling, and the biblical mandate is that pastoral leaders help people grow more like Christ, which involves changes in lifestyle, values and actions (Titus 2:1-14; 2 Corinthians 8-9). In order for the church to have a prophetic voice, it should rediscover its faith in the particular context in which it lives.

Knowing that we live in Christ's age, between his resurrection and the end-time, the yet and not yet, the already and not yet, the mission of the church is living in God's action. The missionary work of the church is an eschatological foretaste of the kingdom of God (Bosch, 1991:507). This is why holistic mission should be part of the church, which is clearly a priority for Africa today.

6.1.3.7 *What does this mean in terms of a traditional worldview?*

African people seek to believe (the quest for meaning), belong (the quest for community), and become (the quest for hope and future). This is one of the major challenges faced by the church in Africa today. Deriving from our traditional worldview, in which the reality of life does not distinguish between sacred and secular, and in keeping with the practice of the founding missions, which did not only preach the Gospel but also established schools, hospitals, orphanages and so on, we should not differentiate between evangelism and social concern. The balance should be maintained. The holistic model of mission has given so much credibility to the message and acceptance of the church in society.

A church-like presence and engagement with communities in general is the only way forward in order to live effectively. The church in Africa should find ways and means to express itself, and be seen as the church which identifies itself with communities. It has to evolve by formulating a contextual theology.

6.1.4 Issues in eschatology

In spite of the current discussions about time in African culture, and our disagreement concerning some of the issues, we agree that there is no time, but rather events, in the African context of the Ngambai people of Chad and others in Africa. We must understand that a biblical truth is valid and true, regardless of what a culture may believe. As such, it must be taught, and contextualization comes not in changing the truth itself, but in the manner and approach we adopt in communicating that truth to the receiving culture.

As biblical truth, eschatology must be taught, even if it means introducing a radical change into the culture. The balance here is in finding a culturally sensitive approach which allows traditional Africans to come up with eschatological issues in terms of their own understanding. We agree that there is a future in the African focus, and planning for events beyond the next generation should be done. This is one area which needs far more attention. The traditional African concept of time will possibly have an effect on our methodology with regard to teaching, evangelism, church growth and practical living. It is clear that the challenge is complex but not impossible.

6.1.5 Biblical teaching ministry

Although the Bible is written for people of all eras, its interpretation differs according to time, culture, history, language, style and so on - a wide gap exists between the biblical world and the contemporary world, and contemporary Africa in particular. For this reason, the Bible demands interpretation in terms of the contemporary African. When we speak of biblical interpretation, we are alluding to hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation. Oleka discusses the interpretation of the Bible in a contemporary African context, and suggests some principles that can be considered to be adequate and can be applied to a given biblical text. All the given principles are based on the grammatical, historical method of biblical interpretation (Oleka, 1988: 104-121). Teaching and bible study are inseparable, and that which is taught must therefore flow from that which is received from God through a study of His written word. Jesus Christ is our ultimate example of one who preached and taught only what he received from God. Jesus Christ Himself testifies that “my teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. He who speaks on his own does not gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who work for the honor of who sent him is a man of truth, there is nothing false about him” (John 7:16-18).

In African traditional religion, God is fearfully approached and worshipped through intermediaries. Unending blood and non-blood sacrifices are offered to ancestors in order to appease Him. Christianity teaches the idea of a personal God who loved this world so much that He gave His only Son, Jesus, to die for its salvation. This contrasts with the role of ancestors. Because of the death of Jesus

Christ, individuals can now have access to God's grace and salvation through Him. He claimed to be the Way, the Truth and the Life, without which no one can come to the Father (John 14:6). Christianity teaches us that by trusting Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, we can achieve salvation from the power of sin and death now, and from the dominion and presence of sin and death in the age to come.

All religions do not teach the same thing, and all roads do not lead to Heaven. The concept that all religions teach the same thing is false, and such a belief provides a false sense of security for people who have some vague religious sentiments.

In his teaching, Jesus used only what he had learned or received from his Father. The apostles followed his example when they wrote: "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the word of life. The life appeared, we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may also have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1-3).

The importance and practical value of personal Bible study are already stated in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, where Paul speaks to Timothy. Timothy is urged by Paul to continue in what he has learned and become convinced of it. One of the values of studying the Bible is that it has the ability to make the learner wise with regard to salvation. Proverbs 1:7; 9:10 tells us that wisdom is the beginning of the fear of God. In biblical terms, one without wisdom is identified as a fool. The Bible equips us with the type of wisdom and knowledge we need in our spiritual growth.

It is profitable for teaching. Paul makes it clear that the Bible is our instructor in matters related to God. Teaching is part of God's ministry to His people, and the Bible is also said to be profitable in terms of rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). No other book throughout the world has the inherent power and authority to rebuke, correct and train men and women in righteousness. With these words, the importance of personal Bible study cannot be overemphasized.

Another concern is Mbiti's (2005:245) use of Acts 8:26-40, which raises the all-important question of the relevance of the understanding of biblical texts to Africa. After reading the Bible, Mbiti answers Philip's question by adapting it in this way: "Africa, do you understand what you are reading?" Mbiti's answer to this question is defined as follows. The African readers of the Bible select some texts that they can

understand and apply in concrete ways, and then memorise verses and stories by heart and retell them.

This is because the oral tradition is very receptive to such stories and proverbs. When people use them, it is because they understand them in relation to a certain situation or to a certain extent. This understanding and application take place in given situations in their lives. These can include things such as health matters, land problems, a need for freedom and justice etc. In these cases, people elect verses or passages that apply to the situation in question. They interpret the text in light of this situation. Mbiti (2005) notes that there are different levels of understanding of texts that can be perceived: personal, family, communal (congregation, study, group, gatherings), or even national. These situations have shown that the Bible has an important role to play at all levels of people's lives, from personal transformation through evangelism and pastoral care to national transformation. Some of the impacts of the Bible can be found at cultural and spiritual levels, such as literature, art, music, drama and liturgy, etc. However, reading the Bible on their own in their own language enable people to evolve additional hermeneutical methods of reading and interpretation. People are open to whatever methods help them to gain deeper insights into the Bible.

Using the Scriptures at hand, Philip did not tell the Ethiopian eunuch to go back to Jerusalem in order to obtain another passage from Isaiah 53. Instead, he taught the eunuch the Gospel of Jesus Christ, baptised him and let him proceed with his travels. The Holy Spirit, who took Philip away, is the same one who accompanied the eunuch on his return trip. This is why it is so crucial for the African biblical scholar to take biblical teaching seriously in terms of its application. Africa has not put down the Bible since then, and Mbiti (2005:247) asserts that:

Africa is still reading the Bible and raising questions that relate to the passages concerned:
"About whom, pray does the prophet say this: About himself or about someone else." Africa
Is still moving on its chariot, still reading the Bible and letting Bible shape personal, community
and even national lives.

As African Christians, we must keep in mind that the primary role of the Spirit of God as the teacher and interpreter of Scriptures is to help us learn the truth and

correctly interpret the truth, in order to understand it and apply it to our daily lives (John 14:25-26).

6.1.6 Ethics of society

In general, there is no distinction between morality and ethics. The first concerns the concrete manner in which people act and organise their lives, and the second, on the other hand, refers to articulating the explanations and justifications for why and how people do what they do. To speak of "ethics in mission" is to deal with both these aspects, that is, with the realities of human existence and the theoretical foundations of behaviour and values (Carrol, 2000:319).

After considering a general definition of "ethics", it must be noted that the term "social ethics" is also associated with certain kinds of issues that affect people. It is defined simply as the shared moral values and behaviours of a specific context. This brings us back to the earlier part of this study, which examined the African concept of morality. For believers, identity is linked to Christian faith in the community, even as they are sometime inseparable from the lives of other human beings around them. The continual struggle for Christians and the church is to be sensitive to the realities of their cultural setting and environment. Another understanding of "social ethics" is related to the issue of social structures and processes.

The focus here is on the religious beliefs and practices of Africans in their context, and to highlight their moral ideas regarding right and wrong. The implication for Christians who now know Jesus Christ as their Saviour is that their lives are transformed. There is nothing in these traditions which can influence their morality and make them adopt a way of life in conformity with their beliefs. To speak about the implications of the Good News of Jesus Christ, which brings them a new life in their culture, suggests that their conversion to Jesus has a big impact in terms of changing their attitudes and behaviour in society. This impact can be seen in the building of their new lives and identity, Christian spiritual and cultural resources, including the exercising of obedience in their social, economic and political responsibilities, the deepening of their sense of commitment to others, and ownership of the liberating forces of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in order to renew their communities.

The experience of liberation and emancipation in and through Christianity has given them a new name and a new identity. The new identity reflects the experience of African converts that comes from their reflection on the Christian Scriptures, and the working of the Holy Spirit in and through this new community of believers.

After conversion to the Christian faith, converts have grown in faith through worship and Bible study, as well as by introducing new symbols, rituals and festivals. Thus, there is an ongoing difference between their experience of the past and the context of their present experience in terms of the Christian faith. Emerging is a new personality, communal experience and social change, resulting in the formation of a new Christian ethic and religious identity. As we have already examined traditional beliefs, we can now have a clear understanding about Jesus as Messiah, Redeemer, Excellency, Ancestor, and the Eschaton to come, who brings salvation to the world. In the liberation praxis, Jesus is identified as the exclusive Son of God, the incarnate God who came to declare the liberation of the Africans from the psychological, mythical, cultural and social oppressions of African religious systems.

Jesus is the New Moses, who offers us fullness of life in Africa. After the traumas of refugees' liberation, orphans, widows, spiritual crises, hatred, violence, war, division, crime etc, African people are seeking a new identity. Jesus Christ is the only one, our new liberator, who will see us through today's crises of oppression and poverty, and lead us to the living waters.

The task of the church in Africa is urgent. There are many good things in the African tradition in terms of morality. We can, with Van Breugel (2001), list some of them in order to obtain a better understanding:

(i) Moral obligations in the context of solidarity

People have to help one another, especially when someone is in need. This kind of solidarity is especially strong at funerals. Sympathy and comfort is given to the bereaved, while the deceased himself is ritually accompanied on his journey to the spirit world. We have seen the importance attached to the obligation to assist at a funeral. This is a symbol of solidarity, and is one of the most sacred duties.

Peace is of paramount important for the community, and for rain and other such sacrifices, it is required that all the people in the village be at peace with one another. Anger disrupts this peace. In a judicial case, great care is taken to allow all the parties

involved to speak and every effort is made to come to a solution which is acceptable to all.

(ii) Moral sexual behaviour

Sexuality is another important value in the community, and is believed to depend on the observance of traditions. Great importance is attached to the right instruction during the time of initiation, and all youths have to be initiated into these traditions. Incest is considered to be one of the worst offences against the family. This involves having sexual relations with one's sister (by the same mother), and half-sister (by the same father but different mothers), one's niece (by one's brother or sister), one's cousin (by one's paternal aunt, paternal uncle or maternal aunt), one's maternal and paternal aunt, one's own daughter, the daughter of one's children, the wife of one's father (and of course, with one's own mother). To do this is to destroy the family, and is seen as a curse.

(iii) Moral Education

Another point to be noted is that youths are instructed in the "wisdom of the tribe" by every possible means. Apart from the initiation itself, stories and many proverbs with a moral teaching are told. Youth, too, remain under the supervision of their tutors or initiators. Life, with its hardships and work in common, is the school in which their characters are formed.

Special mention should be made of proverbs. The Ngambai clan of Chad is very proud of them, for they are said to contain the wisdom of the ancestors, especially in the area of moral beliefs.

The proverbs are an expression of human wisdom, based on experience of life and insight into human relationships. If, in a discussion, a proverb is quoted which is to the point, the business being dealt with is considered to be concluded, and no more has to be said about it.

Here are some examples of proverbs:

"to dama le mari a kuse nain tai kari"

-If you depend on the grain in the granary of your neighbour, you will eat nothing

"kin kalang ge kuma taa kunja ta mula'g"

If you jump up at the first alarm, you will save your chicken from the mouth of the wild-cat

“timri oji ker”

The smallest of field mice gives birth to an elephant

“a kunda der ndo ro’g el”

You don’t start making a shield the day the battle begins

These are a few of the simple ones. These proverbs of wisdom, preserved and coined by their ancestors, had to be learnt by heart.

We believe that the study of African tradition is not, however, in itself enough. It should be translated into practice in order to help communities. Biblical interpretation, as well as moral and pastoral theology, should be related to the actual situation in Africa. The situation we have described in terms of African morality means that there are good ethics, but not enough to deal with the afterlife.

However, for a better understanding of biblical ethics in Christian life, we refer to an explicit system of the nature of morality in the book of Romans. Paul’s focus was not on the task of developing an ethical theory, but on what God had done in Christ and the consequent salvation offered to people of all nations (Hill, 2000:249).

When we look at the book of Romans, it can be seen that the purpose of Paul was the more specific desire to clarify and correct misunderstandings regarding his view of the Mosaic laws. He insisted on the “righteousness of God”. The first eleven chapters state God’s plan of salvation, which includes God’s provision for sin in Christ, the eschatological reality of salvation and the role and place of Israel in God’s plan. In chapter 12, Paul’s focus shifts from what God has done in Christ to exhort about how the community of faith should live in light of the dawning of the age to come.

In this regard, it was argued, however, that the inauguration of the new age in the work of Christ means that the ontological change in believers comes about in two stages. The present evil age came into being with Adam, and will end on the day when the eschaton returns in judgment. The new age has come into being with the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ (Hill, 2000:258).

Through faith, the believer has been united with Christ in his death and resurrection. Justification is not just a declaration of innocence, but the work of God’s creative word. Those who have died and risen with Christ walk according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4) and set their minds on things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5). Believers have

a new nature or being. This new nature provides the basis on which Paul exhorts believers to set new goals (Romans 6:13; 12:2).

If Jesus Christ is the source of life and happiness, our task is to turn his death and resurrection into a reality in our lives, establishing from that saving event the criteria for judging all human conduct. Jesus Christ becomes the sole centre of attraction, drawing all things to himself (John 12:32), and through his cross, consecrating the whole of African humanity. This consecration is the main aim of the absolute commitment of Jesus to the restoration of human dignity. Jesus came as the eschaton, in order to bring the fullness of life to all nations at every level.

At the same time, Jesus corrects and completes the traditional morality of Africans. The moral perspective is no longer limited to our clan, elders and so on, but extends to the whole human race or being. The morality of believers and all African people who accept Jesus, the eschaton to come, is a personal commitment to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The deeds and moral stance of Jesus are resumed in order to be remembered, giving new life to each person today, and opening into a new and fruitful future. Finally, the exercise of morality of African people must be referred to Jesus Christ as a model and example of life.

6.1.7 Authentic African expression in worship

One of the exciting facets of the church in Africa today is its authentic African expression in worship. For a long time, churches were no more than what Adeyemo (1995:8) has called “a caricature of the home churches of their founding missions”. Today, this picture has changed considerably. People have realized that it is not unbiblical or demonic to clap hands, use African musical instruments, and shout and dance during a worship service, as the spirit directs. After all, God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

It is not too much to say that the church in Africa is largely a worshipping community. Christians gather around churches to learn more about God through Bible readings, prayers and Christian rituals. They also embrace Christian traditions and symbols, and are visibly recognised by others in society, because the cross of Jesus has become part of their lives. Their past lives have been transformed (2 Corinthians 5:17). They are not the same after their conversion to the Christian faith. Believers develop in their faith by worshipping the Living God, Father of Jesus Christ, the Eschaton to come, studying the Bible and sharing new Christian symbols. At this

stage, there is an emerging contextual theology of Christians, as well as a new identity, communal experience and social change, as a result of their faith in Christ. Christian sacraments, mainly the "Lord's supper", remembering the suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross, play a vital role in uniting believers in the faith of Christianity. The vernacular language of liturgy has enabled them to contextualise their faith in and understanding of Christianity. The ritual of baptism is a public affirmation of the radical change of religious identity in Christian life. Schreiter (1985:22) raises questions about the community context:

What is the quality of the community's praxis, its worship, its other forms of actions?

Who speaks for the community and brings to expression its response to the gospel?

We saw that a bringing to expression needs different actors involved in the theological process: the action and experience of the Community itself… All of these, guided by the presence of the Spirit within the community, need to come together for the Good News to be truly alive in the community.

There is always an issue with regard to syncretism in the Christian faith. This is based on the way Africans traditionally organize their conceptual world. However, as we have demonstrated in the previous chapters, a clear and distinctive understanding about Jesus as Redeemer brings them salvation and a new life, as well as helping people to defeat the forces of evil.

Of course, this encounter between tradition and Christian identity may raise some problems for the churches as they develop their local theologies. They are not trying to dilute the truth - there is a real and deep desire to remain truly faithful to the Scriptures and to be themselves faithful witnesses to the Gospel in their own circumstances.

The following three aspects of tradition contribute to the development of human community (Schreiter, 1985:105-106):

(i) It provides resources for identity within a community. For example, group boundaries create one of the most basic forms of identification. It is usually transmitted to the youth of a society, in preparation for full participation in the culture as adults. This transmission is done through rites of initiation, the educational system and daily life.

(ii) Another contribution of tradition to identity is that it involves a communication system that provides cohesion and continuity within a

human community. This includes stories, activities, memories and the rules that govern group boundaries and world-view formation.

(iii) Finally, tradition provides resources that can be incorporated into a society. This can link new signs to the codes and messages of the culture. It provides basics messages (values) and codes (rules) which relate (signs) those messages to data in the environment.

6.1.8 African traditional social structures and the church

In order to understand the relationship between the church and society in Africa, it is essential to understand the African worldview, as we have attempted to do in this study. By worldview, we mean the basic presuppositions which serve as a window through which man observes his world.

There is no doubt that Africans live in a religious world. They believe that the visible, tangible and material world of humans is influenced, impacted and even controlled by forces in the spiritual world. They also believe that the invisible world of spirits, including the ancestors, has a lot to do with the visible world. Consequently, those who have access to the invisible world are believed to be able to manipulate the spirit force, such that religious and political leaders are not only respected and venerated in society, but also feared.

In this mystical society, we find the following socio-economic and political implications. Leadership in traditional society is conferred either by possessing mystical power or by inheritance, and appointment to public office is therefore by selection rather than election, and the process is secret. Position and power are usually retained for life, unless one falls out of favor with ancestors. Government in traditional society has no opposition group, as in a modern democracy. Those opposed to the government are treated as enemies or rebels. Moral values are preserved by religious traditions or taboos, rather than through parliamentary legislation, etc.

The same is to be said of the way in which leadership or authority is practiced, and of political takeovers, which lead to the exploitation of people through corruption, abuse of power, self-enrichment, etc. As we know, some church leaders exaggerate their authority at the level of the church in the same way as it occurs in secular society. They cannot be corrected by lay people, since they are considered to be holy and to be providing an example for people to follow.

The exercise of any function must be referred to Jesus Christ as the ultimate Example or Model for the followers of Jesus, and it has been said that:

The King of the Gentiles Lord it over them and those who have authority over them… but not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? "But I am among you as the one who serves" (Luke 22:24-27)

Elevation to Lordship is only possible when there is total renunciation, and when humility has been shown (Phillipians 2:6-11; Mark 10:45; Matthew 22:28). African society can only succeed if Jesus is seen as the Model of leadership.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church (Colossians 1:18). In him is the fullness of God, who has chosen to use him to reconcile all things (Colossians 1:19-20). Jesus Christ presents himself as the one who has come so that his followers may have life in abundance (John 10:10). He gives his life for the sheep (John 10:1; 15). Furthermore, Jesus Christ is the Resurrection, and the one who lives in him and believes in him will never die (John 11:25-26).

A traditional African leader's authority entails, in principle, accountability and responsibility. They will only command respect if they are able to manage both. In the traditional decision-making process, a wise leader lets the people discuss matters first, speaking last so that no one will be afraid to express their own opinion. In the concluding discussion, the leader usually adopts the approach of the majority.

Traditionally, in African leadership, the chief represents the unity of the tribe and is the personification of the law. In other words, his example is respected and emulated. When our efforts toward the future and social ethics are driven by scriptural values, they transform the past's oppressive image into a future hope. In this way, people are empowered to see God going before them. It also affirms their hope for the future, as they see God's redemptive work in the past, present and future (Bosch, 1991:399). Jesus Christ is the eschaton to come, the very life of the church and the source of its growth. Jesus Christ offers to the people of Africa true development. African societies, communities, clans or nations can only develop their communities when they remain grounded in Jesus Christ, the living and unique source of life for the whole mystical society of Africa.

Having said this, it must be acknowledged that the leadership of a nation comes from the people. Leaders are a reflection of the beliefs, values and behaviours of the larger society. Leaders are thus a reflection of the culture. Until a critical mass of individual members of a society is transformed, the leadership of this society will not be transformed. The heart of the leader comes from the heart of the people.

This change can only be initiated by individuals coming to the cross of Christ for their salvation. This is the only place where the human heart can be transformed. However, it is not enough to have one's heart transformed – God wants to change the mind as well. There have been many professed Christians who have risen to high positions of leadership, but there was a dichotomy between their profession of faith in Christ and the beliefs, values and behaviours that they showed – dictatorship, corruption and nepotism.

The practice of bribery, found in many Africa leaders inside and outside of the Church, is an indication of the culture of corruption. Culture is always derived from 'cult' worship. A culture of corruption is based on the worship of deities that can be appeased. Thus, before a society can be transformed, it needs to worship a God who cannot be bribed (Deuteronomy 10:17).

6.1.9 The role of language and culture

Education can never be removed from culture (Kraft, 1979:103). Kraft concludes that God's basic attitude towards culture is that which Paul articulates in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22. When Kraft says "God above but through culture", this means that God chose to communicate His word through cultural means. God gave to people and nations the freedom to live and act responsibly towards nature (Genesis 1-2). This biblical view places the major emphasis on the importance of culture. Through incarnation, God reaches human beings within their culture. Thus, the only way to transform culture is through the word of God.

The African people take the message of the Gospel seriously, especially when they hear it in the vernacular language (Mbiti, 2005:247). For example, the Ngambais of Chad will tell you, if you have preached the Gospel to them in the Ngambai language, that they have heard the word of God today, instead of it being translated into French. The use of the vernacular is very important in terms of authentic contextualization (Bediako, 1995).

6.1.10 The role of cross-cultural workers

Missiological praxis is only authentic insofar as it reflects participation in the mission of God (Bosch, 1991:391). If missiology's concern is also about Christian witnessing to the wider world, it must find a way to be informed and up to date. It must assess the trends and understand their significance, in order to accomplish the missio Dei.

Christian life is about change, which begins with repentance and faith. Faith is not something static, but is ongoing and transformative. If we are to have a better future, we have to change our understanding and remove all the traditional restraints we have placed on mission and ourselves (Matthew 9:16-17; Luke 5:36-39). We must change our understanding, practices, relationships and structures, in order to embrace the new wine that God is waiting to pour. These must serve as our vision and strategy for the reign of God's peace to come in the form of the eschaton, Jesus Christ.

6.1.11 Conclusion

The following observations regarding implications of the present study for the contemporary church's mission in Africa are intended to serve as part of a wider discussion of Scriptural theology. It can be explored in more detail, but this is a small contribution to introduce the discussion or reflection on the importance of a biblical theology of mission praxis inspired by eschatological implications in Africa.

As we have observed in the Ngambai culture, education did not generally take place in a formal or structured environment. Instead, it took place on an informal basis throughout the day. For example, the process of education during a person's life took place through the very important ritual of various rites of passage during the initiation period. Education was understood to be permanent and gradual, such as the practice of UMA-LAO-BEL. The final stage of BEL was considered to be graduate school. The graduates were then equipped for the role of maturity and leadership teaching in traditional society.

God takes people through learning experiences in order to make the story their own. This education process may occur through events, proverbs, oral traditions, the use of vernacular languages, etc, which provide the content for teaching people knowledge, skills and character.

Our purpose is to consider some issues with a view to answering the question that people may ask: "What are the potential values and contextually relevant

practices in a local theology in the African context?" In briefly exploring the situation, there are approaches that invite the church and cross-cultural workers to participate in an effective dialogue, in order to communicate the Gospel in the African context.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

In the following section, several issues for further research, identified in this study, are briefly indicated. These issues are influenced by how they are understood and used in a particular context.

6.2.1 *Religion*

One of the most important and exacting exercises is to arrive at an appropriate definition of religion and how it is related to phenomena present in the existing folk religion. A definition or set of definitions implies some theory of religion, which needs to be examined in more detail.

6.2.2 *Role of language*

Language is related to role and identity. The Ngambai people of Chad maintain their role as mystics by means of a special vocabulary. Do ancestors, initiators and initiates speak mysteriously? This issue needs careful and detailed consideration.

6.2.3 *Issues of eschatology*

Special emphasis needs to be placed on the implications of Christ's return for community and ancestral matters. How does this return affect the traditional African's practice of looking to the ancestors for guidance and regarding them as intermediaries in the spirit realm? The traditional African in particular would need help in understanding the biblical perspective with regard to how the reality of possibly being part of the last generation before Christ's return could affect his life, worshipping and relationships.

6.2.4 *Local theology*

In mission and theological issues today, syncretism and contextualization are important concepts. Greater sensitivity is needed to the context in which these issues must be confronted, because of the vast cultural changes in the world, the complexities of intercultural communication, and the transformation of Christian communities in terms of their Christian identities.

6.3 General conclusions

In this study, a number of arguments were advanced in favor of an African culture that, according to some Bantu in general and the Ngambai people of Chad in particular, asserts that there is indeed no time but rather events, and that completed events occur in the present, future and past, as they are all beyond time. This traditional African concept of time should have an impact on our way of teaching and evangelizing, and it is also important for us to fully consider all the relevant concerns of contextualizing biblical truth in light of the African concept of time.

It has been also argued, with reference to Christology, that Jesus Christ as "Proto-Ancestor" or "Ancestor par excellence" goes far beyond the traditional system of beliefs. Jesus Christ is the founder of a new community. The members of this new community are all those who believe in his name (John 1:12-13). Their experiences become more significant through the experiences of Jesus, the Crucified and Risen one, the eschaton to come.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adeyemo, T. 1995. *Reflection on the State of Christianity in Africa*. Potchefstroom: Institute for Reformational Studies.

Aguilar, M.I. 2002. Time, Communion and ancestry in African biblical interpretation: a contextual note on 1 Maccabees 2:49-70. *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 32(3): 129-144.

Allen, D. 1987. Phenomenology of Religion. In *Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York: Macmillan.

Amanze, J. 2008. *African Traditional Religion in Malawi*. Malawi: CLAIM.

Attwood, D. 1998. *Changing values*. Cumbria: Paternoster Press.

Baker, D.W. 2001. *Looking into the future: evangelical studies in eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Barrett, D.B. 1979. *African Initiatives in Religions*. Nairobi: The East African Publishing House.

Bediako, K. 2004. *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books.

Bediako, K. 1993. *John Mbiti's contribution to African theology*. New York: De Gruyter.

Bolt, P. & Thompson, M. 1985. *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission*. Downers Grove, Il: Inter-Varsity Press.

Bond, G.C. 1992. *Living with spirits: death and afterlife in African religions*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood.

Booth, N.S. Jr. 1993. *Time and African beliefs revisited*. New York: De Gruyter.

Booth, N.S. 1975. Time and change in African traditional thought. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 7(2): 81-91.

Bosch, D.J. 1991. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission.* Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Bosch, D.J. 1993. A theology of "the signs of times". *Perspectives in theology and mission from South Africa*, p.232-250.

Bosman, H. 2001. *All past and present but little future? African and Old Testament concepts of time and history*. Oxford: Lang.

Brower, K.E. & Elliott, M.W. 1997. *Eschatology in Bible and Theology*. Downers Grove, Il: Inter-Varsity Press.

Brown, J.A. 1975. *Spiro art and its mortuary contexts*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections.

Bujo, B. 1992. *African theology in its social context*. Nairobi: Daughters of St Paul.

Byaruhanga-Akiiki, A.B.T. 1980. The philosophy and theology of time in Africa: the Bantu case. *AFER*, 22(6): 357-369.

Capps, W.H. 1972. *Ways of understanding religion*. New York: Macmillan.

Charles, R.H. 1899. *Eschatology: Hebrew, Jewish and Christian*. London.

Christian, E. 2000. [Eschatology]. *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 11(1-2): 54-324.

Ciampa, R.E. 2007. The history of redemption. In *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, edited by Scott Hafemann and Paul R. House. Nottingham: Apollos Press, pp 254-308.

Cook, S.L. 2007. Funerary practices and afterlife expectations in ancient Israel. *Religion Compass*, 1(6): 660-683.

Dahl, M.E. 1962. *The Resurrection of the Body: A Study of 1 Corinthians 15*. London: SCM Press Ltd.

Davis, S.T. 1993. *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Dennis, J.B. & Donna, L. 1996. *Spirituality and Morality*. Mahwah: Paulist Press.

Derickson, G.W. 2001. *Incarnational explanation for Jesus' subjection in the eschaton*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Du Fona, J.D.K. 1991. *African traditional religion in contemporary society*. New York: Paragon.

Du Rand, J.A. 2002. *The Johannine Jesus in Africa*. St Louis: Chalice Press.

Elenga, Y.C. 2001. African Descriptive Christologies on Naming Jesus. *Vidyajyoti*, 65(9): 667-671.

Farthing, J.L. 1994. *Christ and the eschaton: the reformed eschatology of Jerome Zanchi*. Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Pub.

Fernandez, E.S. 1994. *Toward a theology of struggle*. New York: Orbis Books.

Franz, K. 1982. *Ancestor worship among the Bulsa of Northern Ohana: religious, social and economic aspects*. West Germany: Klows Remerverlag.

Gehman, R.J. 1989. *African traditional religion in biblical perspectives*. Kijabe: Kijaby Presly Press.

Gehman, J.R. 1985. *Ancestor relations among three African societies in biblical perspective*. Ann Arbor: Fuller Theological Seminary.

Gerstner, J. 1980. *Jonathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

Getui, M., Holter, K. and Zinkuratire, V. 1999. *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa*. Nairobi, Kenya: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data.

Goergen, D.J. 2001. A Bibliography of African Christology. *African Christian Studies*, 17(4): 93-97.

Gowan, D.E. 1986. *Eschatology in the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Guthrie, D. 1981. *New Testament Theology*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.

Hastings, A. 1994. *The Church in Africa 1940-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Healey, J and Sybertz, D. 1996. *Towards an African narrative theology*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.

Hesselgrave, D. 1978. *Communicating Christ cross-culturally*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Hick, J. 1989. *An Interpretation of Religion*. Houndmills and London: Macmillan Press.

Hillman, E. 1993. *Toward an African Christianity: inculturation applied.* New York: Paulist Press.

Hobley, C.W. 1922. *Bantu beliefs and magic*. London.

Holman, C.L. 1996. *Till Jesus Comes: Origins of Christian Apocalyptic Expectation*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.

Holmes, A. 2006. *War and Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapid, Michigan: Baker Academic.

Hubert, P.G. and Hiebert, E.R. 1995. *Incarnation ministry: planting churches in land tribal, peasant and urban societies*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.

Igenoza, A.O. 1989. *Time, history and eschatology: an evaluation of an aspect of Mbiti's theology.* Edinburgh: Rutherford House.

Ikenga-Metuh, E. 1987. *Comparative studies of African traditional religions*. Nigeria: Imico Publishers.

Imasogie, O. 1993. *Guidelines for Christian theology in Africa*. Zimbabwe: Books for Africa Publishing House.

Johnston, P.S. 2002. *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity.

Klassen, W. 1992. *Living at the End of the Ages: Apocalyptic Expectation in the Radical Reformation.* Maryland: University Press of America.

Kato, B.H. 1975. *Theological pitfalls in Africa*. Kisumu, Kenya: Evangelical Publishing House.

König, A. 1989. *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Publishing.

Kostenberger, A.J. 1993. *The mission of Jesus and the disciples according to the Fourth Gospel.* Michigan: Bell & Howell.

Kraft, C.H. 1980. *Christianity in culture: a study in dynamic biblical theologizing in cross-cultural perspectives*. New York: Orbis Books.

Kraft, C.H. 1990. *Christianity in culture: a study in dynamic biblical theologizing in cross-cultural perspective*. New York: Orbis Books.

Kroge, F. 1982. *Ancestor worship among the Bulsa of North Ghana: religious, social and economic aspects*. West Germany: Klaus Renee Verbary.

Kummel, W.G. 1966. *Promise and Fulfillment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*. London: SCM Press Ltd.

Lengenfeller, S. 1980. *Transforming culture: a challenge guide for Christian mission*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.

Lerrigo, P.H. 1922. The prophetic movement in Congo. *International Review of Mission*, Vol 11.

Levison, J.R. 1995. Pope-Levison, Jesus in Africa. *Bible Today*, 33(3): 164-169.

Longenecker, R.N. 1998. *Life in the face of death: the resurrection message of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Luzbetak, L.J. 1991. *The Church and cultures: new perspectives in missiological anthropology*. New York: Orbis Books.

Maganda, F.F. 2002. Contextualizing Jesus: the only mediator for the Sukuma people of Tanzania. *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 21(2): 147-164.

Manus, C.U. 2002. Inculturating New Testament Christologies in Africa: a case study of the Yoruba and Igbo grassroots Christians in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, 86(2): 116-143.

Masefield, P. & Wiebe, D. 1994. *Aspects of Religion*. New York: Lang Publishing Inc.

Mbiti, J.S. 1968. African concept of time. *Africa Theological Journal*, 1: 8-20.

Mbiti, J. 1980. *African religions and philosophy*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Heinemann.

Mbiti, J. 1986. *Introduction to African religions*. London: Heinemann.

Mbiti, J. 1970. *Concepts of God in African religion.* London: SPCR.

Mbiti, J. 2005. Do you understand what you are reading? *Missionalia*, 33(2): 234-248.

Mbiti, S.J. 1971. *New Testament eschatology in an African background*. London: Oxford University Press.

McDonald, J.I.H. 1998. *The crucible of morality*. London and New York: Routledge.

Milingo, E. 1984. *The World in Between Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival.* London: Orbis Books.

Miller, D. & Allen, S. 2005. *Against All Hope: Hope for Africa*. United States of America: Disciple Nation Alliance.

Molyneux, G.K. 1993. *African Christian Theology*. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Moore, R.L. and Reynolds, F.E. 1984. *Anthropology and the Study of Religion*. Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion.

Moreau, A.S. 1986. A critique of John Mbiti's understanding of the African concept of time. *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 5(2): 36-48.

Moreau, A.S. 1990. *The world of the spirit: a biblical study in the African context*. Nairobi: Evangelical Publishing House.

Moreau, A.S. 2000. *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.

Moreau, Scott, A. 1995. *Folk Religions*. Wheaton: Wheaton College.

Mulango, G.G. 1980. *La religion traditionnelle des Bantu et leur vision du monde*. Kinshasa: Faculté de Théologie Catholique.

Muzorewa, G.H. 1985. *The origins and development of African theology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Muller, R.A. 1981. Christ and the eschaton. *Harvard Theological Review*, 74(1): 31-59.

Ngewa, S; Shaw, M. and Tienou, T. 1998. *Issues in African Christian theology*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Nida, E.A. 1960. *Message and Mission: the communication of the Christian faith*. California: William Carey Library.

Nutkowicz, H. 2006. *L'homme face à la mort au royaume de Juda: rites, pratiques et representations*. Paris: Cerf.

Nyamiti, C. 1984. *Christ as our ancestor*. Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.

Nyende, P. 2007. Hebrews' Christology and its contemporary apprehension in Africa. *Neotestamentica*, 41(2): 361-381.

Nyirongo, L. 1997. *The Gods of Africa or the God of the Bible?* Brochure of the Institute for Reformational Studies no 70.

Oduyoye, M.A. 1986. *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflection on Christianity in Africa.* Maryknoll, New York.

Oduyoye, M.A. 1979. The value of African religious beliefs and practices for Christian theology. *Appiah d Torres*: 109-116.

Oduyoye, M.A. 1979. *The value of African religious beliefs and practices for Christian theology.* New York: Obis Books.

Ogedengbe, O. 1995. *An Africological Study of Western Christianity and a Yoruba society of Southwestern Nigeria*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Company.

Okupuna, J.K. 1991. *African traditional religion in contemporary society*. New York: Paragon.

Ondeng, P. 2003. *Africa's Moment*. Nairobi, Kenya: Enterprise Publications Ltd.

Palmer, D. 1986. *The Kingdom of God*. Great Britain: Bath Press.

Palmer, T.P. 2004. Byang Kato: a theological reappraisal. *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 23(1): 3-20.

Parratt, J. 1995. *Reinventing Christianity: African theology today*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing.

Parratt, J. 1977. Time in traditional African thought. *Religion*, 7(2): 117-126.

Parrinder, G. 1954. *Religion in an African city*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Parrinder, G. 1954. *African traditional religion*. London: Hutchinson.

Parrinder, E.G. 1962. *African traditional religion*. London.

Patterson, J.A. 2005. Revolution and the eschaton: images of Jesus in the Jesus movement. *Trinity Journal*, 26(2): 267-277.

Paul, W.W. 1986. *Time and historical significance*. Singapore: Christian Life Publishers.

Pobee, J.S. 1992. *Christian Faith in an African context*. Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.

Postma, F., Spronk, K. and Talstra, E. 2002. *The New Things: Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy.* Maastricht: Shaker Publishing.

Pretorius, L.H. 1979. The New Jerusalem: Eschatology Perspectives in African Indigenous Churches. *West African Religion*, 18: 3-12.

Rambo, L.R. 1993. *Understanding Religious Conversion*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Reese, R. 2006. African time. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 42(40):474-478.

Rivière, C. 1995. Le temps et Afrique noire: conception, compat et gestion. *Anthropos*, 90(4-6): 365-376.

Robison, B. 2001. Ancient Israelite concepts affecting death and remembrance. *Proceedings of the Central States Society of Biblical Literature and the American School of Oriental Research*, 4: 169-188.

Ross, R.K. 1990. The theology of hope: a missing link in African Christianity? *Africa Theological Journal*, 19(3):

Russel, S.L. 1981. *Christianity and the cult of ancestors: belief and ritual among the black-speaking peoples of Southern Africa*. Princeton Theological Seminary.

Saayman, W.A. 1987. Eschatological Models in Missionary Thinking. *Missionalia*, 15(1): 7-13.

Sanneh, L. 1989. *Translating the message: the missionary impact on culture*. New York: Orbis Books.

Sarpong, P.K. 1988. *African Theology: a simple description.* Accra, Ghana: Accra Catholic Press.

Sawyer, H. 1970. *God, ancestor or Creator? Aspects of traditional belief in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone*. London: Longmann Group.

Schoffeleers, J.M. 1989. Folk Christology in Africa: the dialectics of the Nganga paradigm. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 19(2): 157-183.

Schreiter, R.J. 1985. *Constructing local theologies*. New York: Orbis Books.

Setiloane, G.M. 1986. *African Theology: an introduction*. Cape Town and Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers.

Shorter, A. 1983. Eschatology in the ethnic religions of Africa, in *Christianity and other religions*. Rome: Gregorian University Press, p. 1-24.

Shorter, A. 1969. *Essays in Pastoral Anthropology*. Kampala, Uganda: Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa.

Shorter, A.W.F. 1978. *African Christian spirituality*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.

Singleton, M. 1988. The people and their "religion" in Africa. *Pro Mundi Vita Studies*, 6: 29-37.

Sitshebo, W.T. 1993. *Burial and Eschatology: A Comparative Study of the views of Mbiti and Schwarz*. Pretoria: Unisa.

Smart, N. 1972. Cross-Religious Comparisons: The Dimensions of Religion. In *Ways of Understanding Religions*. New York: Macmillan.

Smith, W.M. 1980. *Biblical Doctrine of Heaven*. Chicago: Moody Press.

Sobanaraj, S. 2007. *Diversity in Paul's Eschatology*. Kashmere Gate, Delhi: Press and Process, NOIDA.

Speckman, M.T. 1998. The Kairos behind the Kairos Document: a contextual exegesis of Luke 19:41-44. *Religion and Theology*, 6(2): 195-221.

Stagg, F. 1981. Eschatology. *One in Christ*, 17(3): 255-270.

Tanner, H.W. 1967. *Transition in African beliefs*. New York.

Tienou, T. 1984. *The Problem of Methodology in African Christian Theologies*. Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission.

Tienou, T. 1990. *The Theological Task of the Church in Africa*. 2nd Edition. Lagos, Nigeria: Challenge Bookshops.

Ukpong, J.S. 1992. *The Immanuel Christology of Mathew 25:31-46 in African context.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Van Breugel, J.W.M. 2001. *Chewa Traditional Religion*. Zomba, Malawi: Kachere Series.

Van Zyl, D.C. 2007. A square peg in a round hole? Questioning the use of the concept of time in teaching the Old Testament in Africa. *Scriptura*, 94: 143-151.

Veary, V. 1984. *Church on the brink but God*. Toronto: Christian Trust Association.

Veary, V. 1977. *Ginn ta Ngambai*. Toronto, Canada: Willow Press Limited.

Veldkamp, H. 1978. *Waiting for Christ's Return*. Ontario, Canada: Paideia Press.

Verryn, T.D. 1987. *Reflections on Religion*. Pretoria: Unisa.

Wan-Tatah, V. 1988. *Emancipation in African Theology*. New York, Bern, Paris: Lang.

Wilks, I. 1975. Do Africans have a sense of time? *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 8(2): 279-287.

Winter, D. 1972. *Hereafter*. Great Britain: Hodder.

Wiredu, K. 1990. *Death and the afterlife in African culture*. Philadelphia: Charles Press.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Understanding the variety of terms in religion
Figure 2: Understanding the relationship between local theology and Christian tradition
Figure 3: Understanding the history of redemption
Figure 4: Presenting Jesus' roles

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Ritual Processes
Table 2: Rites of intensification
Table 3: Rites of transition
Table 4: Rites of crisis