

## SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS

All unmarked Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

The following abbreviations bear the following:

LB - Living Bible

NIV - New International Version

NLT - New Living Translation

Phillips - J. B. Phillips

TEV - Today's English Version

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## **CHAPTER 1: THE AFRICAN SCANDAL OF CHRISTOLOGICAL INSECURITY<sup>1</sup>**

### **1.1. Introduction**

The scandal of Jesus Christ in Africa is the prevalent religious insecurity in many African Christians. In Africa, the shameful thing about the victory of Jesus Christ at the cross over Satan and his demonic regime is that this deposed regime continues to wield great fear and control in the lives of many African Christians. One may say that the greatest enemy of African Christianity is the apparent spiritual vulnerability in African Christians. It is a fact that a good number of African Christians feel more secure in African traditional religions than in Jesus Christ. Herein lies the greatest scandal in African Christianity; this means that the victory of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection over the devil's empire has not extended to African Christianity. For how else can one explain the prevalence of African Christians' strong feelings of vulnerability to satanic powers? African Christianity seems devoid of the power of the victory of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the greatest enemy of Christianity in Africa is not other competing religions. The greatest enemy of Christianity in Africa lies within Christianity itself. That enemy is the failure by African Christians to place total security in Jesus Christ against the malevolent attacks and harassment by evil spirits, angry ancestors, witchcraft and other such evil religious powers. In other words, the greatest enemy of Christianity in Africa is christological insecurity.

This perennial languishing in satanic fear by African Christians ultimately questions the reality of the victory of Jesus Christ's death, resurrection and his subsequent enthronement as the Lord and Saviour of the world that includes the African continent. For how can he claim to be the Victor over Satan's empire when his African adherents languish in torrid fear of this Satan and his evil agents? In addressing this christological scandal we will open this chapter (in 1.2) by substantiating the reality of insecurity in African Christians and elaborating how this is a christological problem. We will proceed (in 1.3) by way of identifying some essential factors that have contributed to christological insecurity. We will end this chapter (in 1.4) by speculating on how christological security can positively shape African Christianity.

### **1.2. The effect of insecurity in African Christianity.**

The greatest threat confronting Christianity in Africa is its failure to sufficiently address the spiritual fears of the African Christians. Fear (as we will see in 31.1) is a naturally intrinsic phenomenon in most

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<sup>1</sup> Christological insecurity – as used in this dissertation means the lack of confidence in Christ's sufficiency for one's salvific needs. The phrase encompasses the strong feelings of uncertainty and the lack of trust in the adequacy of Christ to sufficiently address the African's needs. This phenomenon eventuates in syncretising Christianity and African traditional religions.

Africans. One does not need to look carefully to realise that Christian Africans live in consuming fear. Just like their non-Christian counterparts, African Christians live in great fear of witches and other malevolent and gratuitous evil powers. Since this problem permeates beyond Christian conversion, it suggests that the Christian religion is deficient of the provision of adequate security and protection. Thus in Africa, the scandal of Christianity lies in its insufficiency to address the vulnerability of Africans.

Because of this vulnerability, many African Christians are either disillusioned or frustrated with Christianity. Maimela (1991:8-9) observes that a "large number of African Christians believe that the church is not interested in their daily misfortunes, illness, practical problems of evil and witchcraft, bad luck, poverty, barrenness and in short, all their concrete social problems." This is true. It is this very aspect that frustrates many African Christians back into their erstwhile traditional religions. It is important to note that, in Africa, Christianity is largely embraced on account of its promises of solutions to life's troubles<sup>2</sup>. Research into the phenomenon of religious conversion in Africa, according to Oduyoye (1986: 98-99), "shows evidence of both spiritual and material struggles that prompted people to adopt Christianity." That is, African Christians expect their religion to be utilizable in conquering and gaining advantage over life's hazards. In the world-view of Africans, religion is neither a hobby nor an additive; rather, it is the essence of life. Africans approach life from the premise that says religion is the answer to all their concrete social problems, spiritual and material struggles, as Maimela and Oduyoye point out. In this case, to all Africans religion is both functionalistic and utilitarianistic. It must address the African's existential needs. One of the most important such needs is security.

Yet, other than instilling high morality and a promise of the after-life, to most Africans, Christianity is not utilizable in circumventing and subduing life's threats. Consequently, "most Africans do not know what to do with the new, attractive Christian religion, one which dismally fails to meet their emotional needs" (Maimela 1991: 9). It is this dissatisfaction with Christianity that compels most Africans to augment their security needs with the elements of African traditional religion. Okot p'Bitek (in Udoh 1983:19), the Islamic critic of Christianity remarked: "Christianity has barely touched the core of the life of most African peoples: many Africa Christians are also practitioners of their own religion." There is undeniable truth in this remark. However, it is essential to realize that the problem lies in the different ways African traditional religions and Christianity envision salvation. To Africans, "religion is about salvation" (Okorochoa 1994: 61). In African traditional religious thinking salvation is "anthropocentric; it

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<sup>2</sup> Okorochoa (1994: 61) observes: "For African people, religion is about salvation...Thus, it is the inherent ideas about salvation that determine the conversion to, faithfulness within, and possible evolutions to new religious systems in Africa." This means that Africans embrace Christianity as a key solution to life's problems and as a bulwark to life's threats. They embrace Christianity in search of liberty from their life's constraints.

is life affirming” (Mugabe 1999: 240). It is concerned about humankind’s immediate needs. According to Akrong (in Mugabe 1999: 240), the Akan of Ghana see salvation as

the condition, context, or space in which human well-being and the ultimate fulfillment of the individual destiny are made possible. It means the absence of everything that threatens and destroys human life or disturbs the condition that guarantees prosperity and well-being. Finally, salvation means the conditions that preserve or restore the harmonies of creation so that the ‘rhythm of life’ may go on undisturbed in order that human beings may have the space to be human.

This Akan view of salvation concords with that of the majority of the peoples of Africa south of Sahara. To Africans salvation concerns no less than the “total well being” (Okorocho 1994: 75-76) of life. The ultimate goal of the African is to live in the “sacred presence where no destructive forces dwell” (*ibid.*: 76) This contradicts the salvation of Christ as portrayed in mainline Christianity. Therein the salvation of Christ appears to be only utilizable in the after-life, not now. Jesus Christ, the giver of Christian salvation seems only sufficient to lead the Christian’s soul to heaven but is unable to address the contemporary dilemmas of the African life. His salvation seems to show little or no interest in the ideal condition for human well-being and ultimate self-fulfillment, protection from evil forces of destruction; the preservation of cosmic and social order and harmony and the restoration to the broken life (cf. Akrong in Mugabe 1999: 240).

Therefore, it is this seeming insufficiency of Christ to grant them true salvation, mostly of security concern, that forces African Christians into religious syncretism. As Maimela (1991:9) observes, "So, rather than reject Christianity altogether as useless, Africans opt to remain both in the church and at the same time to follow the religious practice of the African Traditional Religions". They syncretise Christianity and traditional religions "hoping thereby to have the best of both religious worlds" (*ibid.*). In concert, Mugabe (1999: 240) remarks:

In, fact the reason why many African Christians embrace both Christianity and African traditional religions is because they perceive traditional religion as being able to meet real needs in procuring salvation in this real world of ours while Christianity merely concerns itself with the hereafter. An understanding of salvation that is preoccupied only with the salvation of souls from eternal damnation has left this impression on the bulk of African people.

We underscore that Jesus Christ is the essence of Christianity. That is, Christianity stands or falls with Jesus Christ, its founder. All things considered, it is only on account of Christ that Christianity is different from all the religions of the world: he is "the core of the Christian religion” (Mackay 1953: 97). In buttressing this point, Oshitelu (1998: 98) asseverates:

"This point of divergence [Christ] is what makes Christianity unique, distinguishable from other religions of the world. By His name, Christianity is named. Thus any attempt to introduce Christ or deepen Christianity anywhere in the world is an attempt to introduce Christ, or at deepening the people's reflection about Christ."

Christianity is not only named by his name; it is dependent upon him entirely in the absolute sense. Above all, he made this promised-filled invitation: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). In this invitation, Christ set himself as the sufficient healer of all life's plagues. Moreover, he significantly promised: "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10b). In this, he promised fullness of life. Africans convert to Christianity because they want this *rest* and *abundant life* from Christ. In light of these promises of Christ, any deficiencies in Christianity ultimately constitute a christological problem<sup>3</sup>. In saying this we mean that the African Christians' disappointment with Christianity is in real terms a disappointment with Jesus Christ, who is the Lord and Saviour. For in the final analysis, this is indicative of Jesus Christ's insufficiency to address the problems of the African Christians. This therefore questions the sufficiency of Jesus Christ to be the Lord and Saviour of the world that includes Africa. Africans have a consuming need for a Jesus Christ endowed with sufficient power to deliver and secure them from the malevolent and gratuitous African spiritual forces. The African continent is desperate for a Jesus Christ sufficient to address the paranoia that permeates every aspect of African life.

### 1.3. The problem of the foreign Jesus Christ

If there is a question that many African Christians stumble over, it is Jesus Christ's incisive question: "But who do you say that I am?" (Matt.16: 15). Of course, asked to search for the answer in the Bible they will indeed answer it unhesitantly. However, asked to answer the question out of their personal interaction and experience with him, many will struggle for an honest answer. According to Mugabe (1991: 343), many students of the Christian religion have acknowledged that Africans "find it hard to integrate Jesus Christ in their belief system". As one talks to many Christian Africans, one will realize that many of them find it difficult to conceptualize Christ in African terms. The main reason for this is the newness of Jesus Christ in African religious thought. To Africans God is not a new idea. They have always known him as the creator and the source of all beings and things. Thus, if God is not a new idea to Africans, then it is Jesus. This is affirmed by Udoh (1983:80) who writes: "The new element and therefore problematic in African religious experience is the image of Jesus Christ". In

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<sup>3</sup> Moltmann (1972: 280) suggests: "The real essence of the church depends not on its ecclesiology but on its Christology. Whether the church is believable today depends on the faith which the church has in Christ". In our view, the faith of the African church in Christ must encompass total dependence on him, not only for the after-life but also for its present needs.

concordance, Hood (1990:145) says: "It is not the Christian God who causes problems for Afro-cultures; it is the Christian Christ." This problem is further embedded in the fact that Jesus Christ was not a part of African religiosity until the arrival of western missionaries. With the arrival of westerners were many "new ideas which were superimposed" (Mugambi 1989:44) on the African peoples. One of those new ideas was the new teaching about Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Son of God who came to proclaim and enact the Kingdom of God. Thus, among a variety of other factors, a leading problem in African Christianity lies in the newness of Christ in Africa. The reality of Jesus Christ in Southern Africa arrived and attained prominence with the arrival of western missionaries who compounded the problem by proclaiming him in western concepts. As Dawe (1972: 275) writes: "The growth of modern Christology is grounded in the culture of Western man." He continues: "Be it in the rejection or acceptance of modern thought, the cultural basis of theology remains that of western civilization. To be more exact, its basis is the culture of white, middle-class European and American man." (*ibid.*) Bolaji Idowu (in Amanze 1998: 60) rightly notes, "There is no doubt that the urgent predicament of the church in Africa is that of the apparent foreignness of Christianity". Furthermore, Jesus Christ emerged in southern Africa, and indeed in most of Africa south of Sahara, within the European package to Africa set to colonize, civilize the African savages and Christianize the African pagans. In Zimbabwe, this is confirmed by the first centennial celebrations by many mainline Christian denominations in the 1990s. These celebrations coincided with the first centennial celebrations of the establishment of the cities of Harare and Bulawayo and several other institutions related to the arrival of the Europeans in the country. Apart from signifying that Jesus was a new idea of one hundred years in Zimbabwe, it also signified that he came with the white settlers.

Subsequently, many Africans perceive Jesus Christ as both a foreign and new idea. His initial emergence and association with white settlers strengthens the foreign perception with which Africans hold him. Judith Bahemuka (1989:7) underscores that "missionaries preached a foreign Christ to Africa"<sup>4</sup>. By this, she means that the early missionaries to Africa packaged Jesus Christ in a foreign, western and white packet. John V Taylor (in Chipenda 1979:67) acknowledges this foreignness of Jesus Christ in Africa by saying: "Christ has been presented as the answer to the questions a white man would

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<sup>4</sup> Kwame Bediako (1994: 93) discourages the tendency of overstressing this misdeed by the early missionaries to Africa saying: "And yet the negative side of missionary history in Africa must not be exaggerated" because, *inter alia* "the vitality of our Christian communities bears witness to the fact that the Gospel was communicated, however inadequate we may now consider that communication to have been"



ask, the solution to the needs that western man would feel"<sup>5</sup>. This means that African Christians are christologically insecure because they perceive Jesus as one only able to address the concerns of white people but is unable to relate to their African experiences and solve them. They see this foreignness as the one that incapacitates his ability to identify, understand and solve the African person's innermost problems. By wondering: "How then can the church make Christ real to the African?" Bahemuka (1989:7) registers the remoteness and detachment of Jesus Christ to most African Christians. As Udoh (1983:12) points out, "the problem of faith in Africa is fundamentally Christological." By this is meant that the question that often lingers to Africans is how a white Saviour can save an African person. Therefore, Christian Africans are faced with the challenge of being black and African and having to trust a seemingly white and western saviour for their African problems such as witchcraft, angry ancestors, avenging spirits "*uzimu*" and the like. Consequently in times of difficulties, Africans opt to return to traditional religions considered inherently African and familiar, having been solutions that even their ancestors depended upon.

When discussing christological security we must realise that the greatest fear of any African is religious vacuum. Africans are by nature "thoroughly religiocentric" (Okorocho 1992: 169); they cannot live confidently when separated from a wholistic religion. The traditional African finds traditional religion to suffice for all his or her security needs. Okorocho (*ibid.*) rightly says: "In the African religious worldview or consciousness nothing is thought impossible for religion and religiousness permeates all aspects of life". In other words, religion is security. African aspects of traditional religions such as charms and other such magical regalia communicate the presence of religious power. Therefore, to tell an African to abandon these things without an equally life encompassing replacement is to suggest that he or she live in a religious vacuum. Many African Christians often find themselves in this situation. But where really is the problem? In Appiah-Kubi's (1997:65) analysis the problem is in that the Jesus Christ proclaimed in the mainline churches in Africa is "absent in several crisis situations of the African life - birth, puberty, marriage, illness and death". In other words, the Jesus Christ proclaimed in most mainline churches in African is foreign and detached from the Africans. To this extent, many African

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<sup>5</sup> However, Kenneth Kaunda, (in Omulokole 1998: 35-36) the former President of Zambia, approvingly reminisces on the effect of the Gospel in the people during his childhood days: "There was nothing sophisticated about their faith, but it was real and strong and wholesome. And it was a Gospel with power, which changed men. There was power in my father's preaching and in our lusty hymn-singing. When those Lubwa Christians sang the old chorus - 'There is power, power, wonder working power in the blood of the Lamb' - they meant it. And they could point to members of their families, neighbours and friends who had been brought to Jesus and freed from all the dark forces of evil and superstition which never seemed far from the surface of the old life. My father died when I was eight years old and no one who was part of the congregation who attended his funeral could doubt the reality of eternity." This statement, though not from a theologian, acknowledges that the gospel did take root in the African context, notwithstanding the "negative burdens associated with its carriers" (Oduyoye 1986: 99)

Christians often find themselves in a religious vacuum. They do not see his involvement and presence in their daily misfortunes, illness and other concrete problems. African Christians seem more aware of the proximity of the Devil than that of Christ. To them, Christ is either, absent or indifferent to their plight or insufficient to deal with their African problems. Because of the religious vacuum, they often find themselves in, the African Christians continue in traditional religions. How then should this christological problem be solved? It is thus clear that the challenge of the African situation to christology is to *dewesternise, deforeignise and Africanise* Jesus Christ to the extent that the African Christians will rely on him as their only solution to their African dilemmas.

#### **1.4. The benefits of christological security in Africa**

We have thus far established that Africans are existentially religious and they cannot live in a religious vacuum. Any disconnection from their source of religious strength creates vulnerability within them. Therefore, in order to address the vulnerability of the African Christians the gap between them and Jesus Christ must be tightly closed. Therefore, it is extremely urgent to develop a doctrine of Christ relevant to instill confidence in the African Christians. Udoh (1983:162) says that undertaking the christological task of this nature "is urgent not only for the benefit of the African Christian but also imperative for the life of the church on the continent". In this section, we want to speculate on the positive benefits of christological security in the African Church.

##### 1.4.1. The courage to abandon African traditional religions.

Christological security is necessary to empower the African Christians to break away from relying on African traditional religions. African Christians truly want to be authentic Christians exclusively committed and reliant upon Christ. They are driven into syncretism because, to them, Christ seems to be either detached from them or insufficient to address their immediate African problems. African Christians continue to retain a firm hand on African traditional religions, because they see them "as meeting real need by procuring salvation from social ills, the evil spirits and witchcraft, which they experience as 'real', while Christianity is sought to provide salvation in the hereafter" (Maimela 1991:9). In the mind of many Christians syncretism serves as "double insurance for both salvation in time of trouble and misfortunes (the experience of prosperity and happiness here and now) and spiritual salvation in heaven" (*ibid.*) A Jesus Christ sufficiently able to save and secure the African person from the threats encountered within this life in addition to the pangs of hell and eternal damnation empowers the African Christians to divorce traditional religion for him only. Christology in Africa will be meaningful and empowering only "when we translate it to our contextual situation in daily life" (Nthamburi 1989: 57). He further asks: "What does it mean to tell an African that God was made flesh

and dwelt among Africans in the midst of hunger, oppression, loss of dignity, suffering and pain?" (*ibid.*) Indeed, what does it mean to tell an African that God was made flesh and dwelt among Africans in the midst of daily misfortunes, barrenness, the failure to secure a marriage, poverty, practical problems of evil and witchcraft among many concrete social dilemmas. When the African Christians attain from Jesus Christ sufficient security against the spiritual threats of life they will find the courage to abandon trusting elements of traditional religions for their existential security. That is, when Christ's power and protection surrounds the African converts to the point that they no longer fear the evil forces, only then syncretism will fall away (see Musasiwa 1993:69).

#### 1.4.2 The confidence to face life.

In Africa, peace and prosperity are aspects that are constantly bombarded by witches and wizards, angry ancestors and other such evil forces. These evil forces frustrate progress, creating misfortunes such as infertility, crop failure, family discord and even death. As they embark on various avenues that lead to prosperity the Africans fear being intercepted and frustrated by the evil and gratuitous spiritual regime. Christological security will empower the African Christians to face life with confidence assured that no evil spirit or power will frustrate their intended expeditions. The assurance that Jesus Christ is sufficiently able to protect them, their families, their livestock, fields and all their investments will empower the Africans to face life and to adventure as far as they can in their pursuit for peace and prosperity. The assurance that Christ will safely shield all their achievements from the destructive forces is an empowering force. Christological security thus frees the African Christians to pursue life into its fullest.

#### 1.4.3 Yielding to Christ as the Lord and Saviour of Africa

When African Christians are absolutely certain that Jesus Christ is sufficiently able to address their profoundest African problems, they will be compelled to yield to him as their Lord and Saviour. This is what Nthamburi (1989:58) meant when he said that Christ cannot be relevant to the Africans if he is unconcerned about their social, political, economic and spiritual realism of existence. Indeed, Jesus Christ's right and authority to be regarded as Lord and Saviour in Africa is absolutely contingent on his sufficiency to grant the African Christians and their possessions security against the evil marauding regime. Any understanding of the Lordship and salvific work of Jesus Christ that is only preoccupied with the salvation of the soul from hell is insufficient to invoke the loyalty of the African Christian. Indeed, if Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Lord of the whole world that includes Africa, he needs to involve himself in the life and affairs of African Christians in such a way that they will depend on him

for daily bread and not just 'Heavenly Bread'. The Jesus who remains a foreign white man at a remote distance can never be Lord and Saviour in the African Church.

### **1.5. Conclusion.**

The challenge that faces christology in Africa is the power of the African traditional religions in the lives of the African people. Within African traditional religions traditional Africans feel secure and at peace. Jesus Christ can only become relevant to the Africans if he is able to surpass this pervasive power of traditional religions in the Africans. The droves of African Christians who still remain practitioners of traditional religions indicate that they have not found Christ to be as equally wholistic as their traditional religions. There is a visible lack of confidence in many African Christians in the sufficiency of Christ to save and secure them from their African fears. Not only is this a christological scandal, it is also a challenge to Christology in Africa. It is primal to grasp that in Africa, a Jesus Christ who is only concerned about good morality and life in heaven will remain foreign and thus irrelevant and insufficient to Africans. When proclaiming Christ in Africa, it is imperative to realise, as Kolie (in Moloney 1987:508) points out, the struggle for life is primordial in African consciousness - and to be credible, Christianity must be part of that life. A credible Christology in Africa is one that addresses the Africans' struggle for life. Indeed, until Christ is seen to be interested in the African's contemporaneity he remains foreign and insufficient. In such a Christ, the Africans remain insecure.

## CHAPTER 2: SOME AFRICAN SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTOLOGICAL INSECURITY.

### 2.1. Introduction.

African theologians are acutely conscious of the urgent need for a Christology relevant to the African continent. After analysing the trends in African Christianity Mbiti (in Gehman 1987: iii) concluded: "Christianity has Christianized Africa, but Africa has not Africanised Christianity". A concordant observation is also made by Kailing (1994:289) as follows: "In fact, Christianity is thriving on the African continent south of the Sahara, but the alien quality of traditional Western Christianity can never be forgotten". In other words, in spite of its phenomenal growth and spread in Africa, Christianity is still largely contemplated and even practiced in western terms. African theologians are in concert that if Christianity had come in an African package the prevailing schizophrenic tendencies would have been avoided. As Schreier (1991:ix) points out, "Christ is still a largely distant figure for many Africans... [but]... that need not be the case". Urging the African church to Africanise its Christian thinking Setiloane (in De Jongh 1996:2-3) offered this challenge: "As I see it the next task of African Theology is seriously to grapple with the question of Christology - who is Jesus? How does he become the supreme human manifestation of Divinity - the Messiah of Judaism and the Christos of Hellenic Christianity? What does Messiahship or Christos become in the African context?" In response to this challenge, many African theologians have pursued the task of doing an African Christology.

In this chapter, we want to examine some of the African proposals for an African friendly Christology. Those who have proposed these Christologies surmise that these models will instill dependence upon Christ in African Christians. Mugabe (1991: 343) also shares the conviction that Africans cannot have a meaningful Christology when it is built on foreign theological models. He is adamant that since African christology "can only be formulated in African cultural symbols and categories of thought", then the "task that faces African theologians is that of making Christ more real and through African life and thought" (*ibid.*: 343-344). In congruity Pobee (1979:9) says, "The case for translating Christianity into authentic African categories hardly needs to be argued." Hence, several christological paradigms of African nature have been proposed. These paradigms can be divided into three groupings as follows: Christ as Ancestor (in 2.2), Christ as the Victorious Conqueror (in 2.3), and Christ as the African Ruler (in 2.3). We will close our chapter with a brief appraisal on these paradigms.

## 2.2. Christ as Ancestor

The point of departure and methodology in the formulation of this christological paradigm is the traditional African concept of kinship and ancestry. This paradigm starts with the "African ancestral beliefs and practices and tries to confront these with the Christian teaching on the saviour" (Nyamiti 1984:9). African theologians of the likes of Charles Nyamiti, J. S. Pobee, Kwame Bediako and Francois Kabasele have articulated this Christology. John Mbiti's kinship in Christ, when followed to its conclusion from the African perspective ultimately ends up in Christ as ancestor. These aforementioned theologians vary at several points in formulating this christological paradigm, but they all see African traditional religions as 'preparatio evangelica'. In other words African traditional religions are legitimate preparation for the Gospel of Christ and are able to make a cogent and important contribution to African Christian theology. Their common purpose is to enable the African Christians to be at home in Christ. For instance, Charles Wanamaker concludes his *'Jesus the Ancestor: From an African Perspective'* (1997) essay by these remarks: "What I hope that I have shown is that the New Testament itself can be read from an African perspective in which some of Jesus Christ's functions are those of African people" (1997: 296). The intention is to instill christological confidence in African Christians.

Ancestry and kinship are related concepts; one's ancestors are part of one's kindred. Ancestors form the lineage of one's kinship up to one's founding ancestor. The Jesus as Ancestor paradigm rests on Jesus' "common divine sonship with us" (Nyamiti 1984:16). That is, since Christ is the Son of God, and their faith in him makes Christians God's children, then Christians share common kinship with Christ. Nyamiti (*ibid.*) says the elements that qualify Christ to ancestorship include his being our creator, head of the mystical body and our elder brother in Adam. These aspects point out that in retrospect our origin traces back to Christ our creator. To the traditional African, ancestors serve as both founders of clans and families and as linkage between the living and God. Phathisa Nyathi (2000:53) says that the Ndebele conceptualize God as one who lives high above the clouds in the heavens, and so great and powerful that no ordinary human being could directly address him. This is a common belief in all Bantu religions<sup>1</sup>. The ancestors performed this task. The living dead or the departed ancestors are seen as "arranged in hierarchical order with the most senior being closest to God" (*ibid.*) Pobee (1979:94) expresses a similar view: "In Akan society the Supreme Being and the

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<sup>1</sup> That this is an originally ATR concept is disputed by Charles Wanamaker (1997: 290): "Before the introduction of a personal God by Christianity the ancestors could have no intermediary role because there was no personal God with whom to mediate. This led to ancestors being viewed as all-powerful in the lives of their living families....When missionaries introduced the highly developed concept of a personal God into the relative vacuum of the Bantu traditions, it tended to fill that vacuum. Even those who did not convert to Christianity were impacted by the concepts associated with the Christian God".

ancestors provide the sanctions for the good life and punish evil. And the ancestors hold that authority as ministers of the Supreme Being". African theologians reason that since Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and man (1 Tim.2: 5) and the only way to the Father (John 14:6), then he must be paradigmmed as the Ancestor. Francois Kabasele (in Lundstrom 1996:70) says Christ qualifies to be seen as an ancestor and elder brother by virtue of being a transmitter of life and mediator between God and man. Kwame Bediako, (in Van den Toren 1997:221), points out the need to realise that our Redeemer is also our Creator; therefore, he cannot be alien to us. He urges us to "make the biblical assumption that Jesus Christ is not a stranger to our heritage [African]" (Bediako 1994: 99). In this, he insists that Jesus Christ has always been wholly connected with the Africans from their origination. To Bediako, Jesus Christ has always been closely associated with Africans regardless of their unconsciousness and ignorance of this fact. Harry Swayerr, (in Mugabe 1991:344), proposes that Jesus should be seen primarily as the elder brother and the church as the extended family in which there are no distinctions of race, sex, colour, or social condition. "To present Jesus Christ as the first born among the brethren who with him together form the church is in true keeping with African notions" (*in ibid.*).

Charles Wanamaker (1997: 287-290) identifies three main functions of African Bantu ancestors that have christological resonance; namely, (1) guardians of the social and moral order, (2) givers and sustainers of life, and (3) mediators between God and mankind. The greatest needs of African people encompass protection from the gratuitous, maverick evil spirits; prosperity and success in life's adventures; and a close undisturbed union with his or her religious powers. To Africans the ancestors are givers of all these things. Ancestors, notes Muzorewa (1985: 12), "occupy a significant place in traditional religion because they are believed to possess supernatural powers." Because the ancestors are looked up to as guardians of individuals, families, and the community as a whole, Africans place their attention on them (McVeigh, *in ibid.*: 13).<sup>2</sup>

However, as African theologians argue, Jesus Christ is a better ancestor than our natural ancestors. Nyamiti acknowledges that there are profound disparities between Christ and the natural ancestors, but to him this "difference does not annul or even diminish the ancestral character of Christ's Brotherhood: on the contrary, it enhances it" (*ibid.*). He sees Christ as the Redeemer who "shines forth as the

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<sup>2</sup> Setiloane (in Wanamaker 1997:288) endorses this belief in poetical terms:

The dead are not dead, they are ever near us;  
 Approving and disapproving all our actions'  
 They chide us when we go wrong,  
 Bless us and sustain us for good deeds done,  
 for kindness shown, and strangers made to feel at home.  
 They increase our store, and punish our pride.

Brother-Ancestor par excellence, of whom the African ancestors are but faint and poor images" (Nyamiti 1984:70). He concludes that African brother-ancestorship is a true 'preparatio evangelica' for the Christian doctrines on Christ as the unique Ancestor of mankind, and that His Ancestorship is the highest accomplishment of its African counterpart (*ibid.*). In the same vein, Kwame Bediako (in Van den Toren 1997: 225) affirms that Christ should be proclaimed as the greatest and supreme Ancestor, the Ancestor of all mankind. Bediako insists that it is only when Jesus is given the title and developing an Ancestor Christology that Africans will see him as the answer to those needs and fears they brought to their clan-ancestors. It is in Bediako's Ancestor Christology that we see the supremacy of Christ over our natural ancestors. Pobee concurs with Bediako on the supremacy of Christ's ancestorship. (They are both from the Ghanaian tribe, Akan.) He sees Jesus Christ as the "Great and Greatest Ancestor - in Akan language *Nana*" (Pobee 1979:94). As the Great and Greatest Ancestor Christ thus has "the power and authority to judge the deeds of men, rewarding the good, punishing the evil" (*ibid.*). He further emphasizes that "even if Jesus is *Nana* like the other illustrious ancestors, he is a non-pareil of a judge: he is superior to the other ancestors by virtue of being closest to God and as God" (*ibid.*). As the Great and Greatest Ancestor Jesus Christ has "authority over not only the world of men but also of all spirit beings, namely the cosmic powers and the ancestors" (*ibid.*). Our natural ancestors were mere mortals, subjected to the powers of death and thus unable to sufficiently secure, protect and save us even from the greatest enemy of life - death. Furthermore, our natural ancestors only operated within the ambit of tribal clans and family lines, but Jesus is the Saviour of the whole world thus encompassing all the different clans of the universe. Consequently, Jesus is the great and supreme Ancestor, the Ancestor of all mankind who offers what our lineage ancestors are insufficient to offer. Thus Africans should transfer their trust from their lineage ancestors to Christ, the great and supreme Ancestor, the Ancestor of all mankind. Declares Bediako (in Lundstrom 1996: 76): "Once Christ has come the ancestors are cut off as the means of blessing for we lay our power lines differently". This means that, as Lundstrom (*ibid.*) explains, the believers can now alter their relationship with the ancestors: for the ancestors are simply members of the community and are not depended upon for power apart from Christ.

### **2.3. Christ, as the Victorious Conqueror**

In this Christology motif, we have grouped together such paradigms as "Christ the Healer, Christ the Liberator" and "Christ the Warrior King". Borrowing from the Swedish theologian Gustaf Aulen, John Mbiti rendered this motif as "Christus Victor". In a footnote remark, Udoh (1983:134) says Mbiti sees Christus Victor attractive to African Christians by virtue of facing up to the question of evil forces, misfortunes, poverty and death be it imaginary or real. This view of Christ according to Bediako (1994:



90) is precipitated by the "African's keen awareness of forces and power at work in the world which threaten the interests of life and harmony". This view thus sees Jesus as "victorious over the spiritual realm and particularly over evil forces and so answers to the need for a powerful protector against these forces and powers" (*ibid.*). Indeed, as we shall see, (in Chap 3) the traditional Africans see life as a recurring battlefield between evil and good forces. Says Okorochoa 1992: 173), "African peoples believe their cosmos to be peopled by myriads of intractable and capricious spirits locked in an internecine battle at the centre of which is humankind". These forces inflict sickness, disabilities and all sorts of misfortunes. Africans thus need a spiritual conqueror to vanquish these deadly legions of spiritual forces that constantly harass them and entangle them in great pain. Mugabe (1991:347) reckons this paradigm of Christ as the Victorious Conqueror fits well in the context of this African worldview that is dominated by spiritual forces that pose great terror on people. The African needs a Christ *onguMngobi wezitha zonke zempilo*- the Conqueror of all life's adversities.

The Christ as the victorious conqueror motif includes the paradigm of the Healer. This paradigm has been expounded upon by the likes of R B Kibongi Gabriel M Setiloane and Shorter. The traditional healer [also called Bongaka (Tswana), ng'anga (Shona), monganga (Lingala)] to the African is the conqueror of all diseases. The African consults the *inyanga* in times of all kinds of difficulties. To the African, the traditional healer is the provider of "protective medicine, healing services and medicines to enhance the fertility of the land, livestock and human beings" (Amanze 1998:14). According to Gelfand (in Mugabe 1991:345), the *inyanga* "fills a great need in African society, his presence gives assurance to the whole community". Gabriel Setiloane has also accentuated that the '*Bongaka* paradigm provides Africans with an authentic African Christology. The African must transfer this confidence invested on the traditional *inyanga* to Christ the *Inyanga enkulukazi* - the Supreme Healer. Mugabe (*ibid.*) explains that in Africa, the *inyanga* is Christ's predecessor. Hence, it is he who now, as the new *inyanga* par excellence, who fulfills the traditional age. John S Pobe (1979:93) says Jesus is a superior healer because he was in a "perpetual state of holiness, perpetually ensouled with God so much that the divine power was like a continuously flowing electric power in him, unlike the traditional healer, who has the occasional experience of it". In other words, Jesus Christ is the supreme healer, '*Inyanga enkulukazi*'. For, the traditional healers only willed but were not entirely successful in saving mankind; yet, Christ was able to successfully do this once and for all. He thus became a superior healer, the healer for all diseases. Shorter also emphasises the healing paradigm. He sees wholistic healing as a central theme in the life and work of Christ (in Mugabe 1991:346). Thus, the African should consult Jesus Christ, [*iNyanga enkulukazi*], the supreme healer- for all his ills both physical and social.

The victorious conqueror motif encompasses liberation, '*ukukhululwa*'. Africa is a continent that is suffering at the hands of many oppressive aspects such as diseases, poverty, civil wars and all kinds of disharmonies. On the spiritual front Africans suffer the oppressive attacks of the vengeful spirits (*uzimu*), angry ancestors seeking vengeance and appeasement; spirit possession that induces evil deeds such works as witchcraft and promiscuity and curses (*iziqalekiso*) and evil spells cast on their families by their enemies. Generally, all oppressive forces are attributed to the activities of demonic forces. In this the Africans visualize themselves as those *ababotshinye* (literally - bound as with a strong rope or chain) or as one *ogqilazinye* (literally - enslaved or bondaged). Thus, Africans need a Conqueror to liberate them from these oppressive structures and phenomena. Osadolor Imasogie (1985:225) proposes that Christ "must be presented first and foremost as the Victor and Liberator par excellence who forever lives to destroy the demonic forces wherever found". He is the liberator who breaks the chains of all structures and institutions that are oppressive. Mercy Amba Oduyoye believes this is the aspect that makes Christ attractive to Africans. She writes: "The Christ of Christianity touches human needs at all levels, and Africans are but ordinary members of the human race feeling the need for salvation" (Oduyoye 1986:99). She further adds that like Yahweh who rescued his people from childlessness and diseases, famine and fire, from flood and from the deep sea, from disgrace and humiliation, "so we find Jesus Christ in the New Testament snatching women and men away from all domination, even from the jaws of death" (*ibid.*). As liberator, he vanquishes all forces that are agents of oppression and suppression in the process emancipating people to achieve perfect humanness.

This paradigm's point of convergence is on Christ's victory over the forces of evil. Thus, he could be likened to warrior king who vanquishes his enemies and liberates his people from all aspects of slavery. As the warrior king he is the victor or conqueror against the demonic spirits, witches; the powers of sickness and diseases, poverty and death: in short, "evil in its individual and structural manifestations" (Hock in Manus 1998:13). In light of this, the Ndebele could think of Christ as *uMngobi* - the warrior, or victor or conqueror.

#### **2.4. Christ as the African Ruler**

This paradigm groups together such concepts of Christ as "Christ the African King," and "Christ the African Chief". The paradigm of 'Christ the African ruler' has at least two security-orientated implications, namely, trustee (or custodian) and priest. African tribal authorities vary from tribe to tribe. Within the Nguni peoples, the king is the highest tribal authority, while the Shona tribes have a chief as their highest tribal authority. In most Africans, the highest tribal authority is both the tribe's

trustee and priest. Detailing the proceedings of the iNxwala Festival<sup>3</sup> of the AmaNdebele, Phathisa Nyathi (2001:33) says: "only the person of the king provided the link between the ancestors and the people". The king as the nation's priest communicated with the national spirits. He was the priest who mediated between his nation and the national spirits. Wallace Bozongwana (1983:43) registers that the Ndebele king was, in addition to his priesthood, also diviner and magician. The Ndebele kingdom was "King centred in that he (the king) provided all that his people needed to sustain life - security, health, moral and spiritual acquisition". He was essentially the nation's chief custodian. The nation was absolutely reliant upon him. For instance as Bozongwana (*ibid.*) points out, in times of drought, all people were fed with meat and grain from the king's granaries: "His subjects looked to him for security, and spiritual guidance as well". This points out that the Bantu highest tribal authority had "religious, political and social roles" (Chimhanda 2002: 23). Among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, the aspect of a king is now a historical reality; generally, chiefs now perform the functions of a king. Nonetheless, the aspect of a king is still real among the Ndebeles as it can be seen in Ndebele names like *Nkosilathi* (the King is with us), *Bhekinkosi* (look to the king), *Thembinkosi* (hope in the King) and *Mandlenkosi* (the power of the king) and *Nkosikhona* (the King is here). This is also a common trend among the Zulus and the Shonas (cf. Chimhanda 2002: 23). Within the Zulu kingdom, and indeed in most Bantu tribal kingdoms or clans, the people belonged to the king who in turn was essentially responsible for their protection and well-being. In this way, he was the custodian of the nation's spiritual and social being. In proposing this motif, "African theologians see Jesus Christ as fulfilling these roles par excellence.

A leading spokesperson for the 'Christ as King' motif is the Nigerian theologian Ukachukwu Chr Manus. His *Christ, the African King: New Testament Christology* (1993) is dedicated at articulating a Christology for Africa using facts gathered in both the African background and the results of the New Testament exegesis (*ibid.*: 19). He believes: "Africa needs a virile Christology which is responsible to African history and culture and at the same time biblically founded" (*ibid.*) And Christ as the African King is such a Christology. Manus' (*ibid.*: 24) objective is: "To inspire African Christians to rediscover the image of Christ as the *Rex Commundo* (the king of the community), the hidden Christ, and the Jesus of faith who is fully alive in the African royal theologies". This should not be difficult to surmise after all the idea of Christ as king is well elaborated in the New Testament. Manus (*ibid.*) emphasises that Christ-the Son of God, the Prince and the Divine Agent, "reigns perpetually in Christian churches in Africa. He is king and the Lord over all African kings yesterday, today and forever. The kingdom of God has been delivered to him. It has become his entitlement and prerogative to sustain his kingdom and its citizens". In this way Christ the king par excellence is the "sum total of all the representative

<sup>3</sup> The INxwala Festival was the most grand annual ceremony held as an "expression of gratitude to the ancestors and to God for the protection, prosperity and good health of the nation" (Nyathi 2001: 33).

African Kings" (*ibid.*). Manus believes that within the 'Christ as the African King' motif emerges a "Christology derived from an Africa-wide culture and expressed in a category which evokes the experience of the ordinary man and woman to adoration and loyalty" (*ibid.* 24-25). He further reasserts that the acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as African king implies making him at home in the African's rich spiritual universe as one who fulfills the African's spiritual hopes and aspiration (*ibid.* 238). Thus a Christology of this motif will propel the African to abandon reliance on traditional religious powers and anchor his hopes and aspirations on Christ only. When Christ is communicated in terms of the highest tribal authority it is envisaged that the African believer will exclusively rely on him as "the pre-eminent agent in God's salvation and the mediator of God's power of salvation" (Akron in Lundstrom 1996:75).

## 2.5.Appraisal

In these christological motifs, the African theologians have used images that communicate security to most Africans. Indeed the ancestors, the traditional healers, the tribal authorities such as kings and chiefs and liberators are highly trusted African institutions of security. It is important for Africans to understand Christ through this particular aspect of their worldview. The point that must be underscored and be highly appreciated when evaluating these christological paradigms is the African theologians' emphasis on the par excellence of Christ. The proponents of these motifs unwaveringly maintain that Christ is the *Supreme* Ancestor, the *Supreme Inyanga*, and the Chief of chiefs and King of kings. The ultimate aim is to help African Christians see the relevance and the adequacy of Christ within their African context and thus enable them to place their confidence in Christ only for all their existential and spiritual needs. In employing these motifs, African theologians anticipate that Christian Africans will relinquish their reliance upon their traditional religious powers. They anticipate that in turn they will yield to Christ only and trust him only for their protection and deliverance, for wealth and prosperity, for health and long life - in short for all their needs.

Furthermore, some of these paradigms such as healer, liberator, king and victorious conqueror have explicit Biblical basis. The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as one who heals all diseases, liberates from all forms of bondage; the victorious conqueror who even conquered death, the most feared enemy of life, and as the Sovereign King over entire universe.

Moreover, it is important to note that in these christological paradigms the Africans are registering their existential needs and how they expect Christ to address these needs. In paradigmizing Christ in African institutions of security, African theologians are expressing their expectations upon Christ and how they expect him to function in their context of entanglements in spiritual evil forces. In drawing these

christological parallels the African theologians demonstrate that they see Christ as able to address the needs in the African church. Manus (1998: 9) reckons that we do not need to seek far to realise that the contours of African cultures, the patterns of the peoples' mentality, their problems and aspirations inevitably shape African people's imagining of Jesus Christ. Hence Mugabe (1991:351) says, "What is important is that Africans are speaking for themselves and they are raising issues which are relevant to them in their respective situations." This aspect is best articulated in J V Taylor's famous question: "But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that African are asking, what would he look like? If he came into the world of African cosmology to redeem Man, as Africans understand him, would he be recognizable to the rest of the Church Universal? (in Kraft 1979:305). " In these paradigms African theologians endeavour to make Christ recognizable to African peoples. Africans by their nature want a Jesus Christ who is functional and not merely ontological: "it appears correct to argue that Africans define Jesus in terms of function" (Manus 1998:6). It is in this aspect that African religiosity poses a serious challenge to the study of Christ in Africa.

However, the major problem in these paradigms is that they are determined and controlled by the African worldview much to the risk of producing a provincial Jesus Christ. The above-mentioned African christological motifs are all shaped by the African worldview. Of course, some African theologians do not see this as a weakness. One of them is Waruta (1989:40) who contends that Africans "have every right to formulate their own Christology, their own response to who Jesus is to them." This is not true. In any case it has grave risks. A notable risk is the possibility of ending up with a Jesus Christ who is a servant and a product of African religious expectations. Instead of being sovereign, he ends up subservient to religious expectations. In other words, the identity and function of Christ is left to any religious group. We disagree with Waruta and others because we are firmly persuaded that Jesus Christ did not come as a mystery to be figured out. Rather, he came with audible declaration and insisted that he be understood through a particular framework (cf. Matt 16:13-20)<sup>4</sup>. It is not true that Christ has given us the liberty to formulate our own response to who we think he ought to be to us. Christ's question "Who do you say I am." (Mark 8:27) was an ontological question that expected a specific ontological answer.

Without a doubt, as the universal Saviour, Christ must be presented to Africans in their relevant African motifs and paradigms. Certainly, "Christianity is among all religions, the most culturally translatable, hence the most universal, being able to be at home in every cultural context without injury to its essential character" (Bediako 1994: 119). Nevertheless, our search for a Christ relevant to Africa must not be blind to the fact that he is also LORD of all. By this, we mean that our bid for a Christ relevant

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<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ's approval of Simon Peter's answer shows that he was expecting a particular answer.

to our Africanness must not compromise the universality of his lordship and his sovereignty. For even though Christ "must be seen and known as, and understood in the context of each culture" (Gehman 1987: 2), it is necessary, at the same time, to realise that God "must be allowed the privilege of naming and disclosing himself rather than being forced to suffer the indignity of having human constructs and preconceptions imposed upon him" (McGrath 1996:37). Our bid to Africanise Christ must not compromise his universality and sovereignty. On the contrary, we must let Jesus Christ be Jesus Christ and receive, honour and conceive him as he has chosen to be known, not as we would have him be (McGrath *ibid.*).

Those that would insist on the African Christians' right to formulate their own responses to who Jesus is to them, as endorsed by Waruta (1989: 40), need to realize that Jesus Christ is above all cultures. He is not bound to any culture he is above them all. We agree with Osadolor Imasogie (1983: 14) that Christian theology must be informed by the contextual milieu of its targeted audience in such a way that the Word will become flesh among the people, and that the superficiality of the average African's commitment to Christ is the result of the failure of Christian theologians to take the African context seriously. We however want to underscore the need to be wary of sacralizing the African context. It must be remembered that Christ is not answerable to the African context whereas the vice versa is true. Insightfully Volf (1996:49) warns: "Religion must be de-ethnicized so that ethnicity can be de-sacralized." This applies to our cultural contexts and worldviews; they must not dictate who Christ ought to be. African theologians must avoid reaching a point where the African context is more sacred, more authoritative and determinative over Christ. As Goodwin (2004: 34) warns us, "Religion is not about ethnicity, for ethnicity itself is not a sacred absolute. And own ethnicity is not the right object of our worship". Inevitably, our religious and ethnical backgrounds will shape our conception of Christ. Nonetheless, we must be conscientious of Christ's transcendence over all religion and ethnicity. Accordingly, our christological formulations, notwithstanding their relevancy to our immediate contexts, should first and foremost heed to what Christ said about himself, not on what we are, or what we want or prefer him to be. For he did not come to answer to a particular culture; he came so that all ethnic groups will answer to him. African Christology must be wary of being ethnicized. Such a Christology leads to a provincial Christ lacking in sovereignty and universality.

Our christological method must have a high view of the Bible and a high view of our African religious context<sup>5</sup>. We believe that there ought to be a dialogue between the Bible and African traditional religions. In this, we mean that while the Bible is the highest authority in evangelical discourses, there is need for it and the traditional religions to dialogue if the African Christians will completely yield to

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<sup>5</sup>Non-evangelicals disagree with this stance.

Christ as their true Lord and Saviour. We share Kwame Bediako's stance that a Christian theology with openness to the African religious heritage is vital for true Christian conversion in Africa (in Dedji 2003: 169). Gehman (1987: 1) is right when saying, "Christ must be presented in a manner that is both true to scripture and meaningful to the people". African theologians, when doing a Christology for Africa must note this insightful observation from Donald G. Dawe (1972: 259):

The growth of modern Christologies is reminiscent of the parable of the prodigal son. Some Christologies have been designed to take the riches of the gospel to the world.... *Yet having ventured boldly into the world, these Christologies - like the prodigal - have been found living on the "bushes" of modernity and not the riches of the gospel.* Other Christologies have developed - like the elder brother - close to home. They have evolved by reflection on Scripture and in obedience, to the creedal traditions of the church. *These Christologies have preserved their purity, but at the cost of excluding the world* (emphasis added).

In this observation, Dawe registers the failure in modern Christologies to balance the riches of the Gospel and the contemporary cultural context. African Christology must heed this observation. The riches of the gospel and the African religious contexts must meet each other. We need a Christological methodology that will see the Scriptures and the African religious as essential tools. Manus (1993: 280) favours this approach:

Since "historical" study aims at the past as dead past, this living-dead past of the Africans must be retrieved and made relevant towards deepening African spirituality and faith in Jesus, the Christ. While liberation theology takes its starting-point from a critical reflection on the reality of the present and looks backwards; contextual christology must start from the sacred traditions; namely the Scriptures, African traditions, and relate the two patterns in order to elicit the pure phenomena that is re-interpretable in the light of the gospel witness.<sup>6</sup>

We cannot agree with Kato (in Dedji 2003: 174) that: "While the Bible should speak to every people within their own situation in the language they can understand, there is no need to create particular theologies for each situation." Kato fails to realize that although the need for salvation is universal it has also unique particularities. Sure thing, the salvific particularities of an African are diverse from that on the Westerner. Therefore, Christology that responds to the unique salvific particularities of an African is critically urgent. Mbiti accentuates this in these words: "Since his Incarnation, Christian theology ought properly to be Christology, *for theology falls or stands on how it understands, translates and*

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<sup>6</sup> De Jongh (1996: 17-18) making a similar point, writes:

"It would be naïve to expect Jesus Christ to readily and easily slip into the religious experience and framework of many African people. The demand is to take seriously the place and influence of African religiosity on the people, while at the same time preserving the uniqueness of the Christian faith, and particularly the uniqueness of Jesus".

*interprets Jesus Christ, at a given time, place and human situation"* (in Dedji 2003: 198, emphasis added.). This is true, because accepting Jesus as 'our Saviour' "always involves making him at home in our spiritual universe and in terms of our religious needs and longings" (Bediako, in Dedji 2003: 197)

Furthermore, while the aforementioned paradigms are good in aiding the African believers to grasp how Christ functions they fail to address the most critical issue in all religions; namely the transformation of the worldview. That is, while the African theologians are preoccupied with the Africanisation of Jesus Christ; they are silent about the need for Christianized African worldview. It is indeed imperative for Christian Africans to see that Christ is a superior ancestor; superior *inyanga* and the Chief of chiefs and king of kings. However, as long as they continue to see life through the African traditional religious worldview christological insecurity will persist. As helpful and enlightening as they are, these paradigms are insufficient to instill christological security and confidence because they do not help the Africans to transform their traditional worldview to a Christ-centred worldview. In other words, we are saying that christological insecurity is above all a result of worldview crisis. As long as the worldview remains untransformed the proposed paradigms will yield little fruit, if any at all.



## **CHAPTER 3: THE CHALLENGE OF THE AFRICAN WORLDVIEW TO CHRISTOLOGY.**

### **3.1. Introduction**

A Christology that will merit the confidence of the Africans must adequately respond to the challenges in the African religious worldview. A cursory observation reveals that the African religious worldview continues to wield great power and influence on many African Christians even many years their Christian conversion. In this chapter, we will argue that in the African Church, the attainment of christological security is impeded by this persistency of the African religious worldview on African Christians. Indeed, christological security is the absolute work of Jesus Christ. Yet, in the absence of a renewed religious worldview, it is impossible for the African Christians to fully realize and experience this securing work of Christ in their lives. Therefore, in the African Church, the pursuit for christological security includes the transformation of the traditional worldview into a Christ-controlled one. In the African church, the battle for christological security is simultaneously, the battle for a new Christ informed religious worldview. One may say that in the African church the battle for christological security is mostly lost in the worldview that controls the general African outlook of life. Confidence in Christ hinges on the underlying operational outlook towards life. In this chapter, we argue that African Christians must transform their worldview in order to experience confidence in Christ. In particular we want to look at the aspects that drive its persistent hold even on the African Christians. We note that the lack of confidence in Christ in many African Christians is because of untransformed worldview. In other words, for Africans to be secure within Christ they need to see life through Christ and not through the old African traditional worldview. Just as William Dyrness (1996:53) wonders how the Gospel can take shape in the African setting, African Christology must also seriously ponder on how to enable the African Christians to view the world through Christ and not through the African traditional religion.

We will begin this chapter by briefly examining the African worldview of security. We will proceed by looking at how the christocentric worldview can help the African to experience christological security and confidence.

### 3.2. The African worldview of security

#### 3.2.1. The sense of vulnerability

According to the African traditional worldview, life is generally under threat from a variety of hostile forces. Stebbing (1985: 16) affirms that there is "much unhealthy fear in African life - fear of sickness, of death, of sorcery, permeates every aspect of life". Imasogie (1983:63) also notes that to the typical African, it is mainly evil forces that rule the earth that make life unsafe for all. According to Phathisa Nyathi (2001:121), "The traditional Ndebele man lives in constant fear of the evil that emanates from the evil spirits acting independently or through their mediums". By this, he means that the Ndebeles, and indeed Africans in general, have a high sense of vulnerability to hostile spiritual forces. This is a common Bantu belief<sup>1</sup>. They perceive and approach life like a hunted animal under the watchful eye of a hunter waiting an opportune moment to take a decisive pounce. There is, to most Africans, a powerful force hunting after them to destroy their life, family harmony, peace of mind, wealth and their health. It is generally believed that the "presence of evil spirits makes life in the human world extremely precarious" (Kalu 1979:16). These evil forces are mystical authorities that work against all steps of progress, health and prosperity taken by the Africans. These evil mystical powers are believed to work through evil people "who are in alliance with them" (Imasogie 1983:63), namely, the sorcerers and witches. John Mbiti (1969:99) writes: "African peoples are much aware of evil in the world and in various ways they endeavor to fight it". He also agrees with other African scholars that nearly all Africans see the evil hostile spirits as either the origin of evil or the agents of evil. This phenomenon has a powerful influence on African peoples. To them it is not a fiction but an influential reality; in Mbiti's (*ibid.*: 193) words: "whatever it is, it is a reality, and one with which African peoples have to reckon". He further points out that all Africans are "directly or indirectly affected, for better or for worse, by beliefs and activities connected with this power, particularly in its manifestation as magic, sorcery and witchcraft" (*ibid.*). This encompasses the work of avenging spirits, curses and the gratuitous work of the angry spirits. If this were an exclusively non-Christian problem it would be less significant; but it penetrates into the circumference of Christianity in Africa.

This African traditional belief shapes our christological expectations. As Africans we come to Christ expecting him to save us not only from sins but also essentially from these forces that threaten our life. This high sense of vulnerability means that the felt need of security among Africans is indeed generally high. This also shapes the African worldview. Reckons Mbiti (1975: 81); "People [Africans] are deeply

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<sup>1</sup> Amanze (1998: 14), sees this reality also among the Batswana: "Batswana are constantly aware that they are surrounded by evil powers which try to destroy their lives. There is commonplace belief that human misfortunes such as sickness, death, lightning, drought and other social and physical misfortunes are not by God but by evil".

aware of the spirit world, and this awareness affects their outlook and experiences in life for better and for worse."

### 3.2.2. Religion: the African source of security

In this framework of thought, the African peoples see religion as their chief source of security from all evil forces. Nyathi (2001:6) notes that religion to the Ndebele has "a high utility value." That is, religion is "practised for a purpose" (*ibid.*). This is true not only of the Ndebeles, but of the entire Bantu peoples. This chief purpose of religion is the security of life, the maintenance of peace and the defence of prosperity. Dyrness (1990:43) makes this accurate observation about the significance of religion in Africans: "The world and life are believed by many African peoples to reflect a fundamental harmony that religion and ritual are meant to preserve or enhance". In this, he identifies the inseparability of religion and harmony in Africa. Thus, in the African worldview religion is not just a good thing nor a mere right; it is the sum and substance of existence. That is, in the African perception of attaining a stable life, secured from the attacks of the witches and other such evil forces, religion is an absolute necessity. In the African worldview, life and religion are inseparable. The key to security is religious faithfulness.

In underscoring that Africans see religion as the source of security, Sarpong (1975:26) says, the African acted rightfully often in order to avoid disaster or to derive some blessings from good conduct. In reinforcing this view, Nyathi (2001:6) says, in Ndebele religion effort is channeled towards warding off the evil effects of the negative work of the evil ancestral spirits and their mediums. Imasogie (1983: 55) describes and affirms the importance and the urgency of security in Africa this way: "Since it is the nature of the evil spirits and ghosts to prowl around in earth of prey either because they are hungry or in the service of 'one's enemies', a person needs to protect himself". Since no one knows when these evil spirits will strike, everyone "must be ready at all times" (*ibid.*). This explains the ever presence of charms and other artifacts of religious power among African peoples. As Mbiti (1969: 196) also points out, "Charms, amulets, medicines drunk or rubbed into the body, articles on the roof or in the fields, cuts, knots, and many other visible and invisible, secret and open precautions, are used in all communities for seriously religious intentions, to secure a feeling of safety, protection and assurance". In agreement, Imasogie (1985:226), emphasises that this aspect of warding off of the forces in order to achieve tranquility is the major focus in the practices of African traditional religions. He adds that these religious activities include divination, sacrifices and rituals aimed at the restoration of cosmological balance without which persons cannot live in harmony with the natural, spiritual and human

communities (*ibid.*)<sup>2</sup>. To Africans, security is a matter of life and death. It is not only agent but is essential for true existence. Thus in the African worldview, the ambit and essence of security lies in faithfulness to the traditional religions. Maimela (1991:7) notes that the African traditional religions have designed a variety of protective rites and rituals, whose function is to immunise potential victims from witchcraft, thieves, evil spirits and barrenness. It is in this regard that religion “permeates all dimensions of the African experience” (Otijele 1991:2).

Since Africans view religion as the essence of life it means that the African person is, on account of necessity, a participant in an all-life-encompassing religious drama (Mbiti 1969:15). Therefore to the ordinary African person “religion is quite literally life and life is religion” (Magesa 1997:33). This means that the worldview of the African peoples is essentially religious. Affirming this fact, Mbiti (1975: 14) says; "Religion is found in all African peoples." This means that their different cultures have been strongly influenced by religion as it is found in all African peoples. He further affirms that throughout the ages, "religion has been for Africans the normal way of looking at the world and experiencing life itself" (*ibid.*). This is the very aspect that challenges the doctrine of Jesus Christ in the African Church.

### **3.3. The challenge of the wholisticness of traditional religions to Christology.**

Our attitude towards the effect of African traditional religions will determine our Christology. Our perception of the African traditional worldview will shape how we will do our Christology for Africa. The question that arises from this observation is how such a cardinal African phenomenon as the pervasiveness of the African traditional religious worldview escaped the notice of those who first laid the foundations of the Christian faith in Africa. This grave oversight by the early missionaries who first laid the foundations of Christianity in Africa, was in the failure to see the power of this all-life encompassing worldview on the Africans. Of course this resulted in the failure to equip the Africans to Christianly address this phenomenon and in the process transform their African traditional worldview to a Christ-centred one. According to Bosch (1987: 42),

By the time the first European missionaries arrived in Africa, they...were children of the Enlightenment and tended to deny the existence of supernatural forces located in human beings as well as the reality of spirits in general and the ‘living-dead’ in particular. They thought that, with education, they these ‘superstitions’ would disappear. It took a long time before they understood that, for Africans, these forces were a reality and had to be accepted as such.

As a result, they worked at suppressing this worldview instead of equipping the African Christians to

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<sup>2</sup> Imasogie (1983: 65) further says, "From the viewpoint of the African, anyone who fails to avail himself of protective charms may be likened to an industrial worker who fails to take advantage of the safety precautions provided for his good".

address it in accordance to their new faith in Christ. This affected the image of the Christ preached to the Africans, as the missionaries preached a Christ who was geared at civilizing the supposedly primitive Africans. They did not realise the need for spiritual reformation of the African worldview that is empowered by traditional religion.

There is an important element to be learnt by African Christology from the African religious worldview. That is, since Africans see life as a participation in a continuous life religious drama, the African Christians need a Christ who functions in a similar all-life-encompassing manner or better. In other words, African Christology must respond to the wholistic nature of African traditional religions on Africans. The African needs a Christ who is all-life-encompassing. This aspect has been expressed as follows:

Christ must be proclaimed as the cosmic Lord who is more than able to supply all human needs within the context of each individual. Christ's saving concern must be seen as transcending narrow spiritual salvation to include liberation from human oppression and the reconciliation of man to God, to fellow humans, and to nature. *Given the traditional religions and the African worldview... any apologetic endeavour that does not present Christ, as being able to respond to all areas of human experience cannot command a total commitment of the African who has a holistic view of reality.* (Imasogie 1985: 228, emphasis added).

In other words, African Christians want the Jesus Christ who is all-life encompassing just like their former African traditional religions. Just as African traditional religion is security for the whole life, Christ must not be any less.

The problem is that the traditional African worldview of security lingers on in Africans even in post-Christian conversion. Many African Christians' worldview remains unconverted. Their out-look towards life remains the same as prior to their Christian conversion. This has created a major crisis in African Christianity as African Christians attempt to live their Christian faith by the African traditional religious worldview. This is where Christianity has stumbled greatly in Africa. This scandal is best articulated in the famous words of the Archbishop Desmond Tutu as follows:

Up to fairly recently, the African Christian has suffered from a form of religious schizophrenia. With part of himself he has been compelled first to play lip service to Christianity as understood, expressed and preached by the white man. But with an ever greater part of himself, a part he has been ashamed to acknowledge openly and which he has struggled to repress, he has felt that his Africanness has been violated. The white man's largely cerebral religion was hardly touching the depths of his African soul; he was being given answers, and often splendid answers to questions he had not asked (in Maimela 1991:9).

In the ultimate analysis, Archbishop Tutu is pointing to the unchanged worldview of the African Christian. The gospel was a cerebral phenomenon that only affected the African's mind but left the soul, the inner man and the outlook and vision of life untouched. Even when the Africans hear that Jesus Christ conquered Satan and death, they have not been helped to see how this victory at the cross ought to affect their immediate perception of life. Though they know of the facts of Christ's supremacy, he remains a distant reality to them.

One may say that Jesus Christ in Africa has failed to penetrate sufficiently deep into African religiosity and to influence the Africans "in the way the traditional religions did" (Sarpong 1975: 27). In fact, Archbishop Tutu earlier on described this phenomenon. As Sarpong (*ibid.*) concedes: "Christianity has not been able to influence the African to any appreciable degree". He sees Christianity as conspicuously absent from the politics, social life and economic struggles of the African; "It is skin deep because it has not been adopted as a way of life but only as a kind of fashion" (*ibid.*). A consonant voice is heard from Kalu (1979:21) in this manner: "Christianity has spread enormously in Africa; but the resultant church is basically weak". In the ultimate analysis, this is a christological indictment for Jesus Christ is the essence of Christianity. This is evidenced by the lack of the transformation of the Africans' worldview from a traditional religiously empowered one into a Christ empowered one. One may say that in Africa, the Gospel has not been preached in a worldview-transforming manner. That is, Jesus Christ has not penetrated sufficiently deep into the African religiosity to the point that they think and interpret the world through him. Van der Walt (n.d.: 8) attributes this failure to the fact that the "gospel was not brought as a new, total, encompassing worldview, which has to take the place of an equally encompassing traditional worldview, the deepest core of African culture remained unchanged." Thus, the traditional worldview of life and security has lingered in the African Christian even up to today. The root cause is that the average African has not really encountered and experienced Jesus Christ "as adequate for his whole life, and especially not when it comes to the most complex issues of life" (*ibid.*: 10). Consequently "we get the phenomenon all over Africa today that Christians, in times of existential need and crisis, as in danger, illnesses and death, revert to their traditional faith and view of life." (*ibid.*). The main problem in this is that the message about Christ lacked "real impact in those areas where it really matters!" (*ibid.*).

Thus, many African Christians live on untransformed religious worldview. They are yet to come to position where they see the world through Christ and interpret it according to him. Rather than see the world through the victorious Cross of Calvary and Christ's enthronement at the right hand of God, they persist to see it through their traditional cosmic and spiritual powers. The missing aspect in many African Christians' worldview is the experience of Christ's sovereignty in their scheme of thought. This

African challenge to Christology is registered by Adeyemo (in De Jongh 1996: 6) in this manner: "there [is] no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular to the African mind. When the African man goes about his business, there is that religious thought in his mind, he is always conscious that his forefathers are watching and he knows that he belongs to the particular community which has gone before". The proclamation of Jesus Christ in Africa should take cognizance of this pervasive nature of African religiosity. As we reflect on Adeyemo's observation, we realise that Africans naturally need a Jesus Christ who pervades the African's entire spectrum of existence. They need a Christ they will be conscious of as they go about their daily routines. The Africans want to be certain that Jesus Christ is watching over them and that they are part of his community. This is frustrated by the fact that many Africans have received Christ within an environment where Christianity is more or less a "set of rules to be observed, promises to be expected in the next world, rhythmless hymns to be sung, rituals to be followed and a few other outward things" (Mbiti 1969:233). Many average Christians do not really see Christianity as a way of life, but rather see it as a set of rules to be obeyed. In order to discard the traditional worldview for a Christian one, Africans want to see Jesus Christ's presence and work in all the areas of their lives. They want to see him firstly as a true shepherding companion and not a master bellowing out orders and codes of conduct. If indeed, the African sees his traditional religion as his eternal companion, Christ must be more. Just as traditional religions occupy the whole person and the whole of life, Jesus Christ must pervade the Africans' language, thought patterns, fears, social relationships, attitudes and philosophical dispositions if he is to make a lasting impact upon them (*ibid.*: 3). That is, the whole environment and the whole time must be occupied by Jesus Christ so that at all times and in all places, the Africans will experience the presence, the leading, the working, the empowering, the protecting, in short the working presence of Jesus Christ in their whole life. In doing a Christology relevant to Africa we must seriously consider this observation by Mbiti (1975: 15):

It is African Religion, which gives its followers a sense of security in life. Within that religious way of life, they know who they are, how to act in different situations, and how to solve their problems. This does not mean that African Religion has no weaknesses and no false ideas. But as far as it goes, it has supplied the answers to many of the problems of this life even if these may not have been the right answers in every case. Because it provides for them answers and direction in life, people are not willing to abandon it quickly. Otherwise they would feel insecure afterwards unless something else gave them an additional or greater sense of security.

That is, in the absence of a wholistic, supreme and sufficient Jesus Christ, the worldview of the African Christians will remain the same. The African Christian will persistently languish in insecurity. Africans want a Jesus Christ who will give them a sense of security in life. One in whom they will know who they are, how to encounter their fears and how solve all their problems. They want a Christ who will

provide for them answers and direction in this present life. In the absence of wholistic, supreme and sufficient Jesus Christ, the African Christians' worldview remains untransformed. The absence of such a Christ leaves the Africans in a vacuum; for they do not know how to exist without religion that fills up their whole life and their understanding of the world (Mbiti 1969:228). It is the superficiality of Christianity that keeps the African Christians clinging to the African traditional religious worldview.

### **3.4. Factors demanding a Christ-transformed worldview**

Therefore, instilling christological security in the African Church must begin with the transformation of worldview. A worldview that is informed and shaped by Jesus Christ must replace the traditional worldview, which is informed and shaped by African religion. If the African traditional religion is the "normal way of looking at the world and experiencing life itself" (Mbiti 1975: 14), we propose that Jesus Christ replace it. The following christological factors challenge African Christians to transform their African traditionally influenced worldview to a Christ-influenced and empowered one.

#### 3.4.1. The victory of Jesus Christ

The one common thread running through the entire New Testament narrative is that Christ has vanquished Satan, and has freed the human race and all God's creation from his authority and has restored it all to God's control and care. The New Testament depicts the entire life of Christ, (not just the Christ-event) as victory over Satan and his entire evil kingdom: He resisted Satan's temptations, he liberated those enslaved by demons and in his resurrection he conquered death. In victorious tones after debriefing his disciples, he uttered: "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightening" (Luke 10:18). In this statement Jesus Christ indicates the depreciation of Satan's powerful reign. The Apostle Peter preaches of Jesus Christ as one who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38). The devil is portrayed as the one who has captured the world and exercises brutal authority over it. When Peter says that Christ healed all that were oppressed by Satan (Acts 10: 38) he includes all types of diseases. Thus, Jesus Christ victoriously vanquished Satan's brutal reign in the world. Olowala (1998: 164) affirms that Jesus Christ, as God's specially appointed king, "displayed the power and might of God over the curse of sin and the kingdom of Satan through his miracles". He further asserts: "Just as Christ's miracles of healing show His power over sin and its effects, His exorcisms show in a more direct way His power over Satan" (*ibid.*). This resounding victory of Jesus Christ is further affirmed in his resurrection from the dead. He victoriously triumphed over the greatest enemy of human kind death.



The African Christian's worldview must be shaped, influenced and directed by this victorious conquering of the Satanic empire. The defeat of Satan means the defeat of demons, witchcraft and all evil powers. Christian Africans must thus look at the world not through their traditional religion but through the victory of Christ at the cross. It is indeed true that life on earth is under the threat of satanic power, just as the African worldview affirms; yet this power has already suffered decisive loss at the hands of Christ. Rather than see the world under the threat of Satan, the African Christian must see it as under the victorious Jesus Christ. Of course, this aspect is dampened by the conflict of the now, and not yet: the victorious defeat of Satan is a present reality though it is not yet effected fully. Robert Letham (1993:151) explains; "Christ's victory over Satan is decisive but, in the context of biblical eschatology, its full manifestation awaits his return." Thus, even though Satan still exercises great power as we continue to see much Satanic damage in our world his great power "has been decisively broken" (Driver 1986:73) by Christ. Therefore while the African Christian will "have tribulation", he must "take courage; [Jesus Christ has] overcome the world" (John 16:33). This christological factor calls the African Christian to a Christ-transformed worldview.

#### 3.4.2. The reign and presence of Christ

Jesus Christ did not only defeat Satan; he established his reign. The New Testament both explicitly and implicitly presents Christ as the bringer of the Kingdom of God, and himself as king in that kingdom. The Apostle Paul says that on account of his resurrection, Christ has been enthroned at God's right hand and wields authority over "all rule and authority and dominion... Not only in this age, but also in the one to come" (Ephesians 1:20,21). The Apostle Paul, in this passage, affirms the sovereign reign of Christ. In other words, on account of his resurrection, Christ has assumed sovereign authority over the universe. Writing to the Colossian church, he tells them that God has 'delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son'(Colossians 1:13). Thus, Jesus Christ has instituted his kingdom. In that kingdom, he reigns as the sovereign King. Reflecting on this Colossian passage, Hoekema (1979: 50) says, " Since we enjoy the forgiveness of sins now, it is clear that the kingdom of which Paul here speaks is one to which we now have the privilege of belonging". In other words Christians already are occupants of the Kingdom of Christ. In this is affirmed Christ's already reign in the world. But we need to realize that the New Testament shows that Christ's reign is both 'now and not yet'. It has already been inaugurated with the coming, death and resurrection of Christ, but not yet fully consummated until his Second Advent.

Jesus Christ entered the world ruled by Satan and triumphly battled with him and his evil empire. Jesus' exorcisms of the demons and the healing of diseases "are not just isolated invasions of Satan's realm" (Jeremias 1971:94). They are manifestations of the beginning of the annihilation of the Satanic reign and

the dawn of Christ's reign (*ibid.*). In the same vein, Hoekema (1979:46) says that in the casting out of demons Jesus "showed that he had gained a victory over the powers of evil, and that therefore the kingdom of God had come". Jesus Christ himself pointed this out. Refuting the accusation that he cast out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons he pointed out that since he cast out demons by the Spirit of God, "then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). In this, Christ affirmed the contemporaneity of the reality of God's kingdom. In the New Testament, every occasion of exorcism and healing and every conversion signify satanic decline and the augmentation of Christ's reign. These victorious events are buttressed by this declaration, after his resurrection: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mathew 28:18). It is at this time that he is exalted and enthroned at the right hand of God.

This aspect of Christ's reign demands that the African Christian's worldview be transformed. In the foremost African Christians need to realise that by virtue of his exaltation and enthronement "Christ now possesses the full authority of the Father" (O'Brien 1999:141). This is the essence of Matthew 28:18. This means that the African Christian is within the kingdom whose king is "superior to every imaginable hostile power" (*ibid.*). The authority and power of Christ transcends the power of the hostile regime that constantly threatens him or her. Dunn (1996:205) insightfully writes: "If Jesus, the Christ, is so highly favoured and acknowledged to be God's 'right-hand man with all the power and authority to effect God's will and to protect his own, which is implicit in that claim, *then Christian life should be entirely oriented by reference to this Christ*" (emphasis added). Instead of seeing the world through the lens of vulnerability under satanic forces, the African Christian must see it through the lens of the sovereign Christ's reigning over it. Indeed, Satan still exercises gradual power over the world but Christ's power surpasses it. Even though Satan appears to be having an upper hand, he reigns as a defeated king.

Having dethroned the satanic empire and as the sovereign king over the world Jesus Christ is actively present in the affairs of the Christian. He does not reign from some remote post but in the Christian. This point challenges the African Christians' continued hold on African traditional religions. As Osadolor Imasogie (1983:84) explains, the traditional African "lives in the omnipresence of spiritual realities who, in accordance with his politico-social set-up, are bona fide vicars of the Creator – God". The New Testament is affirmative that Jesus Christ is actively present in all the life and affairs of Christians. Affirms Stott (1992:313-314); "the Jesus who was born into our world, and who lived and died in first-century Palestine, also rose from the dead, *is now alive for ever, and is available and accessible to his people*" (emphasis added). Africans who are naturally religious and always long for union with spiritual powers need to be made aware of this fact: Jesus Christ is alive, available and accessible to all who worship him, including Africans. The worldview of the African Christian must hinge on the active

presence of Jesus Christ. John Mbiti (1969:228) rightly notes that mission Christianity in Africa tends to be an event that is “locked up six days a week, meeting only for two hours on Sunday and perhaps once during the week. It is a Christianity that is active in a church building. The rest of the week is empty.” Thus African Christians have tended to see Christ as only available to them once a week depending on the length of their church services, and is absent for the rest of the week. African Christians must be cognizant of the presence of Christ. Jesus Christ’s assurance to his disciples: “I am with you always, even to the end of age (Matt 28:20) that invigorated and shaped the early disciples’ worldview should likewise harness the African Christian to have a Christocentric worldview. In that promise Christ pledged continuing companionship to all believers.

In essence, this presence of Christ to the African Christian ultimately means that Christ’s victory and reign have been established within their lives and affairs. This presence is not a silent presence but an active one. The presence of Christ means power. The Apostle Paul prayed that the Ephesian Christians would open their eyes and comprehend the magnitude of God’s great power at work in their lives (Ephesians 1:19). In this passage the Apostle is not saying that the work of Christ is depended on our awareness of it. Rather, our dependence on the work of Christ is determined by our cognizance of its availability and power. Paul affirms that Christ is present, accompanying and working in the individual lives on the Christians and in their cooperate community regardless of their ignorance of the matter. He wants them to be aware of this fact. Their awareness of it will motivate them to yield more to Christ and to sup the benefits their in. To be sure, the “stability and security of our life of faith is grounded in the reliability of God himself who makes us stand firm in Christ” (McGrath 1995: 76). However, the measure and the intensity of our dependence on the presence of the power of Christ is chiefly determined by our awareness of it. Moreover, this is not just a mere incredible great power; “It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God’s right hand in heaven” (Ephesians 1: 19b-20; Living Bible). The power that raised him from the dead and enthroned him is the very power at work in believers. Gunton (1988:15) sees this continuing presence of the victory of Christ in the life of the Christians, so that Paul can proclaim: in all things we are conquerors through him who loved use; and so that John can portray this victory as continuing in the life of the Christian community (1John 5:4).

#### 3.4.3. The limitations imposed by the Fall.

The African traditional worldview of salvation is challenged by the aspect of the Fall. As we think of our position in Christ we must take into cognizance the implications of the Fall upon the world. Since we live in a fallen world, the experience of salvation in this world before the eschaton when Satan together with his power of evil are destroyed, salvation can never eventuate into an utopian reality

impermeable to destructive forces (cf. Okorochoa 1994: 76). Christ indeed grants us a perfect, complete salvation. That is, at conversion we become God's children in the absolute sense. Nevertheless, this salvation of Christ, before the eschaton, is not the utopian realm envisaged in the African traditional worldview of salvation. In view of the fact that we inhabit a fallen world even when we receive a complete perfect salvation from Christ, life on this side of the eschaton will never reach the utopian state absolutely devoid of all disruptive and destructive forces. Jesus Christ affirmed this reality. Addressing his disciples he assured them as follows: "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16: 33, NLT). In spite of conquering Satan and destroying his influence over the world, Christ assures his followers of trials and sorrows as long as they are in the world. In this, we see the recurring tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. Indeed, in Christ we receive a perfect salvation, but the absolute perfectness of this salvation is constricted by the fallen nature of the world we still inhabit prior to the eschaton. As Hoekema (1979: 72) reminds us: "[S]uffering in the lives of believers is a concrete manifestation of the not yet". He explains: "Suffering still occurs in the lives of Christians because all the results of sin have not yet been eliminated" (*ibid.*). African Christians must realize that the full extent of Christ's victory over Satan, and the perfectness of their salvation from him await the eschaton. Thus, since the salvation of Christ is experienced within the ambit of a fallen world, and where Satan still exercises a significant amount of authority and power Christians will certainly experience events of pain – events which contradict the perfect nature of Christ's salvation.

We must take a cue from the experience of Christ: though he was God himself and in perfect relationship with the Father he was not exempted from suffering as long as he was in this Fallen world. Our worldview of salvation must recognise that since sorrow and suffering were true of Christ who was in perfect union with God, "it will not be much different for those who follow Christ and believe in God; they too will experience suffering and weakness" (Bosch 1987: 56). The Apostle Peter also affirmed this aspect. God through Christ has reserved for the Christians a perfect salvation that is "imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away" (I Pet. 1: 4). As the Christians await the consummation of this imperishable salvation, they are secured by the "power of God through faith" (1 Pet. 1: 5). But during their awaiting period they will be distressed by all kinds of trials (1 Pet. 1: 6), for this world is not their final destination. In spite of this, they remain secured within Christ as God's "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession" (1 Pet. 2: 9). This means that those African Christians who see their persistent inexplicable sufferings as indicators of Christ's insufficiency must realise that pain, evil and suffering are part of this fallen world. The worldview of the African Christians should see that suffering and pain do not necessarily mean God's disapproval or Christ's insufficiency or indifference. Christological security in this fallen world does not

exempt us from the problem of pain and evil. Even the faithful saints of the past ages such, as Job, Paul and Peter did not escape it. However, the presence of Christ and the comfort of the Holy Spirit are promised during such times. Paul assures the Christians that the presence of Christ will remain with them, it is not revoked nor can they be separated from it on account of trials and sorrows (Rom 8: 35).

Therefore, the African challenge to Christology is the need to be certain of Christ's presence and sufficiency in the midst of the results of the fallen world. African Christians must be helped to realise that because they live in a fallen world they will indeed encounter sorrows and trials; but in that midst, the presence of Christ remains with them. Bosch observes that the African Church has failed to ram home this important fact. He rightly states: "On the whole, the church has not been very successful in communicating to the people of Africa that God is always with them no matter their circumstances and experiences" (Bosch 1987: 59). In essence, God "has remained the God out there, far away" (*ibid*). Therefore, the assurance of pain and suffering must be communicated with the assurance of God's abiding and comforting presence. There is, of course, an abiding enigma here, to accept suffering, disappointment, evil and at the same time celebrate Jesus Christ's victory over all satanic powers (*ibid*). If this is a puzzle to us we must remember that Christ announced his victory over Satan in one breath and in the next breath assured his disciples of suffering and pain in this world. He wanted them to find succor in his continued presence with them. African Christians must be warned of the fact of the fall and God's presence that accompanies them empowering them to be victorious. As Taylor (in Bosch 1987: 59) advises us: "... the more remote God is made to appear the greater is the need for magic. If his hand is not there to protect and heal, if his eyes are indifferent to the mustering of the forces of darkness, then charms and spells and curses must be enlisted against them". As we tarry on this fallen world of sorrows and pain his comforting and empowering abides with us, leading us to that perfect city where they will be no sorrow and pain.

### **3.5. The power of the Christocentric worldview.**

A Christocentric worldview is necessary because it has a transforming influence upon the African Christian. When the African Christian begins to view the world through the victory and the sovereign reign of Jesus Christ he is enabled to realise christological security. In this segment we will look at how a Christocentric worldview will help African Christians in their quest for christological security.

#### **3.5.1. It instills the awareness of Christ's presence.**

A Christocentric worldview will instill the awareness of the presence and activity of Christ in the African Christian's life. Henry Johannes Mugabe (1991:344) rightly sees the task facing African

theologians as that of “making Christ more real in and through African life and thought”. Indeed, the ordinary African Christians (even all Christians, for that matter) want to experience the reality and work of Christ in their entire spectrum of life. The irony of this matter is that Christ is indeed actually actively present and at work in the Christians’ life. The Christians’ awareness and experience of this reality is anesthetized by their preoccupation with the African Traditional worldview. That is, instead of seeing Christ at work in their lives, they continue to still see the ancestors and other African religious powers. A Christocentric worldview will instill the awareness of Christ’s presence with the believers.

The lives of African Christians indicate the inaccessibility of the reality of Christ’s companionship and leadership. African Christians, often times, act like the servant of Prophet Elisha: blind to the presence of God but much aware of the presence of the enemy (2 Kings 6:15-17). They thus need a truly Christocentric worldview to unveil the active presence of Christ within which they live. Christological security is a fact that is already there; the Christian’s eyes need to be opened to see it and use it. The Christocentric worldview will achieve this.

### 3.5.2. It induces transference of trust.

A worldview that is centred on Christ and that is alert to his everyday active presence in one’s world will induce the Christian to transfer all the trust placed on African traditional religious powers to Christ alone. A worldview that is centred on Christ empowers the African Christians to place trust on Christ only. We make this claim, because what induces African Christians to trust in both Christianity and traditional religion is the notion that African traditional religion meets real African needs by ‘procuring salvation in this real world of ours while Christianity merely concerns itself with the hereafter’ (Mugabe 1999:240). When African Christians see the active presence of Jesus Christ in their real world they will be motivated to abandon all other powers for Christ only. A worldview entrenched on the active presence of Christ in the African world and his decisive victory over the evil powers of Satan induces the Africans to relinquish faith in ancestral spirits and magical charms. In turn they will be motivated to trust Jesus Christ to protect their homes, fields, children, livestock – in short everything- against the evil missiles of the witches and angry spirits. A Christocentric worldview shifts the Christians’ confidence to Christ.

The great need among African Christians is the assurance of the full active presence of Jesus Christ in their life and world. As Osadolor Imasogie (1983:23) emphasizes: “[f]or religion to be valid it must pervade the whole of human existence if it is to meet man’s needs as he understands them”. The Christ that is valid to the Africans to the extent of winning their complete trust and dependence must first and foremost pervade the entire spectrum of the African world and life. And Jesus as presented in

the New Testament is able to do this. I. Howard Marshall (1981:65) notes that the religious thinking of the New Testament era “knew many strange and mighty powers which controlled the universe and the fate of men”. In the midst of such a strong belief that mankind was in need of salvation and protection from the threat of evil, demonic, and arbitrary forces the “Christian answer was that Christ was supreme over all such powers, both real and imaginary” (*ibid.*). Therefore, since Christ is at the right hand of God and all powers and principalities have been subjected to him, African Christians need to trust him for all their security needs. A worldview entrenched on this aspect of Christ will win the trust and the dependence of the African Christian.

### 3.5.3. It accentuates the status of African Christian in Christ.

A Christocentric worldview affirms Jesus Christ’s acceptance of the African Christians. It is not difficult to realise how many African Christians see themselves as second class peoples in God’s economy and as accursed people. The general trend among most Africans is to see westerners as more acceptable and closer to God and as more blessed than the Africans themselves. This aspect was fueled by two things: firstly, the first world is the most developed economically and materially and; secondly, the gospel was preached to most of Africa by western missionaries. All this gave the notion that the first world peoples are God’s first choice people. The Christocentric worldview will dispel this erroneous notion. A worldview centred on Christ’s presence in the African continent accentuates the status of the Africans as the people of God, a chosen and a royal nation (1 Peter 2:9). When the Africans see that Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word, has taken form and dwelt among them as Africans they will appreciate their being part of God’s people. Explains Imasogie (1983:24): “It is only when... incarnation takes place that Christianity ceases to be seen as a foreign religion. Christ is then not regarded as a ‘strangers-god’ who does not know how to handle those crises with which the white man is not familiar”. In other words, when Africans see that Jesus Christ has taken control of their world, reigning in them and over them then ‘he becomes truly their African saviour.’ Furthermore, it means that they have become part of God’s commonwealth and their curse broken. The Christocentric worldview is necessary to open the eyes of the African Christians so that they will see that Christ dwells among them. In this sense he sheds-off all foreignness and becomes theirs in all respects. Their status in his economy transforms from ‘cursed and second-class’ to ‘blessed and chosen’. It is then that Jesus Christ is accepted as the Lord who “is supreme over every spiritual ruler and authority” (Col. 2:10 TEV), and thus “able to save to the uttermost those who are incorporated into him” (Imasogie 1983:24).

A Christocentric worldview also reinforces the Africans’ assurance of God’s salvation for them. To a large extent, christological insecurity can be traced to the uncertainty of one’s relationship with Christ

and the uncertainty of one's salvation. When one sees Christ's everyday work in his or her life the assurance of one's salvation is reinforced. Indeed, Christians who are certain that Christ has rescued them from the kingdom of darkness into God's kingdom will firmly ground all hope on Christ. The assurance of salvation galvanizes and garrisons dependence and trust upon Christ and at the same time shaping one's worldview towards Christ. Thus, as far as Christological security is concerned, one's worldview and one's assurance of salvation depend on each other. Assurance and salvation affirms one's status in Christ, which in turn transforms one's worldview. The Christ-centred worldview trains the African Christian to be aware of the daily presence and control of Jesus Christ in their life and to depend on it for all daily existence. The assurance of salvation constantly reminds the African Christians that they have been removed from the ambit vulnerable to the marauding evil spirits to a Christ-secured realm.

### 3.6. Conclusion.

In this chapter we have established and affirmed that the important challenge facing christology in Africa is the '*Christosizing*' of the African worldview. African Christians are fearful and hence syncretistic because of the deficiency of the influence of Christ in their worldview, *inter alia*. The African failure to be secure in Christ largely rests on the lack of the permeation of Jesus Christ in the African worldview. Therefore, one of the urgent tasks confronting christology in Africa is the instilling of the fullness of Jesus Christ in African Christian thinking to the extent that African Christians become notoriously Christocentric in their understanding of their world and their situations. Christians in Africa can only find christological security if their entire life-view is permeated with Christ. Unless Jesus Christ fully occupies the whole worldview of the African Christians as much as, if not more than, traditional religions, African Christian converts will continue to revert to their old beliefs and practices in times of emergency and crisis (cf. Mbiti 1969: 3). This task is extremely urgent in the African Church. Its urgency and necessity can never be over emphasized given that "[w]e all operate our lives out of our own mental model of the world, our own notion of what the world is really like" (Sire 1990: 29). Therefore, if Christ has not permeated our mental mode of the world and shaped our notion of what the world is really like we can never be secure Christians, for we are blinded to his accompanying activity in our lives.

We are fully persuaded of the sufficiency of Christ in Africa. As the New Testament presents him, Christ is supreme and transcendent over every spiritual power and therefore adequate "to save to the uttermost those who are incorporated into him" (in Imasogie 1983: 24). The discreditable thing in African Christianity is that African Christians, though always singing affectionately of Christ as their "wonderful Saviour, God gave without measure", do not know what to do with him in times of



existential crisis. Perhaps if he had been presented to them in accordance to their worldview, being a follower of Christ would not only be limited to right behaviour. It would essentially encompass a mode of seeing, living and solving the uttermost African problems. The Africans would thus have experienced being a follower of Christ as "a total, all-embracing religion, influencing the whole of life from a reborn heart (in the same way that a heart pumps life-giving blood to each corner of the body) (Van der Walt, *n.d.*: 9, parenthesis, original). Indeed, Jesus Christ is sufficient to the African context. This can only be realised with the 'Christosization' of the African religious worldview. Hence this appeal from De Jongh (1996: 17):

If it is accepted that the people of Africa are essentially religious, then that religiosity has an inevitable impact on any attempts to introduce and communicate Jesus Christ to an African person. The existing religious framework of an African person (indeed, any person) is the only framework from within which the person will hear of Christ. Therefore, we need to realise that, before we can expect the African Christians to feel secure in Christ, we must first help them to be conscious of Christ's pervasiveness in their lives.

## CHAPTER 4: SECURITY IN THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

### 4.1. Introduction

Christological security is security that is given by Christ to Christians. The task of saving and protecting the Christians from all evil spiritual forces is exclusively the work of Jesus Christ. The Christians alone by their personal power can never be able to rescue themselves from the serfdom of Satan. It is important that the security seeking Christian Africans realise that both their spiritual and physical security are Christ's responsibility. The Christians' needs all rest and end with Christ. Christianity is not only named by Christ's name; it is dependent upon him in its entirety in the absolute sense. In other words, Jesus Christ as the essence of Christianity, all the Christian benefits - the promise for salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and the eternal life – are contingent upon him only. It is essential to grasp the fact that when Christ declared himself the way, the truth and the life and the only route to the Father (John 14:6) he exclusively took upon himself the entire responsibility of meeting all the salvific needs of the Christian including security from the evil threats of life. In addition, he offered the Christian this promise-filled invitation: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). In these declarations, Jesus Christ appealed to the Christians to exclusively rest all their needs upon him. He pledged to meet them satisfactorily. He thus sets himself as the sole provider of all the needs of the Christians.

Since Christ is the absolute essence of Christianity, a profound grasp of his person and work is necessary. In order to be confident upon Christ, it is necessary for the African Christians to gain a sound understanding of his person and work. The African Christians can only respond to Christ's biddings positively and confidently upon attaining a sound knowledge about him. African Christians must join the traditional chief in Nigeria who invited a bishop of the Methodist Church with this request: "We believe in God already but we want you to tell us about Jesus Christ" (Oshitelu 1998:98). We firmly believe that one of the many causes of christological insecurity is the ignorance of who Christ is and what he has done. Many African Christians lack confidence in Christ because they have foggy christological ideas. The African Christian can only be confident in Christ upon attaining a sound understanding of *who* Jesus is and *what* he has done and hence its implications upon life. If indeed "Christianity is Christ"; it means that "we must examine His life if we are to understand our faith" Olowala (1998: 155). This is necessary; for our conception of Christ determines the level of confidence we will have in him. Underlying our task is this advice from De Jongh (1996: 19): "Jesus Christ is the central figure to and the main message of the Christian faith, and if an understanding of his person and work is not developed within Africa, then it is probable that the growth of the church will be stunted".

In concordance, Waruta (1991: 56) feels that “without a very clear concept of who Jesus is to African Christians, the church in Africa may be standing on quicksand”. He is right; christological negligence is a prescription for ecclesiastical disaster. Moreover it is urgent to realise, as Cone (in Oshitelu 1998: 99) maintains, “Without knowing who He was we cannot know who He is for us.” This makes the exposition of Christ in Africa necessary. Furthermore, it is important to realise that the dependence of the African Christian upon Christ is directly proportional to the held Christological details. Who Christ is to us determines what we can trust him to do. Our christological conceptions determine the shape of our confidence and reliance upon Christ. Thus, in 4.2 we explore the person of Christ and expound upon its significance in African Christianity. In 4.3 we see the implications and effects of Christ's work, in his life, at the Cross, in his resurrection and enthronement on the African Christians' need for religious security.

## **4.2. The Divinity of Christ.**

### 4.2.1. Methodology

Christian faith from time in antiquity has essentially rested on this cardinal belief: Jesus Christ was the true God and true Man. He was the God incarnate. That this is a cardinal belief is demonstrated in the church's unwavering commitment, throughout the Christian ages, to safeguard this belief from many within and without who fiercely challenged its authenticity. At the same time we must also note that it is mostly in the western world and among those influenced by its secular philosophies that the doctrine of Christ's deity has met its fierce opponents, who view it as a myth or legend. The situation is quite different in Africa south of Sahara where myth and mystery are indispensable natural hallmarks of African religion and philosophy. Appiah-Kubi (1997:65) points out that African tradition is ubiquitous with myths. In articulating the doctrine of Christ in Africa especially the aspect of incarnation it is necessary to comprehend that African religiosity and philosophy thrive on myth and mystery. For example among the AmaNdebele, a common belief is that some animals such as bulls, he-goats and snakes represent the presence of the ancestral spirits. A black-bull may be regarded as '*uKbulu*' (Grandfather, denoting the patriarchal ancestor) and a white she-goat as '*uGogo*' (Grandmother, denoting the matriarchal ancestor). Of course, the level of myth and mystery in this belief is lower than the one in the doctrine of incarnation. We only mention this to highlight the high level of myth and mystery in African religious thinking and the high willingness to embrace the doctrine of the incarnation in Africa. This high level of mystery and myth functions as a fertile ground for the doctrine of incarnation. Appiah-Kubi (1997:65-66) also sees a significant level of mystery and myth in much of African Christianity. It is in this respect that "the image of Christ comes to the soul of the African Christian through mythology, an area where western scholarship expended endless time and paper to

demythologize" (*ibid.*). He further points out that in the "minds of many African Christians, no watertight distinction is made between God and Jesus. God and Jesus are linked together. Jesus is because God is" (*ibid.*). In unison, Gitari (1982:12) concedes; "The claims of Jesus – to be the life of the world, the son of God who comes on the stage of human history to reveal the Father – are usually received enthusiastically by the African people". It is a fact that many African Christians, unprejudiced by western philosophy are not disturbed that Christ could be the God-Man. As Oshitelu (1998:98-99) points out:

In Christological reflection in Africa, the question that concerns us is not and has not been the historical question of what can be known about the historical Jesus... Nor had theologians in Africa to concern themselves with metaphysical speculations which pre-occupied the Church in the post apostolic times such as the number of natures and wills that Christ has.

What then is the question that concerns Africans today? Oshitelu (*ibid.*) responds: "What preoccupies African theologians is Bonhoeffer's question: 'Who really is Christ for us today (in Africa)?' – or as Bultmann expresses: 'A Christological pronouncement is about the person who makes it'.

In this portion of our chapter we will attempt an exposition of the person of Christ that should invoke the confidence of the African Christians. In this endeavour we are mindful of this observation made by Manus (1993:19):

Even though creative attempts have been made to offer responses to the perennial question: 'Who do you say I am?' (Matt 16: 16-17) with themes rooted and derived from African cultured setting: no known serious attempt has been made to give to the same question from both the African background and the results of the New Testament theologies is elaborating Christological reflections in Africa often gets evaporated into thin air.

In other words, the many African attempts at answering Christ's perennial question: "Who do you say I am?", lacks balance between the African cultural perspective and a detailed exposition of the New Testament on Christ. Our firm belief is that a doctrine of Christ that will earn the trust and the confidence of the African Christian must be biblically authentic and must utilize African mythology. In our exposition of the person of Christ we will rely on the New Testament record for all christological facts and we will use our African thought patterns to expound on these facts. Our desire is to arrive at the Christ who is indeed fully universally yet uniquely relevant to the African continent.

#### 4.2.2. Jesus Christ: The God-Man

The primary requisite in the quest for christological security in the African church is a clear understanding of who Christ is. The New Testament is affirmative that Jesus Christ was the God-Man. Among the evangelists John is probably the most explicit on the matter: "In the beginning was the

Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Unlike the other evangelists who begin with the entrance of Christ into the world, John begins with his prior—the world existence. He traces the existence of Christ to the pre-laying of the foundations of the universe. That is, when creation came into being (Gen 1.1), Christ already existed. In this the Evangelist John exposes the deity of Christ: Jesus existed “face to face with” (Macleod 1998:22) and he was God. We must note the Evangelist's deliberate explicit affirmations. The Evangelist’s statement on the unity of Christ with God should not be taken as unthinking statements or mere utterances of an overly Christ- charmed believer. These are unequivocal terms deliberately employed to assert the deity of Christ (John 20:31). As Leon Morris (1995:69) rightly says, “if that is a staggering affirmation to us, there is no reason for thinking that it was any less so to the Jewish author of this Gospel.” Taking into account that monotheism was a cardinal belief in Jewish religion it is safe to assume that the Evangelist carefully thought over his words before pronouncing that Christ was God. The Jews believed “with an unshakeable certainty that there was, there could be, only one God.” (*ibid.*). Therefore, in grappling with John’s proclamation that ‘the Word was God’, we must interpret this strictly in “the light of Jewish pride in monotheism” (*ibid.*). Even though John regarded monotheism as a cardinal tenet of his Jewish religion “he could not withhold from the Word the designation ‘God’” (*ibid.*).

The deity of Christ is also affirmed in the Pauline writings. The most conspicuous of Paul's christological declarations is in Colossians 1: 15: "He is the image of the invisible God". Outside of Paul, a similar assertion is found in Hebrews 1: 3 where Christ is set as "the radiance of His [God] glory and the exact representation of His nature". Both writers acknowledge the "central Jewish theologoumen that God cannot be seen" (Dunn 1996: 87). Underlying the biblical sanction against idolatry is the fact that no one has ever seen God. Thus in the quest to know God, Jesus Christ is introduced as the only avenue: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father: how do you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14: 9). In this Johanine passage Christ declares himself as the express image of God, God in substance. Christ is the seen image of the unseen God. O’Brien (1982:44) says that the term ‘image’ in emphasizing Christ’s relation to God signifies two things about Christ himself: “his revealing of the Father on the one hand and his pre-existence on the other – it is both functional and ontological”. O'Brien means that Jesus reveals God while at the same time in his being he is God himself. This affirms the deity of Christ. MacArthur (1983: 16) presents Jesus Christ as “the reproduction of God, He is the perfect personal imprint of God in time and space”. It means that the one who wants to see and know God must see and know Christ. Asserts McGrath (1996:40), “The fundamental revelational axiom of the Christian faith is that *only God can reveal God*”. In other words, “as the image of the invisible *God, the Son is, first of all, himself God* (Hendriksen 1964:71). Paul emphasizes this Christological aspect: “in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” Col.2: 9).

In this Paul repeats and emphasizes that eternally Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). The reverse side of this declaration is that "as the *image* of the invisible God, *the Son is God Revealed*" (Hendriksen 1964:71). The essence of this is that the one who has encountered Jesus Christ has in fact completely encountered God himself. In consonance Osadolor Imasogie (1983:15) affirms, "in the human Jesus of Nazareth, the External God or Christ was incarnated in order that he might be apprehended by the creatures whom he created". Thus Christ and God are so inseparable to the extent that "one can only speak about God himself in that at the same time one talks about Jesus." Pannenberg 1968:19). Consequently "the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Jesus as the Christ, are bound together" (*ibid.*: 20). In affirming the unity of Christ with God and the deity thereof, Charles Nyamiti (1984: 31), a leading authority on African Christology says, denying the deity of Christ is really to "falsify the true picture of Jesus personality and the consequent relevance he bears towards us". According to Bediako (1994: 101, there is a trinitarian aspect in the incarnation: the "Trinitarian doctrine is preserved, for the God who has become so deeply and actively involved in our condition is the Son (John 1:18), whom to see is to 'see' the Father (cf. John 14:15ff.; Acts 2:38ff), and this is made possible through the Holy Spirit (John 14: 23)"

Furthermore, when thinking about the sufficiency of Christ to completely secure the African Christian we must note Christ's status of being the creator. Christ is not a mere God, or a mere lord, or a mere saviour – he is the Creator of the entire universe in the absolute sense. The Evangelist asserts thus: "All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." (John 1:3). The Evangelist intends to make his assertion so plainly explicit to remove all doubt. Thus he asserts this in both positive and negative terms. Positively –all things came into being by him; negatively – without him nothing came into being. He wants to leave no room for doubt that all things owe their existence to Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul also affirms creation's contingency upon Christ: "by Him all things were created ... all things have been created by Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16). This point is also affirmed in Hebrews 1: 2; Christ is exclusively the one through whom God made the world. Considering that the ability to create belongs to God exclusively, that Jesus is able to create designate that He is God. As the creator of the world it is "in Him that all things hold together" (Col. 1:17) as he "upholds all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3). This means that Jesus Christ was indispensable in bringing the world into being and he still remains indispensable for its orderliness. If his presence was absolutely necessary in the creation of the world, and if the created universe wholly depends on him for its sustenance and orderliness then Christ is much more than an agent – he is God. There are several ways of interpreting Paul's words about Christ as Dunn (1980:255) points out. Yet, it is undeniable that these are words of one with "overwhelming conviction... that God had himself acted in and through Christ, that what happened in the whole Christ-event was God himself opening the way

for man for righteousness and redemption, and that this had been the same power and purpose through which and for which God had created the world” (*ibid.*). In other words, Paul and indeed other New Testament writers, seem certain and entrenched upon the belief that Christ was indeed God-Man. Even Christ’s opponents who heard him speak about himself and his origins were left without a doubt about his claims of deity. An example is in John 10:30 where Christ declares, “I and the Father are one”. The Jews who heard him were deeply affronted at this claim; they were certain that he was claiming oneness with God or equality with him. John, in his Gospel, presents three such situations, in 5:8; 8:59 and this one in 10:31. Oscar Cullman (1963:302) says the Jews were accurate in their interpretation of Jesus’ claims.

The African Christians must be aware that the deity of Jesus Christ is a fact of scripture. We have deliberately undertaken the above exposition of the deity of Christ to demonstrate that those who have placed their faith in him have actually placed it in God Himself. Their Saviour is above all else their Creator and God. It is in this fact that the superiority of Christ above all other forms of security is set forth. In this spectrum of things Christ surpasses the ancestral spirits, and all the magical charms. Accordingly, “Since, ... all the fullness of the indwelling essence of God is thus completely concentrated in Christ, there is no need of or jurisdiction for looking elsewhere for help, salvation, or spiritual perfection” (Hendriksen 1964:112). This fact should elicit the African Christian’s confidence. When we truly understand the meaning of Christ’s ability to uphold all things “it is amazing that we should ever look anywhere else for meaning and purpose in life” (Hughes 1989: 33). The African Christian must search in Christ for the solutions of his life, for as the creator who holds all things together, Jesus “knows how to best fix and order our lives” (*ibid.*). In Jesus Christ the believers are sufficiently secured in the one who not only created them but also sustains them who have been made for him. Therefore, “we need to “submit our personal problems to him, for he knows how to solve them” (*ibid.*). In this is guaranteed the adequacy of Christ in meeting the Christian’s salvific needs.

An aspect that often disturbs many African Christians is the Jewishness of Christ. To many this is an aspect that compromises his relevancy and sufficiency in Africa, for it means he was a Jewish God sent to the Jews only. To some Africans Christ is insufficient for their soteriological needs because he was a Jew. The question that lingers in them is: can a Jewish Saviour and Lord adequately save and secure the Africans from their African sins and problems? In the ultimate analysis the question really says: ‘how can Africans trust a Jewish Saviour?’ It is important to note that in taking on the human flesh this inevitably entailed assuming a particular nationality, gender and cultural identity among other things. These are all indispensable attributes of being human. As Gehman (1987: 3) puts it, "when Jesus Christ became man, He of necessity had to become a particular man in a particular culture". In choosing to

enter human history it was inevitable for God to assume a particular human identity. However, as McGrath (1994:153) points out insightfully: “the *particularities* of the incarnation must be set against the universality of the redemption which is thereby made possible.” In other words, God became man not for the sake of assuming a particular ethnic identity but in order to save the entire human race. The essential thing is that God became a man not that he became a Jew. We should not attach too much significance on the Jewishness of Christ. As Bediako (1994: 99) points out, salvation though ‘from the Jews’ (John 4: 22), is not thereby Jewish. He adds, “To make Jesus little more than a ‘typical’ Jew is to distort the truth. There is clearly more to him than Jewishness” (*ibid.*) In concordance McGrath (1994: 153) points out, “The central affirmation of the incarnation is that God became one of us in order to redeem us, not that he became a first-century male Palestinian Jew. No culture, gender, or language is given enhanced priority on account of incarnation, nor can people of any culture, gender, or language be regarded as ‘second class Christians’”. This means that African Christians can claim legitimate status in Christ as their God, Lord and Saviour. The cultural particularities of Christ are incidental elements of becoming a man; they do not in any way inhibit the universality of his deity and salvation. In Him, the African Christians have full claims. He is their Saviour and the Christian Africans are his people with full rights. African Christians must realize that since Jesus Christ became human he inadvertently shared our human heritage and is thus uniquely relevant to all human races. Having shared in our universal human heritage he is able to address all our needs. As Bediako (1994: 114) points out:

Jesus Christ is unique not because he stands apart from us; rather he is unique because no one has identified so profoundly with the human predicament as he has done, in order to transform it. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ is rooted in his radical and, direct significance for *every* human and *every* human context and *every* human culture.

#### 4.2.3. The Significance of the Divinity of Christ in Africa.

A good understanding of the deity of Christ has important implications upon the African Christians. These implications ought to solicit the Christian Africans' trust and confidence upon Christ.

##### 4.2.3.1. Security as the work of God.

If Christ is one with God it means that the salvation of the Christian is actual the work of God himself. For African Christians this means that it is God himself that works to secure them against the African evil spirits. The Apostle Paul emphasizes the oneness of Christ's work with God's Work: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). In this Paul stresses that man's salvation is



God's work<sup>1</sup>. In other words, in the work of the salvation of man God the Father was fully "in [Christ], united with Him in being and act" (Hughes 1962: 208). In concert, McGrath (1999:79) says; "In Jesus Christ God has entered into our world of sorrow and pain in order to redeem us". The emphasis is that the work that Christ did was actually the work of God. McGrath (*ibid.*: 81) further asserts: "God has not sent a messenger or a representative to help the poor creatures that we are; he has involved himself directly, redeeming his own creation, instead of getting someone else to do it for him". Waruta (1991: 62), in agreement, says, "The Christian doctrine of incarnation provides a an excellent base for the development of an African Christology. In Jesus God is not a mysterious hidden reality but one who comes down to the people through his servant Jesus". This means that mankind's salvation is both from God himself and also his very own work. In the words of Brunner (1956:286); "In the Son, as the Son, God is the self-moved, the God Himself descends into the world". That is, God became flesh in Christ and worked out man's salvation and all its concomitant packages that include security from evil forces. This aspect emphatically announces the sufficiency of Christ. The African Christian must relinquish trust and confidence from African Traditional Religions and depend on Christ only because he is God. Jesus is able to adequately protect and secure the African Christian from all spiritual threats because he is God. This means that the Africans who have trusted Jesus Christ with the security of their lives, their health, their prosperity, the security of their children, jobs, homes and livestock – have actually cast it all to the care of God. The sufficiency of Christ in meeting the security needs of the African Christian lies in this fact: "God is the acting subject in Jesus" (Bloesch 1997:57). The hope placed upon Christ is hope placed upon God.

The implications of this fact are two-fold. Firstly, since Jesus Christ's work is actually the work of God, it means that the African Christian by trusting Christ has trusted in the most superior form of security. There is no form of security that surpasses God. It means that the African Christian must rescind all hope and confidence placed on magical charms and spirits and place it on God the Almighty Defender of life. In Christ the African Christian has a superior security provider. The ancestral spirits and charms

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<sup>1</sup> P.T. Forsyth (1910: 152) wants to press 2 Cor. 5:19 to its fullest meaning. He says when the words 'God was in Christ reconciling' are pressed to the fullness of meaning they mean God was "not reconciling through Christ, but actually present as Christ reconciling, doing in Christ His own work of reconciliation. It was done by Godhead itself, and not by the Son alone. The old theologians were right when they insisted that the work of redemption was the work of the whole Trinity-Father –Son, and Holy Spirit; as we express it when we baptize into the new life of reconciliation in the threefold name.

are all created things; their power and dependence can never surpass God's power. Thus in relying on Christ the African has chosen the utmost highest form of security. Secondly, to say that Christological security is the work of God is really to hold God accountable for whatever losses or harm the African Christian shall suffer.

#### 4.2.3.2. The assurance of God's presence

Since Jesus Christ is God incarnate and his salvific work is the very work of God, Incarnation is the assurance of God's real presence and involvement. The presence of Jesus Christ means the presence of God. This means that to cast one's self and possessions to the care of Christ are casting oneself into the presence of God. The incarnation is a testimony and assurance that "God is involved in human history and experience – and, specifically, in our own history and experience" (McGrath 1994:148). In Jesus Christ, we encounter God himself, not a representative. As Dermont A Lane (1975:133) explains, incarnation "does not mean that God came down on earth and walked around disguised in the fancy dress of humanity pretending to be a man. Nor does it mean that God simply became in God in Jesus." On the contrary "Incarnation means that God entered fully and unconditionally into human life in the man Jesus. God enfleshed, en-manned, and othered himself totally in Jesus so that in experiencing the man Jesus the apostles also experienced God as personally present in their midst." (*ibid.*). Affirming a similar stance Mbiti (in Dedji 2003: 196),

Christ came to bring the whole man, the entire parcel of man's total existence, into a deep and intimate relationship with God the Father...He came to make man so totally and absolutely religious that no department should be left outside the relationship between creature and Creator, between man and God, between the child and the Heavenly Father.

In this, Mbiti is saying that Christ came so that we may fill all our life. This means that the African Christians, by virtue of faith in Christ, now dwells in the presence of God in the absolute.

The reality of Jesus Christ communicates and signifies the actual presence of God. Where Christ is there is God. Christ's name "Emmanuel' – God with us" (Matt 1:23) signifies the presence of God. McGrath (1994:165) identifies two elements in this name; namely, "God is on our side" and "God is present with us". That God is on our side means that God is not against us. The one in Christ has entered into a realm where God does not work against him but for him. If God gave his Son to the world it means that he is concerned about what happens in it and he works for the world not against it. The African Christians, in Jesus Christ, have proof and guarantee that God is practically concerned about what happens in their lives. Moreover, that God is with us means that God is with his people when they encounter life struggles. That is, as the African Christians enter the battlefield of life God is present with them. Thinking through the Hebrews epistle, Macleod (1998:86) remarks; "the

significance of Jesus is absolute. He is Ultimate Reality.” Then he draws into this conclusion: “But he is Ultimate Reality in a form which is fully conversant with our human plight” (*ibid.*). He knows what it is like to suffer and be frightened. In Christ God participates in the struggles of his people and he fully appreciates their struggles with life. As the Good Shepherd he accompanies his flock, he is with them even when they travel through the dark valleys of the shadow of death comforting them and strengthening them. Thus the Christians – including the African Christians – have their complete existence in the presence of God. To say that God is with us in Christ is another way of saying we are living in the ambit of God’s presence. African Christians need to be aware of God’s presence.

This challenges the African conception of God. Africans think of God as remotely positioned and only approachable through the hierarchical ladder of the ancestral spirits. In Christ God has come down so that all his people live in his presence and are able to approach him directly. That is, through Christ the African Christians have entered into absolute communion with God. It means that whatever fears they have God is present to address them. Therefore they should cast all their fears to him only. This means that God himself administers the affairs of the African Christians. Unlike in the African traditional religions where the administration of the affairs of the world is said to be delegated to ancestral spirits, in the Christian realm, God himself administers his world.

### **4.3 Security in the Christ – Event**

The testimony of Christ’s sufficiency to secure the African Christians from all their African fears is borne in what he accomplished in his human life, at the cross and at the resurrection. The deity of Christ, even though it can stand-alone must also be examined in correlation with the Christ-event. The Christ event has elaborate overtones of sufficient security against all satanic force.

#### **4.3.1. Assurance of God's identity with his people.**

As we have seen thus far, that Jesus Christ was fully God-Man means that God came down lived within the human world and suffered with it. The significance of this in the African church is in that the African Christians have placed their faith in the “God who has entered into [their] human situation, who became man and dwelt among as one of us, someone who knows at first hand what it is like to be frail, mortal and human, to suffer and to die,” (McGrath 1994:165). This aspect is driven home in better terms by Jurgen Moltmann (1991:xxv) “If God ‘was in Christ’, as Paul says in 2 Cor.5: 19, and if the Father is ‘in the son’ and the son ‘in the Father’, as the Gospel of John stresses (14:10ff), then through the crucifixion of Jesus, the Son of God, the Father of Jesus Christ is also drawn to share in the suffering”. The Christ-event demonstrates and guarantees that God has come down to identify with

his people. This means that God did not work the salvation of mankind from some remote distance; on the contrary, he worked it in their midst. This should dispel the ideas of a remote God, totally disconnected from his people. Our point in this section is not to repeat what has already been discussed (though the risk is there). Our point is to highlight that because of the Christ-event God now knows the struggles of his people. This is necessary, for many African Christians do not think God understands the dilemmas that confront them as Africans. It is absolutely necessary to stress to the African Church that in Christ God identified with their human plight. For, “If we think that God has never got involved in the pain and sadness of the world, we will find it difficult to relate to him and even more difficult to pray when we suffer” (McGrath 1999:81).

The Hebrew writer wants the Christians to realise that they worship one who became like them “in all things” (Hebrews 2:17). Lest we forget: God was in this one (2 Cor.5: 19). God in Christ experienced humanness, in its full capacity including the threats of life. Moltmann (1991: 40) says, “Christ experienced and suffered what millions experienced and suffered before him and after him. In this respect his passion is part of and participation in the passion story of his people and the history of the suffering of all mankind.” In thinking about this we must not forget God’s participation. Observes Macleod (1998:69);

[T]he Son of God learns compassion in the only way that anyone can learn compassion; by experience. In Christ, divine personality is caught up in the process of learning and becoming. We may even say that his experiences are taken up to be part of the meaning of godhead itself. Gethsemane is part of the memory of the triune God.

This means that God knows what it is like to be threatened by life’s threats. He experienced vulnerability. The sufferings of Jesus Christ assure the African Christians that they worship the God who has triumphed over life’s insecurities. He experienced full humanness and yet did not compromise. The African Christians, who are constantly criticized for being syncretistic wonder if God understands their pain and confusion in times of demonic harassment and many such situations with spiritual connotations. They wonder if Christ really understands their pain in times of bareness, sickness, poverty, joblessness, chaos in families and many similar difficult situations inflicted upon them by the witches and wizards – all these being situations with stings that drive them into syncretism. The Christ-event answers this question; God who assumed full humanity and suffered in all respects himself and also encountered many souls held in bondage by various afflictions is one filled with understanding, sympathy and compassion. Above this he addressed the pain of those he met. This is the one who is always with the African Christian.

#### 4.3.2. Assurance of Satan's defeat.

Professor B. Gaybba (1988; 52) notes, "While Christians have always been in agreement that Jesus' death was salvific, there has never been any one universally agreed explanation as to how it is so". There are varied opinions among Christians themselves as to how the death of Christ worked in bringing about their salvation. Yet there is one element that is consonant among all Christians: the cross is not a sign of defeat; but "the means whereby God triumphed over every form of evil" (Morris 1986:67). The cross as it represents the death of Jesus Christ testifies of the decisive defeat of Satan and his entire dominion. The world outside of Christ is under the reign of Satan. "Through sin the world is under the spell of powers which are hostile to God" Emil Brunner (1934: 553). These hostile powers are under the reign and command of Satan, the prince of darkness. The death of Christ at the Cross destroyed this power of Satan and its enslaving hold on mankind.

How the cross is a testimony of Satan's defeat is best articulated in Hebrews 2: 14-15 as follows:

Since then the children share in flesh and blood. He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subjected to slavery all their lives.

According to the Hebrew writer here, Christ's Incarnation was so that he would die. And the purpose of this death was to: "render powerless" (NASB), or to actually "destroy him who holds the power of death" (NIV) (Heb 2:14). The Hebrew writer names the one who held the power of death as the devil. Thus Jesus' death on the cross is first and foremost intended for the destruction of Satan, to render him as powerless and impotent. It is in light of this that 1 John 3:8b can say, "the Son of God came to earth with the express purpose of undoing the devil's work" (Phillips). We must realise the extent of Satan's power over death. In the New Testament death is synonymous with sin and the powers of darkness. As Gaybba sees it (1988:13), "All three are connected: Satan, the prince of darkness, brought suffering and death into the world by tempting out first parents to sin". We cannot speak of death at the exclusion of Satan, sin and suffering. Jesus Christ's death destroyed, or we could say castrated Satan who had the power to inflict death, suffering and all the works of darkness. The death of Christ did not end with the emasculation of Satan; it further "set free those who lived their whole lives a prey to the fear of death" (Heb. 2:15, Phillips). In other words, the death of Christ resulted in the liberation and deliverance of all those who were shut in the custody of Satan's tyrannic reign. Explains Lane (1991:61) "The primary goal of the incarnation was the Son's participation in death, through which he nullified the devil's ability to enslave the children of God through the fear of death". The Cross of Christ thus stands as the sign and testimony of the liberation of God's people from the tyranny of Satan. Much more than this, the atonement is "the occasion by which Christ conquers the rebellions

principalities and powers, the demonic world headed by Satan” (Letham 1993:149-150). It is the testimony of Christ’s victory: “Man has fallen into the grip of dark powers, Christ comes into this situation and battles against these powers; with his cross comes the overwhelming victory, bringing deliverance and new life to man (Macquarrie 1977: 318). The victorious emancipation of God’s people from the satanic clutches has been victoriously accomplished.

The Cross of Christ as a testimony of the defeat of the author of death has a significant role in Africa. The fear of death has a profound potency in Africa. It is the fear of death that is the reason to all religious activity in Africa. The gripping fear of death among Africans is real. Writes Mbiti (1969:158):

Death is a monster before whom man is utterly helpless. Relatives watch a person die, and they cannot help him escape death. It is an individual affair in which nobody else can interfere or intervene. This is the height of death’s agonies and pain for which there is neither cure nor escape, as far as African concepts and religions are concerned.

As to be expected, those that have the power to cause death such as the sorcerer’s witches and wizards are greatly feared among Africans. It is in order to elude those that have the power to cause death that Africans practice their traditional religions. African Christians need to realise that Jesus Christ has defeated the one who rules over this evil realm. MacArthur (1983; 70) rightly acknowledges that the “thing that terrifies people more than anything else is death. It is a horrible fear, the king of terrors”. And Christ has vanquished this biggest enemy of all mankind. The question that African Christians ought to ask themselves is this: ‘If Jesus Christ has conquered the author of the king of all terrors what else is he not able to conquer’. Indeed, “Death is the power of Satan’s dominion, and when Jesus shattered Satan’s power He also shattered his domination (*ibid.*). It is in light of this victory that Christ can be looked at as the Saviour even in Africa. In African perspective, it is only the Victor who can save. The victor qualifies to save for he is able to defend and protect his subjects (cf. Kabasele 1991: 106). Christ did this in a supreme fashion.

#### 4.3.3. The testimony of Christ’s Enthronement

The greatest testimony to Christ’s sufficiency is in his resurrection from the dead. As Gaybba (1988:90) states, “The emotion most associated with the resurrection in the Scriptures is that of triumph”. Central to Christ’s salvific integrity is the aspect of his resurrection. Paul thus utters: “And if Christ was not raised then all our preaching is useless, and your trust in God is useless” (1Cor. 15:14 NLT). This is where the testimony of Christ as Victor lies. The crucial basis for our confidence upon Christ is his resurrection. Jesus Christ stands or falls by his resurrection; you cannot take the resurrection away from Jesus Christ and leave his character and identity undiminished. In cognizance of this fact, Paul states that Christ was declared the Son of God as a result of the resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4). In

other words the basis of Christ's credentials as Lord and Saviour rests on his resurrection. In acknowledging the significance of Christ's resurrection Michael Grant (1994:90) says "the Resurrection was the irreplaceable, solid foundation of the apostles faith, and the chief ingredient and origin of their message and church." It was the basis of Christian faith. To the early Christians the resurrection of Christ was so determinative: "It was an event, claimed as a historical fact to which eye witnesses could testify, that turned the faint-hearted disciples into followers who were ready to die for belief that this new understanding had given them" (*ibid.*). One may say it was the engine within the Christian faith.

The resurrection first and foremost bears witness to Christ's conquest of satanic elements that include sin and death. Death and sin are related; they are both a result of Satan's deception of the original Man and Woman. Thus victory, over death and sin is ultimately victory over Satan himself and his reign. In 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, the resurrection of Christ is presented as the chief testimony to Christ's victory over death and sin – the elements of Satan. In his inaugural sermon the Apostle Peter preached that in the resurrection of Christ was "putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (Acts 2: 24). In the resurrection of Christ the grip vice of death is broken up. And thus Paul could rhetorically boast; "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1Cor 15:55). Christ in his resurrection triumphed over death and sin and their author Satan.

The implications of the victory of the resurrection in African Christianity are profound. To begin with, as the conqueror of death and its power, Jesus Christ is thus sufficiently able to deliver the Africans from their most fearsome enemies and secure their lives. If "death could not keep him in its grip" (Acts 2:24b, NLT), - and death is the most feared enemy of all people, - it means that Jesus Christ is able to conquer all the enemies of our lives. It is in this element that Christ sets forth his supremacy in the African context. That is, while the ancestors who constitute the integral part of security in African traditional religions are only the living-dead, Jesus is the living-living - he is forever alive. That Christ conquered death and its power means that the Christian serves the Living Saviour. The feared angry ancestors and the evil gratuitous spirits are spirits of the living-dead while the hope and the security of the Christian African is placed on the eternal, immortal Christ. With great confidence Morris (1966:69) asserts:

Christ did win a victory, and those who are His know that victory in their own lives (Phil. 3:10). This is one of the precious things about the atonement. It is not simply a theoretical doctrine, but something, which the behaviour proves true in his own experience day by day. Christ's victory gives us confidence as we live out our lives. We are confronted on every hand by forces of evil that are stronger than we are. But we do, we not despair, we know that Christ is

stronger still. He defeated even death, itself. And strong in His strength we can overcome the evil that confronts us.

Of greater significance in the victory of the resurrection of Christ is his enthronement. The highest significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is that he has been enthroned as the Sovereign Lord to reign over the entire universe. The African Christians need to take cognizance of the fact the Jesus Christ is reigning as the Sovereign King in the universe. With the victory of the resurrection has come Christ's exultation. Having vanquished Satan and his evil kingdom of darkness, Christ is enthroned at God's right hand with supreme authority over all rule, power and name. (Eph. 1:20-21). In concluding his inaugural sermon Peter announces thus, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him [the resurrected Christ] both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). This is the very point that pierced their hearts and drove them into committing their lives to him. To the early Christians the Lordship or Kingship of Christ had profound dynamic effects on their faith and confidence upon Christ. As Oscar Cullmann (1963:195) explains: "In designating Jesus as the *Kyrios* [Lord] the first Christians declared that he is not only a part of divine *Heilsgeschichte* in the past, not just the object of future hope, but a living reality in the present – so alive that he can enter into fellowship with us now, so alive that the believer prays to him and the Church appeals to him in worship, to bring their prayers before God the Father and make them effective". They saw him as the exalted Lord upon whom they could wholly invest their life Cullmann (Ibid.) adds, "Both the individual Christian and the gathered Church experience in faith the fact that Jesus lives and continues his work". The faith of the Christian is contingent on the "exalted Christ who still intervenes in earthly events" (*ibid.*).



## CHAPTER 5: BIBLICAL IMAGES OF CHRISTOLOGICAL SECURITY

### 5.1. Introduction

Christological security is a soteriological position. In discussing the problem of Christological security in Africa, we are in fact discussing how African Christians stand in the framework of the work of Christ's salvation. Christological security addresses the nature and the extent of Christ's salvation in Africa. In this perspective, the discourse on Christological security is a response to the question: What is the extent of the salvation of Jesus Christ in Africa? Expressed in other words, how do the saved African Christians stand in Christ's economy of salvation? This is the question we want to address in this chapter. We will address this question by looking at how the New Testament pictures the state or the position of the saved person. Our firm belief is that one of the essential ingredients in the pursuing of Christological security is in coming to terms with what the New Testament says about the state and status of the saved person. For African Christians to realise security in Christ they must understand their new position in Christ. We see a major contribution to Christological insecurity as ignorance of this new status in Christ. This is where Christological insecurity is bred and fostered. Perhaps this is a universal problem, after all. Gromack (1973:34) notes, "many Christians only have a vague idea as to what their salvation involves. To most, getting saved just means keeping out of hell or just getting into heaven. They only see their salvation in terms of eternal destiny. But salvation is far more than that". In this chapter we purpose counter this dangerous aspect of ignorance.

At the same time, it is important to emphasise the Africanness of our perspective in this task. We are looking at this as Africans because we are saved as Africans and experience Christ's salvation as Africans within an African continent. Mugabe (1999:238) rightly notes: "It does not take much to show that from the time of the early church to the present, people have always come to Jesus out of their varied experiences, contexts and needs". And this affects the shape of their salvation. And since the shape of our soteriological need differs from that of non-Africans our points of emphasis in Christ's work of salvation may be uniquely different. This is to be expected; it is legitimate since the universal problem of sin also has territorial peculiarities. Indeed, that the wages of sin is death is a universal fact. However, before the eschaton, the shape of this death is varied according to the different socio-cultural contexts. In Africa, the death effected by sin is experienced in such aspects as demonic oppression. A salvation that leaves one entangled in these things is insufficient to Africans.

We have quantified, in this chapter, the many pictures of salvific status under four headings. We will see (in 5:2) the image of deliverance out of the Kingdom of Satan into Christ's Kingdom. In 5.3 we will see that the Christians is portrayed as one 'in Christ.' In 5.4, we will see that African Christians are

adopted into God's Family. Lastly, we will see that the African Christians (5.5) have become the residence and temple of the Holy Spirit. These images depict that the Christian Africans are fully saved and the presence of God is constantly with them and in them.

## 5.2. Delivered into the Kingdom of Light

### 5.2.1. Deliverance in Christ's Mission

The aspect of deliverance features prominently in the mission of Jesus Christ of saving humankind. He clearly announced this in the initial stages of his ministry: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are down trodden, to proclaim the favourable year of the LORD" (Luke 4:18,19). This passage has received varied interpretations, especially in modern Christological discourses. However, a large number of concerned scholars are in concert that Christ's mission to the world chiefly encompassed the liberation and the deliverance of the oppressed in one form or another. Morris (1988a: 117) rightly says, "Jesus saw himself as coming with good news for the world's troubled people". God's people are held in captivity by an evil regime and there is urgent need to wage a war to deliver and liberate them from the clutches of this evil master. In this Lukan passage, the evil oppressive regime has manifested itself in poverty, captivity, and blindness and down troddenness. Indeed that the world is held in imprisonment by an evil oppressor resonates through the entire Bible. In the Gospels this is more elaborated in demonic possession resulting in such physical disabilities such as blindness, lameness and also mental disorders, and a variety of other miseries. And Jesus forthrightly identifies the chief author of this oppressive regime over God's people as Satan. He described the woman he healed as "a daughter of Abraham... whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years" (Luke 13:16). A consonant statement is found in Acts 10:38 where Peter says Christ "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil". The phrase "all who were oppressed by the devil", writes MacArthur (1994:302), "encompasses the whole gamut of human ailments from direct demon possession to disease to spiritual darkness". The oppressive power is also expressed through sin: "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (John 8:34). This power is further depicted as the darkness that hinders God's people from comprehending Christ (John 1:4.5) and is also in the form of a kingdom. (Col. 1:13). In other words, the unsaved person is enslaved "under a tyranny where the power of darkness reigns" (Lucas 1980:42). The Hebrew writer identifies the oppressor in the form of death (Heb. 2:14). All these are depictions of Satan whose chief evidences of control over human life "are bodily and mental illness, moral obliquity and institutional corruption" (Caird 1994:109).

Christ has come to set free God's people. He has come to deliver the people of God out of the domain of Satan, to break the yoke of slavery on them and grant them liberty. As we read of his exorcising of the demonic spirits, the healings, the conversion and the open outright rebukes of Satan, in these, we witness the progressive deliverance of the world out of the chains of Satan's reign. It is a war of deliverance. Reckons Jeremias (1971:94), "Jesus enters this world enslaved by Satan with the authority of God, not only to exercise mercy, but above all to join battle with the evil". The victories over the satanic forces are signs of the work of his deliverance and liberation of God's people. They are achievements of his mission to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). In the words of Kistemaker (1990:394), "Where Jesus went, he was a benefactor to the people. He reclaimed territory from Satan, so that the devil had to yield his power to Jesus". In essence "He liberated all those who were in Satan's power" (*ibid.*) Confident of achieving his deliverance mission, Christ affirms: "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). He is certain that the world is in bondage. And he is certain and confident that he will set it loose from the satanic clutches. Thus, Jesus Christ's complete overpowering of Satan and his demons is the act of deliverance of God's people. "Without a divine deliverance", reckons Lucas (1980:42) as he reflects on Colossians 1:13, "there was no escape. But, through Christ these powers have been forced to yield their prey, and see their erstwhile captives released to belong to the realm of a great king".

### 5.2.2. The deliverance of the African Christian.

Like all Christians in Christ's universal salvific economy, African Christians must comprehend their state of deliverance in Christ. As Christians, they stand extricated from Satan's power. The Apostle Paul urges the Colossian Christians to be joyously grateful to God because "He delivered [them] from the domain of darkness" (Col. 1:11-13). In a bid to make the Christians appreciate the magnificence of this description of their emancipation, Lightfoot (1959:141) renders this verse as follows: "We were slaves in the land of darkness, God rescued us from this thralldom". The power of darkness in which we were held bondage has been broken and the Christians are free. African Christians must fully grasp that on account of his conquest of the jurisdiction of darkness "Christ now has the authority to raid the domain of darkness and rescue those who had hitherto been fast bound under the control of its guardians" (Bruce 1957: 189). African Christians are no longer under the authority or the realm ruled by Satan. Dunn (1996:78) summons us to note the weight of the word-translated authority or domain; it "denotes an executive authority, in this case a domination of darkness". This is a consequential point; for in saying Christ has delivered the Christian out of Satan's executive power or domination means that Satan's authority over the African Christian "can be legitimately and authoritatively resisted, as having its licence revoked" (*ibid.*). This means that whatever the magnitude of the authority Satan

had over the African before conversion, at conversion it is invalidated. Therefore the African Christian now has no legal connection with the powers of darkness. As Dunn (*ibid.*) further points out “Within a unitary kingdom (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24) subjects of the king can reject all other claims to final authority over them (see also Col 1:16 and 2:10,15)”. Likewise African Christians should reject the authority of all dark powers over them. Now they are under the jurisdiction of Jesus Christ whose power transcends that of Satan and is himself sufficient for all their security needs.

It is a deliverance from one authority to another. The licence of Satan over the African Christians has been revoked because they are now citizens of the kingdom of Christ. Their citizenship has changed completely. God has rescued them from the tyranny of darkness, where evil powers rule (Luke 22:53) and transferred them "to the kingdom in which his beloved Son held sway" (O'Brien 1982:28). This means that God himself has not only saved and rescued the Christian from this evil thralldom. Above this God “transplanted us thence, and settled us as free colonists and citizens in the kingdom of His Son, in the realms of light” (Lightfoot 1959:141). There is need for Christians in Africa to come to terms with their new status in Christ. This is where the victory over demonic forces is won. This is where lies the impetus to rescind reliance on African traditional religions. The contrasting terms of darkness and light are deliberately employed to emphasise that a “change of dominion has taken place which is absolutely determinative for the life of the believer” (Lohse 1971:37). This new status of the Christian is articulated in graphic form in order to induce a shift in terms of destination and confidence in the Christian. That is, since the life of the Christian is now in Christ his desires and solutions for the problems of life must all rest in Christ.

As we will see later, Africans have vivid images of bondage. Hence the need for a deliverer or a liberator is a real desire in Africa. This is witnessed in the African way of naming children. Ndebele names that depict a need for deliverance are many: such as *Senzeni* – what have we done? The name implies a desire to know the causes of the misfortunes that have fallen upon an individual, the family or the clan: what have we done to deserve this? May we know so we can make amendments and find relief. Thus one is needed to bring the answer and the alleviation of pain. There is also *Hluphekile* (the suffering one), and *Lablive* (the one cast away) – both names express strong sentiments of being the rejected one or of being the forgotten one. In these names is registered a desire for the end of miseries. There are also names that indicate the attainment of liberation and those who will bring deliverance upon their families, clans and even nations. Such names include: *Mkbululi* (liberator or deliverer); *Sikbululime* (we are liberate); *Nkululeko* (freedom); *Sikbululekile* (we are free); *Sindiso* (salvation); *Sibhengive* (we are rescued). Names such as *Njabulo* (happiness); *Ntokoꝑo* (joy); and *Thokoꝑani* (rejoice) are strongly linked to deliverance and security. For there can be no happiness, joy or rejoicing in times of bondage.

Africans further show that deliverance and security are intrinsic African needs even when they give their children English names. It is common, among Africans, to hear such names as Freedom, Moreblessing, Blessed, Victor; Courage, among others. With this in mind, the African Christians must realise that Christ is their only source of freedom, liberation and deliverance, which should bring them happiness, joy and rejoicing. Jesus Christ is the African Christians' *uMhlengi* (rescuer) and *uMkbululi* (liberator). In Christ the African Christians stand delivered, rescued, liberated and protected from satanic infringement.

### 5.2.3. The extent of Christ's deliverance in Africa.

To what extent is Christ's deliverance experienced in Africa? This is where the sufficiency of Christ's salvific mission in Africa raises many questions. As we have already pointed out, the aspect of servitude to the forces of darkness is a living reality. And this manifests itself in a variety of ways. It is common to hear AmaNdebele talk of people who are under "*ithunzi elimnyana*" (dark shadow). Aspects of bondage prevail at the hands of the evil spirits that either possess individuals or cast evil spells on individuals or families. These evil phenomena bring misfortune upon individuals and families, such as poverty, bareness, and the failure to secure marriages. They may even visit children at school blinding them so that they cannot read and causing them to be dull at school. They influence children to be rebellious and to be renegades; they influence evil deeds such as witchcraft, stealing, promiscuity, laziness and so forth. Among the Ndebeles it is common to hear of occasions "*okugeza umnyama*" (to wash away the shadow of darkness), *okulabla imimoya emibi/amadlozi amabi* "to exorcise the evil spirits" also called '*ukulahlisa*' (to throw away). The Ndebele person is separated from the spirit of poverty by a process called "*ukulabla indlozi lobuyanga*" (literally to throw away the spirit of poverty, exorcism). All these are aspects of deliverance and liberation. In Africa, therefore, the need for deliverance is a literal reality.

It is in the light of this that the sufficiency of christological security is put to test. A liberation that ends in freedom to sin is inadequate to Africans. Perhaps other peoples are content to see salvation as only a ticket to Heaven. In Africa, such a salvation is vacuous. Okorocho (1992:176) represents the feeling of all Africans when he says: "To African peoples, to speak of salvation, tomorrow is meaningless unless it is presaged by a tangible experience of salvation *today*". Of course, salvation is now and yet to come; the realised and the yet to be realised. Notwithstanding, the salvation of Christ starts now. The Bible talks of Christians as those who have already attained deliverance in their present life. In other words, the saved person in his immediate situation is already in a position to sample the benefits of deliverance from the tyranny of darkness. We agree that they ought to be a balance between the yet and the not yet: "So that there is still an attitude of 'not yet', while people being helped to experience God's redemption

*now*" (Okorochoa 1992: 177). That is, even though salvation is yet to be fully consummated, it is already in effect and Christians must be helped to experience the full benefits of that which is already in effect.

Indeed the challenge that stands before the African Christian theologian always is this one:

... to learn how through prayer, patience, study and dependence on the Holy Spirit, he may help those who hear the Good News to learn to participate fully in the redemptive work of God in Christ in the world and appropriate its full benefits, while waiting "for the blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" at the eschaton (*ibid.*: 178).

The Gospel message does make it clear that the African Christian can enjoy practical privileges of their deliverance from the tyranny of darkness now in their present life. By affirming that believers have already been transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son, "Paul gives us an example of truly realised eschatology" (Bruce 1957:189). In other words, "That which in its fullness lies ahead of them has already become true in them" (*ibid.*). We agree with Bruce because Christ announced that he came to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord (Luke 4:19). He was not referring to a calendar year, but the "the era of salvation" (Morris 1988a: 117). Christian Africans, as already participants within that era are able to experience immediate deliverance from satanic encroachment. Although we want to be careful not to demand now what is reserved for us in heaven at the eschaton when Satan and all form of evil are completely obliterated, we note that the Lukan passage also strongly refers to our immediate situation. It is about *now, the very era of salvation*. In that scope Jesus expresses that he is deeply concerned with the literal, physical needs of men (cf. Acts 10:38), as with their direct spiritual needs (Nolland 1989:199). This means that the extent of deliverance is not limited to the pangs of hell. It applies to the evil spirits that hold the African in evil servitude. It means that Jesus Christ is sufficiently able to liberate the African Christians from the evil spirits that cause poverty, witchcraft, adultery, stealing, barrenness, sickness, the failure to secure a marriage and the like. Hendriksen (1979:259) points out that Jesus came "to save the entire man; body and soul." That is, the "promised blessings were both physical and spiritual" (*ibid.*). Where satanic powers are holding in serfdom God's people and frustrating their efforts to find peace, health and prosperity, Jesus Christ is sufficient to deliver them out of such conditions.

Yet this does not mean that Satan will not buffet the Christian. Certainly until the consummation of the eschaton when Satan is finally completely defeated the Christian will indeed encounter skirmishes with Satan. But the Christian has Christ as shepherd. The Bible speaks of Christ as the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11f) and the "shepherd the Guardian of [our] souls" (1Pet 2:25 cf. Rev 7:7). As such he protects, guides, heals and secures the Christian. He does this sufficiently. He shields, he guides and fights the Christian's battles so that they are emancipated out of the control, possession and use by

Satan. In light of this the African Christians must confidently rest in Christ, he is sufficient for their security from Satanic impingement.

### 5.3. In Christ

A prominent imagery of the Christian's life in Pauline theology is the 'in Christ' motif. The Christians are pictured as those 'in Christ'. This phrase has several meanings within Pauline theology, "which must be derived from the context in which it is found" (Neugebauer and Bouttier, in Lincoln 1990:21). Two meanings stand out, namely, indicating Christ as an instrument and as a location. In our work, we want to concentrate on the location meaning. Best (*in Op. cit.*) has pointed out that there are a considerable number of Pauline references indicating a local sense where "Christ is the 'place' in whom believers are and in whom salvation is." Adolf Deissmann, according to Dunn (1998:391), brought the formula to prominence as expressing "the most intimate possible fellowship of the Christian with the living Christ," Christ being conceived as a kind of atmosphere in which Christians live. In our work, we want to concentrate on this incorporational value and expound on its implications upon the African Christian. This is a life changing and security-instilling motif that has unfortunately only received the 'sidelong glance' (Dunn 1998: 395), of modern theology. In comparison with the amazing vigorous contemporary debate on justification by faith, the interest given even to the thoroughly and distinctively Pauline 'in Christ' and 'with Christ' motifs, has been modest and marginal (*ibid.*). The Christian has not been helped to realise the significance of being 'in Christ'.

#### 5.3.1. The Ambit of security.

The Pauline literature shows that Paul attached great significance to the reality of being 'in Christ.' It was a special soteriological position that deserved to be impressed upon the Christian believers. The Apostle Paul considered it urgent to help the community of believers to recognize the significance of their spiritual status in Christ. He admonished the Christians to consider themselves dead to sin, but "alive to God *in Christ Jesus*" (Rom 6:11). He communicates an awareness of freedom and courage to the Roman Christians because "there is no condemnation for those *in Christ Jesus*" (Rom 8:1). He is delighted to send warm regards to Prisca and Aquila for they are his fellow labourers "*in Christ Jesus*" (Rom 16:3) Andronias and Junias are special to him because they "came *in Christ Jesus* before [him]" (Rom 16:7). He wants the Ephesians Christians to cherish their salvific status because through it they have been transformed into God's workmanship "created *in Christ Jesus*" (Eph 2:10). He admonishes the Colossians to authenticate their reception of Christ by walking "*in Him ... being built up in Him*" (Col 2:6.7). In these few out of the many Pauline charges to Christians, Paul wants to evoke and infuse a positive attitude in them by underscoring this new 'in Christ' realm. He deliberately intends to enable

the Christians to realise that Christian conversion has placed them into a new world, the realm whose boundaries is Christ.

African Christians, too, should be helped to be aware that they are participants within the ambit of Christ. This is a development of the deliverance motif. They have been delivered out of and delivered into – out of the province of Satan, into the province of Christ. They have made an exit and an entrance. They are now located within the context of Christ. Dunn (1998: 400) captions the worth of this reality to Paul as follows: “Paul evidently felt himself to be caught up ‘in Christ’ and borne along by Christ. In some sense he experienced Christ as the context of all his being and doing. We can hardly avoid some sort of locative sense in the preposition ‘in’ at least in a number of cases”. Moule (1977: 62) expresses a consonant view: “For my part, I still find it difficult to escape the conclusion that a (metaphorically) locative sense is involved in at least a limited number of [Paul's ‘In Christ’] occurrences”. Jesus Christ is the locus of Christian experience, the sphere in which the Christian life is lived. This is an extraordinary way of describing the Christian's relationship to Christ. Lady Helen Oppenheimer registers her puzzlement at this Christian way of depicting relationships in these words: “Christians...take for granted the possibility of certain sorts of close relationships which are not on the face of it compatible with common sense” (in Moule 1977:48). This framework of thought is certainly in Pauline thought. Paul presents Christ as both a full person and a locus of existence. In this form of thought, the Christian life is lived in a sphere, which is in Christ; the Christians have been incorporated into him; the Christians are a living organism like a body, and at the same time Christ is that body with Christians as its parts. In grappling with this Pauline framework of thought, Moule (1977: 95) makes this conclusion:

All this is puzzling; but one thing seems to emerge clearly from it: Paul at least, had religious experiences in which the Jesus of Nazareth...was found to be more than individual. He was found to be an 'inclusive' personality. And this means, in effect, that Paul was led to conceive of Christ as any theist conceives of God; personal indeed, but transcending the individual category. Christ is like the omnipresent deity 'in whom we live and have our being' to quote the tag from Acts.

Like, Paul, the African Christians must realise that they are within the provincial ambit of Christ. They are in him and surrounded by him. Thus, they must envisage their reality as located within the boundaries of Jesus Christ. But, in what way is Christ who is a person also an ambit? By this, we mean that the believers are in the sphere of influence of Christ. The Christians' faith in Christ enters them into the sphere of his saving power and his sovereign authority. Christians have their being in the ambit of the presence of Christ's power and presence. It is like the sheep that are in the presence of their shepherd's providential care.



The loftiness of this status is best captioned in Col. 3:2, “you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God”. This is also expressed in Rom 6:3, where Christian baptism is likened to entrance in Christ’s death. Here the central idea is that of transformation of status and location. In other words, the Christian’s life is no longer housed in Satan but in the very context of Christ Jesus. This is essentially a place of safety. In this scheme of facts, Jesus Christ is effectively “the storehouse of all God’s secrets including the believers’ new life” (O’Brien 1982: 165). We must realize that this is not a futuristic aspect; it is a present condition<sup>1</sup>. The Christian stands presently positioned in the storehouse of God’s mysteries, Jesus Christ. The life of the Christian is hidden in the sphere or realm of Christ in God. Adding light to this important both soteriological and Christological aspect O’Brien (*ibid.*: 166) says: “... our life is hidden with Christ because we died with him and have been raised with him to new life; ‘in God’ because Christ himself has his being in God and those who belong to Christ have their being there too. Centred in God means that the hidden life is secure, unable to be touched by anyone”. O’Brien identifies the aspect of being rescued from a precarious position to a secured one. The spiritual condition of the Christians is secured in Christ. Thus African Christians must indeed grasp the fact that since they have died and resurrected with Christ “they now live within him and in him” (Bruce 1984:131). This is a position of security against all Satanic agents: “Their life is bound up with his, it is, in other words, laid up in safe keeping with him, securely hidden in God” (*ibid.*). It is because the Christians’ life is securely stored in Christ that Paul admonished them to “keep seeking things above” and to “set [their] minds on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col. 3:1-2). Indeed, secure Christians can be able to afford to be heavenly-minded. This is true in all respects of life, morally, cognitively and both physical and spiritual welfare. Being constantly mindful that one’s life is hidden in Christ increases the Christians’ desire for fellowship with him and dependence upon him for all solutions of this life. This means that to be in Christ is to be within the circumference of security.

### 5.3.2. The State of renewed life.

To be ‘in Christ’ also implies the newness or the renewal of one’s spiritual condition. Paul asserts: “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17). This signifies the beginning of a new life in a new world. This is also pictured in terms of a new birth. A new birth brings one into a New World to start a new life.

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<sup>1</sup> Gromacki (1973: 34-35) believes: "The child of God has already been blessed with all spiritual blessings. It is not that he will be blessed in the future or that he has received a few divine favours. All blessings are his now...These are the blessings of his position before God as a saved person...They are an integral part of the eternal salvation that God has given, not an accessory or a fringe benefit. They constitute the character of salvation. By this he means that the Christian stands secured in Christ now even in his present condition.

Christian conversion is a transforming experience; it imparts a new life and effects a new creation. This state of newness is further illustrated by Paul in Romans 6:4 as follows: “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life”. The state of renewed life is epitomized in death and resurrection. The conversion of Christians marks their death and resurrection; their death and rebirth; their end and a new beginning – in short conversion eventuates in the transformation or recreation of the Christians. They die to their former life under the rule of Satan and resurrect to a new life lived under the authority of Jesus Christ. It is in this respect that Paul speaks of the Christians as new creatures, for they have undergone a process of destruction and reaction. They have been born anew. They have been rescued from the regimentation of darkness and placed in Christ’s territory; therein they have undergone transformation and recreation. Thus, having entered into Christ, Christians have entered into a state of regenerated life.

This aspect should engender a strong feeling of security among African Christians as it signifies a separation between the former life out of Christ and the new life in Christ. The life they lived out of Christ under the dominion of Satan exposed them to all forms of satanic domination and botheration. Their former life, then, was a cursed life. But the new life in Christ is a blessed life, freed from the aggravations; the spells of angry ancestors; the sting of the avenging spirits ‘*uzimu*’; the enslaving dominion of demonic powers and all life threatening evil powers. That this is a new life as well an embarkation from one empire to another is attested by the common demonic manifestations at many baptismal sessions. Testimonies are abounding on demonic manifestations during baptismal sessions as some evil spirits try to refrain their hosts from baptism because they will become inaccessible to them once they are in Christ. Furthermore, many African Christians have testified of the positive differences that occurred in their lives consequent to their conversion. Those that were under the influence of evil spirits that induced in them such evil deeds as promiscuity, stealing and fits of rage many times express experiencing liberation upon their conversion. Those that were under the ravaging working of the avenging spirits, that were threatening to obliterate their families and disrupting peace, health, progress and prosperity have also testified of the abrogation of these operations of the evil spirits immediately after their conversion. In many spheres of the African Church, there are moving testimonies on the release from satanic powers realised upon entering Christ. Such Christian Africans see themselves as having entered in a new state of a renewed and blessed life. Mrs. Miriam Hore makes the example of such testimonies as follows:

The study of the life of Christ in the New Testament studies has changed my being. I am now a liberated person in Christ. Wherever I go in this world I am *not just a person*, but a follower of Christ. I have given up the things of this world. *Thus there can be no accusations of witchcraft against*

*me, and even if people should accuse me it does not matter, because I am saved, protected, by God.* (cited in Mugabe 1991:344).

In this testimony, this African Christian expresses the freedom and the new release of life she has found in Christ. In Christ she realised a free life. In Christ she has been transformed into a new person with a glorious value. A similar sentiment is expressed by Mercy Oduyoye (1986:349) who portrays salvation in these words: God snatches us away, separates us from the oppressive environment, breaks off unjust relationships and tears down dehumanising structures (Ps 35:17; 136:24; Dan 6:27-28). Perhaps she is seeing this in purely horizontal terms, but it is vertically true also. In other words, when we enter into Christ as Christians we become recreated. We are cut off from those spiritually enslaving structures. We must not confuse this with refurbishing. It is much more than mending; as an aspect of rebirth and recreation, it can only be accurately expressed in terms of death, burial and resurrection; or death and rebirth; and destruction and recreation. Thus the African Christian convert is a new creature in the realm of Christ.

In addition, this aspect should transform the Christian Africans' view of their existence. African Christians should perceive themselves as in a new life and in a new realm of existence. They are in "a quite different kind of life, determined not by their old fears and loyalties but by their new and primary loyalty to Christ and by the enabling which comes from on high" (Dunn 1996:166). They must loyally cling to Christ, and live a life that is in keeping with this renewed state of life. If their death with Christ severed the links that bound them to the old world order, which imposed great fear and insecurity on them, African Christians must recognise that their resurrection with Christ has "established new links – links with a new and heavenly order, with that spiritual kingdom in which Christ their Lord [is] sovereign, ruling from the place of supremacy to which He [has] been raised at God's right hand" (Bruce 1957:258). They are no longer in a position of vulnerability their renewed state of life is "bound up in the bundle of the living with their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Hendriksen 1964:141). It is a renewed state of life that is secured by Christ from all spiritual enemies.

### 5.3.3. Relationship with Christ

To be 'in Christ' is to be in a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is an aspect of a union and a relationship. The Apostle Paul is famous for emphasising, sometimes in graphic terms, the nature of the relationship of the Christian to Christ. His motivations for doing this are to impregnate in them absolute exclusive confidence and dependence on Christ only. Paul is with aplomb concerning Christ's absolute sufficiency for all the salvific needs of the Christians, regardless of their nature and magnitude. By impressing in the Christians that they are in a relationship with Christ he hopes to drive them to the point of rescinding all trust and confidence from all forms of securities that are not related to Christ.

The Christians able to do this are those who are certain of their union with Christ. This relationship is so uniquely profound it cannot be expressed in vertical or horizontal terms but in locative terms: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Paul describes this relationship in terms of being fused into Christ or being submerged into him to such an extent that Christ's life becomes ours and our life his. We are in Christ and he is in us. In this he means that just as we have received him as our Lord and Saviour (Col. 2:6), he has also received us as his people.

In impressing the uniqueness of the relationship of Christ and the Christians he further speaks of the Christians as those that God "has made... alive together with Christ... and raised up with him and seated with him in the heavenly places" (Eph 2:6,7). This is a relationship in which the Christians' life is hidden in Christ to the extent that Christ “is our life” (Col. 3:4). After contemplating on this Colossian passage, H. M. Carson (1983:80) draws this point: “Christ is our very life. It is not only that He is its source, but He lives in us, so that our new life is really His life in us”. This also indicates the continued presence and companionship of Christ with the Christian. If Christ has become our life it means that Christians can never be in a situation where they are out of the presence of Christ. In other words, this is a relationship where the Christian is wholistically immersed in the presence and power of Christ<sup>2</sup>. Says Dunn (1998:910), “The condition of ‘in Christ’ was brought about by being brought ‘into Christ’ and sustained by being ‘with Christ’”. In other terms the Christian is enveloped in the full presence of Christ.

The ramifications of this aspect in the African Church have an empowering effect. The ‘in Christ/Christ in you’ motifs communicate Christ’s continued activity in the life of the African Christian believer. If Christ is in me and I am in him then there is no situation that I face alone. I encounter all situations with him and in his power. It means that the Christian dwells in the securing presence of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the African Christians must be reminded that the living Christ is united with them so that they enjoy his full-companionship in their entire lives. They are immersed into his presence. The one upon whom all their life, needs are dependent, the very one who is the indispensable essence of their faith and existence; the exclusive author and source of their faith and existence; is the one in whom they are enveloped having themselves clothed in him (Gal 3:27). They are secure in this realm from all forms of Satanic infringements. In him they are inside the parameters of security.

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<sup>2</sup> The locative sense is reinforced in this point.

#### 5.4. Adoption into God's family.

##### 5.4.1. The Status of Sonship.

The status accorded to the Christians is that of children of God. To the many that received Christ, declares John (1:12), "to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". At conversion the Christians are conferred the authority to regard themselves the children of God. In Christ the Christians are rescued from a position of lostness and granted conservation in the family of God. This is a glorious position; John desires all Christians to be aware of it and to cherish it. Hence, he announces: "See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children – and so, in fact, we are," (1John 3:1a TEV). God considers all Christians as his precious children. This is a position of security; the African Christians must cherish it and be transformed by it.

This status of Sonship is through the process of adoption. This soteriological position is well outlined in the Pauline epistles. Writing to the Ephesian community of faith, Paul outlines the spiritual blessings already received by the Christians in Christ. And one such blessing is the adoption into the family of God: "In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind of intention of his will". (Eph. 1:5). God before he created the universe predetermined that all those who will receive Christ, as Lord and Saviour will be granted the status of Sonship in the family of God. Paul presents this as an already obtained reality by all Christians: "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom 8:14). This is a position that all Christians have already attained. Paul expounds further saying: "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:15,16). That this is a glorious position comes into light when we consider the Christian's former pre-conversion position. Then the Christians position was of one dead in sins, and by "nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). They were enemies of God, candidates of the full wrath of God. The tyrannic master, Satan in whose realm they were held sway, further compounded this woebegone state. They were under a brutal regime and their future prospects lay in the wrath of God. But, now they stand as children of God with full rights.

The idea of adoption is not a positive one in Africa, and thus we may miss the significance of this aspect. Even though the extended family unit is a strong reality, the aspect of adopting a stranger-child is not favourable among Africans. Africans are much more willing to adopt a relative's child than a stranger-child. Even a stepchild is rarely given full recognition. The African culture is

uncompromising, and at times even ruthless when it comes to adoption of stranger-children. For instance, in Ndebele there are such names as “*Izalizelwe*”<sup>3</sup> (lit – the one who came already borne) to refer to the child born to the other spouse before the marriage. The essence of this term is that the concerned child does not really belong to this family, at all; he was already born when this family unit began<sup>4</sup>. This is not a kind word; it is ruthlessly derogatory. The situation is obviously worse for a stranger-child. Such a one is viewed with great suspicion: his ancestral spirits may torment his hosts, or worse he may bring curses to the new family or extend his original family's curses to his adoptive family. There is fear that in the event of spiritual troubles the new family will not be able to appease his ancestral spirits since they are ignorant of their religious ways. Furthermore, there is likelihood that the ancestral spirits of the new family may reject the adopted child. At the same time, there is possibility that the adopted child's ancestral spirits may refuse their descendent to be adopted. Africans strongly believe that their ancestral spirits never allow their blood descendents to settle '*egangeni*' (lit. in the bush, but often used colloquially to describe being away from one's respective family unit.). Thus, in African culture the idea of adopting a stranger-child is not a positive one. Those that do it are often warned of its possible sour ramifications.

We must nonetheless not allow our African negative views on adoption to blind us to the significance of being adopted into God's family. New Testament scholars are in concert that the Apostle Paul is not employing a Jewish idea, but a Greco-Roman one. A.T. Lincoln (1990:125), says ‘adoption as sons’ is a term taken from Greco-Roman law where it referred to the adoption as sons of those who were not so by birth. According to Stott (1979:39), the Roman law is part of the background to Paul’s writing. In this Greco-Roman context, adoption was an honourable thing. In the Roman world, says MacAthur (1987:109) adoption was an honored custom that gave special dignity and family membership to those who were not born into a family. He further adds that in most cases “a wealthy, childless man would adopt a young slave, who would trade his slavery for sonship, with all its concomitant privileges” (*ibid.*). It is in this respect that the adoption of the Christian is glorious: the Roman wealthy childless man adopted a child to redeem himself from the shame of being childless; but God has adopted the Christians to redeem them from the shame of being Godless and hopeless. The Roman man adopted for his own glory and benefit. God adopts us for our own benefit and glory. Of course, in the process God benefits and finds glory, but the intention is our salvation.

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<sup>3</sup> The Shona word is Mbvandiripo, meaning one who was already there before the family unit began. It is also derogatory.

<sup>4</sup> Such a child if he or she was born from the mother could not claim from the stepfather's inheritance.

#### 5.4.2. The benefit of newness.

Adoption into God's family signifies the attainment of newness. Another way of looking at the aspect of adoption is to see it as a process of recreation or making anew. In this aspect of newness, there are profound security connotations for African Christians. First, though, we must expound on the newness factor. To be adopted into God's family is to undergo radical transformation and radical translocation. This is how William Barclay (1976: 80) describes this: "The person who had been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and *completely lost all rights in his old family*. In the eyes of the law he *was a new person, so new was he that even all debts and obligations connected with his previous family were abolished as if they had never existed*" (Emphasis added). This means that the process of adoption is one of death and birth. The adopted child ceases or 'dies' to his or her old name and family ties and is 'reborn' into a new family and a new name. At the risk of over stretching this motif, we must take special note of the point raised by Barclay above. That is, just as in the eyes of the Roman law the adopted child became a new person, to the extent of the cancellation of all debts and connections to the old family unit, similarly, when one is converted to Christianity a new family unit under God and a new self takes effect. In the African context this means breaking ties with one's spiritual history and starting a new one. It also means breaking away even from clan curses. The old status and its evil records are abolished and put away as if they had never existed. Explains Barclay (*ibid.*), "We were absolutely in the power of sin and of the world; God, through, Jesus took us out of that power into his; and that adoption wipes out the past and makes us new". Adoption makes us new in all spiritual respects.

We must not allow our African cultural view of adoption to blind us from the beauty in this motif. Generally, in African traditional view, a person can never be separated from his ancestry. As we have pointed out the main fear of adoption in Africa is the risk of being haunted by the adopted child's natural ancestral spirits. There is also the risk that the ancestral spirits from where the adopted child originated may at some time later take stock of their descendents and seek out those who are missing or lost to bring them back home. The process of doing this usually brings a lot of trouble on the family who has adopted the child. A common phenomenon is for the child to experience serious ill health and when taken to the *isangoma* (*diviner*), the family will be advised that '*izinyoka zakibo kamntwana zifuna abuyele ekhaya*' (the ancestral spirits from where the child originated from are looking for him, they want him to come back home where he belongs). Another development would be for the ancestral spirits of the adopting family to reject the adopted child. In other words, in the African context the adoption of a stranger-child is a potentially troublesome aspect. These two aspects acutely trouble many African Christians. They fear that the ancestral spirits they abandoned when they converted into Christianity will follow then and traumatize them into going back to their traditional religions. They also fear that

Jesus Christ may later reject them on account of their Africanness. There is a consuming feeling of uncertainty in many African Christians: ‘What if at a later stage Christ will say I don’t know you?’ or ‘What if Christ is not really for Africans?’ Thus spiritual insecurity in African Christianity is a consuming reality that oscillates between the fear of being traumatized by jilted ancestral spirits who want to maintain their hold on the African and possible rejection by Christ on account of one’s Africanness. Consequently, to safeguard themselves against possible losses Africans choose to syncretise African Traditional Religions and Christianity.

We must view the soteriological position in Christ from its Greco-Roman background. This is a motif that encourages the African Christians to fully appreciate and enjoy their security in Christ. This motif has a double meaning of transformation and translocation. In the latter sense, the African converts have been made anew in Christ Jesus. They no longer are just Africans they have been destroyed and recreated anew in Christ. Their spiritual status is new they are full Christians, fully accepted by Christ their Saviour and Lord. This transformed state is also a lofty state:

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba Father!” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. (Rom 8:14-17).

In this passage, Paul also addresses the negative aspect in the African view of adoption. In the African traditional context, an adopted child rarely attained full rights. This is when the common proverbial saying ‘Blood is thicker than water’ became a reality. For instance, in deciding the heir, subsequent to a man’s death, an uproar erupted when the adopted son was appointed heir. In any event, the chances of him being considered for inheritance were rather slim. The preferred thing would be for one of the late man’s blood brothers or one of their own sons, - not the adopted son – to be appointed heir. The situation is different in Christ; the African convert has the complete rights of a legitimate son. This is what Paul means in the above passage. The lofty aspect of this is that all Christians are fellow heirs with Christ. They are sharing God’s inheritance with Christ, their elder brother. The African Christians need to be aware that they have been transformed from the enemies of God, the very target of his wrath, to be his sons and daughters not only with a new name, a new legal standing and a new family – relationship, “but also a new image, the image of Christ (Rom 8:29)” (Hendriksen 1968:79).

The Christians’ status of adoption as sons also means translocation. Adoption “transfers the enfranchised soul from the serfdom of Satan’s slave-camp to the family circle of God’s favour and invests the believer with its heavenly citizenship and untold privileges” (Simpson 1957:26-27). This



means that the Christian is removed from the location ruled by Satan into one ruled by God. The Christian is in a location where he has a relationship with Christ and God, being empowered by the Spirit. In this translocation aspect is the benefit of liberation. Adoption into God's family means liberation from tyrannical regimes. The Christian is rescued from a position of vulnerability and placed in God's family where he finds safety. Hebert Lathe, an American preacher, in these words, captures the full glory of this position:

The Christian title to heaven as joint-heir with Christ is unchallengeable. It is not because God is indulged or because all sinners will sometime and somehow be brought home. It is because God for unfathomable reasons chose him and raised him up from the grave wherein he lay bound and loosed him from sin and gave him a new heart and made him a son forever. It is all of grace (in Simpson 1957:27)

Salvation from Christ is not freedom from sin it is freedom from the complete hold of Satan which also manifests itself in slavery to demonic powers. Thus, to add to Lathe's observation, God for unfathomable reasons has chosen to translocate the Christian from Satan's serfdom into his realm to live as a part of the company of his family.

If the African Christian has been transformed into God's child and translocated out of the Satanic realm into God's realm it means that he is now accountable to God only. His obligations to the ancestral spirits have ceased. In Christ he has obligations that are God-centred. In the Roman law, says Barclay (1976: 80), "When the adoption was complete it was complete indeed". It marked a complete transition from one family status to the other. It marked the complete cessation of the debts and obligations connected to the former family. As Morris (1988b: 245) points out, "Becoming a Christian is a decisive step; it is the beginning of faith and it means the end of sin". As the beginning of faith it does not only mean an end to sin: in the African context becoming a Christian is the end of all religious obligations to the clan traditional religious authorities. Now the African Christian is exclusively accountable to God. He is now accountable and obliged to God his Heavenly Father; not to the ancestral spirits any longer.

This also means the end of the sting of the curses incurred before conversion. A question always posed by many African Christians is whether the avenging spirits such as '*uzimu*' can follow the Christian after his conversion. The implication of our motif suggests the contrary. If adoption means that the adopted child became a legally new person, having lost all rights in the former family it means that curses incurred prior to conversion lose their effect at conversion. As Barclay (1976:80) earlier told us (in 5.4.2), the Christian's former debts and obligations connected with the previous family are "abolished as if they had never existed". Indeed, it seems that if God can completely cancel all the

Christian's former sins he is able to cancel all the spiritual curses incurred by the Christian regardless of their nature and magnitude. God does not just only liberate the Christian from the power of Satan, he also liberates the Christian from all the curses inflicted by the avenging spirits and all evil clan or family spiritual heritage.

#### 5.4.3. The benefit of fatherly care.

To be adopted by God is to be positioned in the sphere of God's fatherly care. Through Jesus and in Jesus Christ the Christian is ushered into the ambit of God's fatherly care. As an eternally loving God, he is constantly present with the Christian to guide and protect him. This is what Erickson (1992:311) means when he says, "Adoption means that the Christian is the recipient of God's fatherly care." In traditional African thinking, God is strictly related to as the *Umdali* (the Creator) and *uNkulunkulu* (the Supreme Great One). He is strictly contemplated creator and administrator of mankind and the universe. One may say that in traditional African religious thinking God is conceived in forensic terms not in personal relational terms. He is imaged as one always carrying the judge's nook and not stretching out loving arms. It is strange to speak of the fatherhood of God in Africa Traditional Religions, for he does not deal directly with mankind but only through the ancestral hierarchy. In Christianity, the image of God and the Christian has a strong personal relational aspect. Indeed, God is the Supreme One, the Great creator of the entire universe but he also relates to the Christian community as a father to his children. In other terms, God attends and administers the African Christians as both their Creator and Father.

Furthermore, to say that African Christians are beneficiaries of God's fatherly care means that the barrier between God and them has been pulled down. God no longer relates to them from a remote distance, but is now in a close personal relationship. That is, Jesus Christ has placed them into a direct personal communion with God. This motif in Africa is best exhibited by the relationship of the earthly father and his son. In African thinking, the relationship between the father and his daughters is usually a distant one. The relationship between father and daughter is often inhibited taboos and respect. But the son and the father can have a mutual relationship. In that union there is transparency and close communion. Thus, in thinking of our sonship in Christ we must think of it in terms of ideal relationship of the earthly father and his son. To picture the relationship or the status of the Christian in this motif speaks of a position that is well secured.

## 5.5 The temple of the Holy Spirit.

### 5.5.1 The Christian as the temple.

Christological security is essentially inclusive of the work of the Holy Spirit. In Scriptural terms the work of Christ in the life of the Christian can also be imaged as the work of the Holy Spirit. There is an important extent to which christological benefits cannot be discussed without mentioning the work of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament presents the salvation of humankind as the work of the Trinity. In John 16:5-15 Jesus tells his disciples that when he returns to God who sent him the Holy Spirit will take over from him to complete God's salvation plan. Announcing his imminent return to heaven, Jesus tells his disciples that the Holy Spirit will replace him (John 16:5-15). In John 14: 16, Jesus says the Spirit is the *paracletos*, the one called alongside to help. This word as used by John has a forensic focus, meaning "the witness-advocate who testifies to Christ" (Ferguson 1996: 36). In Biblical ancient culture the witness-advocate was not a professionally trained lawyer but "someone whose relationship to the accused enabled him to speak with authority; an intimate friend" (*ibid.*: 37). The Holy Spirit does this for Christ because of the eternal relationship between them, which is inseparable. Therefore, "when he (the Spirit) comes to Christians to indwell them, he comes as the Spirit *of Christ* in such a way that to possess him is to possess Christ himself, just as to lack him is to lack Christ" (*ibid.*).<sup>5</sup> The work of the Holy Spirit is on Christ's behalf. In Pauline writings, that the salvation of humankind is the work of the Triune God forms the basis of Paul's doctrine of salvation. One of the examples of this Pauline view of salvation is in Galatians 4:4-6. According to that passage God sent his Son to redeem mankind and he sent the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the redeemed to confirm and accentuate their new status of Sonship. After examining many such Pauline passages, Fee (1996:44) makes this conclusion: "The point of all this is that salvation in Christ is not simply a theological truth, predicted on God's prior action and the historical work of Christ. Salvation is an experienced reality, made so by the person of the Spirit coming into our lives. One simply cannot be a Christian in any Pauline sense without the effective work of the Trinity".

The biblical illustration of this soteriological work of God in the Christian is the temple image. The Christian is imaged as the sanctuary of God. The Apostle Paul uses this image to refer both to the new status of the individual Christian and the corporate body of Christian believers. The soteriological image of the Christian and the church is the 'temple of the Holy Spirit'. This is an absolutely

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<sup>5</sup> C.F.D. Moule (1977: 104-105) questions the prevalent tendency of speaking of the Holy Spirit as a replacement of Christ: "Both in John and Acts, the Spirit communicates and extends the presence of Christ. And it is more accurate to say this than to say the Spirit takes the place of Christ. The experience of the Spirit by Christians does not (and this is my [his] point) eclipse their experience of the presence of the living Christ himself. Quite the contrary.... For the Christian, the divine presence is not found through the mere example or memory of Jesus, neither is it called "the Spirit of God" without further qualification: rather, it is Jesus himself *by* the Holy Spirit".

christological position because it is through Jesus Christ's salvific work that Christians have attained this status. This is a status that only belongs to those who are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, the status of the temple of the Holy Spirit is in the package of the blessings reserved for those 'in Christ'. The Christians as the corporate body of the community of the Christian faith are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul sternly remonstrates against the schismatics in the Corinthian church, for, as he sees it, they are not just causing disunity, they are actually rending the temple of God (1Cor. 6: 9), the very temple of God in dwelt by his Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:16). The individual Christians are bricks or stones that constitute the temple indwelt by God. The important point in this motif as far as christological security is concerned, is that the Christian is not just a mere individual but just like a brick in the building he is an absolutely essential member of Christ's body, the church, the habitant of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit also inhabits or indwells the individual Christian. Again this is a Pauline theological tenet. In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, the Apostle Paul charges Christians to refrain from immorality for their bodies are not only members of Christ but also the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in them from God. This indicates that any immoral behaviour tantamounts to the desecration of God's temple. The Holy Spirit indwells the individual Christian believer and the corporate body of believers. In both 1 Corinthians 3:17 and 6:19 the Apostle prefers the Greek word *naos* to *hieron*. Perhaps he deliberately wants to impress this important point articulated by Morris (1985:67), who points out that *hieron* refers to all the precincts while *naos* denotes the shrine proper, the sanctuary. This means that the Christian's body and the community of the believers are, in that particular respect the "actual sanctuary, the place of the deity's dwelling" (Fee 1987:146). To realise the significance of this aspect we must look at the temple significance of the Old Testament. The Mosaic Tabernacle and the temple both signified the actual dwelling of God and his real presence among his people. The tabernacle and the temple typified the presence and the availability of God to His people. These were symbols of security and life. Applied to the Christians, this means that, in the same manner that the tabernacle in the wandering Israelites and the temple in Jerusalem both 'housed' the presence of the living God, so the Holy Spirit is housed in the believer's body (*ibid.*: 147.). As Barnett (1997:349) points out, under the old covenant the temple of God was the Sanctuary of Yahweh, the God of Israel; but under the new covenant, the temple of God is the congregation of holy ones, those set apart in Jesus Christ and made so by God's indwelling presence, the Holy Spirit.

The Christian has replaced the temple as the sanctuary of God. The presence of God now resides no longer in the temple. It is in the Christian. Another way of stating this status of the Christian is using the picture of the shrine. This means that the physical body of the Christian is the shrine of the

indwelling Spirit. The salvation of Jesus Christ transforms the bodies of the Christians into God's shrines that form a one big shrine as the community of the faith, the church. This is a lofty status, since the Greek word used to articulate this status of the Christian is *naos* which, means the sacred shrine or the very sanctuary, the place where deity dwells, this dignifies the Christian's life. It ultimately means, "wherever we go we are the bearers of the Holy Ghost, the temples in which God is pleased to dwell" (Morris 1985:99). Pressed further, this means "our bodies are not simply physical shells of remarkable composition: they are a temple of the Holy Spirit" (Prior 1985: 103). We can further press this image and say with Morris (1985:100): "And because the *temple* is God's and because the believer is that *temple* it follows that the believer is God's."

#### 5.5.2. Testimony of exclusive ownership

The presence of the Holy Spirit also serves as the testimony of Christ's exclusive ownership of the Christian. Paul tells the Ephesians Christians that subsequent to their reception of the gospel of salvation in Christ they were "sealed in Him (Christ) with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13). The Holy Spirit is a seal to demonstrate exclusive ownership to God. The Holy Spirit is given to mark us as belonging to Jesus just as the seal on a letter or brand on a sheep identifies it as mine (Green 1975: 81). He is the mark of ownership and identity. The seal '*uphavu*' is an important element in the Ndebele culture. The Ndebele domestic animals such as cattle, goats, sheep and donkeys have '*uphavu*' – a distinctive mark on the animals' ears and '*umtshiso*' -brand mark on the animals' sides. In one of his weekly columns on Ndebele cultural heritage in the Bulawayo Sunday News Magazine (25 July 2004: 3) Phathisa Nyathi says that to the AmaNdebele, "It was vitally important for a herd man to identify each and every beast positively". He continues, "At the highest level each man and his household had his distinctive ear notch, *uphavu*. That was achieved by cutting one or both ears in a particular fashion – each with a particular name" (*ibid.*). Among the AmaNdebele, apart from being an identification mark, *uphavu* was an essential security feature. If the animal strayed the searching Ndebele herd man would give the description of its *uphavu* when asking if other herdsman had seen the animal. Should it be stolen the '*uphavu*' would be used as evidence when claiming the animal.

In the same way, the seal of the Holy Spirit upon Christians distinguishes them as Christ's possessions. The Holy Spirit is the seal that Christians belong to God through the Salvation of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 1: 21-22 Paul writes: "He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us in God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge". That is, when God placed us in Christ he anointed us and marked or branded us as his with the brand of the Holy Spirit. The imagery of the seal "derives from a wide variety of transactions in the Greco-Roman world, most often in the form of a stamped imprint in wax bearing the 'seal' of the owner or sender." (Fee 1994: 292). A seal of

this nature primarily “denoted ownership and authenticity; this thereby guaranteed the protection of the owner” (*ibid.*). This sense is in both the 2 Corinthians 1: 21-22 and Ephesians 1:13-14 passages. The Spirit sets the Christians apart as God’s possessions guaranteed of a glorious inheritance. As Stott (1979: 45) expresses it, “God’s people are God’s possession.” The Holy Spirit bears witness to that fact.

This is an important security motif in Africa because it denotes God’s acceptance of the African Christians by God. The Holy Spirit is essentially a symbol of fully belonging to God’s people. Adding more shades to this picture Paul assures the Christians saying, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom 8:14). This is a repetition of a fact that is earlier negatively asserted as follows; “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Rom 8:9b). The seal of the Holy Spirit is essential in distinguishing those who belong to Christ from those who do not. This is of crucial value that Paul states it negatively and positively; namely, those who have the Holy Spirit are children of God; those who do not have the Holy Spirit are not only his children, above this they do not even constitute a part of his possessions. The Holy Spirit is differently referred to as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ essentially to show that he is not working independently but as the Triune community member. This effectively means that this is the work of God himself. Thus, the Holy Spirit is a pledge, a seal of belonging to God in Christ. Paul wants to drive this point home, thus he adds: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

In this respect, the Holy Spirit also assures the Christians of their status in Christ. Green (1975:81) says the ‘seal of the Spirit is meant to assure us that we belong to Christ, and to let others also know the fact’. There is need for African Christians to fully understand that Christ has demonstrated his full acceptance of them by tagging them with his Holy Spirit and by engraving his mark in their hearts. This is a mark of protection not of harm, observes Hendriksen (1968:91), “The seal not only assures us that we are his – it also assures us of his protection”. The Ephesian Christians are commanded against grieving the Holy Spirit of God by whom they “were sealed for the day of redemption”(Eph 4:30). That is, the seal of the Holy Spirit is the security mark and a guarantee for eternal redemption. Nevertheless, we must understand that the reality of redemption begins now, today at the moment of conversion. If he is able to redeem them from the eternal damnation then he is able to redeem them from earthly Satanic impingements upon their lives. In Christ the Christians are divinely imprinted with the seal of the Holy Spirit on their lives to signal that they are God’s possession from now and forever (Fee 1994: 716). This is an authentication act (*ibid.*) that proclaims their protection in Christ until the day he (Christ) takes complete possession of them. Marking them as exclusively his,

God is pledging “he will protect the Christian through the trials and testing of this life until he takes final possession of [them] on the day of redemption” (O’Brien 1999: 120). The African Christians, too, are part of this soteriological economy with full rights. Their security is guaranteed. Satan cannot claim them as his; they do not have his seal but God’s. Satan has no rights to them for they are not his, but God’s possession authenticated by the Holy Spirit. Many times the redemption of Christ has been confined to redemption from sin only. This seems to do injustice to the ‘seal’ motif. The seal of the Holy Spirit upon the Christian Africans effectively announces total redemption from all Satanic harnesses. In saying this we are mindful of the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ aspect of redemption. However, even though Satan’s power on the earth is yet to be finally crushed there is a true and strong sense in which the Christian has been set free from him and is now God’s possession with his brand mark.

### 5.5.3. Pledge of God’s empowering presence.

The motif of the Christian as the temple of the Holy Spirit serves as a pledge that God is within the Christian empowering him to conquer Satan. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is synonymous with the presence of the power of God in the Christian. Jesus Christ, before his Ascension, ordered his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, promised to them by God. This would be a watershed moment: “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). A careful examination of the disciples of Christ before and after their baptism with the Holy Spirit reveals that the coming of the Holy Spirit was a watershed mark. The disciples in the gospels are strongly characterized with timidity, fear and a visible lack of expertise. The same company of Christ’s followers is a transformed lot in Acts after immersion into the Holy Spirit. That they are men powered by God’s power is bare for all to see. Inhabited by God’s Holy Spirit they literally seize the world by storm. The Holy Spirit was God’s transforming presence.

Thus, the temple motif is the assurance that God is present at work in the lives of the Christians. This means that the Christians are not left to live their faith and exercise it on their own strength. It is important for African Christians to realise that God has not saved them and left them to live their salvation on their own human strength. God himself by the Spirit is in them. The Spirit represents God’s full presence and power working in them. The Holy Spirit in us means that our present lives in Christ are “empowered by God who dwells among us and in us” (Fee 1994:8). Indeed, if the living God is truly the God of power it means then “by the Spirit the power of the living God is present with and for us” (*ibid.*). This is a point that the Elder wants his children in the faith to fully grasp: “You are from God, little children and have overcome them (the forces of the anti-Christ): because greater is He

who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). The one who is in the Christians transcends the devil in all power. If the One in Christians is greater than the devil in the world then Christians have no reason to live in fear of Satan and demonic legions. The Christians in Africa must recognise that they are not facing life alone. God is accompanying them. If God’s empowering presence dwells in them who then can stand against them? Since they are in Christ the power of God tabernacles in them.

## 5.6. Conclusion.

The motifs we have espied are portraitures of the position of the Christians in the economy of Christ's salvation. This is how Christians stand in Christ. This is what the Christians have been turned into. Since salvation is the work of Jesus Christ, it means then that the above motifs are pictures of the products of Christ's salvific work. The central line in all these motifs is that, at the occurrence of conversion, Jesus Christ transforms and translocates the saved Christian. In simple terms: when Jesus Christ saves his people he gives them a new nature and places them in his kingdom. In there, they are granted perfect salvation. David Wells (1989: 39) describes what happens:

Conversion...inaugurates a life devoted to serving God. Conversion is not an isolated event but is related to the entire life of faith that follows from it. It is the moment of birth into a new life. It is like a doorway into a room. A person is born to live, not to linger on the edge of the womb in time limbo. A person opens a door not for the pleasure of standing forever on the threshold but to enter the room.

Wells is describing for us the transformation and the translocation that occurs at conversion. The African Christians need to realise that as recipients of Christ's full salvation they are not on the periphery, they are right inside of the salvation realm in the absolute sense. The motifs we have examined affirm of a birth into a new life; they warrant of entrance into a new realm of salvation. For they describe the transformation and the translocation of Christians - even African Christians. In light of these facts, the African Christians must find security in their salvation from Christ. The soteriological representations we have viewed are symbols of the African Christians' death to their former religious authority, regime and worldview into a new authority, regime and worldview that is ruled by Jesus Christ. This complete salvation is in secured borders. The ignorance of these facts creates insecurity in African Christians. The awareness of their status in Christ must spur them to a secure settlement in Christ who said: "And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me" (John 6: 39, NLT). At another occasion he declared:

"My sheep recognize my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. *No one will snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is*



*more powerful than anyone else. So no one can take them from me. The Father and I are one"* (John 10: 27-30, NLT, emphasis added).

## CHAPTER 6: THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY IN THE SECURED LIFE

### 6.1. Introduction

Christological security is an existential reality. We have discussed an issue that affects African Christians in their entire spectrum of existence as a matter of real life. Since the African people see spiritual enemies everywhere, they want to see and experience the security of Christ everywhere in their lives. Hitherto, we have insisted that Christological security is available to the African Christians. The discussion we have had so far outlines the details of this fact of Scripture. However, though Christological security is the exclusive work of Christ, the Christian is responsible for remaining within the secured boundaries. In this closing chapter of our discussion, we close by looking at the Christian's responsibility in the secured life. This means that Jesus Christ's defeat of Satan and the breaking down of the power of the demonic forces does not absolve the Christians from any responsibilities. We will realise that the Christians must also (6.2) maintain a Christocentric worldview, put on the armour of God (in 6:3) and remain steadfast in times of sufferings and trials (in 6:4) in order to taste the securing work of Christ in their lives.

### 6.2. Maintaining a Christocentric worldview.

The African Christian must maintain a worldview informed and empowered by Christ. Nash (1992:19) argues thus: "Putting on the right conceptual scheme, that is, viewing the world through the correct worldview, can have important repercussions for the rest of the person's understanding of events and ideas". Nash is affirming the importance and the necessity of a right worldview. The worldview (as we pointed out in Chap 3) is essential in life. In fact, we operate all our life from a particular worldview. Van der Walt (1994: 44) says, "A worldview is the bridge or link between faith and man's life in the world". By this he means that the worldview "is the link or channel between the deepest religious convictions of a person and his life in day to day reality" (*ibid.*). He adds, "Man [humankind] forms a worldview in keeping with his faith and then seeks to shape the world in accordance with this worldview. It is a vision of faith of life" (*ibid.*). The things we see, hear and govern our lives are in reality determined by our underlying worldviews. In other words, the worldview we have essentially affects what we see and how we approach life. Our worldview can deceive us and make unreal things seem real or vice versa. In Christian terms, anyone who wants to experience the presence and the work of Christ in their life must see the world through Christ. Christological security is an absolute reality; the awareness and the access to it is a matter of worldview. In other words, the religious consciousness of African Christians must be shaped by the presence of Christ. Herein, we are saying that African

Christians must realise that Christ is present in all their situations – be it in diseases, oppression, hunger, fear, and death.

Are we saying that the power of Christ in Africa depends on a person's awareness of it? No. Christ is at work in the African Church notwithstanding our awareness of or oblivion to it. However, the magnitude of our confidence in Christ's power and presence is directly proportionate to our awareness of it. This explains the Biblical writers' zeal and commitment in enlightening their fellow believers about spiritual issues. The message of Christ's salvation, for it to penetrate into the depths of the Africans' being and transform them must first enter their total worldview. In this, we are calling for the '*Christocising*' of the worldview of the African Christians. According to Bediako (1994: 96), accepting Jesus as our Saviour

“always involves making him at home in our spiritual universe and in terms of our religious needs and longings. So an understanding of Christ in relation to spirit-power in the Africa context is not necessarily less accurate than any other perception of Jesus Christ. The question is whether such an understanding faithfully reflects biblical revelation and is rooted in the true Christian experience.”

Although Bediako makes these remarks as a build-up to the Christ as ancestor Christology, these remarks also apply to the developing of a Christocentric worldview. In this he affirms the necessity of a worldview that is conscious of Christ's abiding presence in the African Church.

The African Christian must constantly maintain a worldview that sees the world through the victory of the Cross, the resurrection and the enthronement of Christ. By this we mean that the African Christian must realise that the evil and demonic spirits and the witches and other such satanic forces were rendered powerless by the death, resurrection and enthronement of Christ. There is urgent need for African Christians to realise that the victory of Christ at the Cross and his subsequent enthronement permeates all spheres of their lives – religiously and socially. This victory means that the African Christians are indeed able to face the world with confidence; for Jesus Christ, their Lord and Saviour conquered Satan and reigns forever.

### **6.3. Putting on the armour of God.**

In forensic terms, Jesus Christ has already overthrown Satan. However, the full substantiality of this conquest will be consummated at the eschaton when Satan and his entire regime are completely overturned. This means that although an already conquered enemy, until the eschaton, Satan still retains a measure of power and continues to harass the Christian community. The Bible is explicit about this transitory reality: “Your adversary, the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone

to devour” (1 Pet 5: 8b). In this scheme of things, the Christians stands assured that as long as they are in this world Satan will certainly attack them; they must be prepared for a counter-offensive. In stressing the severity of the matter, the Apostle Peter employs the highest fear-provoking – the prowling and roaring lion - the image that will stir up, in any normal person, the alertness of the highest level. As Warner (1991: 78) reminds us: “The warnings in the New Testament about conflict with Satan and demons are all addressed to believers”. He further assures us that this is a conflict in which Christians are all involved whether we want to or not (*ibid.*). As Boyd (1997: 235) points out even Jesus and the disciples did not see this “present *kosmos*...as an Edenic garden in which God’s will was already being sovereignly carried out sometimes bringing blessings and sometimes bringing curses to its inhabitants. Rather in good apocalyptic fashion, this *kosmos* was understood to be a veritable war zone in which the sovereignty of God had to be established over against formidable forces of evil by faith and prayer”. It is important for African Christians to realise this fact in Christianity.

As long as they tarry in this world before the eschaton, Satan will attack them in one form or another. Affirms Dickason (1987: 105), “There is no doubt Satan and demons attack Christians.... Some do not recognise the full range of activities leveled against the children of God because they think that salvation automatically protects us from all sorts of evil. This simply is not so.” Hence, the Petrine plea: “Be of sober spirit be on the alert” (1 Pet 5:8a). ). The New Testament is filled with many such warnings, calling on the Christians to have a warfare frame of mind. Herein is assurance that Satan is hunting for the Christians and seeks to destroy them utterly. Thus the Christians must be on guard; they sleep to their own peril as far as Satan is concerned. The Christians are instructed to be on the alert, ready for defence: “Put on the full armour of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). This command means that “there is still work to be done, and the church is the means by which it is to be done” (Boyd 1997: 239). This charge to put on the full armour of God is in reality an order to fall-in for battle parade. In that text is a complete battle operation order that should ultimately result in the issuing of battle orders: ‘advance and open fire’. It is important to note that Christians are ordered to put on the full armour of God as fighters themselves in a real sense not just armour bearers. They must engage the enemy in battle. This explicitly emphasizes that the Christians are also responsible for their security in Christ. Dickason (1987: 99) maintains that it is definitely the believers who heed and obey the Scriptural warnings and walk in fellowship with Christ that are secure and empowered to prevail over the threats of the evil one. He insists: “Christ will guard him from that as the believer guards himself from evil with the provisions from God.” (*ibid.*). As they live in the physical world now before the eschaton, they are in an existing struggle. This struggle is not against flesh and blood “but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). Thus being in Christ does

not immunise the Christian against Satanic attacks. However, being in Christ arms the Christians to prevail over Satan and his hosts.

It is in the instruction to put on the armour of God that we see the 'already;' and the 'not yet' of salvation. In forensic terms, the salvation of Christians is an already achieved reality. Yet, its perfect state awaits the eschaton. O'Brien (1999:458-459) depicts this paradox in these words:

Christ's triumph over the powers has 'already' occurred (Eph 1: 21), so believers no longer live in fear of them. But the fruits of the victory have 'not yet' been fully realised, so Christians must be aware of the conflict and be equipped with divine power to stand against them.

Though defeated, the enemy still commands a considerable constituency of powerful hosts. Even then the Christians must not fear him and his hosts but arm themselves with the complete armour of God.

The need for security in Africa is real. And the armour of God is the sufficient substitute for magical charms and other religious medicines. Having taken up the full armour of God there is no need to hold on African traditional weapons. It must replace charms, amulets, and articles on rooftops or in the offices and workshops and fields. In African Christianity, the armour of God is a sufficient substitute for magical charms and religious medicines for it is sufficiently preventative, protective and curative against the works of the evil spiritual forces. African Christians should rely on the armour of God "to secure a feeling of safety, protection and assurance" (Ibid.). In the economy of his salvation, Jesus Christ has given the Christians the full armour of God as the sufficient means of resisting and wading of Satan and his hosts.

#### **6.4. Being steadfast in times of sufferings and trials.**

Christological security does not exempt the Christians from the problem of evil. The instruction to be fully armed carries the assurance of the probability of attacks by Satan and his hosts. African Christians must realise that although they are fully secured by Christ they also live in a fallen world. In other words, though we have a perfect salvation, we live in an imperfect world and we have imperfect human bodies. Thus as we live in this fallen world we will surely suffer death and sickness. We must realise that "Christianity is not a ticket exempting us from the consequence of the fall". (Letham 1993: 152). This means that even though we are citizens in God's kingdom and are recipients of God's perfect salvation, yet because we are this side of the eschaton, our earthly existence can never be in the absence of suffering and trials. Thus, we must be careful before branding all our problems as demonically induced. Since we live in an imperfect world and our physical bodies are in an imperfect state - in a

fallen nature, suffering and trials do not always indicate demonic harassment or witchcraft and not even ancestral curses. As we live in a fallen world suffering is a probability.

Therefore, in the midst of trials of all kinds, the Christians must hold steadfastly to their faith in Christ. The New Testament and indeed the entire Bible has a message of steadfastly holding on to our faith even in times of pain. The examples of Job, Jeremiah, Paul, the Apostle and Jesus Christ himself is that in times of difficulties we must not abandon our faith, but cling to it tenaciously. Many times during difficulty times many African Christians rescind faith in Christ and consult traditional healers and other spirit mediums for answers to their problems. They must not do so, but be steadfast in their faith in Christ even in times of sufferings and trials.

#### 6.5. **CONCLUSION.**

The vibrancy and the integrity of the Christian Church in Africa lie on its confidence upon the sufficiency of Jesus Christ to address its African problems. Yet, Jesus Christ is in fact available to the African Christians in equal proportions as he is in the rest of the world. The integrity of the universality of the salvation of Jesus Christ requires that he must understand and be more than able to address the salvific needs of all the peoples of the world in their uniqueness. African Christians need to be aware of the sufficiency of Christ and rest on it. At the same time, however, their African idea of salvation needs to be shaped by the fact of the Fall. We live in a fallen world that is waiting to be destroyed and make way for the New Jerusalem. It is only then that salvation will mean freedom from all destructive forces in the absolute sense.

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