THE THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

ON THE DIVINE

IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT:

A POSSIBLE BASIS

FOR

DIALOGUE WITH ISLAM

by

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It is said that comparative religion study involves a complex understanding of people's beliefs viewed differently. It is another way of looking at religions as they are brought to people in the world. At this point, I want to register my appreciation to all the people who were instrumental in shaping my life as a human being, Christian, teacher and a theologian.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The problem and scope of the study

The countries of Africa are experiencing a phase in their history in which development occupies a major part of their political agenda. It is a period of economic awakening and visions of the continent in close partnership with Europe, America and Australia. This renaissance of Africa will be impossible to achieve without a new social order. This new social order has to be one which goes beyond tribal and ethnic hatred as is the case in Kenya at present and probably in future. It implies a religious tolerance towards all religions and ethnic groups of Africa based on an acceptable concept of civil religion.

The study seeks to contribute to religious tolerance by looking at the similarities and differences between the conception of the Divine in the major religious traditions of Africa, namely African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. The search will also explore the possibility of maintaining the conception of the Divine as a unifying factor and a possible basis for a dialogue between religious communities in a multi-religious society.

The following three basic convictions are central to this problem and the scope of the study:

(a) The concept of the Divine is in itself a complex one when expounded from the African context.

(b) Christian theology in Africa has relevance for the ecumenical church.

(c) Islam, like Christianity, also suffers from ethnocentrism.

The first of these convictions involves seven basic problems which need to be explored:

•   The *first* is that the concept of the Divine is in itself complex when expounded from the African context. African religious life prior to and after missionary religions is not clearly understood in terms of the Divine. Many scholars hailing from a Western background indicated in their early writings that Africans were empty in their souls and that the idea of the Divine was unknown to them. Western contact with African religions was characterised initially by a unanimous negation of the

existence of true forms of religious expression amongst Africans. This observation is contested by J. S. Mbiti in his book *African religions and philosophy* in which he advances the standpoint that Africans are "notoriously religious" (Mbiti 1969:1). Notoriety is not morally praiseworthy in any society. One explanation for the rapid and phenomenal expansion of Christianity and Islam is that this deep religiousness which characterises the African heritage facilitated rather than hindered the acceptance of foreign religions by the peoples of Africa south of the Sahara. These two positions make the study of the Divine a problem which has to be explored in this study.

- The *second* problem is that it is difficult to deduce the concept of the Divine from the available sources, especially if one has to address it from the African context. The religious documents do not in any way present the problem from the African point of view. J. S. Mbiti in his book *Bible and theology in African Christianity*, while leaning heavily on the religious culture and background of the African peoples, fails to present the case of the Divine from the background on which he vividly elaborates (Mbiti 1986). J. N. K. Mugambi's *From liberation to reconstruction: African Christian theology after the Cold War* (Mugambi 1995:1-17) introduces reconstruction as a new paradigm for African Christian theology, but leaves the concept of the Divine completely opaque. The above-mentioned are but a few examples of African theologians who have failed to articulate the problem in their studies. This failure to address the subject in the literature, means there is no theological reflection on the Divine available for use in practical situations, while the continent is increasingly characterised by a multi-religious society. The religions of the continent require a theology of the Divine that in itself cultivates spiritual unity and peace, and offers the hope of combating the inevitable religious animosity. This is a practical situation which this study aims to explore.

- The *third* problem is the lack of comprehensive studies in the field of the Divine from the perspective of the African context. This lack of readily available scholarly work increases the challenge of formulating a theological reflection which will serve to encourage a relationship between Christianity and Islam. In this study an attempt will be made to do research in this field and to reach a workable solution to the problem in the hope of promoting an ecumenical spirit on the continent from

a religious point of view, while simultaneously avoiding the pitfall of creating a religion for the continent which might be regarded as syncretism.

o   The *fourth* problem is that of tracing the African indigenous perceptions of the Divine. Most scholars presumptuous attitudes prevent them from in any way discussing the problem of the Divine from the African context. They do not seem to draw from their rich African heritage. In fact, what they present is mere parrotry of what they inherited from the writings of Westerners. These writings are based on Greek-Roman philosophy which to date remains foreign to the African mind. C. Nyamiti in his book *African theology: its nature, problems and methods* (Nyamiti 1971: 141-147) defends the argument and a position that "an African theology is dependent on Western counterparts." A well-known theologian, E. W. Fashole-Luke, refers to Dr. Samuel Kibicho of Kenya, who claims that Africans had the full revelation of God before the arrival of Christianity (Fashoe-Luke 1976:14-21). Fashoe-Luke, like Nyamiti, maintains that the theology of African theologians is drawn from the common fund of knowledge of Western theologians. The problem posed here is the difficulty of providing a theology which is based on the African traditional heritage and which addresses the theme of the Divine from the perspective of the indigenous theologians. In my opinion this problem has not yet been solved by the indigenous African theologians in their writings.

•   The *fifth* problem concerns the difficulty of drawing a comparison between religions which are completely diverse. The African traditional religion has its own view of the Divine. This African interpretation of the Divine emphasises the horizontal, going back to the ancestral time, as opposed to Christianity which is vertical in nature, and based on the ultimate Reality as the source of the *numen*. Islam's view of the Divine, on the other hand, is based on the Sharia and Hadith which the researcher considers to be a means of reaching Allah, which is the end all Muslims must strive to achieve (Mitri 1995:63-70). These difference and diverse positions present a problem when doing comparative studies of religions in Africa. A theological comparative study of these religions concentrating on the conception of the Divine is necessary to bring about a healthy religious atmosphere on the continent.

- The *sixth* problem is a lack of comparative studies in this regard. Haafkens (1992:121-141) discusses the problem of the relationship between these religions in Africa from a religious political point of view. He, however, fails to portray the main highlights of theological reflection on the Divine which are important in comparative studies. The problem of African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam is one of theological differences but no relationship. It is possible to relate and yet remain very different, as the case is with these religions. Comparative studies on these religions which will emphasise areas of theology common to them would be very worthwhile and may lead to a lasting solution to the problem.

- The *last* problem is the fact that community leaders lack a knowledge of unifying truths and values which could assist the creation of better societies and tolerant religious communities. The leaders of these religions, especially in Christianity and Islam, have been brought up, raised and trained to be leaders in their religious institutions' seminaries. The seminaries mostly teach and impart the content that remains subjective to their religions. They emphasise the negative side of the other religions and paints a picture of perfection in their own religion. The teachings are worked by religious exclusivity. These doctrines, when inflicted on the believers, create societies which look at each other with animosity and hatred. The foundation of these exclusive teachings was laid by the first missionaries and the Muslim Da'wah. In most cases the assumption underlying their missionary work was that the African was primitive, a heathen, irreligious, and a gafir, one without religion (Kruger 1995:241). This stand is no longer acceptable and in this study the problem of the religious life of the African will be discussed. The African religious life is well rooted in the beliefs, myths and taboos which the researcher regards as the main means of expressing the *numen* from the African perspective. If the acceptance of these religions (Christianity and Islam) is morally praiseworthy, then African religiosity which facilitates such a positive response, ought to be appreciated rather than ridiculed. In imparting new facts it is always a sound approach to proceed from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the concrete to the abstract, and from the known to the unknown (Mugambi 1989a:1).

Theologically, I suggest that the gospel has a universally relevant and applicable message which cannot be reduced to the straitjacket of any culture, however sophisticated. All cultures need the gospel and are judged by it. When the people of

a particular culture accept the Christian or Muslim faith, they are challenged to bring into being a community of believers (a local church or mosque) which is in tune with the needs of the specific situation and, in this case, the African religious background. The European Christian theologians and Muslim theologians should take the African cultural contribution to their religious thought seriously.

Theological reflection on the Divine in the African context currently faces many questions which are left unanswered by both European missionary theologians and present-day African theologians. This is mainly due to misunderstanding of the actual objective of religion which in my view is to trigger unity rather than animosity. Their articulations from both sides encourage enmity between Christians and Muslims. Rather than emphasising the healthy and shared theological facts in the two religions, they teach and stress the differences between them and make this into the major objective of their religion. This study endeavours to articulate the theological understanding of the Divine in the African context with the cautious expectation of bringing about an acceptable balance between the African religious heritage, Christianity and Islam. Alien religions can build on the way in which Africans view the Divine. This is the basis from which they can penetrate to the souls of Africans in their cultural backgrounds and can cultivate true religious unity on the continent while maintaining their diversities in accordance with their sacred books. The African's perception of the Divine can serve as a cornerstone for alien religions to build upon and from which they can proceed to the construction and cultivation of religious unity without ignoring the differences. For the soul of the African can be penetrated only when his view of the Divine is understood.

The second conviction is that Christian theology in Africa has relevance for the ecumenical church. Parratt (1995:3) argues that "in its struggle to relate the Christian message to the traditional background of primal religions, African Christianity is respecting in our own time the encounter that characterised the early centuries, between the infant faith and the pagan milieu in which it found itself". Many factors in this encounter, which helped to form and shape the Christianity of the patristic age, are relevant to Africa today as has been demonstrated with great insight by Kwame Bediako (1992). In Africa, Christianity has been used for too long to destroy the cultural and religious foundations of African peoples up to the 1990s and beyond. African Christian theology (including catholic, ecumenical and evangelical strands) should have a reconstructing function, comparable to the role of Protestant theology

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during the European Reformation and Renaissance. Africa deserves to celebrate its own reformation and renaissance. The churches should be the catalysts of this process, as they were in Europe at the end of the medieval period. If churches become obstacles, other forces will push Christianity to the periphery, or bypass it altogether. Christianity, however, has the ingredients, entry points and opportunities for the process of religious coexistence in Africa as statistics about the African traditional religion, Christian mission and Islamic Da'wah in Africa will suggest in this chapter. Churches have valuable links with both rural and urban communities, and these contacts can be a strong basis for the reconstructing action of a theology on the Divine which points out the *numen* as the source of the *mysterium tremendum* in the hearts of the believers. This would create a desire in the followers to coexist with other faithful. This discussion of the Christian work in Africa and the theology accompanying the movements caused the researcher to append below certain historical facts which make a Christian theology from the African point of view a necessity.

Between 1944 and 1964, nationalist struggles against colonial regimes were accelerated (Legum 1969). By 1965, most African countries were republics, except the Portuguese colonies (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde); Spanish colonies (Spanish Equatorial Guinea and Spanish Sahara); Southern Rhodesia, South Africa and South West Africa. Today all African countries are republics and independent of colonial rule. The year 1963 is significant for several reasons. One of these is that the Organisation of African Unity was formed at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May of that year, by the thirty-two new sovereign nations of Africa which had just emerged from colonial domination. Several others were to join the OAU when they attained republican status between 1963 and 1994.

At the ecclesiastical level, the year 1963 is also significant for Africa. In that year, the All African Conference of Churches was formed. Between 1963 and 1965 the Second Vatican Council was in session and out of that council came several decrees that were to transform Roman-Catholicism considerably (Butler 1967). Among these decrees was the lifting of the ban on Catholic interaction with Protestants who were now no longer regarded as "heretics" but as "separated brethren". In the decree on Ecumenism (Butler 1967:104 - 126) Catholics were then authorised to interact with non-Catholic Christians. The Council also relaxed its attitude towards non-Christians, paving the way for a more appreciative attitude towards cultural traditions and languages other than Latin. The World Council of Churches had held its Third

Assembly at New Delhi in 1961, during which the International Missionary Council was merged into the WCC as the Division of World Mission and Evangelism. In 1966 the WCC organised a conference in Geneva on *The technical and social revolution of our time* (Geneva WCC 1967). The timing and venue of this conference were indicators that times had changed – from colonial regimes to post-colonial re-adjustment, from missionary societies to missionary churches. These shifts also call for a Christian theological reflection on the Divine which is based on the African context. Such an approach will speak to the African mind and soul in a more meaningful and concrete manner than the missionary theological abstractions that viewed the African pagan background as diabolical.

These broad-minded and integrative initiatives were profoundly important to the social transformation and theological reflections in Africa during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. In 1974 the African Catholic bishops held a special synod at the Vatican, and evangelicals held a conference on world evangelisation in Lausanne, Switzerland. The All Africa Conference of Churches held its Third Assembly in Lusaka, Zambia. These events indicated the dissipation of Africa's ecclesiastical energies, with some calling for a "moratorium" on missionary funds and personnel, while others were urging for more dependence. The World Council of Churches held its Fifth Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, the theme being *Jesus Christ frees and unites*. Under this theme liberation was synchronised with reconciliation. Theologically, liberation of the oppressed was considered to enjoy logical priority above reconciliation of former oppressors with their former victims. Only in conditions of genuine freedom could individuals and groups be genuinely reconciled theologically with one another.

The end of the old order is the beginning of the new order in which all the peoples of the world can participate without being branded with one ideological label or another. Drawing on the ideas of Hegel and Nietszche, Francis Fukuyama (1992) suggests that the end of the Cold War has brought with it the end of the story and the Last Man. The end of ideological confrontations may cause those who were already tired of their history to heave a sigh of relief to, but for those who were neither participants not interested spectators, history is only just beginning. A. N. Whitehead (1958) would say that the end of one thing is the beginning of another. It may be a consolation to the main actors and audience in the drama of the Cold War to know that their play is over and that they can go home; but for the cast and audience of the next play, it is pleasant to know that the theatre is now free for another show in the 21st century – one

of religious theological dialogue between not only Christians but also Muslims. Process thought is consistent with the theology of reconstruction, because it appreciates the perennial ebb and flow of human cultural and religious achievements.

The researcher's third basic conviction is that Islam, like Christianity, also suffers from ethnocentrism. Muslims have to acknowledge the African religious background from which they have to spread the religion. Their theology should embrace coexistence of other religions, a willingness to live together in their areas of influence. Influenced by centuries long rivalry between Christianity and Islam in the Mediterranean, missionaries who came to Africa generally saw Islam as a danger to Christianity. Some developed missionary strategies in a spirit of rivalry with Islam. Polemical literature about Islam, produced in other parts of the world, rapidly found its way to Africa. Around 1880, for example, Muslims in Sierra Leone were reading the Revelation of Truth, a response in Arabic by an Indian Muslim, Rahmatullah al-Hindi, to a well-known polemical missionary on Islam, Dr Pfander's *The Balance of Truth*, which first appeared in Persia in 1835, and was later translated into other languages (Blyden 1967:3).

Missionary publications may give an impression of considerable tension between Christians and Muslims. In practice it was often different. In many cases personal relations between missionaries and their Muslim neighbours were respectful and even cordial.

Recently there has been a tendency to put more emphasis on the religious aspect of conflicts. In 1966 violent incidents which led to the deaths of many people were by and large interpreted as the result of ethnic and political tensions between the native population of Kano and immigrants from the southern part of Nigeria. In 1991 incidents the native/no-native dimension still played a role, but the point at which violence erupted was not a military coup by people from Southern Nigeria, who happened to be Christian, but the coming to Kano of a Christian preacher from Germany, Gerhard Bonke. This kind of antagonism makes it extremely difficult for a dialogue to exist between Islam and other religions. As already indicated, the common religious truths that are treated on an equal basis in the Qur'an and the Bible will be discussed in this study. These theological reflections on the world view of Islam and Christianity project the actual idea of the Holy which provides an avenue for an "inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the Divine and in its relation to the rational" (Otto 1917). This is the main point of departure which underlies this study and from a

position like this a dialogue between African Traditionalists, Christians and Muslims is inevitable.

Comparative methodology is still largely absent in current teaching and scholarship. In this regard only one example is mentioned in order to show how far we are from what the researcher calls new religious thinking. While revelation is claimed to be the common supreme reference for African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam, each community speaks for its own (a "true") conception of revelation, without any kind of distinction between the three levels of the concept.

(1) Revelation as the Word, transcendent, infinite, unknown to us as a whole, only fragments of it having been revealed through prophets such as Jesus: this level is well expressed in the Qur'an by such expressions as "the well preserved Table" *(al-lawh-al-mahfuzz)* or the "Arch-type Book" (*Umm al-kitab*).

(2) The historical manifestation of the Word of God through the Israelite prophets (in Hebrew), Jesus of Nazareth (in Aramaic) and Mohammed (in Arabic) was originally memorised and transmitted in oral form for a long period of time before being written down. In the case of the Qur'an, the revelation lasted twenty years and the writing down thereof after the death of the prophet took another twenty years. In the case of Jesus, it is interesting to note that the original wording was in Aramaic, a Semitic language, exhibiting the cultural connotations of Semitic culture in the Middle East, while the Evangelists reported the teachings of Jesus in Greek – a fact which resulted in a decisive shift from a Semitic to Greek Mediterranean culture. Likewise, the later translation of the Hebrew Bible and Gospels into Latin and other languages had measurable consequences for the emergence of new cultural codes, on new semiotic systems, not effectively considered by theologians or historians to date.

(3) As a determining force in the history of the societies of the Book/book, the third level had the greatest influence on the history of revelation. Here we raise new problems and open up new prospects for understanding between the religions. It is no longer a question of an encounter between the religions; but rather of a programme for a common endeavour to re-interpret the totality of our religions and theological traditions.

1.2   Conceptualisation of the problem

1.2.1   Aim of the study

This research has eight main objectives which together comprise the aim of the study: These are the following:

(1) To clarify the conceptions of the Divine in the religious traditions of African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam.

(2) To demonstrate the similarities as well as the differences.

(3) To reflect on the implications and consequences for a healthier society.

(4) To study African Christian Theology. This objective will lead the researcher to expound on what Christian leaders of thought in Africa are actually saying, and to analyse their ideas as systematically and sympathetically as possible (Parratt: 1995:3). The African Christian Theology has its origin in the missionary church. The scholars who have emerged, are themselves products of the schools which are rooted in the churches that were originally founded and started by missionaries. But as already observed in the statement of the problem, the missionaries ignored the African cultural set-up and failed to contextualise the religious life of the African into their theology. This is one salient fact which has the African Christian scholars up in arms against the mission churches and their theology. They advocate for a theology to Africans which should be rooted in his background (Mugambi 1995:3). A study of the African Christian Theology will be incomplete without a careful look at the African independent churches' theology from a general perspective. These churches have mushroomed all over the continent and they have a theology which could be described as "African" and which differs from that of the original mission churches. Reasons for their breakaway or split from the main churches are theological in some cases and of an administrative nature in others. Their form of worship and liturgy reflect a different theology which the researcher believes to be African and rooted in the African cultural background. Apart from the African Christian scholars' contribution to theology, the independent churches' contribution is also important for making the study of this objective complete.

(5) To identify theological reflections which are rooted in the Christian doctrine as derived from the Bible which have relevancy for Islam. G. Parrinder in his book

"*Jesus in the Qur'an*" opens his subject by articulating the point of the world as a world of audience. He argues that "one cannot write about Islam in a vacuum, for Muslims will read" (Parrinder 1965:9). According to him the Qur'an, speaks about Jesus in a similar way as the Bible talks about Him. There are certain differences which will be discussed under this objective. There are several theological concepts in the Bible which are treated adequately in the Qur'an. In the course of Islamic history different attitudes have been adopted towards Jesus. Some of these are based on the Qur'an, while others have been influenced by later commentary.

(6) Certain Christian theological concepts such as the idea of one God (monotheism), predestination, the day of judgement, the devil (Sheitan, or Iblis) and acceptance of some canonical Biblical books by the Qur'an and Sunna form part of Christian doctrine which has relevance in the Islamic kerugma.

(7) To study African concepts of the Divine that reflect similarity to Christianity and Islam. The structure of African traditional religion is important in dealing with this objective. Works that deserve attention in this regard are *inter alia* P. A. Talbot's analysis in reference to the religion of Southern Nigeria, E. Geoffrey Parrinder's classifications of West African Religion and R.S. Rattray's analysis of the religion of the Ashanti. P.A. Talbot (1932:14) says: "The religion of the inhabitants of southern provinces of Nigeria would appear to be compounded of four main elements, viz polytheism, anthropomorphism, animism, and ancestor worship.". Talbot is very guarded in his statement and is wise enough to imply that the reality might be different than it appeared to him. Nevertheless, his analysis will bear examination. "Polytheism" can be accepted with reservation as an element in the structure of religion, if we are thinking only of the pantheons of the divinities. For it is only in this connection that we can predicate pluralism in the religion (Tillich 1953:246). Our concern here is to highlight similarities between the African concept of the Divine and that of Christianity and Islam. This objective seeks to articulate and elaborate the African belief in God, belief in the Divinities, belief in the spirits and the way in which Africans regard the ancestors (Mbiti 1971, Parratt 1995). Emphasis will be laid on the way in which these find relevancy in the Christian Bible, the theology held by Christians, and the Muslim Qur'an and the Sunna or Hadith.

(8) To study the use of the Bible, the Qur'an, the Sunna and African traditional heritage as sources of theological reflection, and to determine how the importance attached to God can form a basis for bringing about societal unity. Under the same heading, and drawn from these sacred sources, the concepts the *Godhead* and *eschatology* will be examined. The hope contained in the theological teachings in these sacred books shapes and influences the way of life in both Christians and Muslims. This will lead us to discuss the concepts of sin and salvation, and the ethical problems which affect the religious life and distort the unity of a nation. Whatever is seen extrinsically has intrinsic ramifications, the internal has an impact on the external and the covert influences the overt behaviour. The use of the Bible, the Qur'an and the sayings of African traditional sages engraves and engrafts the truth in the souls of the believers who overtly cherish national unity and coexistence in a cosmopolitan society. This study strives to contribute to a theology which will enhance this societal virtue of togetherness irrespective of religious leanings.

1.2.2 Relevance of the study

"The use of studying other religions than our own is that our sympathy becomes thereby widened. We learn to think more charitably of those outside our religion and more worthily of God as not our God, but a God who comes for all and whose spirit has always been working in the world. And we thus learn to understand our own religion, and see what it is in our own religion that has to be emphasised, and what the higher truth is that is wrapped up in it, and that we must try to communicate to mankind" (Worsley and Strong, in Bowman 1972:1).

Annie Worsley and Hellen Strong made this worthy observation in Australia in the 19th century. Their words still continue to have relevance to the study of comparative religion in this century. It is a theological reflection which also has relevance for the present study which endeavours to make the understanding of the Divine in the African context the basis for appreciating the theology of both Christianity and Islam. This should serve to open up the possibility of bringing about a lasting dialogue between these main religions of Africa namely Christianity and Islam. Professor Huston Smith in the essay *Accents on the world's religions* (in Bowman 1972:18) points out that an adequate culture must strike all of these notes ... a chord. In developing this chord of a fully adequate world culture, each of the three great

traditions appear to have something of importance to contribute. Perhaps each of them has something to learn as well. Africa's main religions, Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion, should take the advice of Professor Smith and endeavour to be relevant to the spiritual needs of the continent. African scholars who are studying theology ought to listen to the missionary theology and strike a balance in their theological thought between these teachings and the needs of the present-day Africa. All religions in Africa have something to contribute theologically, for the age of closed doors in religions is something of the past which does not belong in the present century, and the 21st century calls for more rapport between these religions in order to encourage togetherness in the wake of tribalism which is enemy number one in Africa.

The study will proceed from this call for reformation in the attitudes of the religious leaders of Africa's Christianity, Islam and African traditional religions to enable them to accept one another's views and thus become more tolerant of theological differences.

The reason for stressing the continued relevance of dialogue on theological reflections on the Divine from an African frame of reference is the fact that African theologians who have moved from an African consciousness strategy to the non-national theological approach still regard themselves as African theologians. As far as initiatives to develop a theology based on the thought of indigenous Africans is concerned, the catholic church of Kinshasa in 1959 sponsored an initiative which involved teachers and students tackling the basic question of the possibility of an indigenous African theology (Appiah-Kubi & Sergio 1979:74). The issue crystallised in 1968 during the sessions of the Fourth Theological Seminar in Kinshasa. Several communications of that seminar were particularly noteworthy: they dealt with the problem of an African theology in the light of Vatican II, world theology and African theology (Sawyerr 1987:19-23). This suggests that a theology developed by theologians of African origin is appropriate and relevant to the spiritual needs of the people of Africa. The theologians should regard themselves as thinkers on theological matters in the indigenous way, but should guard against national connotations. They should in fact comport themselves with dignity, and act in an authoritative and dependable manner. Their present theological approach can therefore not be understood without a thorough grasp of African consciousness and the development of a theology of the Divine from the African context, including a possible dialogue with Islam. In the researcher's opinion the mission churches founded in Africa by white theologians, Catholics and Protestants, have not yet responded adequately to the

theology as viewed by African scholars. They have not given a hearing to the theology of the African independent churches. In this regard the present study is indeed relevant and necessary.

1.2.3 Method and hypothesis

1.2.3.1 Terminology

At the outset it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the terms *"theological reflection on the Divine in African context: a possible basis for dialogue with Islam"*, and *"African traditional religion theology"* as used in this study. These expressions will not be used to refer in a general way to all Christian theologians of African indigenous origin, neither will they be used to refer to Muslim theologians of African indigenous origin. The terms will be used in a specific sense to refer to the theology and theologians who look at the theological reflection on the Divine in both Christian and Muslim religions from the African context. When understood against this background this should provide an avenue for responsible dialogue between these main religions of Africa.

In the light of the foregoing the meaning of the terms is determined as follows:

1) **Limitation to indigenous African theologians.** From time to time reference will be made to theological reflection on the Divine from the African context, including a possible dialogue with Islam by theologians outside the continent of Africa or non-Africans, especially scholars such as Parratt and Parrinder who worked in Africa as missionaries. Reference will be made to Muslim scholars who, proceeding from their cosmology, have also treated the subject extensively, but the focus of this study will fall on Africa south of the Sahara.

2) **Limitation to theologians influenced by the African theologian movement** (Appiah-Kubi and Sergio 1979:60). These theologians and earlier scholars influenced by missionaries as well as the missionaries themselves will be referred to in this study when discussing various aspects of theology. This implies that the sources used for this study go back, as the limiting point, to the time of Rudolf Otto (1917) who handled the discussion of the idea of the Holy very well.

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Finally, the **focus on indigenous African theologians influenced by African consciousness** leaves enough room to include those theologians who no longer subscribe to the strategy of the African consciousness movement such as the late Kato (Kato 1975), but who still regard themselves as African theologians. In this respect the researcher has deliberately decided not to set his own standard for judging who should qualify as African theologians, but to accept as African theologians all those who regard themselves as such. It is the prerogative of African theologians to decide whether and how they should "tighten up theoretical and ideological screws" to prevent any theology propounded by any group of Africans from being called **the** African theology and being regarded as sufficient for developing theological reflections from the African context (Mosala 1987:380). Although the missionaries have been sidelined in the present theological tasks of Africa, as for example when they were refused participation in the All Africa Council of Churches in Dar-es Salaam, Tanzania in 1974 (Parratt 1995:9), their theological contribution is immense and a study such as this cannot wholly ignore their work. There is no doubt that the Christian missionary endeavour in Africa in modern times has brought personal transformation for good to millions of individuals who have cause to be thankful for the coming of missionaries (Fowler 1994:21).

Nevertheless, the kind of Christianity promoted in Africa by Western missionaries, in spite of their good intentions, tended to support the colonial dislocation of African society and the consequent structural dichotomy in the society. As pointed out above, this contributed considerably to the present negative attitude of the indigenous African theologians towards the missionaries. This attitude mainly resulted from their support for colonial administration of the continent, not from their theological intentions and development in general. These sentiments are similar to the stand of indigenous theologians towards Islam and the Da'wah. On the East African coast Islam is very much linked to the slave trade of the 19th century. While slave trading is evil, their theology on the contrary, is not bad.

It is necessary also to define the understanding of mission and Da'wah which underlies this study, as this understanding will determine the way in which theological reflection on the Divine will be analysed.

Christian mission is the activity of people who strive to follow in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth, to continue his ministry for the realisation of God's new world of love,

peace and justice in the age of sin and death. They see it as their calling from God to change the world in accordance with the command of Christ contained in the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the son and the Holy Spirit". Such missionaries should both speak and live the good news of God's grace so that they can serve as appropriate examples and models and will become magnets who will capture and attract many sinners to the flock of their master Jesus Christ. The Christian mission is responsible for establishing churches in Africa. They were the agents of change from the traditional cultural set up. It is on the basis of these establishments that African indigenous theologians have coined a theology from the African perspective in their pursuit of an identity. The missionaries founded churches and the Christian theology they established in Africa resulted in competition and rivalry with their Muslim counterparts, the Da'wah, who were also struggling to establish their mosques in the same communities from which the members of the Christian churches were drawn.

Islam, like Christianity, is a missionary religion. Although they do not conform to the Christian conception of the word "missionary", yet in zeal for propagating their faith, in the world-wide missionary enterprise and activity, whether by fire and sword or by word of preaching, Islam affords a striking example of missionaries of faith.

The spread of Islam in Africa began in AD638 and still continues to date. In a country such as Kenya mosques are mushrooming in the villages and market centres everywhere and every day. This trend poses a threat to Christianity and, in the opinion of Cardinal Maurice Otunga (Daily Nation, July 1993) increases animosity to some extent. Bonet Maury (1906) points out that there were three periods in the struggle for Africa. In the first, AD 638 - AD 1050 the Arabs by rapid military conquest overran the Mediterranean littoral from Egypt to Morocco where the stubborn resistance of the Berbers and especially discord among the Muslim rulers prevented wider conquest until the tenth century. During the second period, AD 1050 - AD 1750, Morocco, the Sahara Region, and the Western Sudan became Muslim and the desire for conquest was no doubt, provoked in part, as a reaction against the Christian crusades. The third period, AD 1750 - AD 1900, was one of a revival of Islam and its spread through the Mahah' movement and the Da'wah orders (Maury 1906: 67, 68, 226-249).

In view of the diversity, it is a good idea to discuss Christian-Muslim relationships in the seven regions which, together, constitute Africa separately.

1) **NORTH AFRICA** (Arabic-speaking countries from Egypt to Western Sahara)

Over 90 % of the population is Muslim (Haafkens 1988: 127). The Coptic orthodox church in Egypt traces its history directly to the first century, when, according to tradition, the apostle Mark brought the gospel to Egypt. The largest Protestant church in the area is the Coptic Evangelical Church in Egypt. There are other relatively small Catholic and Protestant churches in North Africa which recruit their membership mostly from elsewhere, originally in particular from Europe and North America, but nowadays increasingly from other regions of Africa. Christians from this region migrate to other parts of the world. Some Christians hailing from a North African Muslim background serve as pastors in France.

An important question for Christians in Africa is why the Christian communities in North Africa established in the first and second centuries gradually lost most (Egypt) or all of their members. The political and other conflicts between the northern Mediterranean regions under Christian rule, and the south under Muslim rule are an important factor. It could also be argued that perhaps the approach followed in founding these churches and Christianity in the region was not well contextualised to the cultural background of the inhabitants and that this is why it had succumbed to the marauding Islam Da'wah. Similar conflicts also contributed to the disappearance of the Muslim communities from Spain.

2) **NORTH-EAST AFRICA** (Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia)

More than 50 % of the population is Muslim. The World Christian Encyclopaedia estimates the Christians at 35 %. Christianity in Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea has existed for many centuries. Around 1500, however, the church in Sudan completely disappeared, and was only re-established in this century by migration from Egypt and missionary activities from Europe and North America.

Early Christianity was based in the Christian kingdoms in the Nile valley, Nobatio, Magurrah and Alwah. Important Christian art treasures from these kingdoms can be seen in the National Museum in Khartoum. Sufi orders contributed much to the spread of Islam in the country by making the religion accessible to its populations. According to several scholars, the disappearance of Christianity from the Nile valley in the early sixteenth century was linked to a continuous Arab migration into the area and

also had something to do with the urban character of the Christian kingdoms and the isolation in which they found themselves (Davidson 1972: 137, Mazrui 1991)

Another factor may have contributed significantly to the disappearance of Christianity, as well as to the slow speed of Islam's spread to the south. One of the conditions of the treaty maintaining peaceful commercial and political relations between Egypt and the Christian kingdoms was the regular provision of many hundreds of slaves by the kingdoms to Muslim Egypt (Hasan 1966:147).

The spread of both Christianity and Islam in this and other parts of Africa has been hindered by the way both have been used to serve the political and other interests of the communities where they were established, interests often conflicting with those of other communities. This has also been a factor in Christian-Muslim conflict in Ethiopia.

3) **WEST AFRICA** (from Senegal and Mauritania to Niger and Nigeria)

Muslims form nearly 50 % of the population. The World Christian Encyclopaedia estimates Christians in North and North East Africa at 37 % of the population. Christianity preceded Islam, but in West Africa the opposite is the case. Here, Islam is many centuries older than Christianity. In ancient Ghana (present-day Mauritania, Senegal and Mali), Muslims had considerable influence at the court of the king around the year 1000, although the king himself was not a Muslim (Clarke 1982:37). The Arab historian, al-Bakri, writing in A.D 1067., tells us how the ruler of ancient Mali became a Muslim. During a period of serious drought when prayers of the traditional rain-makers had failed, the king turned to Muslim clerics for help, agreeing to become a Muslim. The rain came. The traditional priests were expelled from the court, while a number of influential people followed the king's example. However, the majority of the king's subjects kept to the traditional ways (Clarke 1982:41).

For many centuries, Muslim communities in West Africa lived in close relationship with non-Muslims. In the course of time, reform movements started, advocating a purification or, better, a revival of Islam on the basis of its Arabic sources: the Qur'an, the Hadith (traditions) and the Shariah (Islamic law). The leaders of these movements were not only involved in preaching and in producing literature in African languages to bring Islamic teachings to the people (Haafkens 1988:25), they also brought about political change. They overthrew rulers accused of being half-hearted Muslims,

disobeying the Shariah, and concluding alliances with non-Muslims (Clarke 1982:79-97, 98-102).

Around the year 1800, for example, armed force was used in present-day northern Nigeria to establish, maintain and expand an Islamic state based on classical Islamic principles as developed in the Middle East and North Africa (Clarke 1982:113- 123).

However, interpretations of Islam dating back to earlier, more peaceful phases of its history in West Africa continued to be influential. An example is the pacifist tradition among the Jankhanke Muslim clerics, which has been highlighted by Professor Lamin Sanneh (Sanneh 1989a:139 -146).

Christianity only began to develop in the region in the 19th century, although there were some earlier beginnings. This relatively late start is most likely related to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Anyhow, once the Christian movement had started, numbers continued to increase and in 1980 had reached well over 50 million (Haafkens 1988:127).

When undertaking a study of Christian Muslim relations in Africa, J. Spencer Trimingham, who visited West Africa in the 1950s, expressed a concern about the very "Western" character of West African Christianity (Trimingham 1955). Even more than he could see at the time, Christianity was taking root in West Africa. A crucial factor here was the translation of the Bible and of its message into the languages of West Africa (Sanneh 1989b). It is now clear that Triminham's fears that Christianity would remain foreign to West Africa were not justified.

4) **EAST AFRICA** (from Uganda and Kenya in the North to Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique in the South)

In Western sources, the Muslim population is estimated at approximately 15 % (Haafkens 1988: 43-47; Delval 1984; Mbiti 1986:237-239, 240). Muslim sources give estimates of approximately 35 % (Ahsan 1985:43-47). The World Christian Encyclopaedia estimates Christians at over 60 % of the population. The highest proportion of Muslims is found in Tanzania (Western sources, 32 %; Muslim sources, 65 %), followed by Mozambique and Malawi (approximately 15 % according to Western sources) and Kenya (less than 10 % according to Western sources) (Haafkens 1988:128).

The history of Islam in East Africa goes back to the first centuries of the Islamic era. Before the first churches were built in Denmark, there were mosques on the Kenyan coast (about AD 850). For many centuries Muslim communities flourished only in the wealthy coastal towns, where the Swahili language developed as a mixture of Arabic, Bantu, Hindi and Portuguese languages. As in West Africa, the slave trade may have impeded their spread to the interior. The growth of the Muslim communities in this region occurred mainly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

5) CENTRAL AFRICA (from Chad in the North to Zaire in the South)

Western sources estimate the Muslims in this area at less than 10 % of the population. Our estimate of Christians in the region amounts to 40 %. Chad, a country where the influence of Islam is comparable with that in West and North East Africa, has nearly 50 % Muslims, according to Western sources. In all other countries there are more Christians than Muslims. Cameroon also has a substantial Muslim population: between 15 and 22 % (Haafkens 1988: 125, 128). There are strong links between Islam in Cameroon and West African Islam. Since 1840 there has been a rapid growth of Christianity starting from the south. In the north this also occurred among populations which had been in contact with Muslims for centuries. Noteworthy is the situation in Gabon which has a president who converted to Islam a number of years ago when already in office. Muslims in Gabon constitute probably 3 % of the population. Islamic influence in Zaire has mainly come from East Africa, but also more recently, from Senegal.

6) INDIAN OCEAN

Nearly 6 % of the population of the Islands in the Indian Ocean is Muslim. Christians constitute over 50 %. Virtually the whole population of the Comores is Muslim. In Mauritius Muslims constitute over 15 %. The vast majority of the population of this region (84 %) lives in Madagascar. The coastal areas of the island have been in contact with Muslims for many centuries but, according to Western sources, the percentage of Muslims in 1980 amounted to less than 2 %. Christians were estimated to represent 50,8 % of the population. (Haafkens 1988:125, 129). ·

7) SOUTHERN AFRICA (From Angola and Zimbabwe southwards)

Around 1980, Western sources estimated that about 1 % of the population of this area was Muslim. By far the largest Muslim community is found in South Africa (Haafkens 1988:125, 129; Mbiti 1986:135-240). Recently it has become evident that the number of South African citizens of non-European origin is significantly higher than estimated previously. The Muslim percentage in the country is likely to be higher than the 1,5 % estimated in 1980 (Barret 1982:136-771). Christians form over 75 % of the population of Southern Africa.

As in most African countries, there are Muslims in South Africa who share a common language and culture with Christians. In the Cape, the Muslim community traces its history back to 17th century immigrants from Indonesia and other parts of Asia. The Muslim community speaks Afrikaans and has much in common culturally with other Afrikaans-speaking people in South Africa (Kruger 1995).

When we look at the Muslim population of South Africa, we find that it consists mainly of two groups: the Coloured Muslims of the Cape who are still popularly called Malays and the Muslims of Indian origin who live mainly in the old provinces of Natal and Transvaal. Popularly we speak about half a million Muslims in South Africa, almost equally divided between Coloured Muslims, or Cape Malays, on the one hand, and the Indian Muslims on the other hand.

According to the 1991 population census figures, there were 323 959 Muslims in South Africa. The 1997 census shows an increasing number of Muslims in the black townships and areas occupied by Coloureds. The figures as reflected in the census of 1991 do not include white and black Muslims since their numbers were then minimal. The middle province, the Orange Free State, had 245 Muslims in 1991. This is due to the fact that since the 19th century no Indians were allowed in the Orange Free State. After the Boer War and the founding of the Union in 1910 this law which excluded Indians from the Orange Free State remained in force until very recently. In 1981 the Orange Free State had only 58 Muslims, but after the law was rescinded their numbers increased to 245. The other three provinces have their fair share of Muslims. According to census figures, the Cape Province had 158 119, the Transvaal 80 976 and Natal 840 619.

8) THE WHOLE OF AFRICA

According to Western sources, Muslims and Christians each constitute 41 to 42 % of Africa's population. If we look at Sub-Saharan Africa (that is, all regions except North Africa), these sources estimate Muslims at nearly 30 % and Christians at over 50 % (Haafkens 1988:125-129). This suggests that statistically African Christianity is a formidable presence, and it has a mission to fulfil within its gates and beyond of the unfinished task (Mbiti 1986:233). The remaining 20 % of the population can be regarded as African traditionalists and to a negligible extent as atheists. The outlook for the first decennium of the 21st century is that there will then be over 300 million Christians and over 300 million Muslims with the remaining sector of the population traditionalists. These figures represent a major challenge to theology. How can these many hundreds of millions of people, who identify themselves as Christians, Muslims or traditionalists, live together peacefully and constructively? This is why a study of *the Divine in the African context: a possible basis for a dialogue with Islam* can make an important contribution to a theology in that it may offer a working solution to the issue.

1.2.3.2 Basic approach to the theological reflection on the Divine in the African context

As stated above, this study consciously involves a comparison between the main religions of Africa, viz. African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. This comparison is based on the theological reflection on the Divine in the African context. It is therefore essential to locate the kind of response given here within the range of indigenous African theologian responses to the theme of the Divine. These matters will be analysed in more detail in the chapters which follow. At this juncture they need only to be mentioned in summary form.

First, there is the *reflection approach*, represented by people such as Professor Ali'Mazrui who argues that "indigenous African culture is religiously tolerant, partly because African traditional religions are not universalist in its ambition" (Mazrui 1991:1-11). It was probably this very religious tolerance which, as an expression of traditional African hospitality, was interpreted wrongly by "foreign" religions such as Christianity and Islam as a quest for new religious expression. Many African theologians join Mazrui in rejecting the missionary Western-based theology. A good example of these theologians is Maimela's despair when he asks: "Have Africans really no other option but to be recipients of non-African religions?" (Maimela

1981:124). This question borders on a position that actually incites Africans to establish their own religion away from the foreign ones. This approach rejects Western theology as coined by missionaries as foreign, irrelevant, abstract and bent on destroying true African Christianity and the cultural set up of Africans

Secondly there is the *sympathy approach*, represented by people such as Parratt (1995), Ninian Smart (1973), J. S. Kruger (1995), G. Parrinder (1962), Byang Kato (1975), D. Crafford (1987) and P. Meiring (1976), among others. This approach listens carefully to Western theologian views in comparison to African indigenous theological reflections and takes up some of the theological concerns critically. They point out the one-sidedness in these theological reflections, and the dangers inherent in these reflections.

Thirdly there is the *contextualising approach*, represented by people such as Mbiti (1986), Mugambi (1989, 1995), Barret (1982) and Haafkens (1988), to mention a few. This approach affirms the scholarly academic thrust of indigenous African theological reflection. It attempts to develop academic scholarly work in an area where there was none based on the African traditional heritage.

The present study follows the second and third approaches. While affirming and accepting the work already done and available, these works suggest an acculturation approach which the researcher feels able to follow without any difficulty in discussing theological reflection on the Divine in the African context. These approaches will be followed throughout in this research.

1.2.3.3 Sources

The sources to be used in this study of theological reflection on *the Divine in the African context, a possible basis for a dialogue with Islam*, are primarily published books and articles in journals and periodicals by theologians who have dealt with this subject of the Divine in the African context. Theologians who have handled the subject from a general perspective will also be consulted extensively in the course of this research. A number of unpublished doctor's theses will also be used in this work. In this regard it is necessary to mention the obstacles presented to a researcher by the fact that Muslim theologians are not accessible to the researcher. The researcher is himself an African from the African cultural set up, hence familiar with the theology contained in the African traditional heritage. The main obstacle confronting him was

the non-availability of Muslim theologians and the problem of how to find them or search for their works. Exposure to these theologians would have enriched the theological view of the researcher as he draws data from concrete examples. Although books on the religion of Islam are readily available, being able to observe Muslims in a worshipping situation in a mosque would have provided a lot of theological impetus to the researcher's work.

1.2.3.4   Structure

As indicated above, the purpose of this study is to develop an outline of a theological reflection on the Divine in the African context and then to investigate a possible basis for a dialogue with Islam. The purpose of this is to participate in the quest for better societies and tolerant religious communities in missiology. The study as a whole therefore has a dialogic structure, comprising the acts of listening and responding as the concepts on theological reflection on the Divine are discussed.

It is, however, an oversimplification to describe the first part of this study merely as "listening" to theologians in these religions, namely African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. What the researcher calls letting theologians speak for themselves clearly entails a great amount of input from his side, which inevitably bears the imprint of his background and personality, his biases as a Christian theologian in the making, as well as his special interest in the relevance of the study for the understanding of mission. The approach in the first part of this study has a phenomenological slant, in the sense that an attempt is made to allow the 'phenomenon' which was being studied to reveal itself. Extensive use will therefore be made of quotations from indigenous African authors, theologians and historians, as the researcher thinks and feels his way into their world of discourse and experience.

The dimension of listening to theologians and letting them 'speak for themselves' takes up three chapters. Chapter two will contain an overview of the Divine as an attribute of God/Allah's relation in theology. Chapter three will be devoted to a study of the Divine attitude as portrayed by Christians and Muslims from the African context. In Chapter four the doctrine of monotheism as a common source of theological reflection on the Divine in the Christian and Muslim religions will be discussed. In this chapter the perspective of a critic will be highlighted as regards the diversities and differences of these religions with the purpose of articulating co-existence in the African society.

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The dimension of response consists of three chapters, followed by a concluding statement. In Chapter five the expression of the theological reflection on the Divine by the Africans in Christianity and Islam will be discussed briefly. The religious sacred materials will be analysed to pinpoint those which have a bearing on "theological reflection on the Divine." Documents of both Christian and Islamic origin will be scrutinised with the intention of determining their views regarding man in his state of sin and disobedience, something which is emphasised by both Christianity and Islam. Chapter six will be devoted to the doctrine of salvation in the theology of the different religions as a reflection of the Divine presence. The concluding chapter will consist of a critical symbiosis of the theological concepts discussed. Emphasis will be laid on the necessity of togetherness in these religions, i.e. traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. This does not mean that the researcher intends to promulgate sameness in the hope of evolving a single religion, but rather represents an attempt to promote mutual acceptance while remaining comfortable with the individual religions' differences from a theological point of view. Nyamiti's (1971) theological method will be dealt with in the concluding chapter. His method seeks to unite three distinct approaches to theology, which he calls the pastoral, the apologetic and the pedagogical (Nyamiti 1971:3). Fundamentally, "the pastoral motivation should permeate and determine all theological efforts", including the study of theological reflection on the Divine in the African context. Consequently, studying theology is an activity of faith as well as of intellect. It is necessary at this point to appeal to the adoptionist approach to these religions. This represents a genuine attempt to come to grips with the problem of co-existence and relationship between the theology of African traditional religion, Christian theology, Muslim theology and their thoughts.

1.2.3.5 Personal stance

"If other religions are to be studied it must be fairly and freely. In the past there has been a great deal of prejudice and fanaticism and the West has only slowly learnt that true liberty demands tolerating people and opinions different from our own" (Parrinder 1962:33).

As indicated in this statement, the personal position and stance of a researcher is an important aspect of any research methodology. Since neutrality is impossible in any human endeavour, it is essential for the researcher to indicate his personal "interests' with reference to the subject matter of the present study at the outset. This is

particularly important when a person classified as "a theologian" in the African heritage background makes a study of theological reflections on the Divine in the African context. Geoffrey Parrinder's statement quoted above also happens to reflect the researcher's own standpoint in respect of the theme of this study very accurately. As already pointed out very clearly in the statement of the problem, the researcher's stance is to explore avenues which may lead to a workable solution in multi-religious society on the continent through theological reflection on the Divine in the African context. The attitude of mainstream African indigenous theologians towards the European missionary expansion has been ambivalent. This ambivalence is summed up clearly in the assertion of Alione Diop who states that Western religion "succeeded in converting African Christians into a people without soul or visage, a pale shadow of the dominating pride of the Christian West" (Diop 1964:50-51). Diop continues to elaborate on this attitude when he says: "At the very heart and centre of the church in Africa we have in fact witnessed the mutilation of African personality and the trampling of human dignity in Africa" (Parratt 1995:7). This stand does not form part of the researcher's attitude in this study. The aim of the research is to contribute to a theology on the Divine which can promote religious co-existence, that is a situation in which African traditional religion will accept and appreciate Christianity and yet remain different. This also pertains to the relationship between the two above-mentioned religions and Islam. This is a stance which can contribute to the study of comparative religion.

The attitude of Christian missionaries or the Muslim Da'wah towards traditional customs (as observed by a West African theologian) does not form part of the focus of this study. For the sake of clarity it is mentioned briefly here:

"Western missionaries stressed aspects of discontinuity between Christianity and African cultures and traditional religion to such an extent that they excluded the aspect of continuity between Christianity and African cultures and traditional religion. They condemned without evaluation African religious beliefs and practices and substituted Western cultural and religious practices" (Fashole-Luke 1978:357).

The researcher's approach is to investigate the beliefs, customs and practices of African culture in order to structure and direct the theological reflection on the Divine. This theological reflection, as it evolved from these concepts which were originally neglected by missionaries, should serve to point out similarities between the foreign religions on the continent – Christianity and Islam. Dr David Barret points out that

there are other religioSns which have penetrated and infiltrated Africa (Barret 1982:136-771). The researcher's intention is not to discuss these, but to draw a comparison between the main theological concepts common to African religion, Christianity and Islam as far as the concept of the Divine is concerned.

1.2.4 African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam in Kenya

The previous subsection provided a survey of African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam as they generally position themselves in Africa. It is important that our investigation should also be contextualised to a specific region, Kenya in this instance, otherwise the investigation would run the risk of being too vague. The statistics reveal that by the year 2000 the population of Kenya will amount to approximately 31 020 000 people. Of these 3 257 000 will be adhering to African traditional religion, 25 399 000 will be Christians and 1 706 000 will be Muslim. It is necessary that a theological reflection on the Divine in the African context should be made available through this study in order to bring about a comparative dialogue. It is necessary that this study should include a brief history of the encounters between these religions.

In AD 1498 a group of Christian Portuguese maritime adventurers in the company of a few priests sailed to Mombasa and Lamu on their way to India. They found Islam already established on the coast having arrived there through the Da'wah of Oman Arabs from Yemen. The African traditional religions had already been subjected and subverted by these Arabs through their religion, Islam, and the slave trade. The arrival of these Christians on the Kenyan coast gave rise to rivalry between the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. The encounter brought about competition between Christianity and Islam on the coast at the expense of the religion of the indigenous people. The same also occurred at Mumias in the western part of Kenya where missionary activity followed the slave trade routes from Tanzania. The next two centuries saw strong rivalry between the two faiths, until the Portuguese were driven out of East Africa and the Horn of Africa by Oman Arab Muslim rulers in the 1720s. As pointed out already, the indigenous Africans, as a result of their love of hospitality, remained receptive to these religions at the expense of their own religion. But in spite of the acceptance of the new religions, Africans remained faithful to their traditional religions at home and pretended to be believers when they met a missionary or a Muslim Sheikh. These indigenous Kenyans on the coast and Mumias portray a true picture of syncretism in religion hitherto (Mugambi 1989:69).

The 19th and 20th century missionary movements, backed by colonial imperialism, promoted Christianity among the indigenous people with the result that it spread at a more rapid rate than Islam. The Arabs could not penetrate into the interior of Kenya because the fierce Masai people would not allow them to cross their land. The missionaries found acceptance because of the tricks of the explorer Joseph Thomson. The indigenous people discovered that the guns of the white man were superior to their weapons, mainly the spear and the arrow. According to the projected statistics, Islam remains a minority religion, a situation which the Muslims resent in view of their long-standing presence along the East Africa Coast. Until recently most upcountry Christians had very little knowledge of and had experienced minimal exposure to Islam. Islam is spreading very rapidly in Kenya today. There are Muslim mosques in every town, in trading centres and on main roads all over Kenya. Islam has also found its way into rural areas which for a very long period of time were the seat of the struggle between African traditional religion and Christianity.

African traditionalists, Christians and Muslims all share a common identity as Kenyans and have worked together to attain national goals of development irrespective of their religions. They have lived and co-existed under the national slogans of Harambee and Nyayo, have pulled together to achieve peace, love and unity, but in the field of religion they have attacked one another venomously.

This animosity manifests itself in the fact that in towns with strong Muslim leadership it is sometimes difficult for Christians to acquire land for church buildings. Muslims have suffered the same treatment in areas under Christians leadership (Mbagara 1995:59). Christians, Muslims and adherents of the African traditional religion must find new ways of working together theologically. They must understand one another's way of interpreting the Divine and use this as a means of bringing about a lasting dialogue among them. This is important because, as John Macquarrie points out in his *Principles of Christian theology* (1971:157-8) "the consideration is that religious pluralism will be with us for a long time, if not for ever, and it is desirable that the religions should not only be a working arrangement between conflicting interest ... but that they should co-operate in common tasks. The spiritual predicament of humankind today cannot be thought of in terms of Christianity (or any particular religion against the rest) but rather in terms of the contrast between the knowledge of God and the grace of Holy Being on the one hand and materialism and positivism on the other" (Macquarrie 1971:158). This supports the researcher's stance in this study and

underlines the importance of studying the Divine in the African context, especially in the Kenyan situation.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL VIEWS OF THE DIVINE

2.1 "The Divine" in general

The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1981) provides an acceptable meaning for the Hebrew word *qádôsh*. *Qádôsh* is equivalent in meaning to the Greek *agios*, Latin *sacer* and *sanctus*. The direct translation of *qádôsh* would be "Holy", "Holy One", "Saint". The adjective *qádôsh* (holy) designates that which is intrinsically sacred or which has been admitted to the sphere of the sacred by the divine rite or cultic rite. It connotes that which is distinct from the common or the profane (Jenson 1992:40-50).

God Himself is holy and He expects his people, Israel, to be holy as well, and his holiness serves as a rod for their holiness (Lev. 19:2). Because God is holy, He is free from the moral imperfections and frailties common to man (Hos. 11:9) and can be counted upon to fulfil his promises (Ps. 22: 3-5). This trait of God's character formed the basis of Habakkuk's hope that his people would not perish (Hab. 1:12).

The epithet "The Holy one of Israel" is often used as a designation of God in the Old Testament, in particular in the prophecy of Isaiah. It serves to contrast the sins of Isaiah's society with God's moral perfection (Is. 30:11). His holiness compelled the nation to respond with a lifestyle of purity and cleanness. The priestly tradition required the "cleanness" of proper ritual practice and the maintaining of separation from the profane and unclean. The prophetic tradition demanded the "cleanness" in social justice; the wisdom tradition stressed the "cleanness" of inner integrity and individual moral acts (Gammic 1989:6-8). Lay Israelites did not share the same holy status as priests. On special (ritual) occasions, Israel in its entirety was considered holy, but this was only a temporary condition. Yet though they were denied priestly holiness attained through inaugural rites and genealogical rights, they were charged to achieve another type of holiness: that which is achieved through obedience. That which is "holy" is not only distinct from the profane, but in opposition to it as well. God therefore hates and punishes sin (Josh. 24:19; Is. 5:6, 24). In the light of God's holiness Isaiah saw himself and his people as sinners (Is. 6:5).

It is unthinkable that a holy God could condone sin; such a concept would involve a diffusion of the sacred and profane, thus destroying the nature of holiness. The call to be holy was accompanied by the imposition of certain restrictions which served to ensure the continuing holiness of those who believed (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; Deut. 14:2, 21; Num. 15:40).

Features of cultic practice were perceived as holy by virtue of the fact that they constituted a sacred realm. Thus, those who offered the sacrifice (Lev 21:6,8), the temple and its objects (Ps. 65:4; Lev. 6:16) and the cultic personnel (II Chron. 35:3) were considered holy.

The presence of God within the Word delineated a sphere that was holy, for God's holiness cannot be diffused by the common (Deut. 23:14)

The Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology (Shepard 1978:249) defines the Divine in terms of "the Divine Name". This description conveys the following meaning: In Jewish mysticism great stress was laid on the importance of the Divine Name. Forty-two letters characterised the Name not, as Moses Maimonides (in Friedlander 1881) points out, that it comprised one word, but a phrase of several words which conveyed an exact notion of the essence of God. Concomitant with the priestly decadence in the last days of the temple, a name of twelve letters was substituted for the Divine Name, and as time went on even this secondary name was not divulged to every priest, but only to a few. The longer name was sometimes said to contain forty-five or seventy-two letters. The ten *sefiroth* are also supposed, in a mystical sense, to be the names of the Deity. The Divine Name Yahweh (*yhwh*) is greater than "I am that I am", since the latter signifies God as He was before the creation, the Absolute, the Unknowable, the Hidden One; but the former denotes the Supreme Manifestation the immanence of God in the cosmos (Shepard 1978: 249). Different names are used for God in the Old Testament, of which "Yahweh" seems to be the most holy one, being the name of the Covenant God of Israel.

The name of God as well as his presence and manifestation were considered to be sacred and holy. The epithet "the Holy One of Israel" was in consequence used to denote God, as seen above.

So far we have discussed the usage of the concept the "The Divine" in the Old Testament. This was necessary before we proceed to look at its usage in the New

Testament. *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* edited by Gerhard Kittel (1964:100-101) provides us with a succinct description of the usage of the concept. The Greek word on which the discussion is based is ἅγιος. It has a meaning equivalent to *qádôsh* in the Old Testament. The Holiness of God, in the New Testament, rests throughout on the Old Testament usage. The material element largely yields before the personal. As already observed, in the Old Testament, for example in the Prophets, the predicate *Agios* is used to refer to the person of God. Indeed, it contains the innermost description of God's nature (Is. 6:3). Thus the *Trisagion* recurs in the song of praise of the four beasts in Rev. 4:8. The vision of Isaiah contains common elements with the vision of Ezekiel on the occasion of his calling (Ezek. 1), such as the song of the heavenly creatures, who are to be thought of as holy like the . ἀγγελοι ἅγιοι (cf. Rev. 14:10). The scene is set in heaven, and the supernatural/human realm of the worship of God. Yaweh Sabaoth is rightly regarded as παντοκρατωρ so that omnipotence is the external aspect of the holiness of God, to which eternity also belongs (ὁ ην και ὁ ὤν και ὁ ερχομενος). Holiness and glory thus combine to express the essence of the Godhead, and a holy awe permeates the whole scene. If God was invoked by martyrs as the avenger of innocent blood (Rev. 6:19), in His attributes as ο αγιοσ και αληφινος this served as a guarantee of the detection of religious crimes which constitute sacrilege.

In John's Gospel, as in the Apocalypse, the holiness of God emerged in the πατερ αγιε of Jesus (John 17:11), which Jesus uses to describe the innermost nature of God. The name which the πατερ αγιος has given the Son can only be the Divine Name itself (Matt. 28:19) in which the Father and the Son are one — this being the basis of the unity of Christian faith: .ινα ω'σιν εν καθωσ ημεις. Elsewhere .αγιος is applied to God in 1 Pet 1:15f.: κατα τον καλεσαντα υμας αγιον in which reference is made to Lev. 19:2 to deduce from the holiness of God a demand for holy conduct on the part of his children to the extent that they are taken out of the world and await .αποκαλυψις. Finally in the Lord's prayer petition is made that God's name should be hallowed (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:12: αγιασθητω το ονομα σου). Here ονομα means the person in which God reveals Himself (Matt. 28:19), but in which He is also distinct from the mundane world. In the name of God the holy shows itself to be something personal which thus requires of the one who prays a personal attitude to the divine world. Thus the holiness of God the Father is presumed throughout the

New Testament. Though seldom stated, it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ as the .αγιος του θεου and in the πνευμα αγιοαν (Kittel 1964).

This term and its translations in various European languages has been the subject of theological and philosophical reflection throughout the history of religion. The church has had its problems in attempting to define the Divine which, as the dictionary states above, should be understood as that which comes from God and also that which equals God. Whatever proceeds from God at this higher level should and must be "holy". It should be that which is set apart for the purpose of God Himself. Louis Berkhof (1958:53-77) describes the Divine in terms of the attributes of God. In order to discuss the subject, he describes the four aspects which tell about the being of God. These include the essential nature of God, the names of God, the attributes of God and the Trinity (Berkhof 1958:53-77). These aspects will be discussed in detail in the chapter and subsections which follow as we draw comparisons between the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam.

However, for the general purpose it is important at the outset to understand the term theologically. This understanding will provide us with a framework and a skeleton which we can flesh out with more contents. The "Divine" is seen by most theologians as the "Holy". "Holiness" is a category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion. It is, indeed, applied by inference to another sphere – that of ethics - but it is not itself derived from this. While it is complex, it contains a distinctive/diagnostic element or 'moment' which sets it apart from 'the rational' in the meaning of the word αρρηγον or infallible. This word lacks proper semantic definition in the sense that it completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts. This is true of the category of the beautiful.

These statements or description would be untrue if "the holy" were merely what is meant by the word "holy" (Barth 1936) in common parlance, instead of its meaning in philosophical and theological usage (Pink 1918). The fact is we have come to use the words 'divine', 'holy', 'sacred' (heilig) in an entirely derivative sense, quite different from their original meaning. We generally employ 'holy' to denote "completely good". Sometimes 'divine' is understood as the absolute moral attribute, denoting the consummation of moral goodness. In this sense Kant (1933) calls the will which remains unwaveringly obedient to the moral law from the motive of duty a "holy" will. Clearly we have simply the perfectly moral will. In the same way we speak of the

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holiness or sanctity of duty or law, meaning merely that they are imperative upon conduct and universally obligatory (Kant 1933, II, 3).

But this common usage of the term is inaccurate. It is true that all this moral significance is contained in the word 'holy', but it includes in addition – as even we cannot but feel – a clear excess of meaning, and this it is now our task to isolate. Nor is this merely a later acquired meaning. Rather "holy", or at least the equivalent words in Latin and Greek, in Semitic and other ancient languages, denoted first and foremost this excess; if the ethical element was present at all. At any rate it was not the origin and never constituted the whole meaning of the word. Anyone who uses it today does undoubtedly always 'feel' the 'morally good' to be implied in 'holy'; and accordingly in our inquiry into that element which is separate and peculiar to the idea of the holy, it will be useful, at least for the temporary purpose of the investigation, to invent a special term to stand for 'holy' minus its moral factor or 'moment' and, as we can now add, wholly minus its 'rational' aspect.

There is no religion in which this "unnamed something" does not live at the core of the religion. Without it no religion would be worthy of the name. It is pre-eminently a living aspect of the Semitic religions, and of these again in none other does it have such vigour as it has in the Bible. Here, too, it has a name of its own, the Hebrew *qadosh*, to which the Greek *agios* and the Latin *Sanctus* and, more accurately still, *sacer*, are the correspondent terms. It is not, of course, disputed that in all three languages these words connote as part of their meaning, goodness, absolute goodness. The notion has ripened and reaches the highest stage in its development in this sense. And we use the word "holy" to translate these words. In this study we shall use the concept "the Divine" as an equivalent for the translated "holy" in the original languages. But this 'holy' then represents the gradual shaping and filling in with ethical meaning, or what we shall call the "schematisation", of what was a unique and original feeling. A response, which can be, in itself, ethically neutral and claims consideration in it own right. And when this moment as element first emerges and begins its long development, these expressions, (qadosh, agios, sacer, sanctus), beyond all doubt, mean something quite other than good. This is universally accepted by contemporary criticism, which rightly explains the rendering of qadosh by 'good' as a mistranslation and unwanted 'rationalisation' or 'moralisation' of the term.

It is important to find a word more generic in meaning than "holy" with its obvious dependence on moral goodness. For this purpose the researcher chose to adopt a

word coined from the Latin *NUMEN*. Omen has given us "o'minous", and there is no reason why from *numen* we should not similarly form a word "numinous". We shall speak, in fact, of a unique 'numinous' category of value and of a definitely "numinous" state of mind, which is always found wherever the category is applied. A difference should be maintained between the semantic definition of the numinous and the possibility for an individual to know it subjectively. To the latter Berkhof (1958:30-40) responds: "This mental state is perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible to any other, and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined." There is only one way in which one can help another person to understand it. He must be guided and led on by way of consideration and discussion of the matter along the pathways of his own mind, until he reaches the point at which 'the numinous' in him perforce begins to stir, to start into life and into consciousness. The Divine, strictly speaking, cannot be taught, it can only be evoked. It is awakened in the mind, as everything that comes "of the spirit" must be awakened. In the paraphrased words of Louis Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* (1958), the possibility of knowing the "Divine", the "Holy" and God has been denied on various grounds. This denial is generally based on the supposed limits of the human faculty of cognition, though it had been presented in different forms. The fundamental position is that the human mind is incapable of knowing anything of that which lies beyond, above and behind natural phenomena and is therefore necessarily ignorant of supersensible and divine things. What then are the elements of the "numinous"?

As religious people, we undoubtedly encounter feelings familiar enough in a weaker form in other departments of experience, such as feelings of gratitude, trust, love, reliance, humble submission, and dedication. But this does not by any means exhaust the content of religious expression. Not in any of these have we got the special features of the quite unique and incomparable experience of solemn religious expression. What does this comprise? Schleiermacher (1963) deserves credit for isolating a very important element of such an experience. This is the 'feeling of dependence'. But this important discovery of Schleiermacher (1963) is open to criticism in more than one respect. In the first place, the feeling or emotion which he really had in mind in this phrase is in its specific quality not a 'feeling of dependence' in the 'natural' sense of the word. As such, other domains of life and other regions of experience than the religious occasion the feeling, as a sense of personal insufficiency and impotence, a consciousness of being determined by circumstances and environment. The feeling of which Schleiermacher (1958) wrote has an undeniable

analogy with these states of mind: they serve as pointers to it, and its nature may be elucidated by them, so that, by following the direction in which they point, the feeling itself may be felt spontaneously. But the feeling is at the same time also qualitatively different from such analogious states of mind. Schleiermacher (1958) himself, in a way, recognised this by distinguishing the feeling of pious or religious dependence from all other feelings of dependence. The mistake he made was to apply the distinction merely to 'absolute' and 'relative' dependence, therefore inferring a difference of degree and not of intrinsic quality. What he overlooked is that, in giving the feeling the name of dependence at all, we are really employing what is no more than a very close analogy. Anyone who compares and contrasts the two states of mind introspectively will, the researcher believes find out what he means. It cannot be expressed by means of anything else, simply because it is so primary and elementary a datum in our psychical life, and therefore only definable through itself. It may perhaps help him if I cite a well-known example, in which the precise 'moment' or element of religious feeling of which we are speaking is most actively present. When Abraham ventured to plead with God for the men of Sodom, he said (Gen. 18: 27): "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." These sentiments were also expressed by John Newton in the Hymn "Amazing Grace" Here too one finds a self-confessed "feeling of dependence", which is yet at the same time far more than, and something other than merely a feeling of dependence. Desiring to give it a name of its own, I propose to call it 'creature-consciousness' or 'creature- feeling'. It is the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures.

It is easily seen that, once again, this phrase, whatever it is, is not a conceptual explanation of the matter. All that this new term 'creature-feeling' can express, is the notion of submergence into nothingness before an overpowering, absolute might of some kind. Everything turns upon the character of this overpowering might, a character which cannot be expressed verbally, and can only be suggested indirectly through the repentance and content of a man's feeling response to it. And this response must be experienced directly within oneself in order to be understood.

We may now turn our attention to the second defect in the formulation of Schleiermacher's principle (1958). The religious category he discovered and by means of which he professes to determine the real content of the religious emotion, is

merely a category of self-valuation, in the sense of self-depreciation. According to him, the religious emotion would be directly and primarily a sort of self-consciousness, a feeling concerning oneself in a special determined relation, for example one's dependence. Thus, according to Schleiermacher (1958:67). A person can only come upon the very fact of God as the result of an inference, that is, by reasoning to a cause beyond oneself to account for one's "feeling of dependence". But this is entirely opposed to the psychological facts of the case. Rather, the 'creature-feeling' is itself a first subjective concomitant and effect of another feeling-element which casts it like a shadow, but which, in itself indubitably has immediate and primary reference to an object outside the self. This is so manifestly borne out by experience, that it must be about the first thing to force itself upon the notice of psychologists analysing the facts of religion. There is a certain naiveté in the following passage from William James's *Varieties of religious experience* (James 1974:78) where, alluding to the origin of the Greek representation of the gods, he says: "As regard the origin of the Greek gods, we need not at present seek an opinion. But the whole array of our instances leads to a conclusion something like this: it is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call 'something there', more deep and more general than any of the special and particular 'senses' by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed." James is debarred by his empiricist and pragmatist standpoint from coming to a recognition of faculties of knowledge and potentialities of thought in the spirit itself, and he is therefore obliged to have recourse to somewhat singular mysterious hypotheses to explain this fact. But he grasps the fact itself clearly enough and is enough of a realist not to explain it away. But this feeling of 'reality' , the feeling of a "numinous" object objectively given, must be posited as a primary immediate datum of consciousness, and the "feeling of dependence" is then a consequence, following very closely upon it, for instance, a depreciation of the subject in his own eyes.

Now this is exactly what we have already discussed as "the numinous". For the 'creature-feeling' and the sense of dependence to arise in the mind, the 'numen' must be experienced as present, a *numen praesens*, as in the case of Abraham. There must be a feeling of something "numinous", something bearing the character of a *'numen'*; to which the mind turns spontaneously; or (which, in other words, is the something) these feelings can only arise in the mind as accompanying emotions when the category of "the numinous" is called into play.

The numinous is thus felt as objective and outside the self. This 'numinous' is what we refer to and call the "Divine" in this study: it is that 'holiness' which remains the heart of all religious hope and contemplation. We now need to inquire more closely into the theological reflection on the Divine in the specific religions which are the subject of study in this research, viz. African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam, while we retrospectively bear in mind this general definition of the divine understood as the "numinous" or the "holy".

2.2   The African view of the Divine

It is also difficult to find the concept of the Divine explicitly evident in the African religious life. One comes across it by way of inferences (Mbiti 1970:41). In his *Concepts of God in Africa*, Professor John Mbiti states that in his research he has not come across direct references to the holiness of God or the Divine. This does not imply that the concept is absent in the beliefs and myths of Africans. This is one reason why Mbiti points out that one can arrive at the concept by way of 'inference'. The inferences from which we can extract the concept are primarily contained in moral and ritual matters.

In saying that the Divine cannot be charged with an offence, the Ila show their attitude that the Divine is holy. He lives or exists above the level of "fault", sin, failure, "wrong" and "unrighteousness" (Smith and Dale 1920). This belief puts the Divine in the category of ethical holiness, purity and cleanliness. Among the Yoruba, the Divine is known as "the Pure King", "the King who is without blemish", "the One clothed in white robes, who dwells above", and whiteness without patterns (absolutely white), essentially white object (Idowu 1973:47). All these appellations clearly point to the concept of God's holiness.

During rituals of sacrifice, great care is taken to ensure that a high degree of purity is observed. Among some peoples, the sacrificial animal must be of one colour only and without blemish. The Bukusu of Kenya use a white goat for this exercise. Cattle can also be used for the purpose of appeasing the ancestors. A dog can be used as a means of sealing the agreement when enemies of the Bukusu people enter into a covenant of coexistence with them. According to Professor Wandiba (in Nation Newspapers 1993) the dog's meat can also be eaten (Khulia Sisulu) as a means of establishing innocence in the case of an alleged crime against the community (Wandiba 1992). Such a violation of community norms may be an involvement in

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adulterous behaviour, stealing or cheating. The act is a symbol of holiness, with which, no doubt, the people associate God. When making a sacrifice the Gikuyu require that the animal, which must be of a particular colour, be provided by a person who has committed "murder, theft, rape" or was associated with witchcraft. Among those taking part in a sacrifice for rain are two children under the age of eight, for these are "pure in heart, mind, and body, and free from worldly sins." They have not been involved in and have not indulged in sexual intercourse. The ritual must be pure and perfectly performed as a reminder of the holiness/cleanliness of the Divine. There are parallels in this to the Old Testament customs and beliefs:

- God is holy.
- The cult must be preserved cleanly.
- The participant must be clean/holy.
- The cultic space is a holy space.

The officiating elders must refrain from sexual intercourse for six days before and two days after the day of sacrifice. It is striking that even African Christian pastors observe this rule strictly. This is common among older pastors who themselves were adherents to the traditional religion before converting to Christianity. Rev. Festo Okonyene of the Reformed Church of East Africa once told the researcher not to go to bed with his wife on Saturday as a preparatory exercise for bringing the pure gospel to the congregation on Sunday. In his opinion sexual intercourse is dirty and persons coming in the presence of God should not be associated with it. The day of sacrifice is observed as "the day of peace" and God is then looked upon, or known as the 'Possessor of Whiteness'" (Kenyatta 1938:24ff.). The Meru have a traditional "messenger of God", known as the Mugwe who, among other high qualifications "must avoid sin, since he is considered to be very near to God" (Bernardi 1959:107). The Sonjo have sacred temples which are carefully guarded both by taboos and manpower, lest they be profaned (Gray 1963:119). The Shona used to observe a solemn cult in which they made an approach to God, with a deep sense of his holiness (Van der Merwe 1957:23). In Igbo country one still finds shrines pervaded by a feeling of holiness, where people take their offerings and sacrifices. All these examples from the ritual life of African peoples, clearly suggest that they have an awareness of God's holiness, show great respect for it and, at least on ritual occasions, try to conduct themselves accordingly. The word" holiness" or "holy" in its theological sense, does not seem to exist in many African languages, but the concept is not lacking.

Africans describe God in terms of attributes similar to those Christians and Muslims believe God to possess. These attributes are divided into three types, viz. intrinsic attributes, external attributes and moral attributes. These will be discussed fully in the next subsection of this chapter.

2.2.1 The nature of the Divine in the African cultural context

In the preceding sections we alluded to the conception of the Divine and sought to translate it as the numinous, thereby describing the most intrinsic nature of the Divine, namely his holiness.

Henceforth, we shall focus on the attributes associated with the Divine, viz. the omniscience, omnipresence, transcendence and finally the immanence of God. This description of the Divine is also similar to those encountered in the Semitic religions of Christianity and Islam. By attributing omniscience to God, African peoples are placing Him in the highest possible position. In their sight, wisdom commands the greatest respect of everyone. A person who is considered wise is in a special class of his own.

The Akan refer to God as "He knows or sees all" (Danquah, 1944:28,30), while the Zulu and Banyarwanda simply call Him "the Wise One". On reaching the limits of their knowledge, the Bacongo often say "God knows all". When the Bayarwanda face sorrows, uncertainty, and ambiguity, they mention God by name which means "God only knows all things" (Mbanzabigwi 1965). The Pokot firmly assert that Tororot knows all secrets (Beech 1911:19).

In these names and short phrases, God is described as the One to whom complete wisdom, knowledge, or understanding belongs. People admit that man's wisdom is limited, whereas God's is not; and that even if men may know something, it is God alone who knows all. No one else is worthy of, or is given the attribute of omniscience. In practical situations it is often at the end of men's imperfect and incomplete knowledge, that they affirm God's omniscience.

In order to grasp, convey, and express the concept of God's omniscience, African peoples use the metaphors of seeing and hearing, which are obviously easy to understand. This is also due to an inability to understand and express abstract concepts.

In a popular Yoruba song, this concept is put in the context of a rhetorical question: "Whatever do you do in concealment that God's eyes do not reach?" To the Yoruba, God is known as "he who sees both the inside and outside of man, the Discerner of hearts". They hand offenders over to Him saying: "God sees him" or "God sees you!" (Idowu 1973:41). The Barundi praise God as "the watcher of everything" (Smith 1961:187) and the Akan as "the All-seeing" (Smith 1961:187). One of the superlatives by which the Meru think of God, describes Him as "the All Seer" (Bernardi 1959:128). In the Old Testament and Near Eastern cultures nothing is hidden from the eye of God – a view which is also rooted in the African beliefs.

Whether people take it literally or not that God has "long ears", is immaterial. The metaphor conveys with emphasis the fact that nothing can escape the notice of God, since his power to "hear" extends far and wide. His omniscience acts like an organ of hearing which detects everything. So God knows all things by keeping them within his hearing, just as He keeps them within his sight. His constant attention to all things means that no audible secret can escape his hearing, just as no visual secret can escape his observation. Because his "ears are long", there is no period or space when and where He cannot hear. He hears the most soft and most secret whispers. That God's capacity of hearing is different from that of his creatures, is summed up by the Bena who say that although God is without a body and does not speak, nevertheless He hears and sees (Culwick and Culwick 1935:100), and by the Nuer who, without attributing a body to God, believe that He sees and hears everything (Evans-Pritchard 1956:7).

Another attribute of the Divine in the cultural context is his omnipresence. This belief is encountered in many ethnic groups of the continent. For the sake of interest we shall survey some of these ethnic groups and their understanding of the omnipresence of the Divine.

Among the Karanga, the Divine is spoken of as "the Great Pool, contemporary of everything". In a hymn which employs the same metaphor, they sing to God, saying (Smith and Dale 1920:127, 129):

> Great spirit
> Waters of the pool that turn
> Into misty rain when stirred
> Vessel overflowing with soil

Thou bringest forth shoots

That they stand erect ...

Thou gives of rain to mankind.

Rain is the immediate reference here, but the metaphor also contains the idea that God's presence, like water, is to be found everywhere. Life itself is an indication of God's omnipresence, "bringing forth the shoots" or supplying "rain to mankind". The name "Great Pool" is suggested by the annual flooding of the Zambezi and it tributaries and other rivers in the region where the Karanga live. These rivers, with their perpetual, if fluctuating flow, suggest to the people the unending presence of God which stretches from one generations to another, from one part of the country to another. Like an ever-filled pool of water, God's presence is "contemporary of everything", that is, He embraces everything within his presence, making it "contemporaneous" with Him.

The Bena believe that God "is everywhere at once" (McCulloch *et al.* 1954). The Banyarwanda express the same belief when they speak of him as "God who is met everywhere" (Mbanzabigwi 1965). In almost identical words the Kono say that God is "the one you meet everywhere" (Parsons in Smith and Dale 1920:161-162). The first two of these expressions are what one might call theological and philosophical statements, and the other two are practical. So when among the Kono, a person has wronged another, the latter says: "May God see this person", or "God will see him!" With a similar awareness of God's omniscience, they invoke his blessings upon one another. It would seem that for them the omnipresence of God is felt in terms of blessing and judgement. The Kono and many other peoples know that in trouble they can call upon God anywhere and at any time, and that their offenders cannot hope to escape from God's presence.

Of a person who escapes from danger, the Akamba remark: "He is a man of God!" or "God was with him!" or "His God is always with him!" The person himself would proudly narrate his experiences, emphasising that "except for God's presence, I would be dead by now". The obvious implication is that the omnipresence of God shields people from danger. Similar expressions are used when a person prospers or succeeds in hunting, searching for a wife, breeding cattle well, and in other ways. The Akamba thus conceive of God's omnipresence in terms of blessings, benefits, and protection as far as human beings and their welfare are concerned. Their conception of this attribute of the Divine is basically horizontal.

The Bukusus invoke God's presence in pronouncing blessings, and if a person prospers, they say "this person has his God". They will be heard saying to the person: "Isn't your God good?" They believe that good things which befall a person in the community come directly from God's presence and are expressions of his goodwill. They can thus invoke this presence to bring them blessings and prosperity, as well as justice and judgement (Wagner 1949:170).

The Ila put it firmly that "God has no where or no when" and that "he comes to no end" (Smith and Dale 1920:202). This clearly implies that God' presence extends beyond human imagination, so that, as far as man's thoughts can reach, God cannot be absent. We may add that this omnipresent nature of the Divine neither diminishes nor increases, whether man feels it or not. It is part of God's inherent nature to be omnipresent simultaneously, equally and absolutely.

Air and wind may be viewed as epiphanies of the Divine. The Luo believe that God (Nyasaye or Piny Kinyal) is invisible but present, like air and wind (Driberg 1923:217). The Lugbara regard God as being in the wind, and therefore omnipresent like the air, though not confined to the air since in one regard He is also in heaven (Middleton 1953:253). The Nuer think of God as being ubiquitous and invisible like the wind and the air (Evans-Pritchard 1956:4,7). The Shilluk consider Him to be "omnipresent or multipresent" and invisible like the wind, even though He has no fixed mode or form of being. In one of their prayers, they relate God's omnipresence to their own lives (Lienhardt in Forde, 1954, II: 155):

When I sleep in the house, I sleep with thee
The soul is kept (alive) by thee ... And the
soul (of man) is not thine own? It is thou who
liftest up (the sick)

So, like the air we breathe, God's omnipresence encircles men, bestowing on them the breath of life, the means of sustenance, and preservation of life. Life itself is like the air, one can readily see why people should associate it so much with life.

The nature of the Divine in the cultural context is also expressed in terms of the *omnipotence* of God.

When a missionary asked Africans in Zanzibar to tell him something about their concepts of God, they simply said: "God thunders" (Dale 1920:27). The man had

crossed the waters to come, as he sincerely believed, to tell " the heathen" about God. But for these, and many other African peoples, the tropical thunder is the most powerful thing they know – in it they discern not merely the sound of a natural phenomenon, but the almighty power of God Himself. Thunder is not simply an impersonal force of nature: it is the mighty voice of God, which nothing can silence. We have many examples of how people conceive the omnipresence of God.

The Yoruba's popular name for God means "the Almighty" (Parrinder in Smith, 1961, 228). They believe that God is most powerful in heaven and on earth. He is able to do all things; He is the enabler of all those who achieve an end. Things are possible only when and because they are ordered by Him; they are impossible when He does not permit them or give his aid. For this reason, the people use the concept in a saying, which has a practical application: "Easy to do as that which God performs; difficult to do as that which God enables not" (Idowu 1973:40-1).

The Ngombe praise God as "the All-powerful", the strong one who helps them find lost things, who metes out justice upon man, and who removes the curse when it is unjustly invoked upon someone. Among them God is also praised as "the One who clears the forests" (Davidson in Smith 1961:228). In human relationships, the curse is the most powerful thing that the people presumably know; but God is seen as stronger, in that He controls its effects. Living as they do, in the midst of dense forests, they regard God as all-powerful in that He clears the forests.

The Zulu, who were the most warlike nation in South Africa, conceive of God's omnipotence in political terms. They describe Him as: "the irresistible", "He who bends down even majesties", and "He who roars so that all nations be struck with terror" (Smith 1961: 109). These designations for God come from a nation which for many centuries terrorised other nations and produced great generals such as Shaka and Dingane. These people know what it is to have power and strength. Yet they recognise that there is One whose might is greater that theirs, who is irresistible and who can deal with majesties and nations until they succumb to his greater might.

The Abaluhyia look at the omnipotence of God from a different perspective. They believe that God has power to alter the natural laws which He has established as well as any other course. They therefore, pray to Him to let normal phenomena continue normally (Wagner in Forde 1954:43) just in case He should decide to change them!

Among some peoples, God's omnipotence is seen in connection with natural phenomena. The Kiga refer to God as "the one who makes the sun set", and say that what He wants, He takes away that very day without waiting even one more day (Edel 1957:160). Near or at the equator the rhythm of the rising and the setting of the sun seemingly remains the same throughout the year. It is something beyond human power, but God controls it and He must therefore be omnipotent. The Gikuyu turn to God in times of great crises such as epidemics, droughts, calamities, and tribal clashes. When they make a sacrifice for rain. they pray to God in words which refer and appeal to his omnipotence, saying (Kenyatta 1938:247):

> You make the mountains tremble and rivers flood, we offer you this sacrifice that you may bring us rain. People and children are crying; sheep, goats, and cattle (flocks and herds) are crying ... we beseech you to accept this, our sacrifice, and bring us prosperity

Here, both people and animals appeal to God to use his great power and to intervene with rain and prosperity, for it is He alone who controls the weather.

Many other peoples consider God to be almighty. (We, however, do not have enough information to indicate under what circumstances the concept of this attribute is applied.) Thus the Akamba and Meru speak of God as "the owner or possessor of all strength". The Luo speak of God as the "All Powerful and Mighty", whereas the Bukusu refer to Him as "the Provider". The Ngori refer to Him as "the Almighty King" (Elmslie 1899:35). The Chagga say that God "has power to do all things" (Dundas 1924:121). A similar concept comes to the fore in a prayer of a Barotse man who says to God that "everything is possible for thee", and professes that He reigns "over all things" (Junod 1927: 137). No doubt the same idea is expressed by the Ganda when they consider God to be "the master of all things" (Lugira 1969:29). In this regard, the power of the Ganda kings readily forms the background against which God's even greater power is to be seen. Just as the Kabaka had complete rule over their country, so God has absolute power over the entire universe.

Other peoples, like the Akamba, Gikuyu, Nyanja, Pyem, Teso, Tswana, Bukusu and Watumbatu, see God's omnipotence in terms of his being more powerful than men. In this context, power is viewed hierarchically, so that God is at the top as the Omnipotent; beneath Him are the spirits with lesser power, and lower still are men with comparatively little power or no power at all.

Another attribute of the Divine is his transcendence. This is a difficult concept to understand. The transcendence of God must be balanced by the immanence of God. The two attributes are paradoxically complementary (Mbiti 1970:12). God is "far" and distant from the human experience (transcendent), men cannot reach Him: this is clearly understood by the Gikuyu who believe that Ngai lives at the highest peak of Mt. Kenya. The mountain shines and glitters as a result of the reflection of ice and snow at its peak. It is also too cold up there for the hunters and honey gatherers to reach it. According to the Gikuyu, the highest point of the peak is the seat of Ngai. The transcendence of God is described in the same way among the Bukusu of Western Kenya who similarly believe "Wele", whom they also refer to as "Khakaba", lives and has his seat on the unattainable highest peak of Mt. Masaba, renamed by the colonialist as Mt. Elgon, derived from a saboat Gony who lived in the caves of the mountain. According to these two descriptions the Divine is far removed from man and the community, but an antimony contained in the two scenarios is that God is "near" (immanent), and He comes close to men. He comes to them in terms of blessings as a "Providence" regarded by the Bukusu as "Khakaba", the One who gives. This could be taken as the general distinction. Many foreign writers constantly harp on the fact that for African peoples God is "too remote" and virtually excluded from human affairs. In the words of Harry Sawyerr most of the works on African religious thought presuppose the assumption that the African is an animist; that is to say, he believes that inanimate objects such as trees and stones each has its own spirit which he worships (Sawyerr 1970:1). This observation by Sawyerr, drawn from the discussion of the missionary Mrs Margaret Trowell in writing about East Africa, says that "every tree or stone, every snake or wild beast, may contain some spirit or other, and ancestors return to live again in whom they choose". (Trowell 1957:126) corroborates the stand of many western writers who actually believe that to an African God is "remote" and can only be referred to through concrete symbols such as trees, mountains, forests, etc. This assertion is false, and many facts contained in this study show clearly that African people consider God to be both "far" and "near". God's transcendence is conceived of in various ways. In most African communities the transcendence of God is described in terms of time. African concepts of time, as Professor Mbiti points out, lay greater emphasis on the "past" and "present" than on the "future, making the "future" virtually non-existent beyond a few months or years. This idea is well illustrated in a diagram that is also used by Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:102) in their "Contextualisation, meanings, methods and models":

TENSE	KIKAMBA	GIKUYU	ENGLISH	APPROX. TIME
1. Far future Remote future	Ningauka	Ningoka	I will come	About 2 to 6 months from now
2. Immediate or near future	Ninguka	Ninguka	I will come	Within the next short while
3. Indefinite future or indefinite near future	Ngooka (Ngauka)	Ningoka	I will come	Within a foreseeable future, after such and such an event
4. Present or present progressive	Ninukite	Nindiroka	I am coming	In the process of action; now
5. Immediate past or immediate perfect	Ninauka	Nindoka	I come (I have just come)	In the last hour or so
6. Today's past	Ninukie	Ninjukire	I come	From the time of writing up to about two hours ago
7. Recent past or yesterday's past	Nininaukie Nininookie	Nindokire	I came	
8. Far past or remote past	Ninookie ninaukie	Nindokire	I came	Any day before yesterday
9. **Unspecified Timee**	Teneninooki e nookie tene	Nindookire tene	I came	No specific time in the past

Source: Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:102)

Building upon tenses in the languages of the Kikamba and Gikuyu, and using the Swahili words *sasa* and *zamani* rather than the English words *past* and *future*, Mbiti attempts to show that *sasa*-time includes everything from the recent past to as far into the future as the African thinks, or about six months. *Zamani* includes everything from the immediate past (it overlaps with *sasa* to a certain extent) to the far or remote past as the diagram above shows.

2.3   Christian theological reflection on the Divine

The first generation of missionaries from the West, ignorant of the cultural and religious background of the communities they had come to evangelise, formed superficial impressions that Africans had no concept of the Divine, hence no idea of a deity. This idea was propounded by such anthropologists as Edward Taylor, who theorised about African religious beliefs without any field experience among African

peoples (Leach 1970: 7). The second generation of missionaries, notably Edwin Smith, corrected the earlier impression through their field experience as they carried out their missionary work and proposed that African peoples had vague notions of a deity, but that they regarded God as too remote to be interested and involved in the affairs of man. According to this view Christianity had therefore come to teach the African peoples that God was knowable and immanent. In the incarnation of the Word, God had come to dwell among men (Smith 1961:33, 133). In this subsection dealing with *Christian theological reflection on the Divine*, we shall reflect on the attributes of God from the Christian perspective. The attributes will be arranged, to a certain extent, in accordance with the cultural set up discussed above. The discussion will therefore be divided into the following parts: the essential nature of God, the attributes of God, the names of God and the Divine decrees.

2.3.1   The essential nature of God

The Christian church confesses, on the one hand, that God is the incomprehensible One, but also on the other hand, that He can be known and that knowledge of Him is an absolute requisite for salvation. It recognises the force of Zophar's question: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Job 11:7. And it feels that it has no answer to the question of Isaiah, "To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isaiah 40:18) (Berkhof 1958:29). The possibility of knowing God has been denied on several different grounds (Mugambi 1989: 59). In some cases, however, this denial is simply equivalent to the assertion that man cannot comprehend God. And this is, of course, very true. It is not possible for man to know God with an absolutely comprehensive knowledge, to fathom the infinite depths of the Divine Being. But while we can know God only in part, his knowledge is nevertheless real and true knowledge. Man's knowledge of God is generally said to be twofold, namely innate or inborn knowledge and acquired knowledge.

A distinction is usually made between innate and acquired knowledge of God. This is not a strictly logical distinction, because in the final analysis all human knowledge is acquired. However, psychologists maintain that human beings are products of heredity and environment, meaning that we are born with certain innate potentialities to acquire ethos through instinctual drives, while at the same time we also acquire knowledge from the environment. The doctrine of innate ideas, as Louis Berkhof

(1958:35) argues, is philosophical rather than theological. The seeds of it are already found in Plato's doctrine of ideas, while it occurs in Cicero's *De Netura Deorum* in a more developed form (Maritain 1953:60). The statement that man has an innate knowledge of God does not merely mean that he has an inborn capacity to know God, it indicates something more than that. At the same time it does not imply that at birth man brings a certain knowledge of God with him into the world. The innate knowledge of God is inborn in the sense that, under normal conditions, it develops spontaneously in man as soon as he comes into contact with God's revelation. It is a knowledge which man develops of necessity and not as the result of any choice on his part. Naturally such knowledge is of a rather general nature. Francois Wendel (1963:150) in commenting on the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, begins with this affirmation: "the entire sum of our wisdom, of that which deserves to be called true, and certain wisdom, may be said to consist of two parts, namely the knowledge of God, and of ourselves."

From the beginning of his work. Calvin placed his whole theology under the sign of what was one of the essential principles of the Reformation: the absolute transcendence of God and his total "otherwiseness" in relation to man. No theology is Christian and in conformity with the Scriptures unless it respects the infinite distance separating God from his creature. The Christian theology must give up all confusion, all "mixing" that might tend to efface the radical distinction between the Divine and the human. Above all, God and man must again be seen in their rightful places (Mairet 1978: 151). That is the idea which dominates the whole of Calvin's theological exposition and underlies the majority of his controversies (Beveridge 1958: 35-205), concerning the sovereignty of the Divine and the responsibility of man as well articulated in his *Institute of the Christian Religion* (Calvin: 1845).

But what does he mean by knowledge of God? (See Warfield, 1909.) Is it the natural knowledge which we may have of Him, upon which the ancient philosophers founded their question, however little enlightened one may be as to Calvin's meaning. We are not in this instance concerned with rational speculations about the essence of the nature of God, for, as Calvin writes: "What we think about him of ourselves is but foolishness and all we can say about him is without saviour" (Beveridge 1845:3,13). Besides, we cannot know God in his essence. It is in vain to ask "Quis est Deus". His essence is so incomprehensible that his majesty is hidden, remote from all our senses (Murray 1976:1,51). As far as this is concerned, Calvin is only adhering to an opinion

widely held among the church fathers; and it is with a quotation from Hilary of Poiters that he introduces his theme: "Leave to God the privilege of knowing himself; for it is he only who is able to be a witness of himself who knows himself by himself alone. And we shall be leaving him what belongs to him if we understand him as he declares himself, and ask nothing at all concerning him except through his word" (Murray 1979: 1, 13, 21). We fail to recognise the incomprehensibility of God if we try to bring Him closer to us by means of sensible representations, or by invoking theophanies which are intended precisely to remind us that we are unable to grasp God in his essence (Beveridge 1845, II, 8,17).

We know God, not when we merely understand that there is a God, but when we understand what it is right for us to understand of Him, what is conclusive to his glory or what is expedient for us to understand clearly. For, correctly speaking, we cannot say that God is known where there is no religion, nor piety. For what profit would it be to confess with the Epicureans that there is some God who, being free from the care of governing the world, takes pleasure in idleness? Rather the knowledge we have of Him should teach us to fear and revere Him, and it should induce us to reach out to Him and look to Him (Otto 1917:26-45). What interests Calvin is not an abstract knowledge of God such as we might deduce from philosophy; on the contrary, it is a knowledge of what He is in relation to ourselves, the knowledge which, as Luther also taught, induces us to love and fear God and render Him thanks for all the benefits He bestows on us (Pawson 1992:18).

Acquired knowledge, on the other hand, is derived from God's general and special revelation. It does not arise spontaneously in the mind, but results from the conscious and sustained pursuit of knowledge. It can be obtained only through the wearisome process of perception and reflection, and therefore depends on the voluntarily direction of the will and on the persistent efforts of man. While it is possible only because man is born with the capacity to know God, it carries him far beyond the limits of his innate knowledge of God. Men might, therefore, use the cosmological argument analogically in order thus to conclude that God is the Creator of this universe as revealed in the general revelation (Van Till 1955: 106). Men ought to realise that nature could not possibly exist as something independent. They ought to realise that if anything intelligible is to be said about nature, it must be in relation to the absolute system of truth, which is God. Hence, they ought at once to see nature as the creation of God. Cornelius van Till (1955:106) continues to argue that "men ought also to use

the ontological argument analogically". Men ought to realise that the "being" cannot be intelligently applied to anything unless it be applied to God without limitation (Hick 1973: 16). It is clear that by "greater" Anselm means more perfect, rather than spatially bigger. It is important to note that the idea of the most perfect conceivable being is different from the idea of the most perfect being that there is. The ontological argument could not be founded upon this definition of the most perfect being that exists. There is no guarantee that this being is what Anselm means by God. Consequently, instead of describing God as the most perfect being that exists, Anselm describes God as the being who is so perfect that no higher degree of perfection can even be conceived. It is sometimes said that our knowledge of God is limited to the relation in which He stands to his creatures, and does not extend to his essential being, but this is incorrect. It would not even be possible to know these relations without knowing something about the very nature of God and man. By virtue of God's self-revelation it is possible for man to have true and real knowledge of the being of God though, as already observed, this knowledge is necessarily limited (Kant 1933:II,3).

While it is not possible to give a definition of God in the strict sense of the word, it is possible to give a general description of his being. Many so-called definitions have been given of God, but it is perhaps best to describe Him simply as a pure spirit of infinite perfection. This description contains two elements, namely that God is a pure spirit and that God is personal.

The Bible does not attempt to define the being of God. The nearest approach to anything of the kind is found in the words of Christ to the Samaritan woman: "God is spirit", so that all qualities which belong to the perfect idea of the spirit are necessarily found in Him; that He is a self-conscious and self-determining Being. The fact that He is pure spirit of necessity excludes the notion of the early Gnostics and medieval Mystics, that He has some sort of ethereal or refined body. It also rules out the idea that He is visible and can be discerned by the bodily senses.

The fact that God is spirit also involves his personality, for a spirit is an intelligent and moral being, and when we ascribe personality to God, we mean exactly that. He is a rational Being capable of self-determination. The personality of God is clearly indicated in the traces of intelligent and purposeful action in the world, in the rational, moral, and religious nature of man – all of which can only be the product of a personal God – and above all in the representations of God in the Bible. The presence of God

as described in the Old and New Testament, is clearly a personal presence. He is represented as a personal God, who comes and goes, with whom man can converse, whom they can trust, who enters into their experiences, who sustain them in their trials and difficulties, and who fills their hearts with the joy of victory. This is well explained by Rudolf Otto (1917:26) who describes him as the Awesome God. Moreover, the highest revelation of God in the New Testament is a personal revelation. Jesus Christ reveals the Father in such a perfect way that He could say to Philip: "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14: 9).

God is distinguished from all his creatures by infinite perfection. He possesses his being and his virtues with joy any limitations as imperfection. As the infinitely perfect God, He is not only boundless or limitless, but exalted above all his creatures in grand sublimity and ineffable majesty. This infinity is characteristic of all the divine perfections, and distinguishes these from the attributes of all creatures, however exalted they may be. It is extolled in the song of Moses at the Red Sea: "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in the holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders" (Exodus 15:11). Further references are to be found in such passages as 1 Kings 8:27, Psalms 96:4-6; 97:9; 99:2,3; 147: 5; Isaiah 57:15; Jeremiah 23:24.

Some scholars such as William James and H.G.Wells, deny the infinity of God (James, 1857: 26-27). They conceive of God as "finite", developing, struggling, suffering, sharing with man his defences and victories. The missionaries did not take these views of James and Wells to Africa when they the endeavoured to evangelise the continent. Central to their zeal for mission was the former understanding as opposed to the latter. The main driving force behind their zeal was the great commission already referred to in Chapter 1 of this study.

Simplicity is one of the fundamental characteristics of God. This means not only that He is spirit, that He is not composed of different parts, but also that his essence and properties are one. The being of God is not something existing by itself, to which his attributes are added: the whole of his essence is in each one of these attributes. It is generally said that God's perfections are God Himself as He has revealed Himself to man. They serve but to give a more detailed description of his divine essence. Hence the Bible says that God is truth, life, love, etc.

2.3.2   The names of God

The second part of our discussion on the being of God as understood in Christianity in general is to look at the names of God as presented in the Old and New Testaments. The Bible often speaks of the name of God in the singular, as, for instance, in Exodus 20:7 and Psalm 8:1. When it does this, it does not refer to any special designation of God, but uses the term in a very general sense to denote His self-relation. The one general name of God is split up into many special names, which are expressive of his many-sided being. It is only because God has revealed Himself by his name, that is, in his self-revelation in nature, by showing his magnitude in creation, and in Scripture, and also in the special names by which He is designated in the Bible, that we can now ascribe these names to Him. These names are of divine origin and not of human invention, though they are derived from human language. From what has been said about the name of God in general, it follows that not only the proper names of God, but also his attributes and the personal designations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit may be included under the general heading: *The names of God*. For the purpose of this study, the sub-topic will be discussed in Chapter four.

Of the Old Testament names there are certain names which direct attention to the fact that God is the high and exalted One, the transcendent God. The following are the most important: *'El* and *'Elohim* stress the fact that He is strong and mighty, and therefore to be feared, while *'Elyon* directs attention to his exalted nature as the Most High, the object of reverence and worship (Fretheim 1997: 400-1). Another name belonging to this class is *'Adonai*, which is usually rendered as "Lord". It was frequently used in addressing God and was an explicit recognition of the fact that He is the owner and ruler of all men. (Noll 1997: 401-3). Among Israel, the ancient covenant people, it was largely supplanted by the name *Yahweh*. It is especially in the name Yahweh, which gradually supplanted earlier names, that God reveals Himself as the God of grace. Berkhof (1958:49) further contends that the name has always been regarded as the most sacred and most distinctive name of God, the incommunicable God.

There are other names which point to the fact that this exalted Being condescended to enter into relationships of friendship with his creatures. In patriarchal times it was especially the name *Shaddai* or *El-Shaddai* that served this purpose (Exodus 6:3). This name also stresses the source of blessing and comfort for the people of God. (Anderson 1975: 35-38). It indicates the fact that God controls all powers of nature

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and makes them subservient to his gracious purposes. It is especially in the name Yahweh, that God reveals Himself as the God of grace. This name has always been regarded as his most sacred and most distinctive name. On the basis of Exodus 3:14 it may be said that the name is derived from the Hebrew verb "to be" and that it serves to designate the unchangeableness of God. It implies the commutability of the divine being, but points more directly to the fact that God is unchangeable in his covenant relationship, that He is mindful of his promises and faithful in keeping his word (Malachi 3:6). The name often appears in the strengthened form "Yahweh of hosts". The word *hosts* refers not to the stars, but rather to angelic hosts. Yahweh of hosts is the King of glory, who is summoned by angelic hosts to rule heaven and earth on behalf of his people, and to receive glory from all his creatures. In the words of Millard J. Erickson (1983: 226)."God is love, holiness, and power. These are but different ways of viewing the unified being of God. God is richly complex and these conceptions are merely attempts to grasp different objective aspects of the facets of a hidden being".

The *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Van Gemeren 1997:92) gives us many names of God and their usage in the Old Testament as follows: '*abîr, adônay, 'el, elohim, ba'al, gibbôr, pahad, sûr, gados*.

It is important that we should grasp the meaning of these Hebrew words as presented here.

(a) *ab* **(Father):** This metaphor is comparatively rare with reference to God. Though God could be addressed as Father (Jer. 3:4,19), its infrequent usage in the Old Testament makes it difficult to claim it as a name. It is surprising that the word *Father* is used mostly in texts that have to do, not basically with power and authority, but with creation (Is. 64:8), intimacy (Jer. 3:19) ,compassion (Ps. 103:13, Jer. 31:9), even friendship (Jer. 3:4) and it is used in par with metaphors such as Saviour and Redeemer (Is. 63:16).

(b) *abir* **(Mighty One):** This word (the same as *abbir*, but pointed so as not to be confused with "bull") is used in the phrase "the mighty one of Jacob" (Gen. 49:24; Is. 49:26; 60;16; Ps. 132: 2,5). The *abbir* form is used for God in Ps. 132 and with such metaphors as rock (Gen. 49:24) and Redeemer (Is. 49:26). Its use as a metaphor is distinct from the word for human beings, especially heroic figures (Ps. 76:5,[6]) and even animals known for their strength (e.g. stallions, Judges 5:22; bulls, Is. 34:7). It is possible that the erecting of bull images by Jerobeam at Dan

and Bethel (1 Kings 12: 26-30) was intended to reflect this image of Yahweh and was not originally idolatrous; but because this image was also used for the Canaanite god Baal, it in time led to idolatrous confusion (Anderson 1978).

(c) *ádônay* ([My] Lord) *ádôn* cognates exist in other Semitic languages with essentially the same meaning for both gods and human beings. The Old Testament name *ádônay* may be a modified plural form for *ádon* with first person singular; the vocalisation is changed slightly (long final á) so as not to be confused with "my lords". Yet its usage suggests it is (or has become) another name for Yahweh, "Lord", hence the ending may be a non-afformative rather than a suffix. Either way the form may signify majesty or intensification – singular verbs are used. Because its meaning was similar to ba'al, it may have emerged as the suitable alternative. In a great majority of instances *ádonay* is directly linked to Yahweh. It is rarely used in divine speech (Naude 1997:877-887).

(d) *elohim* most frequently means God, but the interpretation of Hos. 12:4 is possible: "He struggled with the angel". Yet, in effect it could be said to Jacob, "You have struggled with God and with men and have overcome" (Gen. 32:28). Jacob calls the place "Peniel" (meaning face of God), "because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared" (Gen. 32:30). One may deduce from this on the one hand Jacob's determination to gain the blessing of God, "to bind God captive" as Von Rad (1988:259-434) puts it and, on the other hand, that Jacob had to experience a brokenness (immobilisation by the wrenching of his hip) if God was to bless him and transform him from Jacob to Israel, the man who has power with God. Out of the struggle comes a new Jacob, symbolised by the new name. In his day Hosea reminded Israel of this experience of their ancestor and the implication for them. "He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favour. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there – the Lord God Almighty, the LORD is his name or renown" (Hosea 12:4-5).

(e) *ba-al* (lord):. This everyday word for the human head of a family (Gen. 20:3) was used as a metaphor for a deity throughout the Ancient Near East. In time it became a name for the storm god, responsible for dominion in the sphere of fertility in Canaan and surrounding regions. Early Israelites may have appropriated the epithet ba-al for Yahweh (as with El), evident in the use of ba-al in the names of Yahweh worshippers (e.g. sons of Saul and Jonathan, 1 Chron. 9:39-40). But because of sharp religious conflict with the Canaanites, especially in

the face of a developing syncretism (1 Kings 18:21; 11:5), this epithet was soon deemed unsuitable and more and more reprehensible. The ba'al element in Ishbaal was changed by later editors to *boset* ,shame (Chron. 8:33-34; 2 Sam. 2:8; 4:4 and New Revised Standard Version footnote; see Jer. 11:13). The relation of Baal-Berith (Judg. 9:4) to El-Berith (Judg. 9:46) has not been resolved satisfactorily (Wilson 1970). At the same time the Israelites appropriated language and themes from the Canaanite tradition and openly used them to fill out their way of speaking about Yahweh (e.g. storm imagery, Ps. 18: 14-15; conflict with sea/dragon, Ps. 74:12-15; "Ancient of Days", Dan. 7:9-11; marriage and death/resurrection imagery in Hosea 14:1-14). This did not constitute a "baalisation" of Yahweh, but recognised (as with *El*) that non-Israelite understandings had at least some grasp of the truth about God (through general revelation). The use of such imagery may also have proved helpful for polemical purposes in staking out claims regarding Yahweh (Hosea 2:8), perhaps even for apologetic objectives in that it served to establish links with the thought world of Baal adherents. The marriage imagery of Hosea remains intact, but it is expressly stated that Yahweh will be called husband, not baal (Hosea 2:16 [18]).

(f) **gibbor (im):** (Job 16:14 LXX *dynamenoi*, N IV warrior). Elsewhere in the KJV (e.g. 2 Sam. 10:7) and in other English translations, including the NIV (e.g. 2 Sam. 23:8), the word is translated as "mighty man" or something similar. The name may be associated with the context of the holy war in which Yahweh was portrayed as the hero or warrior. The LXX, however, uses *gigas / gigantes* for *gibbor (im)* in Gen. 6:4 (NIV heroes); 10:8-9, 1 Chron. 1:10; Ps. 19:5; Is. 3:2; 13:3; 49:24-25; Ezek. 32:12, 21,27; 39: 18, 20.

(g) **pahad (Fear [of Isaac]):** This name is associated with the patriarchal era (Gen. 31:42, 53). The use of *pahad* in 1 Sam. 11:7 for the dread that Yahweh caused to fall on Israel's enemies suggests that the issue of the divine protectiveness of the chosen family is the foremost theme, reverential awe is possible.

(h) **sûr** is a name for God (2 Sam. 22:2; PS 42:10[9]) symbolising his unshakeable faithfulness, performance, protection, care and provision for his people (Ps. 71:3; 78:16; Is. 32:20

(i) **gados (Holy One):** God as the "Holy One of Israel" is especially prominent in Isaiah (1:4; 5:19,24). This language expresses the "otherness" or transcendence

of God: God is not a human being (Num. 23:19; Hos. 11:9). At the same time, this Holy One dwells in the midst of Israel (Is. 12:6; Hos. 11:9) and hence holiness does not express aloofness or distance. God is revealed as the transcendence One precisely in his immanence, by the way in which God is present and active among the people. God is both far-off and near at hand, indeed fills the earth (Jer. 23:24) as does God's glory (Is. 6:3) and love (Ps. 33:5) (Naudé 1997).

Numerous, often neglected metaphors for God are found in the Old Testament. There are over fifty such metaphors in the book of Psalms alone. A few of these are: God as husband (Is. 62:5), king (Ps. 95:3), judge (Gen. 18:25), shepherd (Ps. 23:1), redeemer (Is. 44:24), potter (Jer. 18:1-6), warrior (Exod. 15:3), rock (Ps. 18:2[3]). Though God is never called mother, female images are used for God which reflect the peculiar experience of women, as for instance motherhood (Is. 42:14, 66:13). The image of a child in its mother's womb or at its mother's breast is capable of conveying a sense of oneness and closeness with God that is unique.

Generally, the various names and metaphors used for God in the Old Testament reflect three realities, which interacted with one another in various ways in different periods of Israel's history as formulated by Israelite theologians with differing perspectives.

(i) God as revealing God is not "named" by others (Gen. 16:13 being an exception) unlike people or other gods. The importance of a name cannot be underestimated. A name did and in some sense continues to convey character. The names used for Him surely say something about God and his activity as well as about the way people perceived Him – here the metaphors come into play. The essence of this word about God, and what provides the continuity in God-talk across the generations, is not to be found in some abstract notion of, for example, monotheism (however important that is). Certain credo statements which occur throughout the Old Testament summarised the essence of Israel's faith and provide an inner-biblical warrant for evaluation of all reflection about God. The most common of these is first stated in Exodus 34:6-7 : "The compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished."

(ii) Metaphors and other designations for God were taken over from the Ancient Near Eastern context and were familiarised with Israel's faith. The dependence on language and imagery is not simply formal, for truths about God were in fact available to Israel's neighbours, and Israel's understanding was enriched by this contact. (One need only think of the theological insights of Abimelch in Gen. 20 and his role as Abraham's confessor.) I would say that this is the reason or source of the similar usage. These cultures probably had similar cosmologies, similar cult practices and similar designations (whether metaphoric or not) for their gods. For example, Yahweh and Baal have similar attributes. Far from diminishing the uniqueness of Israel's faith, this is testimony to the work of God the Creator in the lives and thoughts of these non-chosen people, for which the chosen community ought to be more grateful than it has often been.

(iii) Israel's ongoing experience with God, in major events, worship occasions and everyday encounters, generated theological reflection and the development of a new language about God. It is remarkable to what extent Israel's language for God is associated with everyday realities; language is drawn from home, family, from social, commercial and political spheres, from interpersonal relationships and non-human entities. Most fundamental to all to this language is its relational character, revealing a God who was not distant and aloof from the world, but a God who had entered into genuine relationships with people and who worked in and through the complexities and ambiguities of their lives on behalf of God's mission to save the word (Fretheim in Van Gemeren (Ed.) 1996, Vol IV:12988-1300).

The New Testament simply uses the Greek equivalents for the Hebrew names of the Old Testament. The following should be noted particularly:

(a) **Theos**: This is simply the word for "God" and is the most common name employed in the New Testament. It is the common rendering of 'El, 'Elohim and 'Elyon, though the latter is sometimes rendered as "the most high" or "the most High God". The names Shaddai and El-Shaddai are simply rendered by their Greek equivalent, meaning "the Almighty" or "the Almighty God". The simple Theos is frequently found with a possessive genitive, for example "my God", "their God", "our God", "your God", because in Christ God may be regarded as the God of all and each one of his children (Fretheim 1997).

(b) **Kurios:** This is the word for "Lord", a name that is applied not only to God, but also to Christ in the Hellenistic usage. It takes the place of both Adonai and Yahweh, though it does not have exactly the same meaning as the latter, but designates God as the possessor and ruler of all things but particularly of his people, as the One who has regal power and authority. The fundamental idea of Yahweh is sometimes reproduced in such descriptions as "the Alpha and the Omega", "who is and was and who is to come"; "the beginning and the end"; "the first and the last" (Kittel 1964).

(c) **Pater:** It is often said that the New Testament introduced a new name for God, namely *Pater* (Father). But this is hardly correct, for it is also found in the Old Testament as an expression of the special relation of God with Israel. God is the Father of Israel, Deuteronomy 36:6; Isaiah 36:16, and Israel is the Son of God, Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 14:1; Isaiah 1:2. The name is not always used in the same sense in the New Testament. Occasionally it serves to designate God simply as Originator and Creator, for example, 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:14; Hebrews 12:9; James 1:17. In all other places it is expressive either of the special relation in which the first person of the Trinity stands to Christ or of the ethical relation of God to his spiritual children (Berkhof 1958:18-34).

That God has personality is indicated in several ways in Scripture. One of these is the fact that God has a name. He has a name which He assigned to Himself and by which He reveals Himself. When Moses wonders how he should respond if the Israelites were to ask the name of the God who has sent him, God identifies himself as "I am", or "I will be" (Yahweh, Exodus 3:14). By this He demonstrates that He is not an abstract, unknowable being, a nameless force. Nor is this name used merely to refer to God or to describe Him. It is also used to address Him. Genesis 4:26 indicates that men began to call upon the name of the Lord, and Genesis12:8 refers to Abraham's building an altar and calling upon the name of God. Psalm 20 speaks of boasting in the name of the Lord (v 7) and calling upon Him (v.9). The name of God is to be spoken and treated respectfully, according to Exodus 20:7. The great respect accorded to the name is indicative of the personality of God. If a place or object were involved, such respect would not be necessary. With persons, however, it is otherwise. Hebrew names were not mere labels used to distinguish one person from another. In Western impersonal society this would seem to be the case. Africans, however, concur with the Hebrews in attaching meanings to names as already

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observed in this chapter. In the Western society names are seldom chosen for their meaning, rather parents choose a name because they happen to like it, or because it is currently popular. The Hebrew approach was quite different, however. A name was chosen very carefully, and with attention to its significance. Whereas in Western society a number might serve as effectively, and perhaps even better, the Hebrews considered the name an embodiment of the person bearing it (Eichrodt 1967:40-45).

The particular names that God assumes are indicative of the personal aspect of his nature. They refer primarily to his relationship with persons rather than with nature, God is not depicted as working principally with nature.

2.3.3   Divine attributes

God reveals Himself not only in his names, but even more particularly in his attributes. The attributes are ascribed to the Divine Being in Scripture. They are visibly exercised by Him in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. Attributes ascribed to God are important reflections of the way in which God was understood in Scripture.

The incommunicable attributes are those divine perfections which have no analogies in the creature. They emphasise the absolute distinctiveness of God, his transcendent greatness. When we ascribe independence of the self-existence to God we thereby assent that He exists by the necessity of his own being and therefore does not, like man, depend for his existence on anything outside of Himself (Berkhof 1958: 55). This means not only that He is independent in his being, but also that He is independent in all his virtues and actions, and causes all his creatures to depend on Him. This idea is contained in the name Yahweh, finds expression in John 5:26, is indicated in passages which clearly imply that God is independent in his thought (Rom. 11:33,34), in his will (Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:19; Eph. 1:5; Rev. 4:11); in his power (Psalm 115:3), and in his council (Psalm 33:11), and is also implied in the declaration that He is independent of all things, and that all things exist through Him (Ps. 84:8; Is. 40:18; Acts 17:25) (Erickson, 1983:266).

Scripture teaches not only the **independence** but also the **unchangeableness** of God. He is forever the same, and therefore devoid of all change in his being, perfections, purposes, and his promises. This is clearly taught in such passages such as Psalm 102:27; Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17. At the same time there are many passages which seem to ascribe change to God. He is represented as revealing and

hiding Himself, as coming and going, as repenting and changing his intentions and so on (Exod. 32: 10-15; Jonah 3:10; Proverbs 11:20; 12:22; Psalms 18:26, 27). But the unchangeableness of God, as taught in Scripture, clearly does not imply that there is no movement in God. He is unchangeable in his inner being, his attributes, his purposes, his motives for action and his promises. And when the Bible speaks of Him as repenting and changing his intention, this is evidently only a human way of speaking. In reality the change is not in God but in man's relation to God.

The Bible also teaches about the **infinity** of God (Erickson 1983:272). The infinity of God in general is that perfection of his nature by which everything that belongs to his being is without measure or quantity. It may be considered from various points of view.

His **absolute perfection**: This is the infinity of God with respect to his divine being or essence, and as such qualifies all the communicable attributes of God. God is infinite in his knowledge and wisdom in his goodness and love, in his righteousness and holiness, and in his sovereignty and power. All his perfections are free from limitation and defect (Job 11:7-11; Ps. 145:3).

His **eternity** transcends the dimensions of time and space. God's infinity viewed in relation to time is called eternity. Scripture usually represents it as endless duration (Ps. 90:2; 102:12; Eph. 3:21), but in doing so, it uses popular language, and not the more specific language of philosophy. Strictly speaking, it denotes that God transcends time and possesses the whole of his life at once. There is with Him only an eternal present, and no past or future (Erickson 1983:274). Time does not apply to Him. He was before time began. The question, "How old is God?" is simply inappropriate. He is simply not restricted by the dimension of time. God is aware of what is happening, has happened, and will happen at each point in time. Yet at any given point within time He is also conscious of the distinction between what is now occurring, what has been and what will be (Barr 1962).

His **immensity**: Viewed with reference to space, the infinity of God is called his immensity. By virtue of this perfection, He transcends all space and at the same time is present at every point in space with his whole being. There is no place where He cannot be found (Erickson 1983:273). The point here is that nowhere within the creation is God inaccessible. This is called his omnipresence. God is immanent in all his creatures and his entire creation, but is in no way bounded by it. This perfection of

God is also clearly revealed in Scripture (1 Kings 8:27; Is. 66:1; Ps. 139:7-10; Jer.

Scripture teaches further about the **simplicity** of God. By ascribing simplicity to God, we assert that He is not composite, and not susceptible of division in any sense of the word. It implies, among other things, that the three persons in the Godhead are not indicative of parts of which the divine essence is composed, or that God's essence and attributes are not distinct, and the attributes are not super-added to the essence of God. While the simplicity of God is not directly asserted by Scripture, it clearly follows from his self-existence and immutability.

According to Christianity the communicable attributes of God are those to which the attributes of man bear some analogy. It should be borne in mind, however, that what is found in man is only a finite and imperfect analogy of what is infinite in God. In this connection it should be noted that the incommunicable attributes of God qualify his communicable attributes. God is independent and infinite and unchangeable in his knowledge and wisdom, and in His love and holiness.

The knowledge of God may be defined as that perfection by which He, in an entirely unique manner, knows Himself and all things possible and actual. This knowledge is inherent in God and is not obtained from without. Moreover, it is always complete and stands out clearly in the consciousness of God. It is called omniscience, because it is all comprehensive. God knows Himself, and all that is contained in his plan: He knows all things as they actually come to pass – past, present and future, and knows the moments in their real relations. He is fully acquainted with the hidden essence of things, the depth of which man cannot fathom. The actual as well as the possible is present in his mind. The omniscience of God is clearly taught in such passages of Scripture as 1 Kings 8:39, Psalms 139: 1-16, Isaiah 46:10, Ezekiel 11:5, Acts 15:18, John 21;17 and Hebrews 4:13.

The **wisdom** of God is full of understanding and knowledge of the entire creation as well as the design for man in it (Proverbs 8; John 28). It is the intelligence of God as manifested in the adaptation of means to ends. By virtue of it God chooses the best means for attainment of the ends that He has in view. The final end to which He makes all secondary ends subservient, is the glory of his name (Rom. 11:33; 14:7,8; Eph. 1:11, 12; Col. 1:16). The wisdom of God is seen in creation (Ps. 19:1-7; 104:1-

34), in providence (Ps. 33:10, 11; Rom. 8:28) and the work of redemption (1 Cor. 2:7; Rom. 11:33, Eph. 3:10).

God is **good in Himself**; that is, He is **perfectly holy**, but this is not the goodness which is considered here. What we are dealing with is a good God, One who can be trusted and loved. He has attributes of goodness as well as of greatness (Erickson 1983, 24). It is God's goodness in action, which reveals itself in doing well to the others: It is the affection which the creator feels toward the sentient creatures as such. It is sometimes called his love of benevolence, or his common grace, to designate the fact that its bounties are undeserved. The Bible refers to it in many places, such as Psalm 36:6, 102:21; 145: 8,9,16; Matthew 5:45; 6:26 and Acts 14: 17.

The **love** of God is frequently regarded as the most central attribute of God, in the light of which all other divine perfections should be interpreted. When we think in terms of God's moral attributes perhaps what comes to mind is the cluster of attributes we are here classifying as love. There is some Scriptural basis for this. For example, in I John 4:8 and 16 we read: "He who does not love does not know God: for God is love ... so we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (Ladd 1974). Secondly II Corinthians 13:11 speaks of "the God of love and peace". In general, God's love may be thought of as his eternal giving or showing of Himself. This love may be considered from various points of view, for example the following.

The grace of God: In the specific language of Scripture the grace of God is the unmerited love of God toward those who have forfeited it and are by nature under a judgement of condemnation. It is the source of all spiritual blessings which are bestowed upon unworthy sinners (Eph. 1:6,7; 2: 7-9; Titus 2:11; 3: 4-7).

The mercy of God: Another aspect of the love of God is his mercy or tender compassion. It is the love of God toward those who are in misery or distress, irrespective of their desires. It contemplates man as one who is bearing the consequences of sin, and is therefore in a pitiable condition. It is exercised only in harmony with the strictest justice of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ. God's mercy is his tender-hearted , loving compassion for his people. It is his tenderness of heart towards the needy. If grace contemplates man as sinful, guilty and condemned, mercy sees him as miserable and needy. Words such as the Hebrew *chesed, racham* and Greek *agape* give expression to this dimension of God's love. The psalmist said:

"As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him" (Psalm 103: 13). Similar ideas are found in Deuteronomy 5: 01; Psalm 57: 10 and Psalm 86:5. The attribute of mercy is seen in the pitying concern of Yahweh for the people of Israel who were in bondage to the Egyptians. He heard their cry and knew their sufferings (Exodus 3:7). It is also seen in the compassion which Jesus felt when people suffering form physical ailments came to him (Mark 1:41). Their spiritual condition also moved Him (Matthew 9:36). Sometimes both kinds of needs are involved. Thus, in describing the same incident, Matthew speaks of Jesus, having compassion and healing the sick (Matthew 14:14), while Mark speaks of his having compassion and teaching many things (Mark 6:34). Matthew elsewhere combines the two ideas when he says that Jesus saw that the crowds were helpless like sheep without a shepherd and He had compassion on them, so He went about "teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity" (Matt. 9:35-36).

Persistence: A final dimension of the God's love is persistence or as Berkhof puts it, the long-suffering of God (Berkhof 1958:74). The Hebrew here is ['*erek 'appayim* - Exodus 34:6) and the Greek is *makrothumia* (slowness to anger). We read of God's persistence in Psalm 86:15; Romans 2:4; 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 3:15 and Jonah 4:2-3. In all these verses God is pictured as withholding judgement and continuing to offer salvation and grace over long periods of time.

God's long-suffering was particularly apparent in the case of Israel: this was, of course, an outflow of his faithfulness to them. The people of Israel repeatedly rebelled against Yahweh, desiring to return to Egypt, rejecting Moses' leadership, setting up idols for worship, falling into the practices of the people about them, and intermarrying with them. There must have been times when the Lord was inclined to abandon his people. Even the Hittites or the Moabites might have seemed a better risk about then (Anderson 1978). A large-scale destruction of Israel on the fashion of the flood would have been most appropriate, yet the Lord did not cut them off.

But God's patience was not limited to his dealings with Israel. Peter even suggests (1 Peter 3:20) that the flood was delayed as long it was in order to provide an opportunity of salvation to those who ultimately were destroyed. In speaking of the future day of great destruction, Peter also suggests that the second coming is delayed because of God's forbearance. He does not wish "that anybody should perish, but that all reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

On one occasion Peter came to Jesus (on behalf of the disciples, no doubt) and asked how often He should forgive a brother who sinned against him: as many as seven times? Jesus' reply to Peter which has been interpreted as either "77 times" or "490 times", indicate the persistent, relentless nature of the love that is to be characteristic of a follower of the Lord. Jesus Himself demonstrated such persistent love with Peter. When warned by Jesus that he would deny his Lord, Peter vigorously protested. Even if everyone else were to deny Jesus, Peter would never do so. Jesus warned him that he would deny Him not once, but three times, a prophecy which soon came to pass. Peter went out and wept bitterly after denying that he even knew Jesus. But Jesus forgave Peter this time, just as He had in the case of so many other shortcomings. God's faithfulness and forbearance were also manifested in his not casting off other believers who had sinned and failed Him: Moses, David, Solomon, and many more.

We conclude our discussion of the *Christian theological reflection on the divine* by having a look at what we have so far emphasised in this section. The Divine in Christian belief and in Scripture culminates in and coincides with the monotheistic God, known by different names and with a spectrum of superhuman attributes. We have articulated the fact that "the Divine" is God Himself. This has led us to the discussion of his attributes which indeed project his "perfection" of holiness. At this juncture we look at the attribute of the Divine well defined at the beginning of this chapter as the "Holy". This is the main focus point of our study, especially how an understanding of it can help to promote religious coexistence in Kenya and Africa.

There are two basic aspects to God's holiness. The first is his uniqueness. (This aspect of God's holiness could be considered another attribute of greatness, in this case with respect to moral matters). He is totally separate from all of creation. This is what Louis Berkhof calls the "Majesty -holiness" of God (Berkhof 1958:73). The uniqueness of God is affirmed in Exodus 15:11: "Who is like thee, o Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?". Similar expressions of the loftiness, the exaltedness, the splendour of God are found in 1 Samuel 2:2 and Isaiah 57:15. Isaiah saw the Lord "sitting upon a throne high and lifted up". The foundations of the threshold shook, and the house was filled with smoke. The seraphim cried out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:1-4). The Hebrew word for "holy" (*gadash*), mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, means "marked off" or "withdrawn from common, ordinary use". The verb from which it is derived suggests "to cut off" or "to separate". Whereas in the religions of the

peoples around Israel the adjective "holy" was freely applied to its objects, actions and personnel involved in the worship, in Israel's covenant worship is was very freely used of the Deity Himself. (Van Gemeren 1997: 2988-1300).

The sacredness of God is often transmitted to objects and places associated with Him. For example, in the incident of the burning bush Moses was told to take off his shoes since the ground on which he stood was holy (Exodus 3). In like manner, when God came down upon Mount Sinai, it was separated from the Israelite encampment. No one but Moses was to go up the mountain or even touch its border (Exodus 19). Similar restrictions applied to the tabernacle and later the temple. The Most Holy was veiled off from the Holy (Exodus 26:33; 1 Kings 6:16). Access was barred to all but the high priest, and he entered only once a year. The proper reaction to God's holiness, his separateness, is one of awe, reverence, and silence. "Let them praise the great and terrible name! Holy is he!" (Psalm 99:3).

Another aspect of God's holiness is his absolute purity or goodness. This means that He is untouched and unstained by the evil in the world. He does not in any sense participate in it. Note the way in which Habakuk addresses God in Habakuk 1:13: "Thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on wrong." James 1:13 says that God cannot be tempted with evil. In this respect God is totally unlike the gods of other religions! These gods frequently engage in the same type of sinful acts as their followers. Yahweh however, is free from such acts. Job 34:12 says, "Of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice."

God's perfection is the standard for our moral character and the motivation for religious practice. The whole moral code follows from his holiness. The people of Israel were told, "For I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls upon the earth, for I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God, you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44-45). The same thought is expressed in Leviticus 19:2 and Matthew 5: 48. Because of the flawlessness of God, a similar quality is expected of those objects or persons set apart unto Him. In Israel the priests were to be without any physical blemish. The same was true of sacrificial animals. Worshippers were not to bring defective animals but rather perfect ones without any blemish (Lev. 1:3, 10; 3:1,6; 4:3).

We have here a very basic and important dimension of God's nature. God's holiness is emphasised throughout the whole Bible, but especially in the way it is depicted in the Old Testament. Its importance is seen in both the number of times it is referred to and the emphasis with which it is taught. Some Biblical scholars have suggested that holiness is the most important single attribute of God (Strong 1970:297). Whether or not this is a legitimate or desirable deduction, holiness is at least a very important attribute of God. And it has far-reaching implications.

A point which is emphasised repeatedly in the Bible is that the believer should be like God. Because God is holy, those who are his followers must also be holy. God is not only personally free from any moral wickedness or evil. Those who belong to Him must therefore seek the same holiness that is so basic to his own nature. Isaiah, upon seeing God, became very much aware of his own impurity. He despaired, "Woe is me! For I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of Hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5). Similarly, Peter, on the occasion of the miraculous catch of fish, realising who and what Jesus was, said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, o Lord!" (Lucas 5:8). When one measures one's holiness, not against the standard of oneself or other humans, but against God, the need for a complete change of moral and spiritual condition becomes apparent.

Paul stresses the point that those whom God has called to be his people should separate themselves from unclean things and be perfectly holy (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). The same idea is found in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 and 4:7. In an evident reference to the Old Testament requirement of spotlessness and freedom from any blemish, Paul notes that the church must also be completely holy: "that the church might be presented before him in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). To be a believer is to share with the other believers the life ofthe coming age, to be a believer in fellowship, to be in the *ekklesia* (Ladd 1974:350-351). Psalm 99:9 says, "Extol the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy!" A very similar thought is found in Revelations 15:4: "Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, o Lord? For thou alone are holy".

The last stage of the investigation, was to list and elaborate on the attributes of God. The next step is to examine the Scriptural statements carefully and make reasonable inferences from them. The scholastics in developing their natural theology, on the

other hand, used three speculative methods to deduce the attributes of God (Berkhof 1958:52). The first method (causality) involved investigating the nature of the world, and imputing to God such qualities as would be necessary to bring about the effects observed. The second method (negation) was a matter of removing from the idea of God all the imperfections found in man and ascribing in their place the opposite perfection of God. The third method (eminence) was to take the positive qualities found in man and apply their superlative form to God, on the assumption that God is the source of those positive qualities and, being infinite, must possess in unlimited fashion what is found only partially in man. But these approaches involve assumptions which may lead to the abstract or isolated treatment of individual attributes which we are warned against, and hence to conflicting confections.

The Biblical treatment of the attributes of God is not a speculative, but rather a practical matter. There is a vital connection between what God is and what He does – between his attributes and his acts. The attributes of God are frequently revealed in his actions, so that what He does is the result of what He is. Furthermore, the attributes revealed in the Bible are an indication of how He will act. God's actions are not spontaneous, erratic or arbitrary. They are outflows of his nature. Thus they are characterised by constancy and dependability. We can relate correctly to God by governing our actions in accordance with what the Scriptures say God is like. Moreover, knowledge of God's nature becomes a means to realistic self-knowledge. One's holiness is fully and correctly assessed only when measured by the standard of perfect holiness, that of God. We have already noted this in connection with Peter's encounter with Jesus in Luke 5. Finally, the qualities of God, insofar as they are also qualities of man (not omnipresence), are the motivation and stimulus for man to live in an appropriate way. They are the model of godliness for the Christian. This is the theology of the Divine that was the basis of the calling of the genuine Christian missionaries who came to Africa in obedience to the great Commission (Matthew 28).

2.4   Muslim theological reflection on the Divine

"I breathed My Ruh - Divine energy into him (man)" says the Qur'an (15:29). The Nabi said: "Cultivate in yourselves those qualities which reflect the Divine attributes." By cultivating those qualities, the self develops and draws, so to say, closer to God. Through *amal-us-sayy i'ah,* it goes further away from God and Reality. *A'mal-us-sayy i'ah* weakens the Divine attributes in man according to the Qur'an. *A'mal-ul-hasanah*

strengthens and cultivates Divine qualities. The Divine attributes serve as the objective model after which man can strive to fashion himself.

As pointed out the divine attributes brings the believer closer to Allah. The origin of the divine is in Allah himself which, according to the Qur'an, reflect his image and characteristics. It is important at this point to discuss the Muslim ideas of "God" presented in the Qur'an as "Allah". Muslims from Jakarta to Boston describe God as "Allah" (DeGruchy and Prozesky 1994:208). The term "Allah" (El /Ilu) refers to a "high god" in pre-Islamic religion. But Muhammad's revelatory inspiration changed this notion. In Islam, "Allah" signifies a transcendent, omnipotent, omnipresent and sovereign deity, who is beyond perception. The character and attributes of Allah are clearly described in both metaphysical expressions and unequivocal descriptive statements.

God has no intermediaries and has created everything through the command "Be". Although the Divine is believed to be present everywhere, it does not inhere in anything. The picture of Allah in the Qur'an does not categorically resolve the question of divine immanence or transcendence. We are closer to a human being than his jugular vein"; says one verse, while another says: "There is nothing like Him". Above all, the Divine is the God "who guides one along the straight path". Compassion, mercy and power tempered with justice are the salient features of the God of the Qur'an. And, unlike the pre-Islamic concept of belief in a blind and inexorable fate over which humans had no control, Islam proposes a powerful but provident and merciful God.

Muslims believe in God's unity, omnipotence and mercy. Allah is One – the foremost dimension of their belief. No other religion puts so much emphasis on this "oneness" of the deity. "There is no god but Allah," is the finest clause in the Muslim creed. Gibbon calls it an eternal truth, but Palgrave (1907), Noble (1907), Osborn (1907), Hauri (1907), in Zwemer (1907) and other students of Islam have questioned whether the monotheism of Islam is worthy of comparison with Judaism or Christianity. Their presentation forms the source of animosity that this study seeks to remove and replace with a dialogue not only with Christianity but with African traditional religion. Their views belong to religious fundamentalism which permeated the theology of early missionaries of the Christian faith in Africa and, for the purpose of our study, in Kenya. They said that the Qur'an showed that Muhammad had a more or less correct idea of the physical attribute of God, but an absolutely false conception of his moral attributes.

The Muslim conceptions of God are negative. Absolute sovereignty and ruthless omnipotence are his chief attributes, while his character is impersonal. The Christian truth, that "God is love" is blasphemy to the learned Muslim and an enigma to the ignorant. "Islam", says Palgrave, "is the Pantheism of Force" (Palgrave 1907:365-367). These sentiments are unnecessary in the present-day understanding of religion. They fuel animosity and make mission itself extremely difficult in a multi-religious society.

The idea of God that the Qur'an presents is both simple and sublime. God is the creative force which is at work throughout the universe. God manifests Himself in the visible world of nature. The Qur'an says: "Whithersoever you turn, you look at the countenance of God" (2:115). The Qur'an calls upon us to reflect and ponder upon the grand natural phenomena – the earth and sky, wind and rain, sun, moon and stars. All nature reflects the beauty and glory of God. Special attention is drawn to God's attribute of *Rububiyah*, according to which He sustains and fosters every being, thus causing the lowliest organism to develop and attain maturity and relative perfection. Because God controls and governs the world, the world process is not purposeless and meaningless. God guides and directs the cosmic process towards a grand destiny. In the Qur'an God is presented as both immanent and transcendent. He works as a creative urge and also exists outside it as its ground. He manifests Himself in nature, and yet transcends it. He is eternal and yet in the changing world and in every day a new phase of his glory is present in the cosmos (55:29, Musk 1992:208).

The Qur'an sheds new light on the relation between man and God. It is one of partnership although one of the partners is immeasurably higher than the other. The wide gulf that separates man from God is, however, not an insuperable obstacle to fruitful co-operation between them. Man is endowed with a self and a self can co-operate only with a self. By virtue of possessing a self, man can, in his humble capacity, work together with Allah in carrying out the divine plan. Man has a stake in the future of the world and as a free self has the capacity to determine, however slender, what that future is to be: it gives man a new sense of dignity to feel that he is actively contributing to the success of the divine plan. The Qur'an urgently appeals to man to work with God in bringing about a world in which justice and goodness are not merely ideas but realities. He can and should contribute to the sum-total of goodness in the universe. Man's acquisitive instincts make him selfish and greedy, and bring

him into conflict with his fellow beings. As such, he cannot fit into the divine scheme. However, by encouraging and fostering his creative instincts which enable him to create values, he will be able to work in harmony with the moral order of the universe and will move steadily towards the goal of full self-realisation and perfection. At the same time, he will be enriching the world with values and making it a fit abode for men who are both free and good. He will be contributing his modest share towards accomplishing the divine purpose. The Qur'an calls upon man to co-operate with other men in the pursuit of the good. "Help one another in *birr* and *taqwa*", says the Qur'an (5:2).

Evolution proceeded at an extremely slow pace in the past ages, and often, a million years passed before a higher quality emerged in the animal world (Parwez 1968:76). With the emergence of a free conscious self the prospect is much brighter. When free men, under the guidance of God, are participating in the world process and are deliberately furthering it, the pace of evolution is sure to be accelerated. By following the right path, which the Qur'an indicates clearly, we can develop all our latent potentialities and march forward towards the ultimate goal of perfection.

As man owns a self, he has a natural affinity with God, the Absolute Self. This affinity confers on him the right and lays on him the duty of working in harmony with the will and purpose of God. By working in this way, man not only realises himself but also gives an impetus to the progress of human society.

The way in which the Absolute self manifests its attributes in the universe evokes feelings of awe, reverence and admiration in man. As man naturally imitates what he admires, he strives to develop himself to be as like God as it is possible for a finite being to be. God serves as a model and also as an objective standard with which man can compare himself and by which he can judge his progress towards self-realisation. Man needs God as a co-worker and as an ideal.

This view had some of the Muslim groups up in arms when they were developing the doctrine of God. The Mu'tazlites saw it as a breach of pure monotheism. To ascribe to God the anthropomorphistic attributes of man, such as speech amounts to nothing less than destroying the unity of the godhead. In this instance, their opposition could be grasped by the man in the street, for it did not hinge on mere abstractions, like the general debate about attributes. For once, a perfectly concrete thing was in the foreground of speculation. Once the question of the divine word had been separated

from the controversy about attributes, in which it had its first roots, the focus of the issue was: is the Qur'an created or uncreated? Formulated thus, the question was bound to attract the interest of every Muslim, even if the answer to the question hinged on a series of considerations to which he remained wholly indifferent (Caspar 1993:54-55).

To explain the notion of "the speaking God" the Mu'tazilites devised a singular mechanical theory, and in doing so exchanged one bundle of troubles for another. It cannot be the voice of God, they argued, that manifests itself to a prophet when he feels the divine revelation acting upon him through his sense of hearing (Goldziher 1981:98). The sound is created. When God wishes to manifest Himself audibly, He causes, by a specific creative act, speech to occur in a material substratum. That is the speech which the prophet hears. It is not the immediate speech of God, but rather a speech created by God, manifested indirectly, and corresponding in its contents to the will of God. This theory offered a form into which they could fit their doctrine of the created Qur'an, which they set against the orthodox dogma of the eternal and uncreated word of God.

No other Mu'tazilite innovation sparked such violent controversy, reaching beyond scholastic circles and making itself felt in public life (Zebiri: 1997:25). The caliph al-Mamun to further the cause, and acting as a kind of high priest of the state, ordered his subjects, under pain of severe punishments, to adopt the belief in the created Qur'an (Wolfson 1976:138). His successor, Al-Mu'tasim, followed in his footsteps. Orthodox theologians and those who refused to declare their position openly were subjected to harassment, imprisonment and torture Docile *qadis* and other religious authorities were ready to assume the office of inquisitors, in order to vex and persecute the stiff-necked supporters of the orthodox view, and also those who were not sufficiently unambivalent in declaring themselves for belief in the created Qur'an, the sole belief in which salvation lay. This view of the Mut'tazalites is in accordance with our studies in comparative religions where Scripture comes to us through the human pen as opposed to the orthodox stand concerning the revelation of the Qur'an.

With regard to the questions of *tawhid*, the profession of faith in God's unity, the Mu'tazalites rose to an even higher general viewpoint by posing the question of divine attributes in a comprehensive fashion. Is it all possible to ascribe attributes to God without tarnishing belief in God's indivisible, immutable unity? (Goldziher 1981:94).

The Mu'tazalites answer: reason. The Ash'arites: it is written that we must know God. The Mu'tazalites: the obligation to know God is based on the divine commandment, but that commandment is grasped by reason. According to this view reason is not the source but the instrument of the knowledge of God.

The above-mentioned example illustrates the general scholastic methodology of theological disputes in Islam. When we immerse ourselves in the ingeniously contrived definitions relating to the problem to divine attributes, we are prompted to recall the battles Byzantine theologians fought over single words, indeed over letters, such as over *homoousia* and *homoiousia*. Can we ascribe attributes to God? To do so would, after all, introduce multiplicity into his one and indivisible being. And even if we were to think of these attributes (as, given the nature of God, we must) as being in a way distinct from God's essence; as being inherent in his essence from all eternity and not super-added to it – even then the mere positioning of such existents, eternal even though inseparably joined to God's essence, would imply the admission of eternal entities besides the one eternal God. But that is *Shirk* "association". *Tawhid*, the pure belief in God's unity therefore demands that one rejects the supposition that God has attributes, whether eternal and inherent, or additional to his essence. This consideration had to lead to the denial of divine attributes; to a view that God is all knowing, but not by a knowledge, all-powerful, but not by power, living but not by life. There is no distinct knowledge, power and life in God. All those things that strike us as attributes are indivisibly one, and not distinct from God Himself. To say that God is knowing is no different from saying "God is powerful" or "God is living". Were we to multiply such statements to infinity, we would still not be saying anything but "God is".

No human language is good enough to describe God, for there is nothing else like Him. God's nature is far beyond our limited conception. Nevertheless, we do know that He is one Allah, the one true God, is not far from us, for He is with us always. The Qur'an says: "We are nearer to Him that his jugular vein" (Qur'an 50:16). Allah is the One, and only He is God. He is the only One worthy of worship. Allah said 'Choose not two gods. There is only one God. So of Me, Me only, be in awe (Qur'an 16:51).

All other things and beings which man both knows and does not know are God's creatures. We must recognise that all forms of God's creation are not in any way to be compared to Him. 'I am only a warner, and there is no God save Allah, the One, the Absolute' (Qur'an 38:66)

In another verse God says: "Follow that which is sent down unto you from your Lord, and follow no protecting friend beside Him" (Qur'an 7:3)

So, because God is one, no one else can share even an atom of his divine power and authority. God alone possesses the attributes of Divinity. Because God is one and one only, to associate any being with God is both a sinful and infidel act.

Islam makes it clear that God has no son, no father, no brother, no wife, no sister and no daughters. The pre-Islamic idea (*jahiliyya*), of calling goddesses (*al-Manat, al -Lat al Uzza*) daughters of Allah, was condemned by the Prophet (peace be upon him for Allah has no need for daughters). In His unity God is not like any other person or thing that comes to anyone's mind. His qualities and nature are conspicuously unique. He has no associates.

2.4.1   God the Creator

A Muslim must believe that Allah is the creator of the universe and everything in it. The Qur'an says: "He it is who created the heavens and the earth in truth" (Qur'an 6:73) it adds:

> Lo! your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then
> mounted He the throne. He covereth the night with the day, which is in haste
> to follow it, and hath made the sun and the moon and the stars subservient by
> His command. His verity is all creation and commandment. Blessed by Allah,
> the Lord of the worlds (Qur'an 7:54).

These verses remind us that nothing can come to life on its own. Everything, including the earth we live on and the heavens we see above, was created by the Almighty God.

God does not simply create and then abandon His creatures. He goes on fashioning and evolving new forms, and sustains all that He has created according to his ways. "He is Allah, the creator, the shaper about of noughts, the Fashioner His are the most beautiful names" (Qur'an 59:24). He is the sustainer of the universe.

God created man and kindly provided for him. Concerning the creation of man the Qur'an says:

> "He it is who created you from dust, then from a drop (of seed) then bringeth
> you forth as a child, then (ordaineth) that ye attain full strength and afterward

that ye become old men – though some among you die before – and that ye reach an appointed term, that haply ye may understand (Qur'an 40:67, 68)

God created all that we can see, by the Divine command "Be", and "there it was". By this very command the Lord created the universe and all that is in it.

It is the sincere Muslim belief that God did not rest after creating the universe and all the creatures. He needs no rest like man and animals. God is absolute life which is free from any such need. The Qur'an says:

There is no God save Him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber or sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth (Qur'an 2:255).

God is active as the Creator, the Life Giver and Life Remover, the Sustainer and the sole Controller of all his creation.

2.4.2   The names of God

God is the Supreme Reality. He has revealed to mankind ninety-nine beautiful names (*al'asma' al husna*) which indicate His transcendent majesty and unity. The Qur'an says" "Allah are the fairest names. Invoke Him by them and leave the company of those who blaspheme His names. They will be requited what they do" (Qur'an 7:80).

In a Hadith (prophetic tradition) reported by Abu Huraira, the Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said: "Verity there are ninety-nine names of Allah, and whosoever recites them shall enter Paradise" (Siddiqi 1975:1409)

These names are not used to divide Allah, for Allah cannot be more than one, but rather to express some of His attributes. Muslims use these names for God in reverence, and as part of praise and prayer. God may always be invoked by a name relevant to the need of His beseecher. The following are a few of these names: *Rahman* (most gracious), *Rahim* (most merciful), or *al-Jalil* (most Majestic) (Naudé 1971:75-81).

2.4.3   God is merciful.

All *surahs* of the Qur'an except one *surat Tauba* (Qur'an 9) begin with the Basmalah. In Arabic transliteration the Basmalah reads: *Bis-mi-Uhahi ar- Rahmani ar-Rahim,* which means: "In the name of Allah, the compassionate (or Beneficient), the merciful".

The Basmalah is the common statement a Muslim must recite before doing anything. It constantly reminds the believer of the mercy of God to all his creation. A careful look at the Qur'an shows that there are numerous ayas (verses) which describe God's love and mercy for mankind.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Allah it is who hath appointed for you night that ye may rest there in and day for seeing. Lo! Allah is Lord of bounty for mankind, yet most of mankind give not thanks" (Qur'an 40:61).

God continues in another verse:

"Allah it is who appointed for you the earth for a dwelling place and the sky for a canopy, and fashioned you and perfected your shapes, and hath provided you with good things. Such is Allah, your Lord. Then blessed be Allah, the Lord Then blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Worlds" (Qur'an 40:64).

Man enjoys the mercy of God who is kind and good. God's mercy is to anyone, believer or unbeliever, obedient or disobedient, Muslim or non-Muslim, black or white.

The Qur'an states

"Allah is He who created the heavens and the earth, and causeth water to descend from the sky, thereby producing fruits as food for you". (Qur'an 14:32). "And He giveth you all ye ask of Him, and if ye would count the bounty of Allah ye cannot reckon it. Lo! man is verily a wrong-doer, an ingrate" (Qur'an 14:34).

God's mercy for His creation is immeasurable. We cannot imagine or count his favours to mankind. He gives man food, drink, the means of movement, and all the necessities of life. He provides for him irrespective of his behaviour. God has created man in the best form of creation and has given him everything he needs for spiritual and physical growth. He has given all this to man because of his mercy. God is the All-Merciful, and through his mercy man attains peace tranquillity, hope, and confidence. The mercy of God is real and active; it pervades all the dimensions of the human experience.

Furthermore, God has promised to extend His love to those who obey His will. His mercy is extended to all mankind, His love is extended to those who submit to His will.

The Qur'an says: "Say, (O Mohammad, to mankind): If ye love Allah, follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (Qur'an 3:31)

2.4.4   God is all-powerful.

Having seen that God is compassionate and merciful, we must also note that it is only God who is the possessor of all power. There is none besides Allah who can benefit or harm a person. Only God can provide for man's needs or give and take away life. The Holy Qur'an proclaims: "Knowest thou not that it is Allah unto Whom belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and earth; and ye have not beside Allah, any friend or helper" (Qur'an 2:107). With God alone rests authority to exercise power in the heavens, on earth and over the entire creation.

God's supreme authority and power cannot be challenged by anyone or anything. He is the Supreme Master of the whole universe as well as its creator, A Quranic verse which comments on God's sovereign power reads:

> Say! O Allah! Owner of sovereignty! Thou givest sovereignty unto whom Thou wilt, and Thou withdrawest sovereignty from whom Thou wilt. In thy hand is the good. Lo! Thou art Able to do all things (Qur'an 3:26)

This is a serious admonition by Allah directed to those who hold power on earth. They should remember that God gives power, and also removes rulers from power as He pleases. He is capable of doing this because all power comes from Him, He is the Lord of power.

> "Now Allah be exalted, the True King! There is no God save Him, the Lord of the throne of Grace. He who crieth unto other gods along with Allah has no proof thereof" (Qur'an 23:116-117).

This verse explains the nature of the power of God. He is the most exalted Power, the Sovereign, the Master. The firm belief in the all-powerful nature of God can help man to give the best possible explanation of many mysterious things that happen in life.

Allah is the undisputed Authority who alone is entitled to receive obedience, and in fact receives it. He is the most Supreme, so heads should bow to Him in submission and adoration. Powerful as He is, God remains pure and free from all sins and evil.

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2.4.5   God is wise and all-knowing.

The omnipotent, merciful, benevolent Allah is also all-wise , all knowing (omniscient).
The Holy Qur'an teaches:

> "And keep your opinion secret or proclaim it. Lo! He is knower of all that is in
> the breasts (of men). Should He not know what He created? And He is the
> subtle, the Aware" (Quran 67:13-14).

Muslims take these attributes of God's knowledge very seriously. For instance, one
should not commit sins in the dark thinking that because there is no one around one is
not being noticed. God's knowledge extends to everything seen and unseen, spoken
or unspoken. Nothing is hidden from Him – neither desires or undeclared intentions.

God's wisdom and knowledge is stressed in several verses of the Qur'an: For instance
He says:

> "His is the praise in the Hereafter, and He is the Wise, the Aware ... Not an
> atom's weight, or less than that or greater escapeth Him in the heavens or in
> the earth, but it is a clear record (Qur'an 34:1,3).

And

> "He knoweth what is the land and the sea. Nor a leaf falleth but He knoweth it,
> not again amid the darkness of the earth, nought of wet or dry but (it is noted)
> in a clear record" (Qur'an 6:59).

It is the perfect God who knows everything which happens in the present and in the
future. He knows what is near and far, what is in heaven and on earth. His knowledge
is unlimited. He instructs man in wisdom through his messengers and written
scriptures. He also reveals to man the knowledge of the laws of nature and his
wonderful signs in his creation and in the order of the universe. This is all part of his
wisdom and knowledge (Baagil 1984:54).

2.4.6   God is eternal.

Muslims are strongly commanded to believe and know that God is eternal. By this
they acknowledge that God has no beginning and no end, that He has been there and
will always be there. There is none after Him nor before Him. The Qur'an states: "He
is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is knower of all
things" (Qur'an 57:3).

The eternal God is not limited by time, space, or circumstance. As He exists beyond time, He cannot go into senility. God is pre-existent and eternal, yet other forms of existence will come to an end. Everything that exists will perish, except God who will endure forever. The Qur'an teaches: "Everyone that is there on will pass away; There remaineth only the countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory" (Qur'an 55: 26-27). This teaching is important because it reminds the believer that, as human beings, we are nothing but visitors on this world, that God alone is eternally living and present, and that all else is transient.

The most magnificent works of man, such as spacecraft or skyscrapers, are but nothing in the eyes of God. The great empires, the marvellous works of science, art, and all the spheres of human endeavour will perish. The great wonders of nature such as the mountains, the valleys, the seas, the stars, the moon will equally perish at the time God wills. Only He, the Supreme Master of the whole universe, and the Creator of everything will remain (Mufti 1996:3).

In attempting to understand the nature and works of God according to Islam, we learn that:

☪ God is only one without a partner or son;

☪ He is the creator of the universe and everything that is to be found in the universe;

☪ He is the compassionate and Merciful and his mercy is to all creatures;

☪ He is just;

☪ He is the Guide and Guardian of everything;

☪ He is pre-existent and eternal;

☪ He is all-knowing and all-wise;

☪ He is loving and provident, and His mercy for His creatures knows no limits;

☪ He is all powerful and the supreme Master of all the worlds;

☪ He is holy and cannot commit sins or do evil; and

☪ He is independent and unique.

Because He is unique, man cannot know everything about God and even the list of ninety-nine names of God is not in any way exhaustive (Kateregga and Schenk 1980:7) Nevertheless the Muslim can acknowledge God through reflection, meditation, firm commitment to the credal statement "*La I Laha illa-l-lah*" and the total peaceful surrender to His commands and will.

2.5 A comparison between African, Christian and Muslim theological attributes of the Divine

There is clearly a close link between the attributes ascribed to the Divine in the African traditional context, by Christianity and by Islam. The discussion of the concept of the Divine in these religions has led us to the discovery of attributes which are common to these religions. They all recognise that God is the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent One. The immanence of God is stressed. This, in our opinion, forms the basis from which we can endeavour to contribute to a symbiosis in a multi-religious society which form the focus point of this study.

Later on in this study we shall discuss more fully the importance of such religious comparison in Africa, based on the discoveries that the study leads us to. But at the outset it is important to point out that Africa has its own problems of tribalism and economic imbalances. Religion should not be a source of additional animosity, but should rather emphasise the common ground which is to be found in the attributes ascribed to God by all these three religions. In this way it could contribute to peace, love and unity which would also promote national development.

In the preceding part of this chapter we have mainly endeavoured to understand the concept of the Divine by discussing the idea of the Holy in the African cultural context, Christianity and Islam. This was necessary, because one has to understand the differences and not simply respond emotionally. But once the differences have been identified and are understood, a second step must be taken, namely and attempt to effect co-operation between these religions. We have articulated the popular theme of the attributes of God which describe the character of the Divine in the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam, and have studied the common theological view of God and man. This synthesis leads us to study the Divine attitude as portrayed by Christians and Muslims and in the African context on the basis of the attributes discussed in this chapter.

The basic issue in this comparison is freedom of religion. Since, however, many people believe that freedom of religion is only possible if all religions are considered equal, the issue of equality of religion will be discussed first.

Are all religions equal? As far as our study is concerned, can we say that African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam are equal? There are many statements in the Bible which indicate Christ's uniqueness, such as, for example, his "I am" statements: "I am the truth and the way and the life"; "I am the light of the world".

In Acts 4:12 we read that "salvation is in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved". In 1 Timothy 2:5 it is said: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus...". About 30 years ago W. Visser 't Hooft (in Orientation 1994) wrote a book called "*No other Name*". Eight years ago Paul Knitter (in Orientation 1994), however, put a question mark when writing a book with similar title: "*No other Name?*" In Roman Catholic thought on about this topic we also see a clear shift from salvation through the church alone (ecclesiocentrism) to salvation in Christ alone (Christocentrism), to salvation through faith in God but not limited to Christ (theocentrism).

The questions which will be addressed here are the following:
(1) Is only Christianity true and all other religions false? Or (2) are all religions at least partially (or wholly) true? Or (3) are they all untrue?

If we say that Christian faith is the only true one, we have to remember that it is not other faiths which say this of Christianity, but Christians themselves and the testimony which one gives about oneself is normally not impartial.

The simplistic view that all other religions are the work of Satan is definitely not Biblical. Scripture clearly teaches that God, through his creational revelation, also talks to the pagans. On the other hand, it is also unbiblical to deny the work of Satan in non-Christian religions – Satan even works within the Christian religion.

What is really the difference between these religions? What is the difference between the Bible, the Qur'an and African religious customs, taboos and myths? Is it not true that if you were born in Arabia, the chances are that you would probably be a Muslim, if in Africa you would probably be a Christian or a supporter of traditional African religion, and if in Europe and America you would probably be a Christian or an atheist?

Are all forms of religious worship not true in the sense that they travel by different routes, to reach the same destination in the end – various routes to the same mountain peak? Are they not simply different expressions, in terms of different cultures, human types, temperaments and intellectual predilections? Do the different religious trends not represent the different experiences and perceptions of and responses to the same unlimited "transcendent. Divine reality"? (The differences are then a mere superficial result of the differences in mentality and cultural background.) Or does such a viewpoint bring us perilously close to the quicksand of relativism or even scepticism?

There is, of course a third possibility: if religions may prove not to be true, even though their proponents fervently believe them to be true, is it not also possible that none of them is true?

Or are we on a wrong track by trying to make the question of truth applicable to religions? We do not, after all, ask this question when it comes to cultures, and do not, for example, ask whether American culture is less true or more true than, for example, Bukusu culture. We also do not say either that Bukusu culture is totally untrue.

This leads us to make a survey of different viewpoints on this synthesis. M.S. Heim in his Book "*Christ the Only Way?* (in *Orientation* 1994) divides the different viewpoints into two main groups (pluralism and particularism), which are then subdivided into three groups each.

Parallel pluralism: Christ is the only Mediator for Christians. Other faiths, however, can yield much the same results as Christianity (cf. for example, Ernst Troeltsch: *The absoluteness of Christianity and the history of religions*, 1975, in *Orientation 1994*).

Jigsaw puzzle pluralism: Each religion contains a fragment of the full and final truth. It is our task to link up the pieces. There is no communal core in all religions, but they should all flow together ultimately. The strong points of all religions should be brought together in a mansion of faith for all nations (cf., for example John Hick: *God and the Universe of Faith and God has many faces,* 1973, in *Orientation* 1994).

Some religions bring the final truth to stronger expression than others. The Christian faith is true in the sense that it is the best, because Christ towers above other religious leaders. He is in a sense then, the highest peak in the mountain range! (See for example, Schubert M. Agden: *The reality of God,* 1979, in *Orientation* 1994.)

Particularism: As opposed to pluralism, the particularists teach that God works in a determining way for the whole world through the person of Christ. They therefore reject – to a greater or lesser extent – the relativism to which pluralism gives rise.

Magnetic pluralism: This movement views Christ as a magnet which attracts all other religions and fills them with his magnetic power. Nobody is saved without Christ, but they can be saved as Muslims, or African traditionalists. Salvational knowledge of God is therefore possible without the revelations of the Bible. The grace which flows from Christ orients man – even unknowingly – towards God. This power flows through all religions and turns them into instruments of salvation when their adherents respond in a believing manner. (see, for example, Karl Rahner: *Foundations of Christian Faith* in *Orientation* 1994.)

Healing particularism: The image here is of a life-saving vaccine which could heal anybody – even those who have died. (It is often asked what happens to people who never had the chance to hear about Christ, or those who died very young.) This view is almost the same as the theory of a "second-chance" after death. It differs from the preceding vision (which teaches that the meaning of Christ can be channelled through other faiths) in the sense that its full effect is dependent on direct and personal knowledge of God. (See, for example, Karl Barth: *Church Dogmatics* 1936)

Christ is the only source of our salvation, and conscious confession of Christ in this life is the only way along which we can hope for salvation. (See, for example, Leslie Newbegin: *The Finality of Christ,* in *Orientation* 1994).

Heim's overview (in *orientation* 1994) is of course a simplification and cannot possibly do justice to the many and growing visions on the issue of Christ's relationship with other "Saviours". He also does not treat clearly enough the question as to what will happen to those who never heard the Name Jesus Christ. Not that the researcher thinks that this is a question which can be answered. (Can we expect to be able to give a Biblical answer to this while it is a question about which the writers to the Bible had little or nothing to say and in which they showed no interest?) Shall we let it suffice that God is a just and impartial Judge and will therefore judge everyone in accordance with the light that he/she had? Might we say that for children who die young God's love in Christ is fully and completely applicable? Or are we going too far even in saying this?

Imperialist arrogance? The particularists regard the pluralists as relativists, and finally as sceptics. (It is a small step from "All religions are true" to "No religion is true".) The pluralists, in their turn, regard the particularists as exclusivists, as arrogant, intolerant, imperialist and even fanatic.

We do not, however, regard a person who believes that his faith is the true one as of necessity arrogant. He can, without relinquishing his convictions, acknowledge his own fallibility, as well as appreciate the perspectives of others. Especially if he is a Christian, he should not be arrogant at all. He should acknowledge that the knowledge which he has of God and Christ is not the result of his own cleverness or piety. It has come about precisely because of his own weakness. It is a result of the grace of God. And if a Christian feels impelled to share his faith with others, this need not be a sign of arrogance or religious imperialism, but it can also be viewed as a sign of a humble desire that others should also share in the Saving Truth.

This bring us back to the big question: *Are all religions equal*? As regards the purposes of this study, can we say that African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam are equal? We would now like to attempt to answer this question by briefly comparing two major missionary or Daw'ah religions of Africa, namely Christianity and Islam. We would like to compare their views of (1) God; (2) the world and (3) man. As regards man, we would like to indicate what, according to each of these, is (4) wrong with man, as well as what they suggest (5) by way of therapy. The therapy will be indicated in terms of what each views as the way to salvation.

The result can be portrayed is as follows:

	ISLAM	CHRISTIANITY
1. God	Allah, Judge and Ruler	Father (the Compassionate), Son (the Saviour) Holy Spirit (the Comforter).
2. World	A determined universe	God's creation with history under his guidance.
3. Man	A cog in the plan of Allah	A free and responsible person created in God's image, in a religious relationship with the Creator.
4. Diagnosis	Lack of submission to Allah	Sin, rebellion, disobedience to God's laws.
5. Therapy, Road to salvation	Five duties to come to submission	Accept Christ's offering in faith.
6. Core differences	**Man "earns" salvation**	**God comes to man (in Christ) and offers salvation through grace.**

We would like to direct attention specifically to Number 6 in the two columns (the core difference between the two religions). Although the differences emerge clearly in all the other points (1-5), the core difference is been summed up in Number 6. The non-biblical religions are dominated by the question: "What should I do to gain salvation?" or "What do I do to find Allah (or the absolute, should the particular religion not accept a deity)?. In the Christian religion the exact opposite applies: salvation need not be earned by *ME* in the first place - God gives it to us through grace in Christ.

From the simple diagram it emerges that the differences between religions are not simply *relative* but *essential*. Religions are therefore *not equal* (in the sense of being the same, of the *same value*), not even in their so-called core. The Christian faith, based on the Word of God, is a *unique* road to salvation not found in any other religion. However, all monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam accept their deity to be the one and only way to salvation.

A comparison of religions from another angle: Because it is important to realise that all religions are not the same and do not basically amount to the same, another effort will be made to indicate the differences among them.

Each individual stands in a special relationship of dependency with what he experiences as divine, that is, not dependent on anything else. How do traditional Africa, the secular West, the mystic East and the Bible view this religious relationship?

It should be stated beforehand that all people and their cultures are religiously determined. The fact that modern Western scientists maintain that they are not religious should not deceive us. The fact that some people do not participate in religious ceremonies should likewise not deceive us. (Smith, in Bowman 1972:66-81). Even less should the fact that certain Oriental religions do not (as Christianity does) acknowledge the existence of a separate deity.

Three main types: Traditional African religion, secular Western religion and pagan Eastern religion

(i) Traditional African religion and secular Western religion

According to *traditional African religion,* there is only one continuing reality, of which a part is divine and the rest therefore dependent (in diagrammatic form this can be portrayed as a large circle with a smaller circle inside it). (Van der Walt 1994:351-353).

Divine (independent, self-sufficient, absolute

Non-divine (dependent)
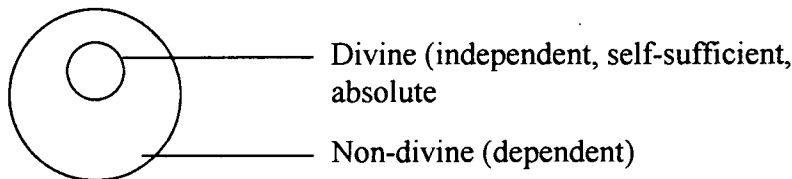
Remarkably we find something similar In the *secular West.* Something in reality is regarded as self-sufficient, independent, absolute (thus deified), and the rest of reality is then seen as dependent on it. A clear example of this is the view of the so-called atheist, Karl Marx. He regarded matter as the basic reality, which could develop dialectically in accordance with certain inherent laws. He was therefore in no way a-religious. The same is true in the case of the other -isms. A mathematician absolutising the mathematical aspect of reality regards numbers (or other aspects of maths) as in themselves sufficient realities on which all other things depend. The same can be said of economism, technologism, etc.

(ii)   Eastern religions

The *Eastern world* (Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism and Taoism) inverts the order: the non-divine is seen as a division of the divine, because the divine is limitless and all-encompassing. (Diagrammaticaly this can once again be portrayed as a large circle - the Divine - with a smaller one inside - the non-divine or human.)

Non-divine

Divine (limitless, all encompassing)
= Pantheism
Earthly reality (mere illusion) = Part of the
Divine
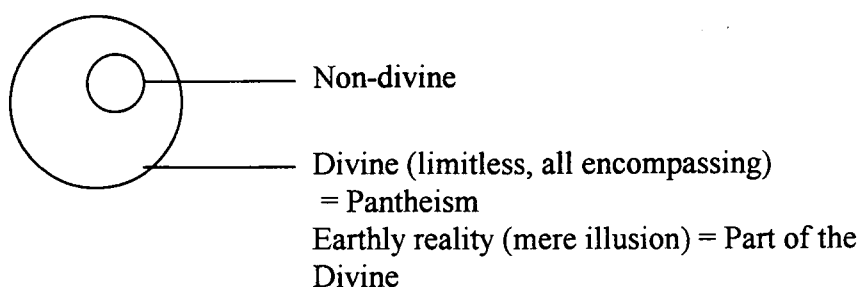
Whereas in the case of traditional African religion, and also the secular West, there is a clear distinction between the divine and that which is not divine, this is not the case with most Eastern religions (excluding Islam). Because: if the non-divine in its totality is part of the divine, there is not really anything that is not divine! And if this is the case, it is not possible to distinguish between the two.

Eastern religions propose that although the divine is the essence of all things, the ordinary things do not appear divine and the divine cannot be discovered so easily in the ordinary things. The contrast is thus not between a part of reality which is divine and a part which is not, but between the divine nature and the illusion that there are things which are not divine. This does not mean to say that the everyday experiential world is real and only less important than the divine which it hides. No, everything around us is unreal, as only the divine exists. For Western logic this would seem to be a contradiction. Orientals, however, regard Western logical thought as being part of the illusion! According to the Oriental this is precisely the greatest sin of mankind, viz. that he insists on clinging to the seeming world, which he can perceive with his senses. According to Eastern people it is wrong to give in to the temptation to see the everyday world as either real and partly divine (African religion) or as real but not divine (Christianity and Islam).

The only way in which one can lift the veil of illusion and discover the hidden divine reality is through a mystical experience. It is not the world that has to change – it rather has to be escaped from – but our perception of the world that has to change. The mystical experience is intensified to the point where the (illusory) self is destroyed

when it is absorbed into the divine "as a drop of water disappears into the ocean" (In Buddhism, the divine reality is therefore called Nirvana, the emptiness or nothingness.)

(iii) Biblical religion

According to the Biblical-Christian view there is not one continuing reality. The Divine (God) is therefore not part of the (earthly) reality (as traditional Africa believes) and the (earthly) reality is also not part of the Divine (as Eastern religions maintain). There is a clear distinction between Creator and creation. (In diagrammatic form, not one circle inside another, but two circles, one beneath the other, with two-way arrows in between to indicate the relationship between God – the Independent, the Sovereign – and creation – the dependent, subject to the law.)

Creator

Mutual relationship

Creation (Dependent)
Both clear distinction and close
relationship between God and created
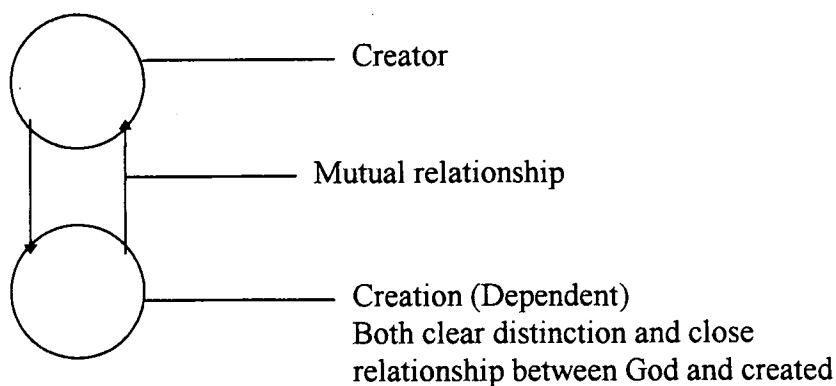
The Biblical vision therefore neither elevates a part of creation to divine status (Africa), nor does it feel contempt for creation as a mere illusion (the East). Creation does exist in reality, and it is also important because it is the sphere in which man is in communion with and of service to God (Mbiti 1970).

The doctrine that God and the earthly reality, including man, should be clearly distinguished does not therefore mean that they should be separated. God is intimately connected with his creation. He reveals Himself and man can enter into communion with Him.

Traditional African religion and secular Western religion: a comparison From the representation of four main traits of the different types of religions it has still not emerged clearly enough that there are also great differences between traditional African religion and the contemporary secular Western religion. (Both regard

something in reality as being divine.) There are, however, radical differences which will now receive attention.

In simple terms, we could regard modern Western culture as being *humanistic* and traditional African as being *animistic*. Western man, who is alienated from the gospel, views *autonomous people in themselves*, or their abilities, such as the intellectual, as absolute or divine, that is, dependent on nothing. The traditional African regards the *world of spirits* as real and important. The Westerner would like to work out his own salvation through human *control* of nature. The African views his salvation as a linking in the right relationship with the spirit world, which controls all things. The means which the Westerner uses to attain his purpose is scientific knowledge (based on knowledge of natural laws), while the African strives to attain his end by means of marginal knowledge (based on knowledge of the spirit world). The happiness or salvation which is striven for in the case of the Westerner is ultimately aimed at the individual, while for the African the concern is always with the community.

It is obvious that the vision of life and the values of life which emanate from the two religions will be different. In the West the key values, for example, are power, change, progression, and individual interests, while the core values in the case of Africa are adjustment, interrelationship, tradition and group coherence (Van der Walt 1994:344).

From all these examples it clearly emerges that the danger of religious intolerance surfaces again and again if no clear distinction is made between religion and the state or politics, when an unholy alliance is forged between them. In this study we advocate togetherness and not sameness, which could easily lead to a grand sycretism, but a concept of the Divine articulated in all religions as a means of effecting of a healthy working relationship in a multi-religious society irrespective of the differences.

2.6   Predestination as a theological reflection on the Divine: a comparison between Christianity and Islam

The acceptance of this plan and design for the cosmos might also have implications for the attitudes of believers towards the Divine hence the importance of discussing the concept of Predestination showing the Divine as the owner of creation who is in control of events.

2.6.1 Predestination from the Christian point of view

The term *predestination* (Latin – being fore-ordained) refers to being elected for salvation through the eternal foreknowledge and will of God (Matt. 20:23; John 10:29; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1: 3-14). The Pelagian controversy provoked from St Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) an extreme assertion about God electing (from the "mass of sin" which is human race) some individuals for eternal salvation. Disallowing the universal saving will of God, John Calvin (1509-1564) upheld a double predestination: some human beings are elected by God for eternal salvation and others for eternal damnation. This view had been held by the monk Gottschalk (ca 804- ca 869) and condemned at synods in Mainz and Quiercy. While properly vindicating the primacy of the divine grace on which we depend utterly, predestination should not be pushed to the point of denying either God's universal saving will (1 Tim. 2:3-6) or human freedom (which will also be discussed when dealing with the Islamic stance on predestination).

This introductory note leads us to as the following questions: Where is history going, and why? What does it mean if something (Somebody?) is causing the pattern of history to develop as it is? These are questions which confront every thinking person and which crucially affect his way of life. Christianity's answer is that God has a plan which includes everything that occurs, and that He is now at work carrying out that plan.

We sometimes refer to the plan of God as the decrees of God. There are several reasons, however, why in this study we shall use the term *plan* rather than *decrees*. **First**, it stresses the unity of God's intention together with the resultant consistency and coherence of his actions. **Secondly,** it emphasises what God does, that is, what He wills, rather than what man must do or what happens to man as a consequence of God's will. **Thirdly**, it emphasises the intelligent dimension of God's decisions. They are not arbitrary or haphazard.

We may define the plan of God as his eternal decision which renders certain all things which shall come to pass. There are several analogies which, though necessarily insufficient, may help us to understand this concept of Predestination which we refer to as *God's plan*. The plan of God is like the architect's plan drawn first in his mind and then on paper, according to his intention and design, and only afterwards executed in an actual structure. Or God may be thought of as being like a athletic coach who has carefully conceived a game plan which his team seeks to carry out. Or He may be

likened to a business executive planning the strategy and tactics of his firm. He is like the student who plans her schedule of work for the semester carefully so that she will be able to do a good job on all her required assignments and complete them on time.

It is necessary at this point to go back to the concepts we started with. Many theologians use the terms *predestinate* and *foreordain* virtually synonymously. For our purposes, we shall use them somewhat differently. "*Predestine*" carries a somewhat narrower connotation than does "*foreordain*". Since it literally suggests the destiny of someone or something, it is best used of God's plan as it relates in particular to the eternal condition of moral agents. We shall use the term *foreordain* in a broader sense, that is, to refer to the decisions of God with respect to any matter within the realm of cosmic history. "*Predestination*" will be reserved for the matter of eternal salvation or condemnation (reprobation) (Strong 1970:355-360). Within predestination, "*election*" will be used to denote God's positive choice of individuals, nations or groups for eternal life and fellowship with Him. "*Election*" will refer to positive predestination, while "*reprobation*" will refer to negative predestination or God's choice for some to suffer eternal damnation or being lost. In this research the use of "*predestination*" is limited to either election or reprobation or both; "*foreordination*" on the other hand, while it may also refer to election, reprobation, or both, has a far broader range of meaning, adopting the usage of Louis Berkhof: (1958:109) as opposed to that of B B Warfield, who said, "'Foreordain' and 'predestinate' are exactly synonyms, the choice between which can be determined only by taste" (Warfield 1909:4).

2.6.2   Biblical teaching regarding the divine plan

The Bible contains a rich set of teachings regarding the divine plan. Several terms in both Hebrew and Greek are used to refer to God's design. *Yatsar*, which is probably the most explicit of the Hebrew terms, appears in Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 22:11; 37:26 and 46:11. It carries the idea of purpose and prior determination. Another common Hebrew term *ya'ats* is used several times by Isaiah (14:24, 26, 27; 19:12,17; 23:9) and by Jeremiah (49:20; 50:45). Its substantive derivative *'estsah*, is both common and precise (Job 38:2; 42:3; Ps. 33:11; 106:13; 107:11; Prov. 19:21; Is. 5:19; 14:26; 19:17; 46:10; Jer 32:19; 49:20; 50:45; Micah 4:12). *'Etsah* frequently occurs together with *Machashabah* (Jer. 50:45, Micah 4:12) for independent occurrences of the later term (Ps. 92:5,6; Is. 55:8; Jer. 29:11; 51:29), which is derived from the verb *chashab*

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(Gen. 50:20; Jer 18:11; 26:3; 29:11; 36:3; 49:20; 50:45; Lam. 2:8; Micah 2:3). There are several other less frequent terms and some which refer to particular decrees regarding salvation and fellowship with God (Morrison 1924).

In the New Testament, the most explicit term used with reference to the plan of God is *proorizo* (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5,11). Similar words are *protasso* (Acts 17:26); *pritihemi* (Eph. 1:9) and its substantive *prothesis* (Rom. 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9), and *proetoimazo* (Rom. 9:23; Eph. 2:10). Other terms stressing advance knowledge of one sort or another are *problepo, proorao* (*proeidon*), *proginosko*, and its substantive *prognosis*. The idea of appointing is found in *proxeirizo* and *proxeirotoneo*, as well as sometimes in the simple '*opizo*' (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 17:26, 31; Heb. 4:7). The idea of willing and wishing is conveyed by *boule, baulema, baulomai, thelema, thelesis*, and *thelo*, while the good pleasure of the Father is designated by *eudokia* and *eudokew* (Ladd 1974).

We now need to derive, from these numerous and varied Biblical references, a few general characteristic of God's plan. This will enable us to understand more completely what the plan is like and what Christians expect from God.

✝ God's plan is from eternity (Elwell 1984:871-72). We have noted that the psalmist spoke of God's having planned all our days before there were any of them (Ps. 139:16) and that Isaiah spoke of God's having planned everything long ago (Is. 22:11). In Ephesians Paul indicates that God "chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world" (1:4) and later in the same letter Paul speaks of "the eternal purpose which (God) has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord" (3:11). The apostle also writes to Timothy that God has "saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose, and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago (2 Tim. 1:9). These decisions are not made as history unfolds and events occur. God manifests his purpose within history (2 Tim. 1:10), but his decisions were made long before. They have always been God's plan from all eternity, from before the beginning of time.

Being eternal, the plan of God does not contain any chronological sequence. This is one reason for referring to the *plan* of God rather than to his *decrees*. There is no before and after within eternity. There is, of course, a logical sequence (e.g. the decision to let Jesus die on the cross logically follows the decision to send Him to the earth) and there is a temporal sequence in the enacting of the events which

have been decreed; but there is no temporal sequence to God's willing. It is one coherent simultaneous decision.

✝ God's plan and the decisions contained therein are free on God's part. This is implied in expressions such as "the good pleasure of his will" (*eudokia*). It is also implicit in the fact that no one advised Him (for that matter, there is no one who could advise Him) (Clements 1976). Isaiah 40:13-14 says: "who has directed the spirit of the Lord, or as his counsellor has instructed him? Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge and showed him the way of understanding?" Paul quotes this passage as he concludes his great statement on the sovereignty and inscrutability of God's working (Rom. 11:34). After adding a word from Job 35:7 to the effect that God is indebted to no one, he closes with "for of him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Rom 11:36) (Harvey 1973).. Paul also quotes Isaiah 40:13 in 1 Corinthians. After speaking of the wisdom of God as having been decreed before ages. (1 Cor. 2:7), he asks: "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" (v. 6). That man has had no input into what God has planned might at first seem to be something of a disadvantage. But on reflection we see that it is instead a source of comfort. For, being without man's input, God's plan is not subject to the incompleteness of knowledge and the errors of judgement so characteristic of human plans.

Not only do God's decisions not stem from any sort of external determination, they are not a matter of internal compulsion either. That is to say, although God's decisions and actions are quite consistent with his nature, they are not constrained by his nature. He is not like the gods of the pantheism, which are virtually constrained by their own nature to will what they will and to do what they do. God did not have to create. He has to act in a loving and holy fashion in whatever He does, but He was not required to create. He freely chose to create for reasons not known to us. While his love requires Him to act lovingly toward any creatures He may choose to bring into existence, it did not require that He create in order to have objects to love. There had been an expression of love among members of the Trinity from all eternity (John 17:24).

✝ In the ultimate sense, the purpose of God's plan is God's glory. This is the highest of all values, and the one great motivating factor in all that God has

chosen and done. Paul indicates that "all things were created through him (Christ) and for him" (Col. 1:16). God chose us in Christ and destined us" according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph. 1:5-6). The twenty-four elders in Revelation who fall down and worship the Lord God almighty sing: "Worthy are thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created" (Rev. 4:11). What God does, He does for his own name's sake (Is. 48:11; Ezek. 20:9) (Gausen 1971:349). The purpose of the whole plan of salvation is the glory of God through the good works which God has prepared for his people to do (Eph. 2:8-10). Jesus said that his followers were to let their lights so shine that men would see their good works and glorify their Father in Heaven (Matt. 5:16; John 15:8). We have been appointed to live for the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:12). We have been sealed with the Spirit to the praise of his glory (vv. 13-14).

This is not to say that there are no secondary motivations behind God's plan and resultant actions. He has provided the means of salvation in order to fulfil his love for mankind and his concern for their welfare. This, however, is not our ultimate end but only a means to the greater end – God's own glory. We must bear in mind that God is truly the Lord. We exist for his sake, for his glory and pleasure, rather than He for ours.

✟ God's plan is all inclusive. This is implicit in the great variety of items which are mentioned in the Bible as parts of God's plan. Beyond that, however, are explicit statements concerning the extent of God's plan. Paul speaks of God as the One who "accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11). The psalmist says that "all things are thy servants" (Ps. 119:91). While all ends are part of God's plan, all means are as well. Thus the comprehensiveness of the divine decisions goes beyond what we might expect. Although we tend at times to think of sacred and secular areas of life, no such division exists from God's standpoint. There are no areas that fall outside the purview of his concern and decision.

✟ God's plan is efficacious. What He has purposed from eternity will come to pass at the right time. The Lord says, "As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand ... For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" (Is. 14:24, 27). He

will not change his mind, nor will He discover hitherto unknown considerations which will cause Him to alter his intentions. "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose", says the Lord in Isaiah 46:10. Because the counsel of the Lord is from all eternity and is perfect, it will never fade nor be replaced; it endures forever: "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Ps. 33:11).

✝ God's plan relates to his actions rather than his nature. It pertains to his decisions regarding what He will do, not to his personal attributes. That is to say that God does not decide to be loving and powerful in accordance with his attributes, for example. He is loving and powerful simply by virtue of his being God. He does not have to choose to be loving and powerful; indeed, He could not choose to be otherwise. Thus, the decisions of God relate to objects, events and processes, external to the divine nature, not to what He is or what transpires within his person (Strong 1970:353:-54).

✝ The plan of God relates primarily to what God Himself does in terms of creating, preserving, directing and redeeming. It also involves human willing and acting, but only secondarily, that is, as means to the ends He purposes, or as results of actions which He takes. Note that God's role here is to decide that certain things will take place in our lives, not to lay down commands that we act in a certain way. To be sure that what God has decided will come to pass does involve an element of necessity. The particulars of God's plan, however, should be thought of less as imperatives than as descriptions of what will occur. The plan of God does not force men to act in particular ways, bur renders it certain that they will freely act in those ways.

✝ Thus, while the plan of God relates primarily to what God does, the actions of men are also included. Jesus noted, for example, that the responses of individuals to his message were a result of the Father's decision: "All that the Father gives me will come to me ... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:37, 44; 17:2,6,9). Luke says in Acts 13:48 that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed".

God's plan involves what we ordinarily call good acts. Cyrus, who did not personally know or acknowledge Jehovah, was foreordained to help fulfil God's purpose of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple (Is. 44:28). Paul says that we

believers "are (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). On the other hand, the evil actions of men, which are contrary to God's law and moral intentions, are also seen in Scripture as part of God's plan, as foreordained by Him. The betrayal, conviction and crucifixion of Jesus are a prominent instance of this (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). (The particular way in which God's will relates to evil actions will be more truly discussed under the headings *Sin* and *Salvation* later in this study. These actions fall under and within the scope of God's plan.

✝ The plan of God in terms of its specifics is unchangeable. This idea has already been introduced in the statement regarding the efficaciousness of God's plan. Here we wish to emphasise that God does not change his mind or alter his decisions regarding specific determinations. This may seem strange in the light of the seeming alteration of his intentions with regard to Nineveh (Jonah), and his apparent repentance about having made man (Gen. 6:6). The statement in Genesis 6 should, however, be regarded as an anthropomorphism, and Jonah's announcement of impending destruction should be viewed as a warning used to effect God's actual plan for Nineveh. We must keep in mind here that constancy is one of the attributes of God's greatness (Erickson 1983:278-81).

2.6.3   Implication of the Christian doctrine

Correctly understood, the doctrine of predestination has several significant implications as regards the Divine:

We can have confidence that what God has decided in his divine providence will come to pass. His divine plan will be fulfilled and the elect will come to faith.

We need not criticise ourselves when some people reject Christ. Jesus Himself did not win everyone in His audience. He understood that all those whom the Father gave to Him in his divine plan would come to him (John 6:37) and that only they would come (v. 44). When we have done our very best, we can leave the matter with the Lord to complete His divine work according to His attributes.

Predestination from the Christian point of view does not nullify the incentive for evangelism and missions. This is one respect in which the Christian doctrine of

predestination differs from the free-will doctrine of Islam, which teaches that humans must be held responsible for their own acts. We do not know who the elect and the non-elect are, so we must continue to spread the Word. Our evangelistic efforts are God's means, within the plan of the Divine, to bring the elect to salvation. God's ordaining of the end also includes the ordaining of the means to that end. The knowledge that missions are within the divine command, are indeed God's means, is a strong motive for the endeavour and gives us confidence that it will prove successful.

Lastly, Grace is absolutely necessary. While Arminianism often lays strong emphasis on grace, in our Calvinistic scheme there is no basis for God's choice of some for eternal life other than his own sovereign will. There is nothing in the individual which persuades God to grant salvation to him or her. It is on this basis of grace that the concept of the Divine takes its position in this study. It is only when Christians experience the grace and mercy of God in his divine providence that they can accept their other religious neighbours without animosity.

2.6.4   Predestination and the doctrine of free will in Islamic theology

The monotheistic religious traditions – Islam, Judaism, and Christianity have each wrestled with a common set of theological problems. For example, the problem of evil has occupied the minds of religious thinkers in all three traditions. God is described as good and all-powerful in the creeds of all three faiths. The question then arises: given the nature of God, is there a source of evil in the cosmos other than God? If not, why is there suffering? Another problem that divided early Muslim thinkers was the seeming contradiction between free will and predestination. In this case, not only the nature of God but the nature of man was at issue (Watt 1973). The problem which drew the most attention was free will versus predestination, to which we shall turn our attention.

2.6.5   God's determination of events

During the Umayyad Age (661-750) many religious thinkers attempted to define God's "power" to determine events. The real problem arose when it came to defining acts done by human beings. To what extent is God involved in the doings of humankind? Who is the efficient cause, say, of an act of murder, or of saving a life? One group of thinkers took the position that God is all-powerful and thus the ultimate source of the power behind all events in the cosmos; humans act under the compulsion of God's

power (Sahas 1972). This group was known as the "Predestination Party". Another group argued that human morality would be undercut by this view; thus humans must be held responsible for their own acts. This latter group became known as the "Free Will Party" (Zebiri 1997:24).

These early theological debates did not take place in a historical vacuum. They were related to claims, especially of the later Umayyad rulers, that their control and conduct of the caliphate was divinely willed, that is, a matter of God's power, not man's. Many Muslim thinkers, regardless of their personal distaste for the impiety and secular interests of several of the Umayyad caliphs, defended the current state of political affairs and thus accepted the Umayyad caliphate on theological grounds. The others, the Free Will Party, held the Umayyad accountable on the ground that human beings (including the caliph), are responsible for their own acts. The Free Will Party of the Umayyad Age was therefore politically as well as theologically in opposition to the mainstream of thought. Many of them paid for their stubborn resistance by imprisonment and even execution.

Both the Free Will Party and Predestination Party claimed that the Qur'an and the sayings (Hadith) of the prophet supported their views. Islamic theology, like Christianity, accepts scripture and tradition as authoritarian – sources on which to build decisive arguments. The problem is that scripture and tradition can be read both ways with regard to most theological problems that divide the religious community. The Qur'an, like the Bible, is not a systematic theological or philosophical treatise.

Many passages in the Qur'an suggest that if God decides that a person shall be a polytheist or unbeliever, there is nothing that person can do; he or she must die an unbeliever. Other passages appear to say that humankind is to be held accountable for its sins on the Last Day, with the obvious implication that human beings are masters of their own acts. The matter could not be decided on the basis of scripture and tradition alone (al-Bukhari Vol I:1973:334). The process of theological argumentation, already highly developed by Christian thinkers who used Greek philosophy to support their claims, was soon adopted by Muslim thinkers. On the other hand, internal political problems led to sectarianism in early Islam and thus created an urgent need for theological reflection (Wijoyo 1982:95).

To Muslim everywhere in the world, those in Africa and even in Kenya's coastal, north-eastern provinces and most towns, God's will is certain, arbitrary, unrestrained,

irresistible, and inevitable before any event transpires. To the Christian, God's will is secret until He reveals it. When He does, we feel the imperative of duty. Were a Muslim to pray to Allah, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven", he would be guilty of folly, if not of blasphemy. An archangel and a murderer, a devil (shaitan) and a gnat equally execute the will and purpose of Allah every moment of their existence. As He wills, and because He wills, they are what they are, and continue what they are.

2.7   Conclusion

Followers of African traditional religion, Christians and Muslims define the concept of the Divine in the same way. They worship the same God as the Supreme Being. As we have seen, all three give witness that there is one true and only God, who is the righteous and transcendent Creator of all things in heaven and earth. Africans give different names to the same God who is understood to have similar attributes as those evidenced in Christianity and Islam. Furthermore, Christians accept with thankfulness all the ninety-nine names of God which Muslims repeat in worship and praise to God. Even the name Allah is affirmed by Christians as one of the names of God. The Prophet Abraham knew God as El or Elohim, which is a Hebrew form of the Arabic "Allah". It is no wonder that the Qur'an affirms that those closest to the Muslims are the Christians. The profound African and Muslim appreciation of the sovereignty and transcendence of God is a witness which Christians need to hear and understand.

Nevertheless, within our common faith in God, followers of the African traditional religion, Muslims and Christians experience differences with regard to their definition of the concept of the Divine. These differences are rooted in different understanding of God's relationship to man. The African traditional religion stresses the past which is based on the belief in the ancestors who have power to influence the present. In the Qur'an the emphasis is laid on the revelation of God's commands and his names to man. In the Bible we perceive God as the One who reveals Himself to mankind through his Son Jesus Christ, the created universe and the written word.

The Biblical witness is that God has chosen to reveal Himself through personal self-disclosure to mankind. God as the One who encounters man personally is known as Yahweh, the God of the covenant, the "I am" who is always present calling man into a covenant relationship with Himself. Yahweh reveals not only his will, command and names to mankind, but also Himself through personal self-disclosure.

The Bible reveals that Yahweh in his self-disclosure reveals that He is the One who loves us perfectly. In fact, the Biblical witness is that Yahweh God gives Himself in suffering, redemptive love. Because of his love, He sorrows when we sorrow, He suffers when we suffer, He is pained by our sin. God loves us totally. He demonstrates his divine attributes to mankind in true love.

The Christian witness is that God invites us to know and enjoy fellowship with One whom African tradionalists and Islamists praise through the reverent repetition of his ninety-nine glorious names and in the names attributed to Him by different African ethnic groups.

All in all, according to Muslim writers, a prophet is one who is directly inspired by God while an apostle is one entrusted with a special mission (Zwemer 1907 :91). This view is similar to the Christian theological stand regarding the prophets of God in the Old Testament and New Testament narratives. Zwemer in his book, *Islam: a challenge to faith* (1907), lists the prophets who are acceptable to Islam and who are known to be prophets in the Bible and afforded the same honour in Christianity.

These areas of similarity between African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam in defining the concept of the Divine, the attributes of God, the names of God and the prophets accepted by Christianity and Islam, and predestination in Christianity and free will in Islam suggest that it is possible to have a dialogue in a multi-religious society. As far as witnessing in Africa is concerned, the points of agreement should serve as starting points for a successful dialogue in a multi-religious society.

CHAPTER 3

ATTITUDES OF AFRICAN, CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM BELIEVERS TOWARDS THE DIVINE

3.1 The attitude of followers of the African traditional religion towards the Divine

3.1.1 Discussion

The focus of this section is to explore the attitude(s) of African believers towards the Divine as is evidenced by their behaviour, practices and life experiences. The primary source of information is authors of Western origin from the 19th century who observed and described these African attitudes. From the description and depiction of African attitudes in concrete life situations, one can also deduce dimensions of their perception of the Divine. Views of African writers such as Mbiti are however also mentioned.

We shall now proceed to discuss a few examples of the views oft hese writers on this subject. Pere Baudin, a Roman Catholic missionary makes the following observations about the African attitude towards the Divine. He voices the opinion that though Africans had an idea of God and were aware about the existence of God, their attitude towards the Divine was principally and practically a vast pantheism. He also observes that although the blacks were deeply imbued with polytheism, they had not lost the idea of the true God. Baudin contends that the African attitude towards God was in most cases confused and obscure or directed towards fetishism and fetish worshipping. Notwithstanding all these notions, the idea they had of God and their religious practices were most unworthy of his Divine Majesty (Baudin 1885:9).

In *Africa and Christianity* Diedrich Westermann observes that in the centre of African myth stands a creative principle which in most cases is identical to Yahweh the high God of Israel. People's attitude acknowledge him, but neither fear nor love nor serve him, the feeling toward him being, at most, one of a dim awe or reverence. He is the God of the thoughtful, not of the crowd, of the people, whose mature observation, personal experience, and primitive philosophy have led them to postulate a central and ultimate power who is the originator of everything existing and in whose hands the universe is safe: The sayings and attitude of these people towards the Divine feature

a truly personal and purely supreme being. More often, however, the African attitude towards the Divine is fixed on the fact that God is the great unknown power which cannot be completely comprehended by man (Westermann 1937:65).

In his earlier works R Rattray concluded that among the Ashanti there was no known attitude towards the Divine as supreme being.. According to him, whatever concept of the Divine was present among the Africans in the West and in the African mind was the result of the influence of Christian missionary teachings. Rattray later confessed that the Ashanti's attitude toward the Divine had nothing to do with the missionary influence or contact with Christians. Their attitude towards the Divine also had nothing to do with the Dawah influence of the Muslim. Therefore, he now emphasised that this attitude towards the Supreme Being was rooted and had always been innate in the minds of the Ashanti. Their attitude was very similar to that of the Israelites Yahweh (Rattray 1923:139).

The viewpoints of the two authors mentioned above are typical of the presumptuous notions that in the European and American world of the great monotheistic religions the attitude towards the Divine was clear. This notion was based on the fact that there were written, systematic statements, backed by Scripture, on the subject, and it was assumed that the presence or the possession of these traditional resources was automatically tantamount to a "clear" attitude towards the Divine and understanding of God. The written statements were taken for granted, while those who built their arguments on them forgot that systematic statements or dogmas had come into being as a result of spiritual and intellectual pilgrimages. There had been stages in their development, and even now, with shifting scenes regarding the attitude towards and knowledge of the universe, we find that established attitudes and beliefs are continually undergoing changes either radically or in their formulations. Attitudes cannot be fixed and static. They are dynamic and therefore undergo reshaping as they move from simple to complex forms of attitudes towards the Divine in terms of behavioural practice and life experiences.

If we take for example, the diversity of Hebrew/Rabbinic spiritual tradition, we can distinguish stages from henotheism – which was profoundly tinged with ethnocentricity – to the ethical monotheism of Deutero-Isaiah. We also clearly see that the prophetic insight into the nature of God was always far in advance of the general concept held by the common people. As far as the matter of clear knowledge of God and the attitude towards Him as "the Divine" is concerned, the Bible is naturally full of warnings,

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and the experiences of the saints confirm the fact that man cannot find out the deep things of God or find out the limit of "the Almighty" (Job 11:7), for He "dwells in unapproachable light, who no man has ever seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6:15).

Islamic tradition contains an implied warning in a story told about Muhammad's visit to Allah for the purpose of receiving the order for the daily obligatory prayers. Muhammad's attitude was that God could not be reached for a dialogue with him as a prophet in his capacity of the last of the prophetic manifestations. When, according to the Qur'an, Muhammad arrived at the outer court of heaven he saw a very voluminous garment, the end of which, height and breadth he could not see, because of its infinite extensiveness. It was Allah's garment (S. 6:1). When he arrived at the Presence, he was confronted by a most bewildering sight: He saw Allah but could not describe the sight. Allah was not sitting down or standing, reclining or lying down; he was not sleeping or awake, the time of day (if it could be called time) was not morning or noon or evening, twilight or dusk. The angels, seeing his bewilderment, sang out: "We eagerly expect to see what form of salutation Muhammad will use for the Lord." We are apt to think that in Islam, because of the Qur'an which contains prophetic statements about Allah, all Muslims have a clear attitude towards God and project this experience into their expressions concerning the five pillars of Islam, namely, Shahada, witness, prayer, the giving of alms, fasting and the pilgrimage to Mecca. A true Muslims will be seen leaving the daily routine, putting down a mat and prostrating himself on it in devout and fervent prayer irrespective of who may be around him. As a religion, Islam requires that all Muslim live in an attitude of submission, which is indeed what Islam means. But in this story of Muhammad, we are warned about the mystery — the inevitable mystery which surrounds our attitude as human beings towards the Holy One. All down the corridor of Islamic history, Muslim theologians and philosophers have been trying to spell out the implications or the contents of the mystery contained in the story of the experiences of Muhammad in the presence of Allah, whom he could not comprehend vividly in his attitude.

The purport of all we have said so far is that nowhere is the attitude towards the Divine or God as clear as we are inclined and prone to postulate or think. It is difficult to develop a scheme or a pattern from which we can deduce uniform attitudes and behavioural practices towards the Divine. Christianity and Islam do have sacred books from which certain forms of religious attitude towards the Divine can be inferred.

African traditional religion to date has had no written sacred document from which such attitudes can be deduced, other than existing myths, taboos and religious rituals.

Those who superficially judge other people's religion and assert that such people have no clear understanding of God, or no attitude towards God at all, should first look within themselves and face the question: 'How clear is my attitude towards God? One has to concede that there are mysteries here as elsewhere, and that a good deal of ignorance, muddled thinking, and a general lack of precise knowledge about the subject are universal; that wherever there have been attempts to probe the unsearchable, every people has only succeeded to the extent to which the native capabilities of their prophets, seers and thinkers could carry them. What we regard with reference to any particular people or race is thus only a result attained by the few privileged ones through their spiritual discernment and mental or intellectual effort, and communicated to the generality of the people. 'The faith once delivered to the saints' is a phrase the individual elements of which are very vital to the understanding of the whole. But what is most relevant to the point that we are making here is the phrase 'to the saints' which signifies a particular category within the community which is capable of receiving or appropriating divine communication, through whom it reaches the general population and whose 'faith' works as a leaven on the whole lump.

In the light of this, let us look again at the various conclusions which our authors have placed before us.

Baudin (1885:95) is right when he says: "In these religious systems, the idea of a God is fundamental." He goes astray when he says that "notwithstanding the abundant testimony of the existence of God, it is practically only a vast pantheism – a participation of all elements of the divine nature which is as it were diffused throughout them all". What he misinterpreted is the fact that to Africans the material has meaning and purpose only through the spiritual, and the entire control of the Divine who manifests Himself through his own works. In the philosophical sense of Africans there is no pantheism in the attitude of an African believer towards the Divine

When he said that "the Blacks have not lost the idea of the true God: yet their idea of Him is very confused and obscure", Baudin was, in the first place, giving the people he described as "blacks" as much credit as could, in fact, be given to the generality of peoples throughout the world. But he was, at the same time, making something which is a universal phenomenon, unique to Africans. The only difference between the

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Western world and Africa is that in one case there is a long tradition of systematic (as dealing with concrete experiences and situations, and as distinct from "abstract") thinking the results of which have been committed to writing, and in the other case a long tradition of systematic thinking which in certain areas still lives on in the oral tradition of the race and which, in other areas, has unfortunately become confused as a result of historical circumstances.

Baudin also says: "The idea they have of God is most unworthy of His Divine Majesty. They represent that God, after having commenced the organisation of the world, charged Obatala with the completion and government of it, retired and entered into an eternal rest, occupying Himself only with His own happiness; too great to interest himself in the affairs of His world, He remains like a Negro king, in asleep of idleness" (Baudin 1885:9).

As far as this statement is concerned, we have two points in criticism:

(a) It is certain that Baudin gave reign to his imagination as conditioned by his preconceived notions in interpreting the minds and attitudes of the Africans on this subject. Heattributed to Africans something that is very far removed from their actual thoughts about the Deity.

(b) There is a definite projection of the Western deistic idea onto the African attitude and experience – here we have the usual preconceived idea of 'a withdrawn God' or *Deus Ostius* in a different dress (Ellis 1894:34).

Diedrich Westermann (1939:65) says: "The high-god is, as a rule, not the object of a religious cult, and is of small or almost no significance in practical religion. People acknowledge him, but neither fear nor love nor serve him, the feeling towards him being, at the highest, that of a dim awe or reverence."

Westermann did his writing at a time when he probably had little access to the proper sources of African beliefs and practices, or when he had little more than a faint opportunity of obtaining a fleeting glimpse at a vast continent. Those who have looked more carefully into African traditional religion will easily see this as a sweeping statement which cannot be taken seriously today (Tait 1961:226).

Further Westermann says: "He is the God of the thoughtful, not of the crowd, of the people whose mature consideration, personal experience and primitive philosophy

have led them to postulate a central and ultimate power who is the originator of all things and in whose hands the universe is safe: it is in the sayings of these people that sometimes the figure of God assumes features of a truly personal and purely divine supreme Being."

In saying this and making it apply only to Africa with a depreciating intent, he conveniently ignored the whole history of religious doctrine which shows unmistakably that everywhere, and not only in Africa the role of the specialist and that of the community have always had their lines of demarcation, although the former does feed, guide and inform the latter. Because Westermann was writing about Africa, he overlooked the established, universal fact that in every locality the seer or prophet is ahead of his community in the idea and insight; that in every age and generation, the 'thoughtful' prophets, theologians, philosophers, mystics are in the minority: this is not an unshared peculiarity of Africa; everywhere it is minority that conceives and brings forth ideas and concepts in systematic forms. The rest of the community usually accept and practise "faith" with little questioning or search for explanations. And is it not a fact of general application that it is "the sayings" (declaration or exhortation written or oral) of these leaders-in-insight that become articles of faith or creeds, which are the means of faith-in-expression?

The appearance of certain recent publications under the suspicious cover of what is called neo-theology constitutes a message of how much confusion there is in the minds of the majority of the people in the Western world with regard to the African attitude towards God. *Honest to God*, by Dr John Robinson (1973), with the debates it stirred up, is a case in point. Whatever may be the merits or faults of this book and others like it, they at least show unmistakably that with regard to this great subject, things are not what they seem on the surface. There should be no doubt now that the majority of the peoples in the Western world, in spite of the Bible in various versions and the large numbers of books which are freely available, are devoid of any clear unequivocal attitude towards God (Idowu 1973:146).

Westermann's (1937) statement that "The African God is a *Deus incertus* and a *Deus Remotus*: there is always an atmosphere of undefiniteness about Him", betrays careless thinking, to say the least. First, there is no such being as 'the African God' except in the imagination of those who use the term, be they Africans of Europeans. As we have already observed (Bouquet 1933:29) there is only one God; and while there may be various attitudes toward God according to each people's spiritual

perception, it is wrong to limit God with an adjective derived from the name of any race. Secondly, the answer that we have already given above to the depreciating inclination that dictates certain conclusions about the African concept of God applies also to the *Deus Incertus* and the *Deus Remotus*. In a sense *Deus Incertus* can apply everywhere in the world because of the inevitable fact of the *Deus Absconditus* (hidden God) which must be accepted as man's predicament in his approach to the mystery of the sacred and the transcendent; while *Deus Remotus* is another way of saying *Deus Otiosus* or a "withdrawn God" which, as we have seen, is an intellectual or imaginative reading which, unqualified, is most inappropriate. Here again we find the deistic idea of the European mind being palmed off on Africa.

The *Incertus* or *Remotus* notion is one that is ever-recurring in anthropological writing. S. F. Nadel, for example, says with reference to Nupe belief that "nothing very definite can be said or is known about God" (Nadel 1954:11). If he had said this as a fact of general application, it would have been proper; limited to Africa, it is improper. It is not true that in Africa "nothing very definite can be said or known about the Divine". Man knows as much as is given to him to know, and he expresses his belief accordingly.

One finds it difficult not to suspect intellectual dishonesty in those who write about religion in Africa in this vein, because there is evidence that there are those of them who must have been acquainted with the problem of epistemology with particular reference to religion.

"The Alpha and the Omega of a pagan's belief is 'My will be done'" (Westermann 1937:65). This is just too much! The word 'pagan' should not be applied to Africans because of their belief: 'paganism' is unsuitable as a descriptive name for African traditional religion.   "Pagan" is a culturally biased term and reflects religious exclusivism, for "pagan" would be everyone outside what is being perceived as authentic tradition.   With regards to "My will be done", Westermann is confusing religion with magic, (Idowu 1973:116), whereas, although the two commingle, they should not be confused. It would seem that our author is betraying the fact that he has taken mere appearance for reality and has not been well acquainted with the actual situation. In order to illustrate what the actual situation is, we shall use what we obtain among the Yoruba as an example:

"Admittedly, the objective petitionary character of Yoruba prayers shows that the fulfilment of man's desires, rather than the will of the deity, is their essence – 'My will

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be done'; rather than 'Thy will be done', but that is because all the time the Yoruba are basing prayer on the fundamental notion that the will of Deity is supreme anyway, and that his will is the ultimate answer to their prayers. We have noticed that their 'Ase – 'May it be sanctioned' or 'May it come to pass' – is an affirmation of their belief that nothing happens unless He permits it. This is a point at which we need carefully to distinguish between religion and magic and, therefore, between prayers and incantations. The Yoruba presents his petitions; the very word shows the attitude of mind which accompanies the prayer - not with the attitude of one who is bringing divine power under control for his own benefit, but as one who asks for a favour, the granting of which he knows depends entirely upon the will and pleasure of his 'Determiner of destiny' (Idowu 1973:117).

R. S. Rattray (1923:139) does not disguise the fact that he wrote with a mind which was reacting not only against the reading in of Western ideas and preconceived notions into the African scene, but also against erroneous, intentionally or unwittingly mischievous interpretations. Thus he asserts categorically, not only have Africans a clear concept of God, but also precisely "this great supreme Being, the attitude towards God which has been innate in the minds of the Ashanti, it is similar to Yahweh of the Israelites". I wish that we knew what exactly was in the mind of Rattray when he made this statement, that is, apart from the fact that the Ashanti had a clear attitude towards one supreme Deity. It is one thing to say that the Ashanti attitude towards God is similar to, or identical with the Hebrew attitude of God, and another thing to make the statement as quoted above, which suggests either that the Ashanti and the Israelites both derived their attitude towards God from the same source, or that the Ashanti received their attitude towards God from the Israelites which would be in conflict with Rattray's own argument against those who deny "that the attitude toward a supreme God in the West African Mind, and His place in their religion was due to any cause deeper or more remote than the influence of Christian missionary teachings" (Idowu 1973:148).

Whatever may have been in Rattray's mind, we know that in Africa there is abundant evidence of similarities to Semitic beliefs and practices, and that the factor of diffusion must have been in operation at some remote past in the history of the continent. But it is also a fact that there is nothing to prevent the Ashanti or any other race in African from developing its own attitude toward God. This is underlined in Rattray's observation that the concept was innate in the mind of the Ashanti. Of course, the

various components of the human race cannot be isolated in watertight cultural compartments. We flow constantly into one another and naturally interact and cross-fertilise one another, spiritually, morally and culturally.

We can speak of a multi-sided expression of the attitude towards the Divine in Africa. That is, in each locality, the African's attitude towards God usually takes its emphasis and complexion from the sociological structure and climate. It is therefore necessary to understand the variations in the sociological patterns in order to see clearly the reason for certain emphases and tendencies. Let us take Kenya as an example.

Among the Babukusu and Batachoni, where society is highly organised and carefully graded on a hierarchical basis, Deity (Wele) is conceived as the supreme king of a theocratic world, with heavenly ministers appointed over each department of his realm. Among the Sabaot, on the other hand, the divine ministerial system is not as homogenous as among the Babukusu. Among the Nandi, the divine ministers (Orkoyot) are rather few and, except in one or two cases, their nature is not clearly defined; while among the Bioukha, the ministerial system is almost absent (Wandiba 1992:36).

Whereas in most of Africa, God is conceived of in masculine terms, there are localities where He is regarded as feminine. Among some, Ewe-speaking peoples, Mawu, or in particular Nana Buluku – the ancient Deity – is thought and spoken of in feminine terms.

The local variations in the African attitude towards the Divine should be appreciated and given due recognition. In spite of the variations, however an unmistakable basic pattern stands out, God's divinity, the features of which we have already discussed in the attributes of the Divine in the cultural set-up above.

The whole African attitude toward the Divine is based upon the fact that they believe the world belongs to the Deity. They believe that the social and moral orders are his ordinance, and that He is far above all divisions into races, ethnic groups, clan differences, or political partisanships. The same is the case with a political invention such as "the God of Africa", in answer to what appears to be the Europeans' race-centric God, who is alien to the traditional, genuine African attitude toward the Divine in God.

The correct African attitude toward and belief about God is well experienced by implication in the following dialogue (Douglas 1975:317):

"What is the word for God?" he asked.

"Which one?" inquired Esther innocently.

"The only one," he said severely.

"Theos," she replied, after a little pause"

This brings us to the writing of the former President of Zimbabwe, Canaan S. Banana. We concentrate on only one of his writings: *The theology of promise; the dynamics of self-reliance* (1982). His earlier, more popular work (1981) is called *The gospel according to the ghetto*. One need only read his parodies on the Apostolic confession of faith (re-baptised "The people's creed"), the Ten Commandments ("The ten gates of emancipation"); the Beautitudes, Psalm 1, 1 Corinthians 13, etc., to find confirmation that the title of the book is no printing error. It is indeed the gospel according to the ghetto and not for the ghetto. What promises does this "theology of promise" offer?

That this African leader is also looking for a new anthropology emerges from the title of the very first chapter: "A vision of man." And the passage following immediately after the title leaves no doubt at all as to where he is heading. The person with the promise is, in fact, the revolutionary."

This brings Banana, as a Christian church minister, to face the problem of whether God does indeed play a role in the establishment of the new man for Africa, and for Zimbabwe for that matter. His reply is "the future of man is the future of God" (1982:15). The Bible teaches the exact opposite. If one continues reading on to the next page of the book, the suspicion is confirmed that in his view the African attitude towards the Divine is to a large extent used to pull the revolutionary chariot.

We quote comprehensively:

"He is not a God 'before us'. He is not a God 'above us', he is a God ahead of us and yet he is among us. The God before us has been used to consecrate the past and to constitute the past as the only norm for the future. Educational, social and economic systems resort to God as guarantee for their permanence as the only possible order. The God above is being used to detain the present, to contain the initiative of the revolutionary forces of the world today. Those who resort to God above us will tell you exactly what is good and evil, which

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changes are 'legitimate' and which are not, and that the peaceful ones will be accepted by God and the violent ones rejected. The God ahead of us, the God among us is the revolutionary God. He is the God of justice, the all-caring who grants us our equal right to enjoy the world in which he placed us, alongside with the rest of mankind, both in the present and the future" (Banana 1982:16).

However, we cannot determine our future because we are discovering it while we live in it. We do not even know ourselves, we do not know how much we will achieve till we do it. We do not know God either till we meet Him again in new encounters" (Banana 1982:17).

God may not go out in front of us, because then we have to follow Him. He also should not, as the sovereign Law-giver, stand "above" us, because then we have to obey his commandments. If He wants to, He is welcome to assume the only little place remaining for Him, which is next to us as a revolutionary God, a god whom we discover in the revolution only (ibid.:22). God after all addressed Moses from the burning bush. (Exodus 53:4-22).

In Banana's opinion the Divine should be seen as revolutionary in the sense that God relieves the African of his misery. This forms the attitude of God in the mind and soul of most Africans in their traditional cultural set-up as they look back to colonialism which was concomitant to Christianity. The humiliation of the African Negro race in colonial times was largely suffered at the hands of Christian people and had been inflicted in Christian lands (Bediako 1992:7). It is this experience that shaped writers such as Banana's attitude towards the Divine. The sentiments expressed in his writings are derived from personal experience of the treatment of the Negro in America, and the works of an American clergyman demonstrated to him how Christianity was used by upholders of slavery and racial discrimination to induce Negro submissiveness.

"Such were the circumstances under which the Negro throughout the United States received Christianity. The gospel of Christ was transvestied and diluted before it came to him to suit the peculiar institution by which millions of human beings were converted into 'chattels'. The highest men in the South, magistrates, legislators, professors of religion, preachers of the Gospels, governors of states, gentlemen of property and standing, all united in upholding a system which every Negro felt was wrong. Yet these were the men from

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whom he got his religion, and whom he was obliged to regard as guides. Under such teaching and discipline, is to be wondered at that his morality is awry, that his sense of the dignity human nature is superficial - that his standard of family and social life is low and defective?

Not so much by what Christianity said, as by the way in which, through their teachers, it said it, were the Negroes influenced" (Blyden 1967:31).

The experience of people suffering from slavery had a marked effect on their concept of the Divine. In Africa the relation to the colonial powers also had a definite effect. In the next subsection of our investigation we shall discuss the African Christian believer's attitude towards the Divine. Banana's attitude should be seen as an exact expression of the attitude of black American theologians today.

It is also important that we should discuss the African view of time and space as opposed to the view of the colonial masters who were in most cases Westerners. This view influences the attitude of an African towards the Divine, a vision which differs from that of the Westerner, as the following description shows.

Professor Bennie van der Walt, in discussing the concept of time under the title "*The clash between African and Western conceptions of time*", says the following in defence of his theory which is based on the Western vision of time: "I am compelled to generalise to a very large extent: the 'typical' Western vision of time is not applicable to all Westerners. Accordingly one can also not speak of a single traditional African vision of time" (Van der Walt 1996:21). He argues further that the Western concept of time has not left Africa untouched and to a certain extent the opposite has also happened. Many of the older whites will act more in accordance with an African concept, while many black people clearly show a Western understanding of time in their actions. The debate on the subject is contributed to by Mbiti (1970) and E.T. Hall (in Orientation1994) who says, for example, that "time is a core system in the lives of Westerners around which the picture of the world is built in the mind of an European. Time has to be understood in behavioural terms, measurable, and this is done in the West by way of something physical (a minute hand and a second hand) which moves across a specific space (the face of the clock). Time indication (clock time) is not time itself. From the African point of view, time is a key concept in the understanding of the traditional religion, world view and culture of the African.

The views of the West and of Africa concerning the nature of time can be expounded as follows:

A schematic representation of the views of the West and of Africa concerning the nature of time

THE WEST	AFRICA
An absolute.	Something relative (depends on the context as well as on how one uses it or how one experiences it).
Something static.	Something dynamic.
Time is mathematical, measured in figures.	Time is events (that which you do or what happens to you),
Time is determined by a clock.	Time is determined by events.
Something abstract, independent of ordinary life.	Something concrete, interwoven with one's daily existence.
Mechanistic-fragmented	Organic-holistic.
Chronological (course of time, time interval important).	Kairological (the right moment in time is important, time is an event.
Is located outside man, a watch on the arm or clock on the wall.	Is located within man, more like natural, biological time.
Task/issue-determined precedes relationships.	Man-centred (relationships are more important than tasks).
Man moves through time.	Time moves past man.
More future-directed, less directed towards the past.	More directed towards the past, and less future-directed.
Time has to be filled (this emerges from words such as time lost, saved, made up, used, wasted, passed).	Time is made when and to the extent that it is needed (for example, for interpersonal communication).

The two views, as expounded above, have certain implications which also relate to the subject of our study. These implications can be set out as follows:

The implications of the two visions

THE WEST	AFRICA
Man is the slave of time, it regulates the whole of his life.	Man is master of time.
A hurried tempo of life, cannot wait.	A tranquil tempo, not such a big problem if one has to wait.
Tense human relationships,	Relaxed human relationships.
Alienates people from one another.	Time is there to unite people.
Segments man's existence.	A more holistic existence is the result.
Impoverishing.	Enriching.
Thorough planning.	Poor planning.
Tight schedules and procedures.	More flexible schedules and procedures render Africans effective.
Punctuality.	Being punctual is not so important – other things may be more important
Irritated with African time.	Irritated with the rat race of the West.
The Westerner says that the African wastes time.	Africans say that the West idolises time.
The Westerner has to learn to enjoy time.	Africans have to learn to use time.

Perhaps one cannot provide an evaluation and say, for example, that African culture is right and Western culture wrong. They are simply different. Neither one is right nor wrong. Remaining at this point, however, will not achieve anything. We should be as honest as possible with each other and acknowledge that our own notion of time is not ideal or the only possible one. It is precisely when comparing it with the concepts of time of other cultures that we note the weaknesses or shadowy sides of it. In each culture there is inevitably a tendency to overemphasise those things which are good to such an extent that they become less good. Thus, instead of using the notions of right and wrong, we might well speak of better and worse, more and less advantageous.

Time as seen from the African point of view suggests the presence of the Divine as the beginning of the day in the morning and the end of the divine presence at sunset in the evening.

The transcendence of God is also understood in terms of space, distance and outreach. Space is a concrete form from which it is relatively easy to draw parallels and comparisons and spatial language is the commonest medium through which African peoples express their conception of God's transcendence. The Ila have a legend of an old woman who went in search of God, Shikakunama (the Besetting One), who had afflicted her since she was young (Mbiti 1969: 29-36). Thinking that he dwelt in the sky, she built one tower after another, but each time, before she could reach Him, the bottom timbers rotted and the tower tumbled down. She gave up this method and started on a journey, travelling from country to country, hoping to reach the point where the earth and sky touched and there to find the road to God. But she never came to that point, and wherever she met people, they said to her: "In what do you differ from others? The Besetting One sits on the back of everyone of us, and we cannot shake him off!" The poor woman never solved her problem and died heart-broken. The people say that to this day nobody has ever solved the same problem or puzzle and succeeded in finding God physically (Read1956:190-1). This legend finds a parallel in the Old Testament and similarly in the Qur'an. The Old Testament equivalent story is that of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). In a dramatic way, this story clearly illustrates both the transcendence and immanence of God. He is beyond human search and reach; but paradoxically He is near so that he "sits on the back of everyone of us". The Divine is always around us and with us according to the African cultural set-up. Many other peoples associate God with the sky, the sun and the heaven, all of which suggest great distance and aid men in trying to comprehend and describe the transcendence of God (Mbiti 1970:III).

The Nandi and the entire Kalenjin ethnic group of Rift Valley, Kenya refer to God as "asista", meaning the sun. The underlying belief behind this name is that God radiates through the sun. In fact the Nandi avoid immoral activities during the daytime. Sexual intercourse among couples or fornication and adultery should not be carried out during the sunshine or the day because "Asista sees", and from his distant seat of the sun He can punish such partners. The Pokot, who also belong to the same ethnic group, have "Tororot" for God, who is also present in "The Asis", the sun. They believe that cattle should not be raided from the Turkana during the day because "Tororot sees". The Turkana have "Akuj" for God, which means one who lives above (Kidiama). This tells how the attribute of God's transcendence is rooted in the belief system of an African. Among the Gikuyu it is forbidden to look towards the heavens during a thunderstorm lest a person should catch glimpses of God's intense manifestation,

since the heavenly bodies and phenomena are believed to be God's manifestations. The Gikuyu make contact with God at the key moments of life, during crises and other special times of sacrifice and prayers; otherwise it is considered unnecessary if not dangerous to "bother" God (Kenyatta 1938:234).

The transcendence of God is conceived of by some people in terms of worship and exaltation. The Akan praise Him as "He who is beyond all thanks" (Evans in Smith 1961:249). This may derive from the fact that God's acts are so innumerable that human thanks cannot match them even if men spend their entire lives thanking Him. It means that God cannot be exhausted by praise and thanksgiving, for He is "beyond " that point. The Ngoni, Lamba, and Sukuma-Nyamwezi peoples say that God cannot be reached in worship. The Sangama, on the other hand, believe that God can be reached by human prayers only through the mediation of a special council (Cerulli 1956:115). The use of intermediaries between men and God, which is a widespread practice among many African peoples, readily suggests the concept of the transcendent God being linked with men through the ladder of intermediaries (Mbiti 1970:IV).

For some the transcendence of God means limitlessness. Thus the Tonga describe God as "the limitless one who fills all space" and "the surpassingly great Spirit" (Hoopgood in Smith 1961:74; Smith and Dale 1920:116). The Akan conceive of Him as "He is beyond whom there is nothing" (Danquah 1944:28) or "He who alone is full of abundance" (Evans in Smith 1961:248-252). As in a creed, the Bacongo believe that "He is made by no other, no one beyond him is" (Claridge 1922:269). In the only Shilluk prayers said to be addressed to God, He is invoked in a transcendental context: "There is no one above thee, thou God" (Westermann 1912:171).

From these all these appellations and sayings about God, it emerges clearly that as Spirit God has no limit and transcends all boundaries. There cannot be and there is no "beyond" God, for he is omnipresent and there is no vacuum of existence which He does not fill up. He is or has the most abundant reality of being, lacking no completeness and possessing all fullness of being. He is the ultimate, the final and the absolute Supreme Being, beyond the aspiration and imagination of man.

God's transcendence is considered in terms of man's explanation or understanding of God. The Ngombe describe Him simply as "the unexplainable" (Davidson in Smith 1961:167). The Alur believe that God is "effectively unknowable" as far as his ultimate

nature is concerned (Southall 1953:97). In talking about the transcendental aspect of God, the Lugbara say: "we do not know what God is like, he is everywhere, in the wind and in the sky" (Middleton 1960:253-3). God evades or defies human comprehension; He cannot be grasped within the confines of the human mind. His beginning is unknown; his dwelling place is unknown; what He looks like is unknown; how He carries out his work is unknown; and in every aspect of his nature or being, He is utterly "the unexplainable". It is perhaps for this reason, that many African peoples have only a few phrases and words that describe the fact of God's existence, and beyond that they readily admit that they do not know much about Him.

Other peoples consider God's transcendence in terms of his supreme status in relation to other beings, divinities, objects and human institutions. The Akamba, Dinka, Shilluk, and others believe that God is above the spirits (Lindblom 1920:244; Seligman 1932:179; Butt 1952:62). The Ashanti consider Him to be over and above the spirits and divinities who derive their power from Him (Busia in Forde 1951:193,196; Lystad 1958:163). The Indem call Him "the Big God" who is "the biggest deity of all" (Partridge 1905:273).

When the Ganda consider God to be "the Father of the Gods" they are recognising his supremacy over all other spiritual beings.

The next attribute of the Divine, as God is understood in the African context, is his immanence. From the Lugbara we have perhaps the fullest written account of the concept of God's immanence. Accordingly, the people think of God as transcendent (Adroa) and immanent (Adro). As we have seen, as far as his transcendent aspect is concerned God is thought of as creative and "good', but as far as his immanent aspect is concerned He is considered "bad" and "dangerous". People think of Him anthropomorphically, believing that as Adro He comes into direct contact with his creatures on earth and lives temporarily in the rivers, large trees and thickets and on the mountains (Sawyerr 1970:1). Although invisible, He may become visible to a person who is about to die, and is then said to have a human body which is split in the middle and which is "very terrible to see". While He is not intrinsically "evil", people fear Him nevertheless, and therefore consider Him to be "bad". As far as his immanent aspect is concerned, He is associated with the diviners (called "the people of God"), witches, sorcerers, and death. Elders are thought to be "nearer" to Him than are other people, and can go to the place where He is to be found and "sit there in the place of God's children. Those places are "bad". This twofold conception of God

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reflects the Lugbara society and cosmology in which good and evil, heaven and earth, God and man are often contrasted (Middleton 1960:31, 251).

The Turu make a similar distinction with regard to the attributes of God, considering Him to be transcendent in the sky but immanent in the bush. In his immanence He manifests Himself in form of a lion, a hyena, a python, lightning, storms, pools of water, and high wind. As nearly all of these animals and phenomena are dangerous to human beings, it would seem that God's immanence is also "dangerous" to man and safe only when it is "retained in the bush". In Turu society, the lion is a symbol of punishment and protection, the python symbolises benevolence and forms the bridge between God and the departed. The same view is found among the Luo of Nyakach, Kenya who call the python Omweri, that is one who provides a ladder of blessing from Nyasaye to man. The Bukusu refer to an elephant as a source of strength and their ethnic group calls itself Lirango lie nrhofu, the thigh of an elephant. Other ethnic groups cannot go to war with the Bukusu because they are as strong and powerful as the elephant. For the Turu birthrites include the dangerous but merely symbolic act of "catching the lion" from the bush (Jellicoe 1968:43-9). Thus the immanence of God is seen as paradoxically benevolent and dangerous, welcome and unwanted.

These examples indicate that God is involved in his creation, and is immanent and close to everything. He is the Great Pool, "Contemporary of everything", and "He who was found" as the Karanga call Him (Smith 1961:129). There is no space or time in which He cannot be found, for He is contemporaneous with all things. While God is believed to be immanent in all things, there is no evidence that everything is considered to be God.

The most common acknowledgement of God's immanence manifests itself in the various acts of worship, such as sacrifices, offerings, prayers and invocations. In this way people affirm their belief that the transcendent God, who is above all, is also the immanent God who is close to all and to whom they can turn through these acts of worship. For most of their life, many African peoples place God on the transcendental plane, making Him seem remote from their daily affairs. They know, however that He is immanent and is manifested in natural objects and phenomena, and they turn to Him in acts of worship at any time and in any place (Mbiti 1970:178-190). Thus for them, God is in theory transcendent, but in practice immanent.

The nature of the Divine is also evident in the cultural set-up of the African which acknowledges the eternal attributes of God. These attributes are experienced as the self-existence of God, the pre-eminence and greatness of God, God as the first and last cause, God as spirit, the invisibility of God, God as incomprehensible and mysterious. Their belief in the eternity, infinity and immutability of God is evident, and they also acknowledge both the unity and the plurality of God. These attributes will be discussed in detail in the chapters that follow.

The "Divine" as expounded in the definition as the "Holy", which is only attributable to God, is also described in terms of moral attributes. These attributes are included in African traditional religion which has been christianised as the African cultural context includes the pity, mercy and kindness of God. In the African context God is also understood as "love". He is hence described by most Africans as a "loving God". Many Africans peoples look to God for comfort. He is discloses his nature in his comfort. God has his seat in faithfulness and that is why many Africans refer to God in terms of the attributes of the "faithfulness of God" and the "goodness of God". With regard to the concept of the goodness of God there are many examples proclaiming that He is good. With jubilation, the Bacongo say: "Rejoice, God never wrongs one," and they attribute nothing evil to Him (Smith 1961:129). The Herero believe that God "does only good, therefore we do not make offering to Him" (Van der Merwe 1957:10). In almost identical words, the Akamba say that "God does us no evil" and consequently see no reason to sacrifice to Him. The Nanyarwanda similarly argue that God is so good that he does not require any offering (Smith 1961:50-1). When the Ewe survey the acts of God, they say with great conviction, that "He is good, for he has never withdrawn from us the good things which he gave us" (Smith 1961:109). The Kpelle look at natural phenomena as an indication of the goodness of God and observe that "He causes rain to pour down on our fields, and the sun to shine, because we see all these things of his, we say he is good" (Smith and Dale 1920:202).

When unexpected beneficial events befall a person or family, the Bukusus take them as indications of the goodness of God. They say: "What God offers you with one hand, you should take with both hands" (*Nisio wele akhua ne kumukhono mulala, Yakanila ne kamakhono kombi*). They believe that God is the Author and Maintainer of all good things, and that all goodness comes from Him. So they pray for his help in hunting, ethnic clashes against the saboat (barwa) and the Tesa (bamia), and other undertakings. In his goodness He warns them, through sneezing (engaani), to refrain

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from murder, theft, and other evil deeds. When He occasionally kills people, He does so out of his goodness, "because He wants them to live with Him." Otherwise he does not even punish them for bad deeds, except in certain cases of adultery and incest (Talbot 1932:19).

All the examples given above have been drawn from peoples who consider God to do them only good. There are, however, others who believe that God acts in ways which are both good and bad, at least as far as human life is concerned. The Nandi believe that ultimately all good and evil come from God; and they invoke God's goodness in pronouncing blessings and call upon his name in uttering curses (Smith and Dale 1920:201-2). A similar belief exists among the Makaraka by whom God is "vaguely considered the author of good or bad fortune" (Petterson 1953: 194).

When faced with the mystery of suffering, from which there is neither escape nor clear explanation for it, some peoples tend to attribute this experience to God. In the Katanga area God is spoken of as "the father creator who creates and uncreates". This description is used to cover the paradoxical acts of God by which He creates and destroys life, supplies and takes away life.

The moral attributes of the Divine are manifold. His "anger", "will", "justice", "righteousness" and "holiness" are mentioned in African context.

3.1.2   Conclusion

African peoples have no creeds from which their attitude towards the Divine can be overly observed: Their creeds are within them, in their blood and in their hearts. They have a body of beliefs that depicts their practical attitude towards the Divine and which finds expression in their way of life. This is not formulated into single creeds which can be recited as is the case in Christianity and Islam. Their beliefs are expressed in their attitude towards God's divinity, the way in which they experience Him, and in various acts of worship. Furthermore they are collective, communal or corporate attitudes, held by groups or communities, The individual "expression" of attitude towards the Divine is what other members of the corporate society "express". The way in which the individual experiences and expresses his attitude towards the Divine is the same as the way in which others experience and express it. We have shown by means of innumerable examples how African peoples manifest their attitude towards the Divine, even though this was misunderstood by Western writers and missionaries. They

practically express their attitude towards God by trusting that He will bring them rain, that prayers and sacrifices will result in his giving them children, and so on. African peoples are not spiritually illiterate in comparison with Christians and Muslims as far as expressing their attitude towards the Divine is concerned. However, the word "faith" in its technical sense, as used in Christianity and Islam, does seem somewhat foreign to them.

To assert, however, that they have "no faith" in God, would not be correct. There are no atheists in traditional African societies. A Bukusu proverb seems to summarise the situation well. It says: "No one shows a child the supreme Being", because even a child expresses his attitude towards God almost automatically and by instinct (Hollis 1909:135, 144-145,153)

We have shown that people in their traditional set-up express their attitude towards God, when they seek help from Him. They express their adoration of the Divine through prayers, invocations, sacrifices and offerings. These are practical aspects of their attitude towards the Divine. They believe that He responds and helps them. The search for his attention is utilitarian and not purely spiritual; it is practical and not mystical. This attitude towards God on the part of the traditional African constitutes the major difference from the attitude expressed by the African Christian – the subject which we shall explore in the next subdivision.

3.2 The attitude of the African Christian towards the Divine

3.2.1 Discussion

In the first seven centuries of the Christian era, the northern third of Africa as well as Ethiopia and much of the Sudan became predominantly Christian. The evangelist Mark is said to have established the church in Egypt in the year AD 42. There were, undoubtedly, many people from Northern Africa who had already been exposed to the Christian faith in one form or another. The list of nations mentioned at the time of the Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2) includes Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene. No doubt many of the Jews and proselytes who heard the preaching of the gospel on this occasion had come from parts of Northern Africa. Through long established contact with the Palestine of the day, Northern Africa had sufficient channels of communication and contact to come into touch with the Christian message at a very early date.

Whatever the factors and details, within a few centuries North Africa became one of the centres of Christianity. We have no intention of recounting the story, success, contribution and decline of this early African Christianity here. Historians have dealt with all these aspect (Groves 1948, Vol. 1, Vol. 2). It was a dynamic form of Christianity which gave us great names such as Clement, Justin Martyr, Augustine, Origen, Athanasius, Tertulian, Frumentius and Yared, to name but a few; and Christian traditions such as asceticism and monasticism. It also engaged in theological controversies such as Donatism, monophysitism and Arianism.

Then came the rise of the Islam in the seventh century (AD 622). Within one hundred years Islam had expanded to the western end of North Africa, conquering the religious ground where Christianity had reigned. This could probably be attributed to the common cultural background of the Dawah with the Arabs inhabiting the region during this period. Gradually (and even swiftly in some places) African Christianity waned, until it weakened considerably and more or less disappeared completely in some areas.

Egypt (and Ethiopia further south) retained a strong Christian presence, even up to our time. Today this northern third of Africa is predominantly Muslim. Christianity is the minority as the statistics in Chapter one indicate. When one meets the Christians in a country such as Egypt, one cannot help but be deeply impressed by their sense of their ancient Christian roots which they trace back to the evangelist Mark. With joyful pride they say that he founded their church in AD 42, and they will show you the two huge St Mark's cathedrals in Alexandria and Cairo. They are active in international ecclesiastic life, through the Middle East Council of Churches, the All Africa Conference of Churches and the World Council of Churches, in all of which they are well represented as founder members. They are also engaged in the general life of their country, even if they have to endure certain limitations.

The southern two thirds of Africa have become predominantly Christian in the course of the twentieth century. The process of embracing the Christian faith in this region continues, and it is projected statistically that by the year AD 2000, this region of Africa will be even more Christian. As far as the continent as a whole is concerned, in 1900 there were just under ten million Christians (or 9,2 % of the population), though an additional fifteen million (13,8 %) had been 'evangelised' (that is, had heard the Christian message proclaimed or taught to them) (Barret 1982:136-771).

The African Christians responded to the message of the gospel with a strong attitude of respect towards God. This attitude has forever impelled them to be involved in the evangelisation of their own people on the continent as an expression of their in-depth attitude towards God in faith. The African converts themselves are the chief bearers of the gospel because of their attitude towards the Divine which has indeed changed their behaviour pattern and practice from cultural religious set-ups to devout dependence on God. The history of the spread of Christianity on the continent projects this African Christian attitude towards the Divine in practice (Mbiti 1971:1-22). In June 1980 there were 203 490 710 Christians (or 45,5 % of the population with a further 31.2 % having been evangelised but remaining non-Christians. It is estimated that the number of Christians is currently increasingly by 16 600 people per day or nearly 12 persons every minute as a result of demographic growth and conversions. One wonders about the cause of this growth in recent years. The reason that presents itself most strongly is that this is because of the fervent involvement of the African Christian themselves in spreading the Gospel. This involvement is not simply a matter of course. The primary cause of the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the strong attitude towards the Divine which the Africans cherish and which motivates them to go out with zeal to evangelise their fellow Africans in response to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). These Africans have been described by the Westerners as the Christians who carry with them dirty Bibles. The reason for this is their attitude towards God and the Bible which results in their seeking the answers to their problems in the Word at all moments and times.

The current annual rate of increase is 3,55 % while the population itself is increasing at a rate of 2,72 % per year (Barret 1982:526). At this growth rate there will be approximately 400 million Christians in Africa by the year 2000, accounting for almost half of the total population, and nearly 86 % of the population will have been effectively evangelised because of this attitude towards God cherished by the Africans themselves (Barret 1982: 780;798). In Christian Africa itself, the percentage growth rate is much higher than this average, amounting, for example, to 4,2 % in Uganda, 4,6 % in Ghana, 4,2 % in Zambia and 4,89 % in Mozambique (Barret 1982:686). In every country of Christian Africa, it is estimated that the percentage of Christians in relation to the total population will have grown higher still by the year 2000 (ibid:283). No serious factors other than the massacres in Rwandan and Burundi (Kritzinger 1996:340-357) and that in Uganda under Idi Amin are envisaged which could radically slow down this momentum up to the turn of the millennium (Mbiti 1986:5).

Naturally the question poses itself: What the reasons are for this explosion of Christianity in Africa. I shall give a few reasons briefly. The *first* and most obvious is the works of overseas missionaries, particularly since the nineteenth century. The whole continent was literally invaded by missionaries and mission societies. Since most of these came by sea, the invasion moved from the coast into the interior as was the case in Kenya. The general result was that coastal peoples received the gospel first, while in many cases those living further inland heard it much later. The story of missionary expansion in Africa is told in many books and there is neither room nor any need to repeat it here. In former years it was told, not without bias, by overseas missionaries themselves or scholars from their countries. In more recent years African scholars have begun to add their voice to the narrative, providing their own version (and bias). By and large, the history of Christian missions in Africa includes many noble deeds of dedication (Fowler 1994:21), perseverance, endurance and determination for the sake of the gospel (sometimes at heavy costs in lives, material welfare, health and career). This to some degree shaped the attitude of the evangelised towards the Divine, in this case that of the Africans towards the Christian faith. Most of them sowed the seed or watered the ground and did not live to see the growth nor reap the harvest.

The *second* contribution towards the growth of Christianity was the work done by African Christians themselves in spreading the gospel and establishing Christian congregations. This enormous work has often been overlooked in published reports and books. In recent years it has increasingly been recognised that African Christians have carried and continue to carry the bulk of the labour of evangelising the peoples of Africa and Madagascar. They, too, are highly dedicated men, women and young people, who have sacrificed their time, energy, wisdom, material welfare, health and even lives as evangelists, catechists, teachers, pastors, priests and lay-workers for the love of Jesus Christ and the gospel. The impelling strength here is their attitude towards the Divine of the Christian message that they proclaim to their fellow Africans. Proof of their success is the response they get from the audience who vividly understand these evangelists since they have a similar cultural background as opposed to foreign missionaries. Missionaries may learn the language and culture of the people among whom they work very well, yet all the same they will not appeal to the people to the same extent as fellow Africans who bear the message of the gospel.

In 1900 there were some 8 000 missionaries from overseas in Africa, amounting to a proportion of one missionary to 13 500 people. In 1975 the proportion was one missionary to 10 670 people. It is obvious that the missionaries could not reach many of these people and the barriers of language, culture and distance proved to be a further constraint. It was then, and still is, the duty of African Christians to carry out the detailed inch-by-inch evangelisation of the continent – a task that has assumed various forms.

One form was (and still is) spontaneous evangelisation, particularly in the case of first-, second- and third-generation Christians. Christians simply spread the news that they have become Christians among their relatives, friends and other contacts, informing them that they had been baptised and sometimes that they could now read and write. It was as when Andrew met Jesus for the first time: He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus (John 1:40-42). Philip and Nathaniel had a similar experience (John 1:43 ff.). In the same way as Philip said to his cautious and questioning brother, "come and see!" many African Christians call their brothers and sisters to Christ. In this way spontaneous evangelism takes place.

As African Christians we can recall many occasions when, as small children, we heard our parents and other family members telling relatives who were not Christians and others who came to our homes about Jesus and about the faith. They did this by way of exchanging news and holding conversations. All our neighbours and relatives knew that we were Christian. When they came to our homes we sometimes sang hymns from the church hymnal *Tenzi za Rohoni* or *Nyimbo za Kumsifu Mungu* in Kiswahili; sometimes we read passages from the New Testament and the Old Testament (*Agana Jipya na Agano la kale*); and before eating together and on going to bed at night, we prayed – not only in our homes but also when we were guests in the homes of other people, regardless of whether they were Christian or not. Often we heard our parents say to other people: "Oh, we do this, or we cannot eat that, because we are Christians!" They then went on further to explain why they did or not do such things. This example depicts how the Divine attitude functions in the whole life of an African Christian. The expression of this response to the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ still continues.

It is typical for an African Christian when undertaking an event, such as going on a journey, or performing an important task, or taking a major decision, to pray and

sometimes sing hymns and read passages from the Bible. These events and many others are seen as opportunities to speak about Jesus Christ, the gospel and Biblical teaching. When people who did not yet hold the Christian faith happened to be present, they were confronted with it through these spontaneous moments of evangelisation.

This process of spontaneous evangelisation is going on still in many parts of Africa. In the process the experiences of the early followers of Jesus are repeated and multiplied millions of times. Christians who are neither trained theologians nor official preachers of the church act as carriers and multipliers of the good news of Jesus Christ. A proverb in the Bukusu says appropriately: *Lusimu lwo Mubukusu Kumunwa*, which means 'the mouth is the radio transmitter of the African'. Obviously there are also places where people are not so free to speak about and propagate their faith, but then this kind of limitations has confronted the church ever since the time when our Lord on earth.

There is a second method of evangelisation which underlines the way in which the gospel is spread as a result of the zeal created by the Christian attitude towards the Divine. This is the work done by the catechists, both men and women, Church ministers teachers and preachers, as well as other official representatives of the church. These men and women have mostly attended church schools or Bible schools but a number have not and can neither read or write, yet they have a working knowledge of Christian teaching and of the Bible. Many of these are lay-people, many are paid little or nothing for their work by the church. They prepare others for baptism and confirmation, they share in building up the church life in the community and many lead prayer and other services of worship. Their work is carried out mainly in an official way, in that they are sanctioned or commissioned or recognised by the church to carry out evangelisation in the broad sense. Teachers in particular have the added opportunity of shaping the lives of children in the direction of the Christian life. In many public schools, as is the case in Kenya, there are active groups of Christian pupils and students, such as choir groups, Christian unions, the Young Christian Students' Association and others who meet for prayer and Bible study, and even groups which evangelise others in and outside school. Religious teaching is permitted and often encouraged by governments in most of the Christian countries in Africa.

Thirdly, we wish to mention here African missionaries and their missionary work among poor peoples of other languages and countries. This is a phenomenon that

started in the time of overseas pioneer missionaries, but one which has been accelerated and has become more structured since 1907. We can mention examples such as Uganda with its 15 million inhabitants of whom 80 % are Christian. The first missionary to proclaim the gospel in this country was Dallington Maftaa, an African evangelist from Malawi who travelled to Uganda in 1875, accompanying the American explorer Henry Morton Stanley. He started the work of evangelising the Baganda. Two years later the first overseas missionaries from England arrived. The church in Uganda grew rapidly and one of the early Christians there was Apolo Kivebulaya (c. 1865-1933). He was baptised in 1895, and in September of the same year he started working as a missionary among the Batoro. He tried to work further afield in the Congo, but because of the Belgian occupation the political climate there made him return to the Batoro, among whom he worked for 15 years. During this time he travelled thousands of kilometres on foot, preaching the gospel. He said, "My greatest need is to have enough strength, so that I can bring people to Christ". In 1915 he finally returned to the Congo where he worked as a missionary among the Pygmies, established a church there and faithfully served the Lord up to his death in May 1933 (Keyes 1983).

There are many similar stories of African missionaries in other countries. During the last thirty or forty years small local mission societies have sprung up in several churches in Africa, particularly among the indigenous (independent) churches (Keyes 1983). In 1972 there were 27 mission-sending bodies indigenous to Africa based in over 20 African countries and their number increased rapidly to reach 104 in 1980,. Of these, Ghana had 23, Kenya 16, Nigeria 16, Zaire 14 and Zimbabwe 8. In 1972 there were 1 007 African missionaries. Their number increased more than five times to 5 884 in 1980 and is still growing. In 1980 Nigeria had the largest number of African missionaries, namely 2 500, followed by Ghana (1 127), Kenya (1 002), South Africa (579) and Zaire (334). These mission bodies, rooted in a strong attitude towards God, are simply structured, but they choose their candidates to train them for an average of just over two-and-a-half years, and send them to areas other than among their own people and language. They work there for an average of three years, and virtually all their expenses and salaries are defrayed by African Christians, something which demonstrates their attitude towards God. This tells of the commitment African Christian have towards the Divine as the underlying power and force behind their missionary enterprise. So we see that African missionaries are very actively engaged

in the spreading of the gospel in Africa, and in some cases in countries of Europe, America and Asia (Keyes 1983).

The *third* factor which contributes to the spread of the Christian faith in Africa is traditional African religion. This has deep roots in African culture and history (Ochieng 1992). Speaking in general terms, since this is neither the place nor part of our assignment to do a detailed examination, we can rightly say that African religion has prepared the religious and spiritual ground for many of its adherents to listen carefully to the teachings of the Bible. The Africans reflected seriously on these new teachings, found a high degree of credibility in them and discovered meaningful parallels between their world and the world of the Bible. In many cases they were converted to the Christian faith without feeling a sense of spiritual loss, but on the contrary achieving new heights in their religious experience. The chief new element brought to African religiosity by Biblical teaching is the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel. Western missionaries did not introduce God to Africa, rather it was God who brought them to Africa as bearers of news about Jesus Christ. African religion had already done the groundwork of making people receptive to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Africans already knew God through this traditional religion, but they did not yet know Jesus Christ as such (Acts 17: 22-23). This is similar to the experience Paul had with the people of Athens. Paul did not condemn them, but used their religious life as a starting point for imparting the gospel of Jesus Christ. The teaching of the Bible thus taught Africans to name God, often without problems and in some cases with a sigh of joy: "We have groped after him in the twilight. Now we see him in the dawn of day!" Where African religion has reigned supreme, the Christian faith is also spreading fastest today.

The *fourth* contributing factor is simply the Bible itself. Now that it is available as a whole or in part in both African and former colonial languages, the Bible is exerting a tremendous influence on the religious scene and is planting a new attitude towards the Divine in Africans. It is a major contributor to the spreading of the Christian faith and the extension of the Christian presence and communities.

There are others factors, obviously. We have only named these four as concrete illustrations of how the attitude towards the Divine has contributed to the rapid spread of the Christian faith in Africa. The spreading of Christianity has now gained its own momentum, thanks to its dynamism. Africa now has a golden opportunity to evolve a genuine Christianity which is rooted in its culture, which is sensitive to the cries and

aspirations of its peoples, which promotes worldwide fellowship (Koinonia) in Christ and religious co-existence in the multi-religious society. Most importantly, it grows to the honour and glory of God.

Andrew Walls has taught us to recognise the Christian religion as 'culturally infinitely translatable' (Walls 1981:39-52). From this perspective it becomes possible to see Christianity's various cycles of expansion into different cultural contexts in the course of its history as many expressions of cultural manifestations and incarnations of the faith. Each incarnation has been different and yet each has managed to preserve elements which unite them all as sharing in a common reality, elements such as worship of the God of Israel, the attribution of ultimate significance of Jesus Christ, a sense of belonging to a people of God extending beyond the local context and in the midst of whom God's activity is recognised in the reading of common Scriptures and the sacramental use of bread and wine and water (Walls 1981:76-109).

Translatability is also another way of saying universality. Hence the translatability of the Christian religion signifies its fundamental relevance and accessibility to persons with any attitude, and the ease with which it is transmitted and assimilated. Nowhere is this feature of Christianity more evident that in the Christian view of Scripture. Unlike, say, Islam, in which the effectual hearing of the Word of Allah occurs essentially only through the medium of the Arabic language, Christian doctrine rejects the notion of a special, sacred language for its Scripture and makes God speak in the vernacular so that "all of us hear in our own languages the wonders of God" (Acts 2:11). Accordingly, the Bible, translated into whatever language, remains essentially and substantially what it is believed to be in its original autographs.

Behind the Christian doctrine of the substantial equality of the Scriptures in all languages, lies the more profound doctrine of the incarnation. In the incarnation the fullest divine communication has reached beyond the forms of human words into the human form itself. "The word (of God) became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:4). Translatability therefore may be said to be built into the nature of the Christian religion and is capable of subverting any cultural possessiveness of the faith in the process of its transmission.

We do not intend to pursue these ideas in the manner of a theoretical discussion, but rather to show how, in our post-missionary setting, such considerations truly come into their own, and also to point out how it is only through an adequate and firm grasp of

this principle of the translatability of the Christian religion that we can appreciate the true character of continuing Christian witness ,and enhance the genuine development of new indigenous traditions of Christian thought.

In April 1965 an international gathering of academics and scholars representing various intellectual disciplines with interest in the missionary transmission of Christianity to Africa, met at the University of Ghana in Legon near Accra under the auspices of the International African Institute to discuss and assess the place of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa. The proceedings of this seminar, edited by Christian Beata of Ghana, were published under the title *Christianity in tropical Africa* (Bultmann 1960:23). When one reads the papers presented and the account of the discussions, one gets a distinct impression that the gathering took a positive but not triumphal view of the fortunes of Christianity on the African continent. Clearly not all issues were considered to have been resolved, yet *Christianity in Tropical Africa* gives every indication that there was a feeling that the Christian presence in Africa represented the most significant spread and advance of the faith in history since its penetration of the early Roman Empire and of Europe. The phenomenon of Christianity in Africa was therefore an important subject to study. By way of observation Beata sums up the mood of the gathering and the state of the understanding reached as follows: "intangible in many of its aspects, the Christian presence has been and remains, in the African scene, a massive and unavoidable fact and factor" (Beata 1968). Africa seems to be a success story of the missionary endeavour. Adrian Hastings, writing in the 1970s and looking back to the two previous decades, could comment: "certainly, if one looked around Africa in 1950, the achievement of the missionary enterprise could not but appear considerable" (Hastings 1979:43). And yet it also seems that there was some measure of surprise, accompanied by not a little perplexity, at this rich African harvest. In the mind of the missionary movement there had been a general hesitancy about ascribing to Africa's pre-Christian religious traditions and socio-cultural forms of life any substantial theological status. Not many had been convinced that African societies gave evidence of any "preparation for Christianity". Furthermore, the entanglement of the missionary histories of African peoples with European colonial ventures served to complicate the outcome all the more. How successfully could the one be dissociated from the other (Bediako 1992:111)?

On the specifically religious plane, it was not the feat of the high religious cultures of Asia – on which considerable missionary resources and personnel had been expended – but the 'animistic' world of "Africa, to use the language of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 (Beata 1968:129; Anderson and Ferrier 1960:24), which now became the test case of the missionary enterprise, and probably of Christianity in general. The new era was beginning here.

One area of discussion at the Accra Seminar in which this perplexity seemed particularly acute was that concerning African conversion. The seminar seemed to give a variety of interpretations of the massive and unavoidable fact and factor of the Christian presence in Africa. The explanations ranged from those which were broadly sociological and political to those which sought to be specifically religious. The British theologian, F B Welbourn, who had worked in Uganda, for example, wondered whether a missionary (Protestant) preaching of salvation from the standpoint of guilt could be understood by traditional African societies which, in his view, were conditioned more by a culture which had little understanding of this concept (Beata 1968:182-199). He saw conversion to Christianity in Uganda as providing a 'fantasy structure' for an African identity within the new political structure that was emerging (1986:125). On the other hand, the Kenyan theologian, John Mbiti, then working at the Makerere University College, Kampala, Uganda, called for greater attention to be given to religious considerations in their own terms. He asked whether sociological or political considerations alone provided an adequate explanation of the facts. Mbiti (1968:126) cited the testimonies of converts who gave as reasons for their conversions a positive demonstration of love by missionaries and the impact of some Christian doctrines, particularly the resurrection and the nature of the Christian afterlife. "Did they not have an inner religiosity which found fulfilment in Christianity?". (Beata 1968:126). Perhaps it is not surprising that the need was felt for a study comparable to the work by Arthur Darby Nock on conversion in the Hellenistic world of the early Roman Empire. At another time and place a massive response to Christianity was recorded as it crossed cultural frontiers (Nock 1951:3). The feeling was that "the spread of Christianity in Africa" was a topic of far greater importance in Christian history that was generally recognised (Mbiti 1986:123), that there was a need to explore 'fundamental questions', and that what was at issue was really the question of Christian identity, a study of which was made even more urgent by the wind of political nationalism sweeping across the continent at present.

"The search must continue for an identity which ensures to all African Christians a satisfying self-consciousness and dignity in social and inter-racial relations. If the definition of this identity has so far been predominantly in nationalistic terms, this must be supplemented by the reflection that a Christian comes from God and goes to God; (his citizenship is in heaven, i.e. his total and final value system extends well beyond those of his own culture). Full realisation of the potentialities of genuine Christian culture within the African context will involve both the working out of a clear Christian mind regarding this context and an equally clear African mind concerning Christian values and ideas" (Beata 1968:129-30).

The Accra Seminar of 1965 is important for an understanding of what was happening to Christianity in Africa, at least in the minds of its most influential scholars, interpreters and advocates, at the critical time of the heyday of African nationalism, and also in the period when African Christian intellectuals were themselves beginning to make serious efforts to come to terms with the Christian presence in African life.

The seminar is also important in a rather disturbing way, in that, in at least some of its aspects, it served as a pointer to the hurdles which still had to be overcome, if the Christian religion in Africa was to be seen as a truly African experience and reality. For despite the recognition in some of the papers presented, that there was a valid African contribution (Mbiti 1986:18-30), an appreciation of the full dimensions of their contribution was only just beginning to be recognised. It still seemed as if the whole matter of the planting of Christianity in Africa was little more than the religious equivalent of the political and cultural impact of the West. The difficulties regarding the interpretation of African conversion are an indicator of the inhibiting effects of such a frame of reference.

Furthermore, African independent churches had become a significant element of the Christian presence on the continent. Yet despite George Shepperson's argument in his paper "Ethiopianism: past and present", that these African initiatives in Christianity had a 'rightful place in the history of the church' (in Beata 1968:363) and David Barrett's analysis of 200 different societies across Africa which showed that independence was 'playing an increasing part in the expansion of Christianity in Africa' (ibid.:1968:284), the seminar's treatment of the phenomenon of the independent churches was less than positive in that these churches were rather seen as 'separatist' movements (Oosthuizen 1987:39). Academic orthodoxy was still far from

recognising that it was the independent churches which were in fact indicating the trend and direction of African Christianity. In a later trenchant criticism of the seminar on this point, two African historians with an interest in African Christian history asked why the convenors failed to 'invite participation by the African Churches, or to recognise their existence as propagators of Christianity in Africa' (Ayayi and Ayadele 1969: 90-108). These independent churches to some extent express the attitude of the African Christian believer towards the Divine in his true cultural context as opposed to an attitude which copies and incorporates Western culture into African Christianity. We shall discuss the independent churches separately in Chapter five of this study.

3.2.2   Conclusion

In conclusion, we can assume that the African Christian demonstrates his/her attitude towards the Divine religiously, also as he/she inherited it from the African religion. However, the Bible is central to African Christianity. It is the most widely translated, and most widely read book in tropical Africa. The Bible is the most widely available book in both rural and urban areas in Kenya and many other African countries. It can be regarded as the most influential book, and in reading and cherishing it Africans express their attitude towards the Divine openly. The Bible is read at primary and secondary schools, in colleges and universities, at seminaries, during worship services, in fellowship meetings, in private devotion and meditation. Most historians carry copies of the Bible, or parts of it, wherever they go and read it when they have little time to spare. Even when they do not have the Bible in their hands, they will refer to it in talking and praying (Mbiti 1986:59).

In recent decades there has been as influx of missionary groups from Europe and North America, which emphasises the Pentecostalism inspiration of the Bible (Gifford, 1992). Biblical hermeneutics is a complex subject, and it is too simplistic to suggest that the words contained in the Bible are synonymous with the Word of God (Dietrich 1942). African Christians, as soon as they acquire the skills of literacy, are able to discern meaning from the Bible, because the gospel speaks to them directly. It has been the experience of many pastors that, having graduated from the seminary, their enthusiasm to exhibit their learning in hermeneutics on the pulpit often makes them lose contact with the attentive congregation and soon they learn to relate the Word of God to the daily life of Christians to whom they minister (Schmidt 1988:218-219).

This links up with the African attitude towards the Divine in the sense that all spheres of life are determined religiously. According to the African heritage, religion cannot be abstracted from the rest of life. Rather, it gives meaning and a sense of purpose to all aspects of thought and action. This integral approach to religion is also prevalent in Islam and other oriental cultures.

The European Renaissance and Reformation, in critique of the medieval synthesis of religion and culture, initiated a process of separation between church and society which in the 20th century has culminated in almost total detachment. In the African context such separation between religion and culture is contrived and unrealistic.

J.S. Mbiti suggests that Africans are "notoriously" religious (Mbiti 1969:1). Perhaps he should have said that Africans are reputably religious in demonstrating their attitude towards the Divine, because there is nothing notorious about the religiosity of Africans. Mbiti aptly observes that in African heritage.

> "Religion permeates all departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it. A study of these (African religious) systems is. therefore, ultimately, a study of the peoples themselves in all the complexities of both traditional and modern life. Because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred or the Divine and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated (a student), he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament. Although many Africans do not have a word for religion as such, it nevertheless accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death. Though modern change can not remain intact, but they are no means extinct. In times of crisis they often come to the surface, or people revert to them in secret" (Mbiti 1986:1-2)

As an African, the researcher can confirm this experience. Thus the study of the African Christian's attitude towards the Divine necessarily implies the study of the total appropriation of the Christian faith as portrayed in the Bible and denominationally introduced into Africa by African individuals and communities in the context of their

cultural and religious heritage and also within the framework of their colonial and post-colonial experience.

3.3   The attitude of the African Muslim towards the Divine

3.3.1   Discussion

The attitude of Muslims towards rhe Divine is determined by the opening chapter (al-Fatiha) of the Qur'an. The Muslim desire to experience the Divine is reflected in all Muslims irrespective of their geographical origin or where they come from. It reads:

> Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.
>
> The Beneficient, the Merciful
>
> Owner of the Day of Judgement,
>
> Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help.
>
> Show us the straight path,
>
> The path of those whom Thou hast favoured
>
> Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger
>
> nor of those who go astray (Qur'an 1:1-7)

A Muslim is the one who submits to the Divine attitude which has been revealed by God as mercy to mankind. In submission there is peace.

Islam is the way of peace. The Muslim community, the Umma, is the community of peace who has surrendered to the will of God. Anyone can experience peace if he has unequivocal faith in the one true God – Allah – and has completely surrendered to Allah's will and commandments. The submission which is peace includes the confession of faith, a belief in the Books of God, obedience to the Prophet and submission to the Law of God.

In Islam the true believer must take the Kalimah or Shahada very seriously "La-Ilaha-illa-l-lah, Muhaamadun rasulu-lah". The Shahada which states that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, is the covenant of submission which God has given to mankind. It is an expression of the attitude towards the Divine which is on the lips of every genuine Muslim. It is the same covenant of submission which all prophets of Allah, from Adam to Muhammad, came to renew.

Pronouncing the Shahada must be a sincere confession of deep understanding and appreciation for the true God, who is the Creator, Master, and Ruler of all that exists in the universe. Only He is transcendent and possesses all the divine attributes. He is beyond and above all his creation, and to associate anyone with his worship is a grave sin.

The Qur'an (13:16) witnesses:

> "Or assign they unto Allah partners who created the like of His creation so that the creation (which they made and His creation) seemed alike to them? Say: Allah is the creator of all things, and He is the One, the Almighty."

This one true God is also the All-Loving, the All-Generous, the All-Benevolent, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate and the Most Forgiving. Peace is at the door of all believers, who submit to Allah's will, obey His commands and law and associate none with Him in the worship.

God has revealed his commands and will to mankind by sending his Divine Books from which the Muslims in Africa and the rest of the Islamic world derive their attitude towards Allah. The Qur'an, as the Last Revelation, is the final criterion of truth, and all Muslims must submit to its divine authority. The Muslim experiences peace in the grateful submission to the marvellous will of God as revealed in the Qur'an (Deedat 1982:10). The Qur'an receives the highest veneration from all Muslims to whatever sect they belong.

It is through the prophets that the oneness of Allah and these Divine Books are revealed. Therefore the true servant of Allah must also believe in all the prophets including the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the seal of all Prophets. No one is considered a believer unless he obeys the Prophets through whom the Qur'an was revealed. The way of the Prophet (Sunnah) is the path of divine guidance and as Parrinder (1961b:186) puts it: "Muslims believe that Muhammad is the Intercession for mankind, and will be so at the Day of Judgement, pleading for sinful believers to come out of hell, and for the faithful that they rise higher in praise. Among the two hundred and one titles traditionally given to him are Intercessor, Mediator, Forgiver, Holy One, Holy Spirit. He has been called Light of all light, the loveliest of men, a rose in the garden, a pearl in a shell, and through him all blessings flow." The Qur'an (4: 150-152) adds to this by saying:

"Those who disbelieve in Allah and His message and seek to make distinction between Allah and His messengers ... such are disbelievers in truth; and for disbelievers we prepare a shameful doom. But those who believe in Allah and his messengers and make no distinction between any of them, unto them Allah will give their wages; and Allah was ever forgiving, Merciful."

Allah demands complete obedience to Muhammad and all of Allah's apostles. Since prophets come with God's guidance, the believer has no alternative except to obey the instructions of the Divinity-guided messengers. As for the seal of the Prophets to whom Muslims turn for instruction, the Qur'an (34:28) remarks: "We have not sent thee (O Mohammed) save as bringer of good tidings and a warner unto all mankind; but most of mankind know not."

The Prophet Muhammad told the Muslims that they had to follow his instructions with regard to all that he received as revelation from Allah. Mohammed's life was sanctioned as a model life for all mankind. His explanation of the Qur'an was divinely sanctioned. Muslims cannot make decisions which run counter to those taken by the prophet. The religious significance of the Prophet Muhammad is summarised thus "Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for whom who looketh unto Allah and the Last Day and remembereth Allah much" (Qur'an 33:21) Therefore, sincere belief in the Prophet and strict obedience to his teachings and example is the one sure way for a Muslim to achieve peace.

The Muslim Umma, which is the community of peace, must strictly follow God's guidance. This guidance or law is contained in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah (practices) of the Prophet. This code of Allah is also referred to as the Sharia, and literally means "road" or "path". The Sharia is the very road which, if properly followed, leads man to peace. The Sharia combines the guidance contained in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah and its very basis is the Shahada.

Sharia is the Muslim sacred law. It is the Divine Law which pervades and guides the Muslims' attitude towards the Divine. It is the law to which all Muslims must subordinate all their life affairs, both public and private. Rejection of the Sharia is a rejection of the faith of Islam. The Sharia is the ideal pattern for a Muslim's life and the law which unites all Muslims into a single Umma. Strict observation of the Sharia gives man hope of a happy life in this world and the next one. The Sharia is the course through which God has chosen to guide man. Strict adhesion to Allah's code is the

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way of experiencing peace (Islam) because the Sharia combines all aspects of divine attitude and guidance.

3.3.2 Worship

Worship (singular – *ibadah* or plural – *ibadot*) is submissive obedience to one's Master, God. It is therefore, the profound religious practice. *Ibadah* is the confession that Allah is the Lord and Master and man is the servant or slave. All that the servant does in obedience to Allah constitutes *ibadah*.

The Qur'an (6:162-164) says:

> Lo! As for me, my Lord hath guided me unto a straight path, a right religion, the community of Abraham, the upright, who was no idolater. Say, Lo! my worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds, He hath no partner. This I am commanded and I am first of those who surrender (unto Him)."

The attitude of Muslims towards *Ibadah* is comprehensive. The central point is to acknowledge wholeheartedly that only Allah, the Creator of all things, is worthy of worship. Allah has ordained some aspects of religion (*al-Diin*) which constitute particular expressions of worship.

Three obligatory dimensions of Islamic worship are:

- submission to Allah (Islam);
- belief of faith (iman); and
- righteousness (ihsan).

The attitude or spirit of right worship includes prayer (*dua*), fear of Allah (*khawf*), hope (*roja*), trust (*tawakhul*), aspiration (*raghbah*), remorse (*inabah*), sacrifice (*dhabh*), vowing (*nadhr*), homage (*khushu*), appeal for refuge (*istiaanah*), appeal for succour (*istighathah*), supplication (*istianah*), awe (*ru'bah*), apprehension (*khashyah*) (Haeri 1997:37).

All these forms of worship should be directed to no one other than God; true worship is to ensure that all these practices are directly and exclusively performed for Allah. The Qur'an (23:117) teaches: "He who crieth unto any other god along with Allah hath no proof thereof. His reckoning is only with his Lord. Lo! disbelievers will not be

successful." A Muslim must confess that Allah is the only reality. He is the originator of the divine attitude, the Lord, the Creator, the most Gracious.

3.3.3   The right attitude of Muslims is worship (*ibadah*).

First, we shall discuss several of the right attitudes of worship. Then we shall briefly discuss the obligatory rituals, beliefs and practices.

Fear is a cherished attitude in Muslim worship. The Qur'an (3:175) states: "It is only the devil who would make (men) fear his partisans. Fear them not; fear Me, if ye are true believer." So if you desire good and not evil, fear God in whatever you do; then you are performing true *ibadah* (Gibb 1949:54).

Hope and **trust** in God are also important in true worship. A person who puts all his hope and trust in God in all that he is doing is performing *ibadah*. Such a person is raised to great spiritual dignity which is great reward. Allah says: "Who hath created seven heavens in harmony. Thou (Muhammad) canst see no fault in the Beneficient One's creation; then look again: canst thou see any rifts" (Qur'an 68:3) (Guillaume 1954:112).

Remorse is another important aspect of worship that must be taken seriously by Muslims. Allah advises Muslims in the Qur'an to repent and be righteous, before it is too late and judgement is established. The Qur'an (39:54) says: "Turn unto Him repentant, and surrender unto Him, before there come unto you the doom, when ye cannot be helped."

Supplication is one of the most important aspects of Muslim worship. In the Qur'an (1:1-4) we read: "Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds" Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help." This means that Muslims do not only worship God and ask for his help, but emphatically worship Him alone and ask for his aid only, for He is the only one worthy of devotion and able to help man. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "If you need aid, offer supplication to Allah" (Al Bukhari, Hadith.) (Farah 1968).

It is *ibadah* for a Muslim to **faithfully fulfil his vows and oaths** of spiritual service, including service to humanity. If a man fulfils his vows in his commercial and economic dealings, in his contracts and in his dealings with all the people he meets,

his relatives, friends or strangers, all that constitutes *ibadah*. The Qur'an (76:7) witnesses: "They perform the vow and fear a day whereof the evil is wide-spreading."

To **seek refuge in God** is yet another important aspect of worship. God is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Ruler, and the Master of the day of Judgement. God is, therefore, the only Being entitled to man's worship at any time. It is man's duty to worship God by seeking his protection against evil. God protects those who in worship take refuge in their Lord. To this effect the Qur'an (114: 1-2) teaches: "I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind."

Sacrifice is also a significant expression of worship. As far as sacrifice is concerned, the Muslim witness is quite clear. Sacrifice is not for appeasing higher powers, for God is One. God is not interested in the flesh and the blood of our sacrifices. They are only a symbol of thanksgiving to Him. By sharing the flesh of the sacrificial animal with our fellowmen we recognise this. It is the devotional state of the mind and the person's attitude towards the Divine which is important in sacrifice. The Qur'an (22:37) tells us: "Their flesh and blood reach not Allah, but the devotion from you reacheth Him." In another Qur'anic verse we are further informed that :

> "Lo! my worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for Allah. Lord
> of the Worlds. He hath no partner. This I am commanded, and I am first of
> those who surrender (unto Him)" (Qur'an 6:163-164).

We have described only a few aspects of the right attributes and expressions of worship. These aspects are a demonstration of the Muslim attitude towards Allah. Now we need to consider some aspects of worship which are also a reflection of Muslim attitude towards the Divine (Haeri 1997:50).

3.3.4   The obligatory rituals, beliefs and practices of *ibadah*

We have seen that *ibadah* is a means of purifying man's physical and spiritual life. We have described some required expressions or attitudes of worship. In addition to the worshipful attitudes, Allah has also commanded certain obligatory rituals, beliefs, and practices of *ibadah*. We have already noted that these include: (1) submission (*Islam*) with its pillars of duty; (2) faith (*iman*) with all its articles of belief; (3) good deeds (*ihsan*).

The obligatory acts or rituals of the *ibadah* of **duty** which make up submission (*Islam*) consists of five pillars:

1. Testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Mohammed (PBUH) is His messenger (*shahada*).
2. Performing prayers.
3. Paying obligatory alms (*zakat*).
4. Fasting during the month of Ramadhan.
5. Performing the pilgrimage to the ka'bah (*haj*).

The obligatory beliefs of *ibadah* which make up *iman* are belief in (1) One god (Allah); (2) his angels; (3) his books; (4) his messengers; (5) the last day; (6) his power (*Qadar and Qatha*) (Glasse 1974).

Finally, the obligatory practice of *ibadah* which makes up *ihsan* (right doing) is to worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for though you do not see Him, He is seeing you.

It is not our intention to discuss all the obligatory rituals, beliefs and practices of *ibadah* as outlined above. We are going to restrict our attention to several aspects of *ihsan* (right doings or righteousness) and *salat* (prayer) which is a very important form of the *ibadah* of submission (*Islam*), because *salat* is an exceedingly important pillar of duty.

Right conduct is an obligatory form of worship. The *ibadah* of *ihsan* is absolutely essential, because every good deed performed is submission to the will of Allah and is indeed an act of worship. Righteousness covers so many areas of our private and public life that we cannot exhaust it here. If a man helps the poor, gives food to the hungry, helps the sick or performs other similar acts, not from selfish motives, but only to seek the pleasure of God — that is true worship. About righteousness the Qur'an (2:177) has the following to say:

> "It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the scripture and the Prophets; and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation

and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing."

Salat is the fundamental and most important obligation of *ibadah*. The Prophet is reported to have said: "Salat is the pillar of religion and whoever abandons it, demolishes the very pillar or religion" (Fazul Karim [N.D]: 169). On another occasion the Prophet described *salat* as "the essence of worship". It is through prayer that a Muslim submits to Allah totally and practically (Lewis 1995).

Prayer (*salat*) is a religious duty. It is *ibadah*. God says: "Pray unto me and I will hear your prayer. Lo! Those who scorn My service, they will enter hell, disgraced" (Qur'an 50:6). *Salat* is a fulfilment of an obligatory duty, an act of homage towards God, a duty all the faithful are commanded to perform. He who wilfully avoids *salat* forsakes Islam.

Prayer is the essence and heart of the Muslim attitude towards the Divine. It is the essence of religion. Prayers will be accounted for first on the day of judgement, before any other duties. We learn that from a Hadith that, "should one's prayers be marked as perfect, all his other deeds will win the satisfaction of the Merciful Lord (Trimingham 1964:10). Because prayer is very important, it is the first duty imposed by God upon mankind, after believing in his oneness.

It is prescribed for a Muslim to pray five times a day: before sunrise, between midday and afternoon, in the afternoon, immediately after sunset, between the time when twilight is over and just before dawn. The various poses and postures the worshipper assumes in prayer are a true embodiment of the spirit of total submission to Allah. The various recitals strengthen his commitment to the Almighty God. The frequency of the prayer is a good lesson for the worshipper in discipline and will-power. Prayers strengthen the foundation of one's faith and prepare one for a life of virtue, submission to Allah, inner peace and stability. They help to guide a man to the most upright way of life, a life of sincerity, patience, courage, confidence and hope.

Before a Muslim presents himself before his Lord to offer prayers, he must be spotlessly clean and pure. The Qur'an (2:222) states: "Truly Allah loves those who turn to Him and those who care for cleanliness." Islam takes interest in the purification of the body from all dirt and impurities, as well as purification of the mind from false, wrong and corrupt beliefs and attitudes. This purification of the mind, body and clothes is called *taharah* (purification). It is only when a Muslim worshiper is in the condition of

taharah, that he can perform the *salat*. The purification of the body can be made through a partial wash of those parts of the body which are generally exposed to dirt or dust or throough a complete bath. The partial wash is better known as *wudu* (ablution) and the complete bath is called *ghusul*. All this proves the importance of *salat* as a manifestation of the worshipper's attitude towards Allah (Qur'an 70:23) (Haeri 1997:38-39).

It is recommended that prayer be performed in a mosque and in a congregation if there is one available. This is more true of the *Juma* (Friday) congregational prayer which is compulsory to all Muslims. On all other occasions Muslims may pray wherever they happen to be, at home, in the market, in parks, at a railway station, in an embany yard or on board a flight. It is a very common sight to see a Muslim praying by the roadside.

Muslims can perform *salat* anywhere. The Qur'an (72:18) says: "And the places of worship are only for Allah ..." Nevertheless the common feature which Muslims all over the world must observe, is to stand barefoot facing towards *Makkah (Qiblah)*. and conducting the service in the language of the Qur'an. The universal practice of *salat* among all Muslims around the world distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslims. The unity and the world-wide community of Islam is evident in the common ritual of *salat*.

We have discussed *salat* as one aspect of the *ibadah* of submission. We have not discussed the other rituals of duty, nor have we probed any aspect of the *ibadah* of *iman* (belief). We have only briefly discussed the *ibadah* of *ihsan* (right doing). But *salat* is a key dimension of the whole experience of *ibadah* and as such reveals the inner meaning of *ibadah*, and as such reveals the inner meaning of worship in Islam. In fact, Islam is *ibadah* (Nasr 1981:98).

The essence of Islam is *ibadah* which manifests in the Muslim attitude towards Allah or the Divine. It is in worship, which is a total way of life, an expression of complete and grateful submission to God, that a Muslim gives witness to the reality of his faith in God. Through *ibadah* the Muslim expresses the submission and peace which is Islam.

From what we have identified as *ibadah*, we assert confidently that there is no Islam without *ibadah*. It is through *ibadah* that Islam is given meaning. It is *ibadah* that provides the pillars of support for the edifice of Islam.

Abu Huraira reports in a Hadith, that an Arab came to the Prophet and said. "Guide me to a deed by doing which I shall enter paradise". The Prophet replied, " Worship God and do not associate anything with him, observe the prescribed prayer, pay the obligatory zakat (alms) and fast during Ramadhan". The Arab responded: "By Him in whose hand is my soul, I shall not add anything to it nor fall short of it." When he had left, the Prophet remarked: " If anyone wishes to look at man who will be among the people of paradise, let him look at this man" (Al-Bukhari in Hadith).

So if anyone performs all his essential obligations (*ibadah*) without leaving any one of them out, his place is in paradise. It is through proper demonstration of the attitude towards the Divine in *ibadah* that man can hope for paradise. African Muslims are not different from Muslims from other continents in the expression of their attitude towards Allah which is demonstrated overtly in *ibadah*.

Let us now turn to the attitude towards the Divine of Muslims in East Africa. The story of the Christian-Muslim relations in East-Africa at the time of and after the advent of Islam was one of tolerance, mutual respect and healthy co-operation. Scriptural evidence, both canonical and apocryphal, exists which could have given the Christians of Arabia and its environs hope of the coming of a prophet who would vindicate the basis of their faith in God and Jesus Christ (Zebiri 1997:32). It was in this atmosphere that the Prophet Muhammad in the fifth year of his mission sent out a group of his followers to Ethiopia to escape the persecution of his idolatrous kinsmen. Ethiopia was a Christian country. That the refugees were well received is recorded history. When they appeared before the king to answer the charges of the envoys of the idolatrous Quvaish who demanded their extradition, the spokesman of the refugees, Jafa bin Abi Tahib, the Prophet's cousin answered in these memorable words:

> "We were folk immersed in ignorance, worshipping idols, eating carrion, given
> to lewdness, severing the ties of kinship, bad neighbours, the strong among us
> preying upon the weak; thus were we till Allah sent to us a messenger of our
> own, whose lineage, honesty, trustworthiness and chastity we knew, and he
> called us to Allah that we should acknowledge His unity and worship Him and
> eschew all the stones and idols that we and our fathers used to worship beside
> Him; and ordered us to be truthful and to restore the pledge and observe the
> ties of kinship, and be good neighbours and to abstain from things forbidden,
> and from blood, and forbade us lewdness and false speech, and to prey upon
> the wealth of orphans and to accuse good women; and commanded us to

worship Allah only, ascribing no one unto Him as partner and enjoined us prayer and legal alms and fasting. And when they (the Mekkans) persecuted and oppressed us, and hemmed us in, and kept us from the practice of our religion, we came forth to they land, and chose thee above all others, and sought thy protection, and hoped that we should not be troubled in thy land, O king!" (Trimingham 1964:25)

Thus did Islam enter Africa. Several years before the teachings of the Prophet were received in Madinah, they had reached East Africa. Among the Prophet's earliest and staunchest followers were men and women of East African origin. Baraka on Umm Aymana embraced Islam with Ali the very day following the Prophet's revelation. She was an East African, and she had been the one who had looked after the Prophet when as a child he had lost his mother. Bilal, the Prophet's muezzin who bore all that human endurance should bear, was also of East African descent. Similarly was Sumayya who became the first person to lay down her life for her faith.

Not an alien faith in East Africa, Islam came overland in the first decade with the refugees to Ethiopia, and by sea in AD 1067 with the seamen who were always visiting the East African coast. There are, however, no indications that Christianity penetrated south of Ethiopia and Sudan until the coming of the Portuguese by sea round the Cape. Both religions, Islam and Christianity, are missionary religions, although Buddhism also claims the same. The East Africans, however, have seen that their approaches and methods differ fundamentally. The spread of Islam has never been an organised affair in East Africa. By living his religion in accordance with the teaching of the Qur'an, the sunna and the scholars above, the Muslim imperceptibly helps to propagate his faith. A good example is the announcement of the creed many times a day and the prayerful life. He does not have to preach as a professional although he may not lack argument when argument is called for. Lyndon Harries (1954, in Sanneh 1982:54) writes in his book *Islam in East Africa*: "Islam, like Christianity, is a missionary religion, but the missionary as we know him has a more important place in East Africa amongst Christians than amongst Muslims". And further on he expounds: "Islam depends almost entirely for the spread of its faith upon the influence of the Muslim community. When social distinctions are overcome, the progress of conversion is likely to be accelerated". In Islam the believer's attitude towards the Divine is lived and seen in action. This, in turn, becomes an individual means towards the *Da'wah* and eventually the acceptance of Allah as the Only God and Muhammad is his Prophet. In

East Africa, as already pointed out in the beginning of this study, the religion was taken from the coast into the interior by the traders. There were no organised missionaries to spread Islam as such. Historically these traders were mainly involved in the trade of slaves. Although on the one hand they took the slaves from as far as Mumias in Kenya, on the other hand they had Islam to leave behind to the people under the trusteeship of the local leaders such as Nabongo wa Mumia or present-day Mumias. This presented an antimony in the believers of Islam who were Arabs at this juncture in the sense that, on one side, slavery was evil and, on the other, the Islam religion was good and a means of perpetuating morality and human tolerance among believers (Fleming 1963). Islam was accepted by most Africans in these areas because of its simplicity and identification with the people as opposed to Christianity which involved catechism and strict rules and which was associated with colonialism, etc.

The Muslim witness regarding their attitude towards the Divine is profound. Right *ibadah* as an expression of the attitude towards the Divine is a prominent Muslim concern, and many Christians who have Muslim friends in Africa are impressed by their attitude of sincerity and the devotion of Muslim worship. The Muslim discipline of prayer, fasting a *tawhid*, or giving of alms is impressive. Christians appreciate that the essence of Islamic worship is submission to God. As Christians hear and see the Muslim witness in worship, they are often challenged to also become more disciplined in their own experience of worship.

At the same time the African Christian witness invites all true worshippers of God to move beyond the mystery of the forms of worship to an actual encounter with God, a personal relationship with the One whom both Muslims and Christians worship. The forms and practices of our worship are less important than the spirit in which we worship God as our loving heavenly Father. We are invited to joyously participate together in the bounty of his grace and love. It is for this reason that eating and drinking in fellowship, is a sign of God our loving heavenly Father being graciously present among his people.

As we worship in the presence of God, both Muslims and Christians are reminded that the true worship which is acceptable to God is a right attitude.

The fact that Muslims are very concerned about the right forms for worship should not obscure the other fact that a true Muslim should be equally concerned about having a

right attitude of total submission to God in his worship. In Islamic worship, the right ritual and right attitude belong together. The third dimension of Islamic worship, *ihsan*, concentrates on a right attitude. The Qur'an (1:177) says: "It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and West, but righteous is he who believeth in Allah."

3.4 Religious leaders in sacred positions

It would seem that what plays a major factor with regard to sacred leadership positions and responsibilities in the religious communities is these leaders' contribution to the life of a society. The models provided by these leaders in the African cultural context, Christianity and Islam are important and have a lasting impact on the outlook of their followers. In the religious context the word *sacred* is widely accepted to infer personal morality attributable to a place or areas set apart for God. In all three the religious contexts which are the subject of this studies we find certain leaders who occupy what can be called *sacred* positions and who have to perform certain *sacred* duties. These leaders are the subject of our next discussion.

The religious leaders in the context of the African traditional religions, the church and the mosque have generally attained their positions by maintaining certain standards of religious behaviour and personal morality for instance with regard to honesty, compassion integrity, truthfulness, diligence and fairness. The problems of society are identified by these leaders in strict understanding of their calling. They are religious leaders by nature with humanity and spiritual responsibility. They should exhibit a complete religious aversion of dishonesty, laziness and lack of compassion. One would tend to believe that these leaders have a very special perception of and attitude towards the Divine in order to have achieved a position of leadership in sacred institutions We shall now proceed to discuss the religious leaders of the three religions under discussion, namely the African traditional religious leaders, Christian missionaries and the Muslim Daw'ah as examples of these sacred leadersy.

3.4.1 The traditional African religious leader

The attitude that intermediaries are useful is widespread in African societies. Man feels that he cannot or should not approach the Divine alone or directly, and must do so through the mediation of special persons or other beings. The reason for this feeling and practice mainly lies in the social and political life of the different African peoples. For example, in some societies it is the custom for the children to speak to

their fathers through their mothers or older brothers and sisters. In others, the subjects approach their king or chief only indirectly through the mediation of those who are closer to him. Certainly these examples do not apply to many societies, but they illustrate the social and political background which has fostered the origin and development of the custom of using intermediaries in religious life. There are however, occasions when people approach God directly without the use of intermediaries.

3.4.1.1 The most important mediators in the African traditional religion

3.4.1.1.1 Priests

The existence of priests is reported in many societies, including the Abaluyia, Alur, Amba (also priestesses), Ankore (hereditary), Ashanti, Aushi, Bakene, Banyarwanda, Bauyor, Burundi, Basoga, (also priestesses), Bavenda (hereditary), Binawa (hereditary), Burawa, Chiwai, Edo, Ewe, Ga, Ganda, Gisu, Hereru, Igbo, Kipsigis, Kitimi, Kurama, Lango, Lozi, Mekan, Mondari, Rukuba, Sandawe, Shona, Sonjo, (hereditary), Srubu, (hereditary), Tikar, Turu, Bukusu, Warjawa, and Yoruba (Welbourn 1969:16).

In some of these societies, the priests are formally trained and commissioned (ordained). The duties of priests mainly include making sacrifices and offerings, performing private rites and ceremonies, giving advice, performing judicial functions in some societies, helping to search for lost things (in some societies), caring for the temples and shrines where these exist, and, above all, fulfilling their office as religious intermediaries between God and men.

The Ewe believe that their priests are "called" by God. Before someone can become a priest, he is first trained, then initiated and finally cleansed (or "consecrated"). Priestly duties include the performing of daily and weekly rites, the offering of prayers for blessings, for the barren and other needy persons, and the making of libations (Manoukian 1950:1, 46). The Lozi have a supreme priest who occupies a hierarchical position above the other priests and who makes offerings to God in case of national crises. Under him are other priests appointed by the king in council and put in charge of the royal graves. These also make national offerings and sacrifices (Turner 1967:1, 50). The Mekan believe that God communicates with the priests through the rainbow which forms a bridge between them and Him.

The Sonjo priesthood is said to have originated with God's call to a man in a dream, "to perform sacrifices for the Sonjo". After this it became a hereditary office and each of the six villages has its own temples and priests in addition to those found at the headquarters. The priests and their families wear only skin garments, and qualified priests wear a bracelet on their left wrist. The numbers, names and activities of the priests are not divulged to outsiders. Their duties are mainly to perform temple rites, and the priests are said to be the "repositories of mythology and experts on questions of theology (Gray 1963:107, 120).

The priest officiating at a Shona assembly for the purpose of approaching God is not allowed to partake of alcoholic drinks. The religious leader (the Mugwe) of the Meru must observe sexual continence before and after making sacrifices and special prayers (Parrinder 1961:78).

In some societies, the priest also has political duties. Among the Herero the priest is also the chief of the local group. He is regarded as representing God among the people . His duties include the care of the holy fire in the kraal, sacrificing, the maintenance of national (tribal) ceremonies and customs, and the ritual tasting of milk before anybody else may taste or use it. The tasting of milk is regarded as an action which neutralises its holiness, thus making it safe for people to use (Lutting 1933:31). The Mondari priest is also the political head, the rainmaker, and the judge. The people believe that when he is giving judgement, his words are given to him by God (Middleton 1960:70). The same applies among the Rukuba whose priests are also the political heads of their villages. The duties of these priests include interceding with God on behalf of the people, performing the rainmaking ceremonies, and leading the communities in their fertility festivals. Each priest is put on probation for seven years, and in one place this period ranges between thirty-six and forty-two years. If drought, pestilence, or shortage of wives arises during the probation of a priest, he is disqualified and deposed (Gunn 1953:1, 41)

The Butawa political headman also presides as the priest at the religious rites. Similarly, the Tikar political head (for) performs priestly functions on the occasion of the annual sacrifices to God and the departed. The sacrifices are to ensure the fertility of the women and land. There is, however, an elected high priest who is known as "the father of the country" and a high priestess who is known as "the mother of the country". These two assist the head of the country in making major sacrifices at planting time and during the dry period. This is done at the royal cemetery, but there

are altars along the paths at which minor rituals are carried out. Each political subdivision has centres with shrines and stone altars where offerings and sacrifices are made to God (McCulloch 1954:36-7, 47).

In some societies the priests serve both God and the divinities, or only the later. The Ankore hereditary priests only serve the divinity of war, and there are none for God (Roscoe 1966:131-2). The same is true of the Ashanti and Banyoro who have priests only for their divinities (Forde 1954:192-3). The Basaga priests serve both God and the divinities. The Ganda only have a highly developed priesthood for the divinities and some of the temples have up to four priests. The duties of these priests are to receive the people who came to have an interview with the divinities, take offerings, intercept the oracles given through the mediums and maintain the temple areas. The priests are regarded as sacred; they wear bark cloths, nine white goat skins round the waist and a head-dress of a jackal skin. Where the priests are robed for duty, people may neither touch them nor draw near to them (Lugira 1969:32). For the Yoruba. "the priest has always been an important social figure. Virtually nothing is done without the ministration of the priests". He is said to look after the "soul" of the community and to feature prominently in the installation of kings and making of chiefs (Idowu 1962: 129-39).

3.4.1.1.2 Seers, prophets and oracles

Written information on the subject of these specialists as sacred leaders in the African traditional religion is very slight, and the terms tend to be used loosely.

Among the Gikuyu, the seers are ritual elders, supposed to be in direct communication with God. He gives them instructions in dreams, and they decide the time for the agricultural sacrifices (Middleton 1960:1, 68). The Lango are said to receive God's advice through the seers on matters both great and small (Driberg 1923:224). When special needs arise, the Ila go to a "prophet or prophetess," who guides them in performing the necessary ritual and invocations to God (Smith and Dale 1920:208-9). The Turkana diviners (*Emworon*) are said to receive prophetic dreams and to foretell the future (Gulliver and Gulliver 1953:85) or the result of raids among the Pokots, Marakwets and Tugen. The Tswana maintain that formerly they had seers or prophets who foretold droughts, diseases and other major events. They received their revelations either from God or the spirits (Pauw 1960:30). Among the Bukusu the diviners (*Bakimbo*) are said to be predictors of the future and other calamities. A good

example of these was Mutonyi owa Nabukelembe who is said to have correctly foretold the arrival of Europeans and the coming of the cars and trains. In our time Elijah Masinda predicted the 1982 bloodshed during the attempted coup in Kenya. In strong oracles delivered at the bus stand in Kitale town in June 1982 he advised tribesmen to have their boys circumcised early before the usual month of August which was in his view "full" of blood" (Nation Newspapers, Sunday June 7 1982).

The Meru religious leader (the Mugwe) is said to derive his power from God. He is considered "a wise man, a man of God, the Chief, leader and saviour of his own people". It was one such Mugwe who led the Meru from their former land of bondage. They say that "the Mugwe is the one who knows and teaches about God". His calling comes from God, and he becomes God's messenger as well as representing the people's needs, before God. He is like the father of the Meru, "he prays to God for 'this people of mine'. He is regarded as a man of God, he is identified with God." He is also the tutor of young initiates and the guarantor of the society's prosperity (Bernardi 1959:62, 101, 126, 159, 188).

The Ganda mediums or oracles act as the mouthpiece of the divinities. They are both men and women chosen through being possessed by the divinities concerned. A woman medium is regarded as the bride of the divinity and remains chaste all her life (Lugira 1969:33). Among the Yoruba, the Ifa oracle if divination has priests whose training lasts three years and who are also physicians (Fonde 1954:1,29-30).

3.4.1.1.3   Diviners, medicine-men and witches

Diviners are mentioned often in the sources, but no serious or detailed study has been done about them. They are briefly described in E G Parrinder's *West African Religion* (1961) and J S Mbiti's *African religions and philosophy* (1969). We shall take a few examples here. In time of dry season, the Ila go to the diviner to find out why God does not give them rain. The Jie believe that some of their diviners receive revelations from God. The Lugbara believe that their diviners are connected with God in his immanent aspect and that he gives them their mystical power (*tali*). Nearly all their diviners are women; their power is hereditary and God is thought to possess a would-be diviner in her adolescence. She then wanders in the woods for several days, at the end of which she returns home with the power of the divine. On getting married, she becomes a diviner and a shrine is erected to her to which people refer as "the hut of God." The diviners are spoken of as "the children of God", being regarded as "the link

between men and God". Among other things they bring back the dead to the living, and these are thought to help the people live in peace (Middleton 1960:31, 249).

The Turkana believe that the diviner is God's chief representative (*Emworon*). He begins his career by a period of complete retreat from other people, lasting from one day to several months. During this period of withdrawal, he lives in deserted areas. When he returns to society, he begins to have prophetic dreams, "foretells the future, heals the sick, combats witchcraft and sorcery, cures barrenness, purifies or fortifies age-sets (*Enjonok*), predicts successful raids, and induces rain" (Gulliver and Gulliver 1953:85).

Among the Toro, diviners are said to derive their power from God. The Zulu say that when men lost the gift of immortality, God gave them doctors, medicines and diviners – a most worthy consolation! (Callaway 1970:4).

There are just two further points to be noted. Firstly, as the guardian and the operator of the religio-moral system, the diviner becomes the arbiter of change in the religious system of ideas. He flexibly applies it to a variety of real conditions and experiences. As ongoing social and economic changes overtake society, the diviner must continue to show the relevance of the belief system to transformed circumstances and life-style. By and large conservative in outlook, diviners will use the belief system to counter and resist creeping or radical change, but once the transformation has been accepted as inevitable, divining practice will reflect some corresponding trimming or adjusting of religious values, if only by way of a change in emphasis. The point is that this adds another level to the complexity and sensitivity of the divining process.

Secondly, the diviner is more than just an honest broker, or a fixer in the best sense of that term, fusing different types of knowledge, merging different kinds of interest and absorbing new developments. The working utterance is no mere embellishment of what has been transacted in the consultation. It sets a seal upon it by transforming social reality to the form required of it. The diviner's pronouncement expresses and fixes the authorised version of what must really have happened (Shaw 1991:150). It authorises the redefinition of persons, situations and events, providing an objectification of what has transpired.

The function of the diviner is to draw on his/her mystical resources to lead people to the discovery and acknowledgement of the desirable truth, and to stamp that truth with the authenticity of reality so that others may act upon it with confidence.

The diviner's secret knowledge is assumed to be a revelation from the ancestors which in its pure form is unutterable. The revealed knowledge remains silent and unspoken. Though it may be outwardly signified, as in a trance, it is essentially no verbal knowledge. "Trance" has double significance here; as the ancestor possesses the diviner, the diviner possesses what is known to the ancestor. The appropriation of this knowledge places the diviner in an initially commanding position. The situation is full of portent, possibility and expectancy; everything depends on how the diviner employs this unverbalised knowledge.

Medicine men or traditional doctors are generally given bad publicity by foreign writers who simply harp on their preconceived notions which do not match the facts. The medicine-men are the greatest friends of African societies and every community has one or more of them. Their main duties are medical, but in some societies the medicine-men also perform religious functions. We have some examples of the latter practice.

Among the Akamba, the medicine-men determine the nature and form of rites to be performed in times of need, and some of them direct the actual performance of such rites (Middleton 1960:93). The Bena associate the medicine and medical skill of these doctors with God (Culwick & Culwick 1935:99). Culwick and Culwick say that medicine is known as Mulungu, which is also the word for God. Among the Lango it is said that God gives advice through the doctors. The Tswana believe that the professional knowledge of the medicine-men "is a gift of God' (Pauw 1960:29), though some people believe that this special knowledge comes from the spirits. In time of war the Luo medicine-men make prayers and sacrifice to God (Muango 1965).

When twins are born, the Gisu medicine-men sacrifice fowl to the divinities. The Medicine-men of the Hadzapi are reported to sing to the sun, which is associated with God, "at certain times" (Huntingford 1950:III, 134).

Among the Kyiga it is the medicine-men who recommend when offerings are to be made to the spirits (Roscoe1966:46). The Lango diviners, who also fulfil the office of medicine-men, are said to derive their power from God.

Witches and sorcerers are the great enemies of society, performing anti-social deeds, which poison its welfare. Sometimes people have imaginary ideas about witches and innocent women are often suspected of, and even persecuted for, being witches. There are known cases among the Abagussi of Kenya where such suspects have been mobbed and lynched. Sorcerers may or may not use magical means to harm their enemies, but they are perhaps feared more than they deserve. In no single case is there any indication that witches or sorcerers act in an intermediary capacity between God and men. There are, however, a few examples of witches, sorcerers or their powers being linked with God. The Lango say that sorcerers can generate the power of God through certain acts (Hayley 1947:13). The Lugbara associate God's immanent aspects with witches and sorcerers (Middleton 1960:257). The Lunda believe that all things belong to God, including the power of the sorcerers (McCulloch 1954:73). It is also said, among the Barundi that God gives power to the magicians and witches (Haragakiza 1965). The Beno associate the power of wizards with God (Culwick 1935:99).

Magicians belong partly to the category of sorcerers and partly to the category of medicine-men. As far as the rest of society is concerned they use their magic power and knowledge for both good and evil purposes. When they use it for good purposes, they are really diviners, medicine-men or rain makers; and when they employ it for evil purposes, they are witches (*balosi* according to Bukusu) or wizards (*babini*) and sorcerers (*bafumu*). It is doubtful whether "pure" magicians really exist, apart from these two major groups and the category of conjurers. There is, however, magic power, comprising partly a knowledge and manipulation of secrets generally unknown to the public, and partly common sense, deceit and conjuring tricks. The Zulu believe that God loves "certain magicians" whom they call "the shepherds of heaven", and that He influences the weather through them if they are ritually clean (Schapera 1937:263).

3.4.1.1.4 Rainmakers

Rainmakers are another useful and important category of specialist found in many African societies. On the whole they exercise their profession by way of consultation with God, through prayer, sacrifice and trust. Many of them are well-versed in knowledge of the weather, the heavens, the plants and the insects whose habits indicate changes in the weather. In some societies they hold high positions which are often hereditary. Their duties are mainly to make rain, but they may also stop it when

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too much is falling; and in some societies they bless the seeds before planting or the harvest before it is gathered in or used. They may also take part in other religious ceremonies.

The best-known and studied example comes from the Luredu, with their famous "Rain-Queen": she is the political head of the nation, the symbol of its welfare and prosperity. With the help of other experts she not only makes rain for her people, but may stop it from falling on the land of her enemies (Krige 1960).

The Acholi rainmaker approaches God in prayer, and the people believe that God sends rain thereafter (Seligman 1932:122). The Banyoro rainmakers pray to God for help, as do those of the Bari (Taylor 1963:38). The Hadya rainmakers are said to "make rain without supplicating the sky God but not against his will" (Cerulli 1956:120). Among the Katab the rainmakers perform rites involving the living-dead, but prayers are directed to God; and when the rain comes, the rainmakers thank their remotest forefathers who presumably are thought to act as intermediaries (Gunn 1953:78-80). The Lugbara believe that God gives special mystical power (*tali*) to rainmakers and diviners. They say: "Rainmakers know the words of God; that is their work" (Middleton 1960:31, 207). This indicates that rainmakers are thought to be in a special relationship with God, so as to get to "know his words", and get power from Him.

In Kenya a number of rainmakers are said to exist among the Banyore who claim to be the owners of rain or that rain is part of their possession as a group. Among the Nandi, during a severe drought, a public ceremony for making rain is held at which a black sheep is pushed into the river. When it comes out, the old men pray to God for rain (Huntingford 1953:38). Among the Banyore, rainmakers come from one clan – the Abastirasti. Among the Babukusu rainmakers are known to have the secrets of the arrival of rain. When the drought lasts longer than usual, the Bakimba are appeased by the slaughter of cattle, but if it fails to pour, they are rounded up and beaten to enable them forcibly to allow rain to pour. There are also rainmakers among the Akamba, Elgeyo, Gisu, Kamasuya, Teso, Luo and others Kenyan ethnic groups.

We may conclude that African peoples do not regard either animals or inanimate objects as intermediaries between God and men. They seem to have a sufficient number of other intermediaries in the persons of the priests, rainmakers, elders, diviners medicine-men and the living dead. These, as expounded above, are the ones who can approach and intercede between man and the Divine. They represent

the "Holy" in the sacred shrines and places of the African religious scene. It is because of God's sacredness, his transcendence, his power and remoteness that there is need for one or more intermediaries. This serves as an indication that Africans regards God as great and awesome, necessitating the service of intermediaries and spirits who fulfil a similar function.

In summary we can observe that these are the religious leaders/specialists in African societies. They represent the African peoples' attitude towards the Divine, depicting the presence of the Supreme Being in their communities. Our list and discussion of these specialists are not exhaustive. For example, there are many people such as family and ritual elders, persons such as twins, hunchbacks and mental patients who, by virtue of biological and environmental circumstances, are treated and regarded with religious awe and respect. These also play their role as unofficial "specialists", partly by what they actually do and partly by virtue of the religious which their communities may ascribe to them. They are part of the divine milieu of African societies.

"Specialists" are in effect the repositories of knowledge, practice and, symbolically, of the religious life and attitude towards the Divine of their communities. They are the ones who make the history of African traditional societies both sacred and religious. "Specialists" are the symbolic points of contact between the historical and spiritual worlds. They embody the continuity and essence of African religious life and attitude towards the Divine. These are the men, women and children whose sacred presence in society makes their life and that of their communities a profoundly religious experience. Every village is within reach of one or more such "specialists" They are the concrete symbols and epitome of man's participation in and experience of the religious universe. Without them African societies would lose sight of and contact with this religious phenomenon. African religiosity demands and appreciates their presence in every community and for that reason one "specialist" may be expected to function in more than one capacity.

3.4.2   The Christian missionary in Africa

As a result of the divine calling, mission, as exemplified by the modern missionary movement, has become an integral part of the life of the church, throughout the world. The orthodox tradition of the church, however, does not view and practise mission in the same style as other traditions of the church. Today mission is the meeting point of reference for the churches that send missionaries. This is so because underlying their

objective in sending them is a common belief in the Divine Commission. It is also a point of reference for the churches which have been established or those churches which receive missionaries. We cannot detach this obedience to the divine calling or mission from the universal church today. Thousands of books and articles have been and continue to be published on mission, and at the theological seminaries and faculties of Europe and America Missiology is included as a major discipline of study in response to the divine calling. This is also the case at South African and Australian universities. Church histories in Africa, Asia and the Pacific are often written as histories of foreign missionary activities. This has been done without recognising that the divine calling of God also works innately in the local people of the place of missionary work. The account has often been one-sided, and did not give sufficient attention to the activities of the Divine or credit to the indigenous inhabitants of the missionary field.

Our chief concern in this subsection is to examine the activities of the Christian missionary in Africa in response to the Divine Commission. We intend to explore what African theology is saying or should say as regards the divine involvement in mission on the continent from the African perspective. Their stand with regard to mission outreach is important since in a sense it represents the response of the whole church to the divine call (Matthew 28:19).

When the word "mission" in the singular is used here, it refers to the mystery and purpose of God for the wholeness of creation in general and humanity in particular, which he has communicated in the Bible and most intensely in Jesus Christ our Lord.

When the word *missions* is used in plural, it refers to organisations and societies of foreign missionaries sent from Europe and America to Africa. They are to be enumerated here. Our first observation is one of disappointment. Up to the present virtually nothing has been published by African theologians on the mission of the church in Africa. What we have in plenty is the opinion of Africans about "foreign missions" on the African continent. This means that we have a considerable number of books and articles about the work of foreign missionaries, including their evangelism, educational, medical and welfare services. But African theology as such is virtually silent on the active participation in mission by and from the church which is rooted in Africa.

Let us look at the available literature. In a book compiled by Gerald H Anderson, *Bibliography of the theology of missions in the twentieth century* (1960) only two of its over 1 000 entries are by Africans; of the more than 600 authors who made contributions, only two are Africans (Anderson & Ferrier 1960: 404-407). And even these two African entries address themselves largely to missions from overseas countries to Africa. In the more recent bibliographical list by Patrick E Ofori, *Christianity in tropical Africa* (in Nendeln 1977), only about 10 titles by Africans out of 2 859 items speak in a general way about the mission of the Church in Africa. But even these are nearly all contributions to the book *God's Mission to Ghana* (Accra 1974). To the researcher's knowledge this is almost the only book written specifically on the question of the mission of the Church in Africa. It is a set of miscellaneous essays by several Ghanaian Christians rather that a single coherent presentation of mission by one author. Another book, *Contemporary missiology: an introduction* (Verkuyl 1978 [English translation of the Dutch original published by Kampen in 1975]) does not cite a single publication by African theologians on the theme of missiology, even though it cites several African theologians dealing with other themes or concerns. Similarly, the book *Missions Theologie* by Horst Buerke (1979) mentions several African theologians in dealing with other themes, but offers nothing concrete on missiology seen from the viewpoint of the Church in Africa.

The fact that there is little or no literature pertaining to the perspective of the Church in Africa cited in these books is not a reflection on their compilers. Instead, it is a severe judgement on African theology that it has almost completely neglected the question of mission.

As just noted, however, there is a great deal which is actually being said by African Christians about foreign missions: Most of these writings deal with the history of missions in Africa. Others deal with the response of African peoples to foreign missions in terms of conversion, reaction to education and medical work, as well as more negative refusals to accommodate foreign missions. Another concern focuses on the critique of missions by Africans (Parratt 1995), both in the church as well as outside the church. In this respect the most concrete collection of views is the book by Harris W Mobley, *The Ghanaian's image of the missionary* (1970), but there are many other critical references to foreign missionaries in African theological and secular writings (Ochieng 1992). These criticisms are not all negative; they are evaluative,

pointing out the weaknesses of the missionaries and of the missionary movement in Africa as well as giving credit to the work done by foreign missions (Fowler 1994:21).

Another area of attention is the relations between foreign missions and African culture, religions and background. In this connection the relation between the local church and foreign missions responsible for the local church also deserves attention. Sometimes, tension develops in these relations resulting in the founding of indigenous churches, these being independent of, or having branched off from the ones founded by overseas mission societies and churches. As more studies are conducted on the topic of indigenous churches, these studies point fingers at foreign missions as being directly or indirectly responsible for the formation of individual indigenous churches or the collective indigenous church movement.

Another issue is the moratorium concern which was aired very much during and after the Fourth Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches in Lusaka in 1974. The roots of this controversy go back much further than that occasion. As early as 1964, an American, James A Scherer, published a book on this issue, title *Missionary, go home! A reappraisal of the Christian world mission* (1964). In this book the author discusses what he calls "an attitude frequently stated or implied" that missionaries should go home. He takes seriously the criticisms and objections of those who find fault with certain activities traditionally associated with the Christian world mission. The author believes that many criticisms of the missionary enterprise are justified. In 1972 Kefa Sempangi circulated a privately published booklet, *Missionary days are over* (1972), saying many of the things which surfaced under the moratorium controversy later. Elliot Kendall in *The end of an era: Africa and the missionary* (1978) supports the moratorium and sees the time of foreign missions as being already over, and yet he points out that there are more foreign missionaries in Africa today (numbering about 57 850, not counting family members, according to the World Christian Encyclopaedia) than at any other time in the history of missions in Africa.

The history of foreign missions, their relationship with local churches, their encounter with African culture and religion, these and other issues are related to the basic question about missions. However, they are all treated in terms of foreign missions. But they are basically issues arising from the execution of mission by churches with centres in Europe and America. They are not handled as mission issues of the churches centred in Africa.

Why has African theology said so little about mission?

To this question several answers can be given. We list only a few:

(a) Perhaps African Christians have become so much the end product of other people's missionary work from overseas that they do not know how to be anything else. They do not know how to look at themselves as sources and not products of mission. They do not cultivate their Christian personality in terms of being missionising agents, but only as missionised nests. We talk much about what foreign missionaries have done, the good they have achieved and the evil they have wrought, the sacrifices they have made and the disruptions they have inflicted upon our culture, the histories of their work, and the churches they have founded; the structures they have introduced and the divisions they have imported. We look at mission as if we were only spectators and recipients. We seem to believe that mission was performed only on us. It seems as if only others had a right to do mission, to think mission, to theologise mission while we sit and watch on the edges telling them what wrong they have done and what good they ought to have done (Kruger 1995:8-15).

(b) It may also be that foreign missions have introduced an incomplete idea of mission, giving the impression that mission is a monopoly and privilege only of the churches of Europe, America, Australia and the whites of South Africa. Have foreign missions really shared honestly the concept of God's mission with the church in Africa? Have African Christians been muted in the matter of the mission of the church, while they have been sensitised about missions from overseas?

(c) There is only one model of mission known in the church in Africa and that is the mission which has come from overseas. African Christians cannot afford to copy or follow that model, since they neither have the money, nor the power, nor the personnel, nor the traditions, nor the political backing, nor even the guilt that has gone with this one model of mission. Yet this model has dominated the scene so exclusively that the church in Africa has not had the freedom to think out, to develop, to evolve and to practice other models of mission. This is a serious and tragic hiatus in African theology and the African church.

(d) The number of 57 850 foreign missionaries in Africa in the 20th century has muted African voices on mission and blinded the Church for the vision of its own

engagement in mission. All of us were born in the presence of foreign missions: we were brought up and we matured in the same presence. We do not know anything else about mission. We have had no role or participation in the nature, arrival and activities of these foreign missions which have largely created us to become what we are as individuals Christians and as the Church in Africa.

We have looked at the situation of African theology and the African church in response to the Divine Command (missions). We have seen that. apart from a very few references, African theology has not addressed itself to the Divine Command to reach out to the unbelievers. This implies also that the Church in Africa has not taken up mission as its own divine calling. Of course both the church and African theology have said much about foreign missions working in Africa. The fact is that mission is not be seen from within, as arising out of, and moving from the church which is centred in Africa. Whether or not foreign missions and missionaries continue to exist and function in Africa is immaterial as far as this issue is concerned. The crucial issues for the church in Africa are to understand mission, to engage in mission, to become the activator of mission, to think mission, to be in the full-time business of mission (even if it continues to be at the receiving end of foreign missions). At this juncture and in the future the Christian missionary in Africa should have his origin in the African Church itself with a universal divine calling of Christian brotherhood (Van der Walt 1994:11).

3.5   The Muslim *da'wah* in Africa

Allah ommanded the Muslim: "Call men into the path of your Lord by wisdom and goodly counsel" (Gilchrist 1989:155-6). "Present the cause to them through argument yet more sound" (Qur'an 16:125). *Da'wah* is the fulfilment of this commandment "to call men unto the path of Allah". Besides it is the effort by the Muslim to enable other men to share and benefit from the supreme vision, the religious truth, which he has appropriated. In this respect it is rationally necessary, for truth wants to be known. It exerts pressure on the knower to share his vision with his peers (Nazir-Ali 1987:128). Since religious truth is not only theoretical, but also axialogical and practical, the man of religion is doubly urged to take his discovery to other men. His piety, his virtue and charity impose upon him the obligation to make common the good which has befallen him.

This opening discussion brings us to the investigation of the *da'wah* methodology which will be dealt with under the following subheadings: *Da'wah* is not coercive;

Da'wah is not a psychotropic induction; *Da'wah* is directed to Muslims as well as non-Muslims; *Da'wah* is rational intellection; *Da'wah* is rationally necessary; *Da'wah* is anamnesis. Lastly we shall take a look at the content of the *Da'wah* (Qur'an 2:30; 6:165; 10:14,73; 35:39; 7:68,73; 27:62).

3.5.1   *Da'wah* is not coercive.

"Calling" is certainly not coercing. Allah commanded "No coercion in religion (2.256)". It is an invitation the objective of which can be fulfilled only with the free consent of the called. Since the objective is an exercise by the called of his own judgement that Allah is his Creator, Master, Lord and Judge, a forced judgement is a contradiction in *adjecto* and hence punishable with *jahannam*. Humanistic ethic regards coerced *da'wah* as a grave violation of the human person, second only to homicide, if not equal to it. That is why the Holy Qur'an (16:125) specified the means of persuasion to be used. "Argue the cause with them (the non-Muslims) with the more comely arguments" If they are not convinced, they must be left alone (5.108; 3:176-177; 47:32). Certainly, the Muslim is to try again and never give up on the possibility that God may guide his fellow-man to the truth. The example of his own life, his commitment to the values he professes, his engagement, constitute this final argument. If the non-Muslim is still not convinced, the Muslim is to rest his case with God. The Prophet himself allowed those Christian who were not convinced by his own presentation of Islam to keep their faith and return home in dignity (Haeri 1997:45-52).

From this it follows that the societal order desired by Islam is one where men are free to present and argue their religious causes with one another. It is a kind of academic seminar on a large scale where he who knows better is free to tell and to convince, and the others are free to listen and be convinced. Islam puts its trust in man's rational power to discriminate between the true and the false. "Truth is now manifest from error. Whoever believes (i.e. accept the truth) does so for his own good. Whoever does not believe (i.e. does not accept the truth) does so to his own peril" (Qu'ran 39:41).

Islamic *da'wah* is therefore an invitation to think, to debate and argue. It cannot be met with indifference except by the cynic, nor with rejection except by the fool or the malevolent. If it is met by silencing force, then that force must be met by superior force. The right to think is innate and belongs to all men. No man may pre-emptively

deny it to any other human being. Islamic *da'wah* operates only under these principles. It is the *da'wah* to all nations, including Africa (Nigosian 1987).

The principle that Islamic *da'wah* is non-coercive is based upon the Qur'an's dramatisation of the justification for the creation of man. The Qur'an represents God as addressing the angels in *SURAT AL-BAQARAH*, verse 30 with the words. "Lo! I am about to place a *KHALIFAH* (vice-regent) on earth. The angels replied: Will You place therein one who will do harm and will shed blood, while we sing Your praise and sanctify You! He said: Surely I know that which you know not." In another verse of the Qur'an *SURAT AL AHZAB*, 72, we read: "Lo! We offered our trust to heaven and earth. They shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. But man assumed it." Both these statements are understood by Muslims as defining the purpose of man's existence, namely that he is God's *KHALIFAH*, carrier of the responsibility entrusted to him for the fulfilment of the divine will. That will is already fulfilled in part within nature as natural law, but is not yet fulfilled by man as moral law. This constitutes man's distinction from all other creatures. Only he acts freely and this enables himself to actualise the moral part of the divine will. His essence is his capacity for responsible moral action. Coercion is a violation of this freedom and responsibility, and is utterly inconsistent with man's reaction to the divine will.

3.5.2 *Da'wah* is not a psychotropic induction.

It follows from the nature of judgement that *da'wah* cannot have as its objective anything but a conscientious acquiescence to its contents on the part of the called. This means that if the consciousness of the called is any way vitiated by any of the common faults or defects of consciousness the *da'wah* is itself equally vitiated (Daniel 1993:13). Thus a *da'wah* which is fulfilled through, or whose fulfilment involves in any way. a lapse of consciousness, a lapse of forgetfulness, a lapse in ta'aqqul or the intellectual binding of ideas and facts so as to make a cohesive and consistent whole, or a transport of emotion and enthusiasm, or a sort of "trip", is not Islamic *da'wah* (Barelvi 1983). *Da'wah*, is therefore not the work of magic, of illusion, of excitement, of any kind of psychotropic. In such work the subject is not in control of his power of judgement and hence his judgement cannot be properly said to be his "personal free judgement".

The presence of God, who is, as Ultimate Reality, Creator and Lord of the Universe, Judge and Master of all men, is a fact which can indeed enter common

consciousness. Indeed, Islam holds that were consciousness to be tampered with, the object perceived would not be God, but something else. Under the tremendous impact of revelation itself, the Prophet's consciousness neither lapsed nor became vague as in a mystical experience, but continued to function normally and was even enhanced in its clarity and perception. That is why Islamic law does not recognise the conversion to Islam of the minor child; for his consciousness is presumed immature until he comes of age.

The principle that *da'wah* has nothing to do with psychotropic induction preserves the freedom and consciousness of choice which cannot be affirmed in case of dilation of consciousness by chemical or mystifying means. It protects the *da'wah* from being conducted for pleasure, happiness, freedom from care, *eudaemonia* – indeed, for anything but the sake of Allah. Any ulterior motive would vitiate it in both the giver and the recipient. On the other hand, unconscious conversion of any person who has been tricked into entering Islam is evil; more evil, of course, is the trickster.

3.5.3   Da'wah is directed to Muslims as well as non-Muslims.

It follows from the divine commandment that *da'wah* must be the end product of a critical intellectual process. Its content cannot be the only content known or the only content presented. There is however no judgement without consideration of alternatives, without comparison and contrast, without test of inner consistency, of general consistency with all other knowledge, without tests of correspondence with reality. It is this aspect of *da'wah* that earns for the called who responds affirmatively to its content the grace of *hikma* or wisdom. Allah's described his prophets and saints as "men of hikmah" precisely because their Islam was a learned thing, not a narrow-minded addition to a single track of thought, certainly not a "pre-judgement". That is why *da'wah* in Islam has never been thought of as exclusively addressed to the non-Muslims. It is as much intended for the benefit for Muslims as of non-Muslims (Haeri 1997).

Besides stemming from the fact of all men's equal creatureliness in the sight of God, this universality of *da'wah* rests on the identity of imperative arising out of the conversion to Islam. All men stand under the obligation to actualise the divine pattern in space and time. The task is never complete for any individual. The Muslim is supposedly the person who, having accepted the burden, has set himself on the road of actualisation. The non-Muslim still has to accept the charge. Hence, *da'wah* is

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necessarily addressed to both, to the Muslim to press forward toward actualisation and to the non-Muslim to join the ranks of those who make the pursuit of God's pattern supreme.

The directing of *da'wah* to Muslim as much as non-Muslim is indicative of the fact that, unlike Christianity, Islamicity is never a *fait accompli*, Islamicity is a process. It grows, and it is sometimes reduced. There is no time at which the Muslim may carry his title to paradise, as it were, in his pocket. Instead of "salvation", the Muslim is to achieve felicity through unceasing effort.

3.5.4   Da'wah is rational intellection.

Since *da'wah* is a critical process of intellection, it is its nature never to be dogmatic, never to stand by its contents as if by its own authority, or that of its mouthpiece, or that of its tradition. The fact that it is critical means that it should always remain open to new forms, in cognisance of the new discoveries of human science and of the new needs of the human situation. In making the *da'wah*, the *daiyah* labours, not as the ambassador of an authoritarian system, but as a co-thinker who is co-operating with the *Madu* (the called) in the understanding and appreciation of Allah's double revelation. This revelation is seen in creation and comes to a person through his prophets.

From the standpoint of the *madu*, his process in intellection should never stop. His *Iman* should be dynamic and always growing in intensity, clarity of vision and comprehensiveness. Moreover, conversion to Islam is not a sacrament which, once it has taken place, becomes an eternal *fait accompli*. Islam knows of no "justification by faith", certainly of no "justification" in the sense of *justi facti*. If lethargic and stagnant, *Iman* degenerates into narrow-mindedness and gradually impoverishes its subjects (Al-Bakri 1913:178). On the other hand, its dynamism, its openness to new knowledge, new evidence and new life situations, new data, problems, as well as creative solutions which may or may not be derived from the tradition, makes it a source of enrichment for the subject. Fortunate is he whose *Iman* increases in "*yaqin-ness*" (certitude) with every new day. As rational intellection, *da'wah* shows that in Islam faith has to do with knowledge and conviction, whereas in Christianity it is, as Pascal found out, a blinder wager. The Arabic word *Iman* does not mean "faith" as Christians use the tern. Rather, it means "conviction". It does not involve the function of a sacrament. There is no *ex opere operata* principle in Islam.

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3.5.5 Da'wah is rationally necessary.

Islamic *da'wah* is therefore the presentation of rational, i.e. critical truth. It is not the proclamation of an event, or even of a truth (idea), but the presentation, for critical assessment of its truth value, of a proposition, a *factum*, which has theoretical (metaphysical) and practical (ethical) relevance for man. As to the recalcitrant will, Islam recognises it for what it is, namely recalcitrant and diligent, and leaves the subject of that will to himself until God guides him to the truth. It respects his will and his judgement and, indeed, it extends to him its protection and *pax islamica*. But it asks him to respond equally with peace and not to interfere with his neighbour's right to listen and be convinced. Moreover, the Muslim of history always presented his case in the open, never entered or practised his Islam in secret. His *da'wah* preceded his entry onto any international or interreligious scene (Octave 1964:123-24). In consequence he interpreted the killing of the *da'iyah*, the silencing of his *da'wah*, as a hostile act, a rejection of the peaceful call to reason and argument, and not merely as the opposition of a recalcitrant will. That is also why, once his call was answered not with conversion but merely with "yea, I will think," the Muslim of history spared absolutely nothing in the effort to present his argument in such a way as to make it convincing; above all, by embodying it in its universality, justice and brotherhood (Haeri 1997).

That *da'wah* is rationally necessary is implied by the fact that in presenting its case, Islam presents it as natural or rational truth. "Rational" here means "critical". Men differ in their use of reason, but there would be no point to our dialogue if we did not assume the truth to be knowable, that is, unless we believed it possible to arrive at principles which overact on differences. Therefore, the standpoint of Islam is not an "act of faith", but one of "conviction". It is one of knowledge, of trust in the human power to know.

3.5.6 Da'wah is anamnesis.

In commanding the Muslim to call men to the path of Allah, the Prophet did not ask him to call men to anything new, to something which is foreign, or unknown to them. Islam is *din al-fitrah* (*religio naturalis*) which is by nature already present in man in its fullness. It is innate, as it were, a natural constituent of humanity (Delafosse and Hondas 1964:314). The man who is not *homo religiosus* and *homo Islamicus*, is not a man. This is Allah's branding of his creation, namely that He has endowed all men, as

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his creatures, with a *sensus numinus*, a *fitrah*, with which to recognise Him as Allah (God), Transcendent Creator, Ultimate Master, and One. It is history which confirms this natural faculty with its primeval perceptions and intellections, cultivates and enriches it or warps it and diverts it from its natural goal.

Da'wah is the calling of man to return to himself, to what is innate in him, to "objective" or "phenomenological" (i.e with suspension of the indoctrination and inculteration of history) re-examination of facts which are already given, and thus within him. It is the nearest thing to Platonic anamnesis without the absurdity of reincarnation or transmigration of souls. As such the claims of *da'wah* are necessarily moderate. For the *da'iyah* is to do no more than a "midwife", to stir the intellect of the *madu* to rediscover what he already knows, the innate knowledge which God has implanted in him at birth (Hiskett 1973:42-46).

As anamnesis, *da'wah* is based upon the Islamic assertion that primeval religion is found in every man (*din al-fitrah*), and that all he needs is to be reminded of it. The function of the prophets is to remind people of what is already in them. Christianity has approached this position in the literature of the Apostles.

3.5.7   Da'wah is ecumenical *par excellence.*

Islam's discovery of *din al-fitrah* and its vision of it as the base of all historical religion is a breakthrough of tremendous importance in interreligious relations. All religious traditions are *de jure*, for they have all issued from and are based upon a common source, the religion of God which He implanted equally in all men, upon *din al-fitrah*. The problem is to find out how far the religious traditions of African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam agree with *din-al-fitrah*, the original and first religion; to trace the historical development of religions and determine precisely how and when where each followed and fulfilled or transcended and deviated from, *din al-fitrah*.

Holy writ as well as other religious texts must be examined in order to discover what change has befallen them, or has been reflected in them in history. Islam's breakthrough is thus the first call to religious scholarship to critically analyse religious texts, of test the claim of such texts to revelation status. It is the first call to the discipline of "history of religions", because it was the first to assume that all religions have a history, that each religion has undergone a development (Hiskett 1962: 575-596).

Islam does not claim for itself therefore the status of novelty, but of a fact and dispensation at least as old as creation. The religious life of man, with all its variety across the ages is rehabilitated under this view, not as a series of vagaries, but as attempts at true religion.

Islamic *da'wah* begins by reaffirming this ultimate base as genuine and true. It seeks to complete the critical task of sifting the wheat from the chaff in the accumulated traditions. One is not impressed by the claim of latter-day ecumenists, advocates of interreligious dialogue, tolerance and co-existence, who assert the ultimacy of any religious system because it is religious. For such a claim amounts to the absolutising of every religion's propositions, which is nothing short of cultural relativism. Indeed, such ecumenism is non-representative of the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam, which claim that what they propose is the truth, and not merely lay a claim to the truth among many claims. And it is rationally inconsequential because it counsels the juxtaposition in consciousness of contrary claims to the truth without the demand for a solution of their contradiction. By avoiding all these pitfalls and shortcomings, Islamic *da'wah* is ecumenical (Blyden 1967:234).

Da'wah is ecumenical *par excellence* because it regards any kind of intercourse between the Muslim and the non-Muslim as a domestic relationship between kin. The Muslim comes to the non-Muslim and says: "We are one; we are one family under Allah, and Allah has given you the truth not only inside yourself but inside your religious tradition which is *de jure* because its source is in God." The task of dialogue, or mission, is thus transformed into one of sifting the history of the religion in question. *Da'wah* thus becomes as ecumenical co-operative critique of the other religion rather than its invasion by a new truth.

3.5.8   The content of the *da'wah* content and the implication of *tawhid*

Islam's view of other faiths flows from the essence of its religious experience. This essence is critically knowable. It is not the subject of "paradox", nor of "continuing revelation", nor the object of construction or reconstruction by Muslims. It is crystallised in the Holy Qur'an for all men to read. It is as clearly comprehensible to the man of today as it was to the men of Arabia in the Prophet's day (AD 570-632) because the categories of grammar, lexicography, syntax and redaction of the Qur'anic text and those of Arabic consciousness embedded in the Arabic language have not changed through the centuries. According to Muslims this phenomenon is

unique; for Arabic is the only language which remained the same for nearly two millennia; for Muslims this essence has been on every lip and in every mind, every hour of every day.

The essence of Islam is *tawhid* or the witnessing that there is no god but Allah. Brief as it is, this witness packs into itself six principles which constitute the whole essence and ultimate foundation of the religion (Haeri 1997:37-38).

First, that there is no god but Allah means that reality is dual, consisting of a natural realm, the realm of creation, and a transcendent realm, the Creator. This principle distinguishes Islam from Trinitarian Christianity where the dualism of Creator and creature is maintained but where it is combined with a divine immanentism in human nature in justification of the incarnation. *Tawhid* requires that neither nature be apotheosised nor transcendent God be objectified, the two realities ever remaining ontologically disparate.

Secondly, *tawhid* means that God is related to what is not God as its God, that is, as its Creator or Ultimate Cause, its Master or Ultimate End. *Tawhid* therefore asserts that Creator and creature are relevant to each other regardless of their ontological disparity which is nor affected by the relation. The transcendent Creator, being Cause and final End and of nature creative is the Ultimate Master whose will is the religious and moral imperative. The divine will is commandment and law, the "ought" of all that is, knowable by the direct means of revelation or the indirect means of rational and/or empirical analysis of what is. Without a knowable content, the divine will would not be normative or imperative and, hence, would not be the final end of the natural. For if the transcendent Creator is not the final end of his own creature, creation must not be the purpose event consonant with divine nature, but a meaningless happening to Him – a threat to his own ultimacy and transcendence.

Thirdly, *tawhid* means that man is capable of action. Creation is malleable or capable of receiving man's action. Human action on malleable nature and resulting in a transformed creation is the purpose of religion. Contrary to the claims of other religions, nature is neither fallen or evil or a sort of *Untergang* of the absolute, nor is the absolute an apotheosis of it. Both are real, and both are good, the Creator being the *summum bonum* and the creature being intrinsically good and potentially better as it is transformed by human action into the pattern the Creator has willed for it.

Fourthly, *tawhid* means that man, alone among all creatures, is capable of action as well as free to act or not to act.

Fifthly, *tawhid* means the commitment of man to enter into the nexus of nature and history, there to actualise the divine will. It understands that will as pro-world and pro-life and, hence, it mobilises all human energies in the service of culture and civilisation. Indeed it is of its essence a civilising force. In consequence, Islamic *da'wah* is not based upon a condemnation of the world. It does not justify itself as a call to man to relieve himself from the predicament of an existence which it regards as suffering and misery. Its urgency is not an assumed "need for salvation" or compassion and deliverance from anything. In this, as in the preceding aspects, Islamic *da'wah* differs from the mission of Christianity. Islam holds man not to be in need of any salvation. Instead of assuming him to be religiously and ethically fallen, Islamic *da'wah* acclaims him as the Khalifah of Allah, perfect in form and endowed with all that is necessary to fulfil the divine will, indeed, even loaded with the grace of revelation! "Salvation" is hence not in the vocabulary of Islam. *Falah*, or the positive achievement in space and time of the divine will is the Islamic counterpart of Christian "deliverance" and "redemption".

The Islamic *da'wah* does not, therefore, call man to a phantasmagoric second or other kingdom which is an alternative to this one, but rather to assume his natural birthright, his place as the maker of history, as the remoulder and refashioner of creation. Equally, his joys and pleasures are all his to enjoy, his life is his to live and his will is his to exercise, since the content of the divine will is not "out-of-this-world", but "of-it". World denial and life-abnegation, asceticism and monasticism, isolationism and individualism, subjectivism and relativism are not virtues in Islam but *datal* (misguidance). Islam stands squarely within Mesopotamian religious tradition where religion is civilisation and civilisation is religion.

Finally, *tawhid* restores to man a dignity which some religions have denied by their representation of him as "fallen", as existentially miserable. By calling him to exercise his God-given prerogatives, Islamic *da'wah* rehabilitates him and re-establishes him and re-establishes his sanity, innocence and dignity. His moral vocation is the road to his *falah*. Certainly the Muslim is called to a new theocentrism; but it is one in which man's cosmic dignity is applauded by Allah and his angels. Islam understands itself as man's assumption of his cosmic role as the one for whose sake creation was

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created. He is its innocent, perfect and moral master; and every part of it is his to have and enjoy. He is called to obey, i.e. to fulfil the will of Allah, but this fulfilment is in and of space and time precisely because Allah is the source of space and time and the moral law.

Man, as Islam defines him, is not an object of salvation, but its subject. Through his agency alone the moral part, which is the higher part of the will of God, enters, and is fulfilled in, creation. In a sense, therefore man is God's partner, but a partner worthy of God because he is trustworthy as his Khalifa, not because he is pitifully helpless and needs to be "saved".

3.6   Conclusion

African traditional religion strives to make the African communities live according to the ancestral requirements, to respect their sacred leaders and perform traditional sacrifices as required. They ought not offend other human beings, as this is, in essence, a violation of the ethos of the divine standards set by every society. Both Muslims and Christians strive to proclaim "good news" to the world, as commanded by God and exemplified by their respective prophets. The two communities take service as a fundamental duty to humanity, and especially to the community of faith. This duty is performed as a demonstration of a fervent religious attitude towards the Divine in the lives of both Muslims and Christians.

The African traditional religion is not missionary in nature. The religion confines itself to specific ethnic groups or , as in the case of Kenya, clans. Christianity and Muslims organise their missions differently as we have seen in the discussions. Islam, which has no ordained hierarchy of priesthood or organised missionary orders like Christianity, has been propagated and spread mostly by committed Muslim individuals who had only limited means of livelihood, and though visible material structures such as hospitals, roads or conference centres were conspicuously lacking, especially in areas where Muslims were in the minority. Although Muslims stress preaching, this does not mean that they are concerned about life in the hereafter. Islam, as a complete way of life, is naturally as much concerned about life as about the life after death. Work and service is a duty enjoined by God and is part of Muslim attitude towards the Divine, Allah.

Christians believe that they have a witness to proclaim the Gospel to their fellow Africans on the continent as evidenced in the discussions. In their relationships with each other both Christians and Muslims need to recognise that mission is at the heart of their faith. When Muslims live in countries which are predominantly Christian, the church needs to encourage freedom for Muslims to conduct their *da'wah* and for Christians to convert to Islam if they decide to do so. Freedom for mission and conversion is a basic God-given right. Similarly, whenever Christians are in minority in a land which is predominantly Muslim, the right of the Christians to witness freely concerning their faith should be assured by the Muslim majority. And Muslims should be free to become Christians if they so choose. A Christian community which cannot give free and open witness to its faith experiences great pain, for at the centre of Christian faith is the compulsion and command of God to be a witness. Because human freedom is a basic God-given right, people should have the right to accept the witness which they hear, whether it be a Muslim witness or a Christian witness or the witness of African traditional religion though the latter is merely transmitted or inherited from one generation to another within a community.

Christians also appreciate that ideally *jihad* in Islam is for self protection, and not for aggression. If, however, self-protection is applied in such a manner as to prevent the Christian church from being faithful to its witness in the world, this is exceedingly painful. Authentic self-protection should also include the willingness to hear the witness of those whom the Qur'an (5:82) recognises as being "closest in affection" to the Muslims.

Like the Muslim *Hadith*, the Bible also affirms that Jesus, the Messiah, will return at the end of history. The Bible explains in considerable detail the meaning of the second coming of the Messiah. It would be very good for Muslims and Christians to explore together the meaning and significance of the Divine as the basis of the anticipated coming of the Messiah at the end of history. This will help to alleviate the present animosity between these communities.

CHAPTER 4

MONOTHEISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIVINE

The word *monotheism* has its origin in the Greek language and is simply translated as "the belief in one God" – the belief in one (and only one) personal, all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving God, who is the Creator and Lord of everyone and everything and yet exists distinct from and beyond the whole universe. In her formative stages Israel may have worshipped only one God, without necessarily denying the existence of (lesser) heathen-deities. Israel's monotheism clearly entailed rejecting the reality of any other gods (Is. 41:21-24; 43:10-13; 44:8). The New Testament revelation that there is one God existing in three persons is not opposed to the genuine monotheism. Judaism and Islam, however, reject belief in the Trinity as incompatible with their monotheistic faith. In the field of comparative religion some have argued either that monotheism evolved from an earlier polytheism (belief in many gods) or that a primitive, pure monotheism often lapsed into later polytheism.

In the following subsections we are going to explore the concept of monotheism which is addressed in the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam, though differently. This investigation should lead us to the discovery of an important basis for dialogue in our study. As we shall see the concept as articulated in African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam forms a basis or common ground on which religious coexistence can be developed – and hence a dialogue. This discussion will reveal that monotheism is a view of the Divine which is common to the three religions which are the subject of our study as we focus on their presence in Africa.

4.1   African monotheism

According to African peoples man lives in a religious universe so that natural phenomena and objects are ultimately associated with God (Mbiti 1969: 8-13). This does not mean that the natural phenomena and objects are also taken to be God. These things not only originate from Him, but also bear witness to Him. The understanding of God in the African sense is highly and strongly coloured by the universe of which man is himself part. Man sees in the universe not only the imprint but the reflection of God in his oneness. Whether that image is marred or clearly focused and defined, it is nevertheless an image of God, the Creator. This is the only

image known in traditional African societies. The discussion of the concept of monotheism as seen from the African perspective requires that God is the absolute controller of the universe. This is the focal point which brings the fact of the reality and uniqueness of God in the African context and from the African perspective home to us. In a way the fact of God's control of the universe embraces all that is understood and held as real about God by Africans as already discussed above, and also that God is seen to be unique by Africans. Those two points, viz. the reality of God and the uniqueness of God, clearly demonstrate why in this study we take the stand that Africans were monotheists and yet did not deny the existence of other deities.

We shall now proceed to look specifically at the African scene. As we have already observed, African traditional religion cannot be described as polytheistic. Its appropriate description is monotheistic, however modified this may be. This modification is, however, inevitable because of the presence of other divine beings within the structure of the religion. But 'beings' in this case can only be spelt with the initial small letter "b" even as 'powers', when they are described, can only be spelt with the initial small letter "p"; this is because, in fact, they have no absolute existence and the African world is under a unitary theocratic government.

The question of the relationship between Deity and the divinities defines the place of the latter within the whole system.

First, from the point of view of the theology of African traditional religion, it will not be correct to say that the divinities were created. It will be correct to say that they were brought into being, or that they came into being in the nature of things as a result of the divine ordering of the universe. Orisanla (arch divinity among the Yoruba) is definitely a derivation partaking of the very nature and metaphysical attribute of olódùmarè. Hence he is often known as God's son or deputy, vested with the power and authority of royal sonship. And this is why it has been possible in Bahia to syncretise his cult with Christianity and identify him as Jesus Christ. Olokun (Bewin) is known as the son of Osanobwa, the son vested with power and majesty by his father. All Akan divinities are called sons of Onyan. It is in consequence of this derivative relationship that these divine "beings" are entitled to be called divinities or deities.

Secondly, the divinities are derivatives from the Divine. This we have seen in the first description above. It is necessary, however, to re-emphasise the fact in this context. It is not always true that the fact of the derivation can be proved from the linguistic

connections between the names of the Divine and the generic names of the divinities. It is generally theologically provable that the divinities have no absolute existence – they are in being only in consequence of the Divine Being. All that we have said about the unitary control of the created order by Deity applies here. Because from the African point of view concerning Deity and the divinities, their powers and authority are meaningless apart from Him. This corroborates the fact that even though there are references to other divinities, the basic attitude towards the Divine in the African traditional religion is indicative of monotheism.

Thirdly, every divinity has his own local name in the local language, which is descriptive either of his allotted function or the natural phenomenon which is believed to be a manifestation or emblem of his being. Among the Yoruba, the divinity who is believed to be the divine representative of "the Wrath" is called Jàkuta – one who hurls or fights with stones; and in Nupe he is called Sokogba (=*Soko egba*) – "God's axe". In every case the phenomenological reference is to the thunder bolt which is believed to be the instrument of execution. Among the Igbo, the arch divinity is called Ala (or Ana, Ani, according to the locality in Igbo land). This is the same word used for 'earth' of 'ground'. Ala is the earth-goddess, and is the arch divinity.

Fourthly, the divinities were brought into being as functionaries in the theocratic government of the universe. According to Dahomey belief the whole set-up makes this clear (Herskovits 1938:103). Mawu-Lisa (the arch divinity apportioned the kingdoms of the sky, the sea, and the earth among six of his offspring, and to the seventh, Legba – who is the same as the divine messenger and inspector general in African pantheons (Idowu 1962:80) – is assigned the office of being the liaison officer between Mawu-Lisa and the other offspring and between the offspring themselves. Here we have an apt illustration that the divinity system is usually a reflection of the conceptions regarding the sociological pattern of the divine government of the universe. Godfrey Lienhardt makes a discerning observation in connection with the divinities.

"None of the free-divinities, with the possible exception of *Macardt*, also called Colwic, is thought to exist independently of the particular name by which the Dinka know it. That is, unlike Divinity, who is thought to be universal and known by various names to different peoples, the free divinities are active only where their specific names are known and where effects in human life can be attributed to them (Lienhardt 1961:57)".

The divinity therefore has a local name which linguistically appears to limit his scope to the locality. Upon careful study it will, however, be discovered that several of the principal divinities are common to several parts of Africa although under different linguistic names. These names do not in anyway signify different gods but they remain under the Supreme Being or God in the Semitic sense of monotheism but based on the African cosmology. "Khakaba" of the Bukusu of Kenya represents the one who "provides". Jakuta (or Scingo) representing the Wrath among the Yoruba appears as Sokogba among the Nupe, as Xevioso in Dahomey and among the Ewe-speaking peoples. Thus, even though the divinities have different names in the various languages and appear to be confined to localities, the actual conceptions which they represent are not as confined, especially where such conceptions are made universal by the universality of phenomena – earth, sky, thunder, sun, water, agriculture (Mbiti 1969).

Fifthly, the divinities are ministers, each with his own definite portfolio in the Divine Monarch's government. Each is in his own sphere an administrative head of a department. They are also intermediaries between the Divine and man, especially with reference to their particular functions. Consequently, in course of time, they have become conventional channels through which man believes that he should normally approach the Divine. It is this accepted role of the divinities according to African beliefs and practices which has lent weight to the sweeping and erroneous assertion that the Divine is never approached directly by Africans; or that if He is called upon directly at all, it is only in moments of crisis and desperation when all other means have failed.

The correct interpretations of the position of the divinities is that they constitute only a half-way house which is not meant to be the permanent resting place for man's soul. While man may find the divinities 'sufficient' for certain needs, something continues to warn him that 'sufficiency' is only in the Deity. Technically, the divinities are only means to an end and no ends in themselves. This does not mean that Africans can be regarded as pantheists. These divinities are accountable to the Divine who is supreme in his essence.

Sixthly, the divinities under the various generic names form the pantheon in each locality. The pantheon varies in size according to the sociological context or other factors which may influence the concept of the divine ordering of the government of

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the universe among each people. Over each pantheon is usually an arch divinity who is more closely related to the Divine as far as his attributes are concerned.

Seventhly, we still have to answer an important question. Are the divinities real or not? We may get round the question by saying that to those who believe in them and believe that they derive succour from their ministration or afflictions from their machinations, they are real, and to those who have outgrown them or to whom they have never had significance they have no real, objective existence. But this is a question so subtle and of such tremendous importance that it cannot be so easily dismissed. First, it is wrong to hold that a certain experience is impossible simply on the ground that certain people have not had such an experience or are incapable of it. Secondly, it will be sheer presumption to claim that we already know all that there is to know about the fact of spiritual powers and the super-sensory world (Idowu 1962: 62).

It is important to illustrate this by referring to the concept of God of the Bushmen of Southern Africa and the way in which it relates to the concept of monotheism. It should be borne in mind that to the San, as to most primal peoples, the name of God is too charged with sacred power to be spoken lightly. Thus a variety of pseudonyms have been devised for referring to God. The !Kung, for example, have seven divine names, and one human name for the great god. This raises the question as to whether the San recognise a single God (monotheism) (Kruger 1995).

In the case of most groups there is a belief in a greater and lesser god, as well as in other supernatural beings (Bisiele 1978: 162-165). The Greater God is regarded as a supreme, good creator, although he is often highly anthropomorphised. He can send both good and bad fortune to people. He created the elements necessary for human substance, taught the people the skills necessary for their survival, and gave them the knowledge and skill to cure themselves by dancing. He dwells in the eastern sky where the spirits of the dead also go and are rejuvenated. This a parallel belief to the 'Ngai' of Gikuyu and Maasai in Kenya who is believed to dwell at the highest peak (*Mbatian*) of Mt. Kenya (*Mt Kirinyaga*).

Both the greater and the lesser god may be approached by people in shamanic trance, and also at other times through informal prayer. Prayers to the moon by some Cape Bushmen have been recorded, but certainly these do not amount to moon worship as in the case of the Ras Shamra epic of the Canaanites. No doubt it is closer to the truth to say that in these instances the moon is personified in the same way as

the rain is among the same Cape Bushmen. Similarly these attestations indicate that the Bushmen have an idea of the Supreme God, and in this respect therefore a monotheistic concept of God like other Africans on the continent have had from the early periods to the present day.

Many Africans visualise God as Father, both in terms of his position as the universal Creator and Provider, and in the sense of his personal availability to them in time of need. The Akamba consider the heavens and the earth to be the Father's 'equal-sized bowls': they are his property, both by creation and the rights of ownership; and they contain his belongings. The Lunda, Bemba and others in the same region speak of God as 'the universal Father', and of mankind as his children. The Pokot and Baganda hold that God is Father not only to men, but also to the divinities and other spiritual beings. This idea of God being the Father of creation in general is common among other African peoples and the major personal name used for God often simply means "Father".

The fatherhood of God also comes out in prayers, indicating that people consider Him to be their personal Father in a monotheistic sense, with whom they can communicate. So, in prayers and invocations He is addressed as 'Father', 'Our Father', 'My Father', 'Great Father', 'Father God' or 'Father of our/my fathers'; by peoples such as the Luo, Bukusu, Gikuyu, Nandi, Tugen of Kenya and others in Africa such as the Bambuti; Azande, Nuer among others. The sense of God's fatherhood strongly points to the monotheistic concepts which are addressed in this subsection of the chapter. This cosmological view of monotheism is African in interpretation and peculiar to them. It is, however, different from the Judeo-Christian monotheism just as the Muslim monotheism is also open to a different interpretation. It should be understood that African religion, like all other monotheistic religions, has undergone a process of development from "family divinities" to the "Supreme Deity" – a scientific phenomenon of growth from a simple to a complex conception of religion.

4.2   Monotheism in Christian belief

The religion of the ancient Hebrews, (especially after the Deuteronomistic reform) was a rigorously monotheistic faith, as indeed the Jewish religion is to this day. Christianity is an offshoot of the Jewish religion, hence highly occupied with the concept of monotheism. The unity of God was revealed to Israel at several different times and in various ways. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1 – 17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21), for

example, begin with the statement, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me (or beside me)" (Exod. 20:2-3). The Hebrew translated here as "before me" or "besides me" is *ál panai*, which literally means "to my face". God had demonstrated his unique reality by what He had done, and was thus entitled to Israel's exclusive worship, devotion and obedience. There were no others who had so proven their claim to deity.

The prohibition of idolatry, the second commandment (v.4), also rests on the uniqueness of Yahweh: He will not tolerate any worship of manmade objects, for He alone is God. He is the only member of a unique class. The rejection of polytheism runs throughout the Old Testament. God repeatedly demonstrates his superiority to other claimants to deity. It could, of course, be maintained that this does not conclusively prove that the Old Testament required monotheism. It might simply be the case that it was the other gods (i.e. the gods of other nations) who were ejected by the Old Testament, but, that there was re than one true God of the Israelites. In answer we need point out only that it is clearly assumed throughout the Old Testament that there is but one God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not many (e.g. Exod. 3: 13-15).

A clearer indication of the oneness of God is the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6, the great truths which the people of. Israel were commanded to absorb themselves and to inculcate in their children. They were to meditate upon these teachings ('these words ... shall be upon your heart", v.6). They were to talk about them at home and on the road, when lying down and when arising (v. 7). They were to use visual aids to call attention to them – wearing them on their hands and foreheads, and writing them on the door frames of their houses and on their gates. And what were these great truths which were to be emphasised in this manner? One is indicative, a declarative statement, the other an imperative or command. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord" (v.4). while there are various legitimate translations of the Hebrew in this verse, all alike emphasise the unique, unmatched deity of Yahweh. The second great truth God wanted Israel to learn and teach is a command based on his uniqueness: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (v.5). Because He is one, there was to be no division of Israel's commitment. After the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-5), the commandments of Exodus 20 are virtually repeated. In positive terms God's people are told: "You shall fear the Lord your God;

you shall serve him, and swear by his name (Deut. 6:13). In negative terms they are told: "You shall not go after other gods or the gods of the peoples who are round about you" (v.14). God is clearly one God, precluding the possibility that any of the gods of the surrounding peoples could be real and thus worthy of service and devotion (Exod. 15:11; Zech. 14:9). "The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name". The New Testament takes the same monotheistic concepts as follows: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism: One God and Father of all, who is over all one through all and in all" (Eph. 4:5-6).

The teaching regarding the oneness of God is not restricted to the Old Testament. James 2:19 commends belief in one God, while noting its insufficiency for justification. Paul also underscores the uniqueness of God. In discussing the eating of meat which had been offered to idols the apostle writes: "We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, and that there is ... but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord. Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we live" (1 Cor. 8:4,6). Here Paul, like the Mosaic law, excludes idolatry, on the grounds that there is only one God. Similarly Paul writes to Timothy: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5-6). While on the surface these verses seem to distinguish Jesus from the only God, the Father, the primary thrust of the former reference is that God alone is truly God (idols are nothing); and the primary thrust of the latter is that there is but one God and there is only one mediator between God and men.

4.2.1 The Trinity: a means of monotheism in Christianity

A theological study on the teaching of the Christian view of the Trinity to an indigenous African finds that analogies tend to be confusing (Mugambi 1989:36-38). We have already pointed out that an African can easily understand concepts when they are presented to him concretely. Analogies taught to an African in Sunday schools and primary schools about the Trinity become useless and confusing on the perceptual level of an African. It seems difficult to use learning resources to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity. The analogies of the Christian concept of God are too analytical. Any artificial learning resource and teaching aid would be a model, and models represent only some aspects of the object they are meant to explain. Models of God cannot adequately describe what the word represents. Therefore another approach has to be

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found, an approach which would start from the traditional African experience, then proceed to Christian theology. Such an approach, we think, will reduce conceptual incoherence.

A practical situation of Christian religious education would appear as follows: taking students out of the classroom to a place where both students and the teacher can appreciate the beauty, abundance and magnificence of nature – facing Mount Kenya, Mount Kilimandjaro or Mount Elgon. Another possible natural scene would be facing Lake Victoria, Lake Nakuru and the many flamingoes, Lake Borgaria or Naivasha. The class can then sit down on the green grass in the beautiful natural environment, after which the students and the teacher become involved in an interesting discussion about God or "The Divine". The discussion leads to the following theological observations. The fatherhood of God can be discerned in his Providence. He has provided all things in nature and the balance of nature is not accidental. There is one God, who discloses his Fatherhood in the world He has created and sustains. All the things in the universe ultimately belong to Him, and all people all over the world are his children.

In the context of this discussion, the students do not have difficulty in understanding the "fatherhood" of God as manifested in his ownership and sustenance of nature. They then reflected on traditional African life and observe that there are individuals whom the African community recognise as "men of God". The notion of a "man of God' is familiar in African thought. In traditional African life men of God were people through the mediation of whom the community discussed the will of God. The teacher and students can then conclude on the basis of this notion that in Jesus Christ they see most clearly what it means to be a man of God. Jesus is the Son of God in the sense that through Jesus they learn most clearly what God is like and what God expects of man: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John14:1-31). The expression "Son of God" does not necessarily suggest biological relation (Tillich 1957: 97-118).

This discussion can continue with the observation that the presence of God is felt to be everywhere, even in traditional African religious thought. Among African peoples it is common belief that it is impossible for anyone to hide himself from the presence of God. Wherever one goes, the presence of God is experienced by those who believe in Him. This prevailing presence of God is, in Christian theological terms, the Spirit of God the Holy Spirit. Thus the pupils can gain an understanding of the Trinity which

has its origin in terms to which they were first introduced by the teachers in Sunday school and primary school. Instead of "God the Father", they talked of the "Fatherhood of God". Instead of God "the Son", they talked of "God in man". And instead of "God the Holy Spirit", they talked of the "Spirit of God who is universally and eternally present".

The reflection leads to the following theological insights. The notion of "persons" in the Trinity should be discarded because to the African mind they are misleading, vague and confusing. The doctrinal debates in the early church with regard to the "persons" of the Trinity indicate that these notions were not clear to the early Church Fathers either. Greek philosophical influence was at work in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and most Africans are not acquainted with Greek philosophy.

The discussion group thought that the best and most relevant way to achieve understanding of the Trinity is in terms of the modes of God's manifestation to man. The Christian faith is monotheistic – the God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ is the same One whose power and presence were experience at Pentecost (Acts 2). He is the One who is known by different names in the African religious heritage (Malachi 1:11).

The Trinitarian doctrine of God in Christianity which was developed under the influence of Neo-Platonism (Richardson 1941), has to be re-interpreted in terms of traditional African monotheism. African Christians have been doing it subconsciously. This is not syncretism because the objective of such a re-interpretation is to clarify to African Christians the classical Christian doctrine of God, rather than to distort it. When African Christians use traditional African names of God to refer to the God worshipped in Christianity, they inevitably carry over into their Christian theology the concepts which are associated with those traditional African names. African Christians use traditional names to refer to God. In doing so, they inevitably carry over into their Christian world view and theology the concepts which are associated with the traditional African names. Epistemologically the acquisition of new concepts (theological or otherwise) comes about though direct acquaintance with an object or a situation and also through reflection in which old concepts are related to new ones in an endeavour to acquire new knowledge. In terms of Bertrand Russel's epistemology all knowledge falls under two categories: knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description (Russel 1945: Ch. 5). According to this theory, the doctrine of the Trinity should be introduced to an African from the situation familiar to him. One should

proceed from the concrete and from there to the discussion of the abstract theological concept of the Trinity.

At this point it is necessary to consider the salient elements of Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

1. We begin with **the unity of God**. Monotheism is deeply implanted within the Hebrew-Christian tradition. God is one, not several. The unity of God may be compared to the unity of husband and wife, but we must keep in mind that we are dealing with one God, not a joining of separate entities.

2. **The deity of each of the three persons**, Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be affirmed. Each is qualitatively the same. The Son is divine in the same way and to the same extent as is the Father, and this is also true of the Holy Spirit.

3. **The threeness and oneness of God are not in the same respect.** Although the orthodox interpretation of the Trinity seems contradictory (God is one and yet three), the contradiction is not real, but only apparent. A contradiction exists if something is A and not A at the same time and in the same respect. Modalism attempted to deal with the apparent contradiction by stating that the three modes of manifestation of God are not simultaneous; at any given time, only one is being revealed. Orthodoxy, however, insists that God is three persons at every moment of time. Maintaining his unity as well, orthodoxy deals with the problem by suggesting that the way in which God is three is in some respect different from the way in which He is one. The fourth-century thinkers spoke of one *ousia* and of three *hypostases*. Now comes the problem of determining what these two terms mean, or more broadly, what the difference is between the nature or locus of God's oneness and that of his threeness.

4. **The Trinity is eternal.** There have always been three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and all three of them have always been divine. One or more of them did not come into being at some point in time, or became divine at some point. There has never been any alteration in the nature of the triune God. He is and will be what He has always been.

5. **The function of one member of the Trinity may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members, but that does not mean he is in any way inferior in essence.** Each of the three persons of the Trinity has had, for a period of time, a particular function unique to Himself. This is to be understood as a

temporary role for the purpose of accomplishing a given end, not as a change in his status of essence. In human experience, there is functional subordination as well. Several equals in business or enterprise may choose one of their number to serve as the captain of a task force or the chairperson of a committee for a given time, but without any change in rank. The same is true in the military circles. In the days of multimember aircraft crews, the pilot, although the highest-ranking officer on the ship, would follow the instructions of the bombardier, a lower-ranking officer, during the bombing run. In like fashion, the Son did not become less than the Father during his earthly incarnation, but He did subordinate Himself functionally to the Father's will. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is now subordinated to the ministry of the Son (John 14-16) as well as to the will of the Father, but this does not imply that He is less than they are.

6. **The Trinity is incomprehensible.** We cannot fully understand the mystery of the Trinity. When some day we see God, we shall see Him as He is, and understand Him better that we do now. Yet even then we shall not totally comprehend Him. Because He is unlimited God and we are limited in our capacity to know and understand, He will always exceed our knowledge and understanding. We shall always be human beings, even though perfected human beings. We shall never become God. Those aspects of God which we shall never fully comprehend should be regarded as mysteries that go beyond our reason rather than as paradoxes which conflict with reason.

The problem in constructing a statement of the doctrine of the Trinity is not merely one of understanding the terminology. That is in itself hard enough. For example, it is difficult to know what "person" means in this context. More difficult yet is to understand the interrelationship among the members of the Trinity. The human mind occasionally seeks analogies which will help in this effort as we saw above in the African cosmology.

On a popular level, analogies drawn from physical nature have often been utilised. A widely used analogy, for example, is the egg: it consists of yolk, white and shell, all of which together form one whole egg. Another favourite analogy is water: it can be found in solid, liquid and vaporous forms. At times other material objects have been used as illustrations. One pastor, in instructing young catechumens, attempted to concretise threeness yet oneness by posing the question: "Is (or are) trousers singular

or plural?" His answer was that trousers is singular at the top, and they are plural at the bottom.

Note that these analogies and illustrations, as well as large numbers of similar analogies drawn from the physical realm, tend to be either tritheistic or modalistic in their implications. On one hand, the analogies involving the egg and the trousers seem to suggest that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are separate parts of the divine nature. On the other hand, the analogy involving the various forms of water has modalistic overtones, since ice, liquid water and steam are modes of existence. A given quantity of water does not simultaneously exist in all three states.

In recent years, some theologians, drawing upon the insights of analytical philosophy, have intentionally utilised grammatical "category transgressions" or "logically odd qualifiers" to point out the tension between the oneness and the threeness. Examples of their attempts at clarification are statements such as "God are one" and "they are three". Yet these odd sentences serve better to state the issue than to clarify it.

One of the most creative minds in the history of Christian theology was Augustine. In *De trinitate*, ([s.a.]: 14,3) which may be his greatest work, he turned his prodigious intellect to the problem of the nature of the Trinity. He reflected upon this doctrine throughout his Christian life and wrote his treatise on the subject over a twenty-year period (AD 399-419). In keeping with the Western or Latin tradition, his view emphasises the unity of God more than the threeness. The three members of the Trinity are not separate individuals in the way in which three members of the human race are separate individuals. Each member of the Trinity is in his essence identical with the others or with the substance itself. They are distinguished in terms of their relations within the Godhead.

The major contribution of Augustine to the understanding of the Trinity is his analogies drawn from the realm of human personality. He argues that since man is made in the image of God, who is triune, it is therefore reasonable to expect to find, through an analysis of man's nature, a reflection, however faint, of God's triunity. Beginning with the Biblical statement that God is love, Augustine noted that there are three necessary elements in love: the lover, the object loved and the love which unites them, or at least tends to do so. (Augustine [s.a.]:8.10). While this analogy has received a great deal of attention, it was for Augustine merely a starting point, a steppingstone to a more significant analogy based upon the inner man and, in particular, upon the mind's

activity in relationships to itself or to God. Already in the confessions, we see the analogy based upon the inner man in the triad of being, knowing and willing (Augustine [s.a.]:13:11). In *De Trinitate* the analogy based on the mind's activity is presented in three stages or three trinities:

1. The mind, its knowledge of itself and it's love of itself (Augustine [s.a.]:9:2-8).
2. Memory, understanding and the will (*ibid*:10:17-19).
3. The mind remembering God, knowing God, and loving God (*ibid*:14:11-12).

While all of these stages of the analogy give us insight into the mutual relations among the persons of the Trinity, Augustine feels that the last of the three is the most helpful, reasoning that when man consciously focuses upon God, he most fully bears the image of his Maker.

In practice even orthodox Christians have difficulty clinging simultaneously to the several components of the doctrine. Our use of these several analogies suggests that perhaps in practice or in our unofficial theology none of us is really fully trinitarian. We tend to alternate between tritheon, a belief in three equal, closely related Gods, and modalism, a belief in one God who plays three different roles or reveals Himself in three different fashions.

Augustine's suggestion that analogies can be drawn between the Trinity and the realm of human personality is a helpful one. In seeking for the thought forms which can provide a conceptual basis on which to develop the doctrine of the Trinity, we have found the realm of individual and social relationships to be a more fruitful source than the realm of physical objects. This is true for two reasons. The first is that God Himself is spirit; the social and personal domain is, then, closer to God's basic nature than is the realm of material objects. The second is that there is greater interest today in human and social subjects than in the physical universe.

Accordingly, we shall examine two analogies drawn from the realm of human relationships.

The first analogy is drawn from the realm of individual human psychology. As a self-conscious person, I may engage in internal dialogue with myself. I may take different positions and interact with myself. I may even engage in a debate with myself. Furthermore, I am a complex human person with multiple roles and responsibilities in dynamic interplay with one another. As I consider what I should do in a given

situation, the husband, the father, the university lecturer at Maseno University College, and the citizen of Kenya which together constitute "me" may mutually inform one another.

One problem with the analogy is that in human experience this is most clearly seen in situations where there is tension or competition, rather than when there is harmony between the individual's various positions and roles. The discipline of abnormal psychology affords us with extreme examples of virtual warfare between the constituent elements of the human personality. But in God, by contrast, there is always perfect harmony, communication and love.

The other analogy is taken from the sphere of interpersonal human relations. Take the case of identical twins. In one sense, they are of the same essence, for their genetic make-up is identical. An organ transplant from one to the other can be accomplished with relative ease, for the recipient's body will not reject the donor's organ as foreign, it will accept it as its very own. Identical twins are close in other ways as well. They have similar interests and tastes. Although they have different spouses and different employers, a close bond unites them. And yet they are not the same person. They are two, not one.

These two analogies emphasise different aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity. The former lays major emphasis on the oneness. The latter illustrates more clearly the threeness. A few years ago we tended to the former analogy, which reflects a modal (but not modalistic) view. More recently, however, theology has come to the conclusion that both must be equally emphasised (Wainwright 1962:257). The Greek (Cappadocian) stress on the three persons and Latin (Western) stress on God's unity are equally vital. Each group had seized upon an indispensable facet of the truth. And yet, from a logical standpoint, both cannot be true simultaneously, at least as far as we can understand (Hendry 1956:31). May it not be that what we have here is a mystery? We must cling to both, even though we cannot see the exact relationship between the two.

Perhaps this mystery which we must cling to in order to preserve the full data is, as Augustine strongly puts it, "inscrutable". Yet the theologian is not the only one who must retain two polarities in his thinking. Physicists have never finally and perfectly resolved the question of the nature of light. One theory says that it is waves. The other says it is quanta, little bundles of energy as it were. Logically it cannot be both.

Yet, to account for all the data, one must hold both theories simultaneously. As one physics student put it: "On Monday, Wednesday and Friday, we think of light as waves; on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, we think of it as particles of energy." Presumably, on Sunday physicists do not concern themselves with the nature of light. One cannot explain a mystery; one can only acknowledge its presence.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a crucial ingredient of the Christian faith. Each of the three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is to be worshipped, as is the Triune God. And, keeping in mind their distinctive work, it is appropriate to direct prayers of thanks and of petition to each of the members of the Trinity, as well as to all of them collectively. Furthermore, the perfect love and unity within the Godhead model for us the oneness and affection that should characterise our relationships within the body of Christ.

It appears that Tertullian was right in affirming that the doctrine of the Trinity must be divinely revealed, not humanly constructed. It is so absurd from a human standpoint that no one would have invented it. We do not hold the doctrine of the Trinity because it is self-evident or logically cogent, we hold it because God has revealed that this is what He is like.

4.2.2 Conclusion

The essentials of Christian monotheism can be understood as Erickson (1983:142) described it:

> "Try to explain it and you'll lose your mind; But try to deny it, and you'll lose your soul."

The Christian monotheism is based on the understanding that the Godhead exists "undivided in divided persons". There is an "identity of nature" in the tree hypostases. Basil says:

> "For all things that are the Father's are held in the Son, and all things that are the Son's are the Father's; because the whole Son is in the Father and has all the Father in Himself. Thus the hypostasis of the Son becomes as it were form and face of the knowledge of the Father, and the hypostasis of the Father is known in the form of the Son, while the proper quality which is contemplated therein remains for the plan's distinction of the hypostases" (Basil Letters 38:8).

It is clear that the orthodox formula protects the doctrine of Trinity against the danger of modalism. This is done at the expense of falling into the opposite error – tritheism. On the surface, the danger seems considerable. Two points are made to safeguard the doctrine of Christian monotheism against tritheism.

First, it is noted that if we can find a single activity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit which is no way different in any of these persons, we must conclude that there is one identical substance involved. And such unity was found in the divine activity of revelation. Revelation originates in the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is completed in the Spirit. It is not three actions, but one action in which all three are involved.

Secondly, there is an insistence upon the concreteness and indivisibility of the divine substance. To avoid the conclusion that there is a multiplicity of men within humanity, Gregory of Nyssa suggested that, strictly speaking, we ought not to talk about a multiplicity of men, but a multiplicity of the one universal man. The divine essence is simple and indivisible. God is simple and incomposite. Thus, while each of the persons is one, they cannot be added together to make three entities.

4.3   Monotheism in Islam

4.3.1   The Oneness of Allah

When we turn our attention to Islam we must first of all know that the name and concept of Allah is not an invention introduced by Mohammed. The whole concept of monotheism in Islam pervades the Muslim conception of Allah as the Only God but nobody else. It is necessary to find the origin of the name *Allah* which became so firmly rooted in the Islamic faith and religion. In pre-Islamic Arabia this name was in general use and seemingly already the pre-Islamic Christian Bibles used that name for God. Our interest here is to look at the concept of monotheism in Islam although the historical understanding would be of help in the study.

"There is no God but Allah ..." Islam is one of the three great monotheistic religions in the Middle East. Along with the other two, Judaism and Christianity, it stresses the oneness and unity of God, *Tawhid*, literally "making one" or "asserting oneness". In consequence, it applies theologically to the oneness (*wahdániya, tawahhud*) of Allah in all its meanings. The word does not occur in the Qur'an, which has no verbal form

from this root nor from the kindred -*h-d*, but in the Lisan (IV 464 to 465 from below) there is an elaborate philosophical statement on the usage of the different forms from these roots as applied to Allah and to men. Technically "the science of *tawhid* and of the qualities "(*'ilmal-tawhid wa 'l-sifat*) is a synonym for the science of kalam" and is the basis of all the articles of the belief of Islam (Introduction by Taftazani to the 'Akaid of Nasafi, ed. Cairo 1321, p 4 and marginal commentaries therein; Dict. Tech. Terms p12). In this definition the Muctazilites would exclude the qualities and make the basis *tawhid* alone. But unity is far from being a simple idea. It may be internal or external; it may mean that there is not other god except Allah, who has no partner (*Sharik*); it may mean that Allah is a oneness in Himself; it may mean that He is the only being with a real or absolute existence (*al-hakk*), all other beings having merely contingent existence, it may even be developed into a pantheistic assertion that Allah is All-Again. Knowledge of this unity may be reached by the methods of systematic theology (*ilm*) or by religious experience (*ma'rifa, musháhada*); and the latter, again, may be pure contemplation or philosophical speculation. In consequence, *tawhid* (monotheism) may mean simply "There is no god but Allah" or it may cover a pantheistic position, where "Allah is for all".

The word Allah means "the God", the same God confessed and worshipped in the other monotheistic traditions. In the call to prayer, in the Shahada, and in everyday discourse, the name Allah is constantly heard. The name also appears in Arabic writing and calligraphy in books, on mosques and buildings and on walls, hangings in homes and offices in the Islamic religion and culture.

The affirmation of God's oneness and unity is comprehended in the important Arabic word discussed above – *tawhid* (Miller 1976:43-45). The early Muslim community in Arabia, where pagan polytheism had been widely practised, regarded the association (*Shirk*) of other gods with Allah as a serious threat to God's unity. *Shirk* was the earliest and most repugnant form of heresy. Pagan gods were familiar and pliable beings, made of stone and easily "possessed". The concept of Allah stood above such associations. As Islam spread to all lands and cultures outside Arabia, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the Zoroastrian dualistic conceptions of good and evil divine powers were also seen by Muslims as aberrations of God's unity or *Tawhid* (Haeri 1997:8,45). Muslim theologians sought arguments, both from scripture and through reason, to make persuasive the fundamental oneness and unity of Allah to the exclusion of other "lesser" gods or plural implications of a "godhead" that threatened

that unity. Muslim mystics practised special meditations or modes of remembrance, *dhikr*. which focused the consciousness upon God, for in their view God was the only Reality. The average Muslim, even without special theological knowledge or spiritual techniques, nonetheless thinks of God in the way of *Tawhid* (monotheism).

A belief in the existence of Allah, his unity, his absolute power, and in the other essential attributes of an Eternal and Almighty Being, is the most important part of the Muslim religion, and is supposed to be expressed in the two clauses of the well known formula:

> "La Ilaha illa-l-lah
> Muhammadun Rasulu-l-lah
> (There is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger [s 47:19 and s.48:29]).

The first clause, "There is no deity" is known as the *Nafi*, or that which is rejected, and the second clause, "But Allah", is the *Isbat*, or that which is established, the term *Nafiwa-Isbat* being applied to the first two clauses of the Muslim's *Kalima* or creed.

The doctrine of *tawhid* or monotheism is the essence of Islamic faith. For outsiders, *tawhid* may appear to be a statement of the obvious, but for a Muslim from any part of the world, Africa included, it represents the alpha and the omega of the faith.

> "It is the addition to a metaphysical assertion about the nature of the Absolute, a method of integration, a means of becoming whole and realising the profound oneness of all existence. Every aspect of Islam rotates about the doctrine of unity which Islam seeks to realise first of all in the human being in his inner and outward life" (Nasr, 1971:29).

A world view based on *tawhid* considers God to be the normative criterion of religious experience, in other words, God is the Being who commands. Every command of God becomes an ought-to-be or an ought-to-do; in short, a value.

This emphasis on the oneness of God, or *tawhid*, recognises that nature is well knit and operates on the basis of laws of natural causation. But this does not mean that God and nature are rivals which function at the expense of one another; or that God operates in addition to the activities of man and nature.

According to Fazlur Rahman (1980: 45), "things and humans are, indeed, directly related to each other'. In other words, God is 'with' everything in so far as the divine constitutes the integrity of everything. Since everything is related directly to the Divine, 'so everything, through and in relation to other things, is related to God as well. God then is the very meaning of reality, a meaning manifested, clarified and brought home by the universe. Without God's activity, both nature and humanity become derelict, purposeless and self-wasting. The role of human beings is to further God's meaningful and purposeful activity through creative moral action.

Muslim theologians thus replaced the philosopher's explanations of causality with the doctrine of "occasionalism". This means that at every moment God recreates the world and is directly responsible for what takes place. The upshot of this theory was the establishment of a causality of divine presence. This is what is meant by the expression that God is with everything, which is different from the immanentist belief that God is everything or is in everything.

The Muslim theologian perceives God as a 'core of normativeness'. Being normative means that God is that sought after end which is an end-in-itself. In Islam the creator is the Final End, which implies the uniqueness of the other. This precludes the dependence of the ultimate upon another entity. In this sense God is self-sufficient. God's self-sufficiency does not preclude human beings from knowing God's imperatives and obeying these commands. In the Islamic tradition it is possible for human beings to come to know God's will by means of reason. However, Muslims believe, certainty can only be arrived at by revelation.. It is revelation that enables human beings to fulfil their ethical vocation with intellectual certainty. This is an antinomy in Islam indeed

At this juncture and point, we can ask the question: what is the significance of *tawhid*? Al-Faruqi (1982) , one of the leading Islamic scholars of the twentieth century, describes the core principles of *tawhid* as five self-evident truths: duality, ideationality, theology, human capacity/ the malleability of nature and responsibility/ judgement.

Duality insists that reality is of two generic kinds. God and non-God, or Creator and creature. These are separate realms, both in terms of being (ontology) and of existence. One is infinite and the other is finite. Hence it is impossible for the finite to transcend its finitude and pass into infinity or for these two orders of reality to be united, confused or diffused into each other.

This relationship between the Creator and creature is ideational in nature. The ideational faculties, such as the intellect, reason, imagination, intuition and observation enable humankind to understand the will of God when it is expressed through revelation or the laws of nature or both.

Because of *tawhid* human endeavour is purposive, with a *telos* (goal) in sight. While human actions do have a utilitarian aspect, it is the theological character of actions that provides them with the distinctive quality of being moral.

Human beings also possess the capacity and potentiality to realise the divine *raison d'être* of creation. Without potentialities *per se*, human beings would be unable to fulfil the divine will. The actualisation of these potentialities results in moral action. Nature and the entire universe is 'Muslim' (that which submits or surrenders). It conforms to the laws of nature ingrained in it, in other words, it is automatically 'Muslim'.

Human beings are designated as the Creator's vice-regents on earth and are therefore required to 'surrender' to God's law by choice, in other words, to be 'Muslim' by choice. This indicates the uniqueness of humans in that they possess a free will. By following divine commands, in terms of which they ought to act, they fulfil a responsibility placed on them by God. Effective responsibility requires that one has the ability to make a judgement, and be decisive in such decision-making (Al-Faruqi 1982).

Monotheism in Islam is rooted in the word *Islam* which means total submission to the commands and will of Allah. As we have seen, the word *Allah* is Arabic and, according to Al-Farugi and many other scholars of Islam, it is difficult to translate exactly. The word means the unique God who possesses all the attributes of perfection and beauty in their infinitude. Muslims feel very strongly that the English word *God* does not convey the real meaning of the word *Allah*. Islam means total submission to the commands and will of Allah who is the only true God. The first greatest teaching of Islam is proclaimed by the *Shahada* (confession): *La llaha illa-l-lah, Muhaamadun rasulu-l-lah.* This means: there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah. It is this very confession which, once uttered in sincerity and followed completely, makes one a real Muslim. It is this *Shahada* which leads a Muslim through his life (Geisler and Saleeb 1994:303).

Islam is strictly a monotheistic religion. The key *Sura* (chapter) in the Qur'an testifies to Islam's monotheism (Haeri 1997:57):

Say: He is Allah, the One!

Allah, the eternally Besought by all.

He begetteth not nor was begotten.

And there is none comparable unto Him (Qur'an 112).

A Muslim must believe in one God (Allah). Belief is the very basis of the *as-Diin* (religion) of Islam. Allah Himself has commanded: "And cry not unto any other god along with Allah. There is no god save Him (Qur'an 28:88). Elsewhere in the Qur'an we read: "Surely pure religion is for Allah only" (Qur'an 39:3)

The essence of Muslim belief is that God is One (Keene 1993: 134). This belief is known as *Tawhid*. By this a Muslim believes that God is beyond all human understanding, beyond time and space, the Truth before all other truths. Nothing can be compared to Him. Nor is Allah like a human being in any way. He is, quite simply, unique and incomparable.

What then, does Islam teach about the relationship between God and the world? Allah is the First and the Last, the One Only Creator. All men and women owe their beginning and their continued existence to Him. It is by his person and authority that they draw every breath. If that power is withdrawn, the person dies. Whilst that person is alive, though, his/her first duty is to openly declare his/her belief in the *Tawhid*.

4.3.2 The Trinity from the perspective of Islamic cosmology

The most heinous form of sin is *Shirk* or obedience to laws and injunctions other than those of God. Islam does not permit obedience to any laws other that those laid down by God. Obedience to any other god other than Allah is, in the view of Islam, considered to be idol worship. It is, of course, true that idol worship, or the worship of any of the forces of nature, amounts to *Shirk*. The word *Shirk* itself has the meaning of obedience to man-made laws along with or in contravention of the laws of God.

The Islamic faith is characterised by a belief that 'Allah is *Tawhid* – meaning Allah is One, as stated under the preceding sub-topic. This concept was intended to

differentiate Allah from the pre-Islamic concept in which He was extended, and to reject the obviously misunderstood concepts of the sonship of Jesus and the Trinity:

> "They do blaspheme who say: 'Allah is one of three in a Trinity'". (S 5:76).
> "Say not 'Trinity', desist: it will be better, for Allah is one Allah" (S. 4:171).

It is then consistent with the Islamic view to reject the sonship and with that the deity of Jesus Christ:

> "The Christians call Christ the Son of Allah. That is a saying of their mouths; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say: Allah's curse be on them: How they are deluded away from the Truth" (s.9:30).

> "It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son" (S. 19:35)

> "Christ the son of Mary was no more than an Apostle. Many were the apostles that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth, they had both to eat their (daily) food" (S. 5:78)

How could they have been gods, if they had to eat?! is the apparent argument.

These passages from the Qur'an have taken a very prominent place in Muslim thinking. We must therefore take cognisance of what every Muslim all over the world, Africa and Kenya included, firmly believes, and what necessarily predetermines his perception of Jesus, the crucified Saviour:

> "They (i.e. the Jews) said (in boast) 'we have killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the apostle of Allah; But they killed him not but so it was made to appear to them. And those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no certain knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety, they killed him not; Nay, Allah raised him up to Himself; and Allah is exalted in power, wise" (S.4: 157-158).

We are aware that the quoted Qur'an texts totally reject Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world – the only hope a Muslim has. *Nabi Issa*, "the prophet Jesus" is another Jesus (2 Cor 11:4). If we care to communicate the Biblical Jesus Christ to Muslims even in Kenya, we have to seriously rethink the use of the name *Nabi Issa*, if we do not want to risk a Muslim keeping his erroneous

understanding of the Saviour. Studying the faith of Islam, one learns not only that Christ has no place in the Muslim idea of God, as they deny the Trinity, but that the portrait of Jesus, as given in the Qur'an and in tradition, is a sad caricature in the eyes of Christians. According to Muslim teaching, Jesus was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary; He spoke while still a babe in the cradle; performed many puerile miracles in his youth; healed the sick and raised the dead when He reached manhood. He was specially commissioned to confirm the law and reveal the gospel (*injil*). He was strengthened by the Holy Spirit (Gabriel). He foretold another prophet whose name should be Ahmed (Muhammad). They believe that Jesus was, by deception and substitution, saved from crucifixion and taken to heaven, and that He is now in one of the inferior stages of celestial bliss; that He will come again at the last day. According to Islam, the anti-Christ will kill the swine, break the cross and remove the poll tax from infidels. Muslims believe that Christ, on his return, will reign as a just king for forty-five years, marry and have children, then die and be buried near Muhammad's grave at Medina. The place of His future grave is already marked out between the graves of Omar and Fatmah (Zwemer 1907:40). Given the above understanding we can see that the idea of the Trinity as viewed in Christianity does not exist in the Islamic cosmology.

There is therefore no doctrine of Trinity within the religion of Islam. This is one of the major difference between Christianity and Islam. It should be remembered that the basic creed of Islam, called from the Mosque and repeated by the Muslim daily, is: "God is most great. There is no God but Allah. Mohammed is the apostle of God". (*Allah akbar. La ilaha illa 'llahu Muhammadun rasulu 'llah*). The unity of God is expressed clearly in *Sura* 112, which is often repeated after the first *sura*: "Say: He is God alone: God the eternal. He begetteth not,and he is not begotten; and there is none like unto him."

The Qur'an repeatedly refers to God as the One, *Al-Wahid*. The unity of God was the great passion of Mohammed, against the idolatory and polytheism of the Arabs of his day, God is unborn and does not give birth. The miraculous birth of Jesus is explained in the words, "God will create what he will; when He decreeth a thing, he only saith, 'Be', and it is (Qur'an 3)

The gravest sin is *shirk*, that is association of other beings with God, or the "attributuion" to others of the worship and knowledge that belong to God alone. The positive opposite of this is *tawhid*, the assertion of the unity of God in faith and life.

This stand in Islam leaves no room for a doctrine of Trinity in Islam as we find it in Christianity. Ascribing to such a doctrine would imply *shirk* which is the gravest sin in Islam. *Tawhid*, the oneness of God is a fundamental principle of Islam (Keene 1993:135).

4.4   Conclusion

In the African traditional religion, the Divine is understood in terms of his attributes. In most African communities God is described as He appeals to them concretely. For example, the Masai of Kenya would be heard talking of Ngai as all knowing, "Ngai knows". This is a common saying in the mouths of the Masai. His universal knowledge is based on universal vision and the organs of this vision are the sun by day and the stars by night, the former his great daytime eye, the later his numerous night eyes. The implications of this is that the Africans, like the Jews are monotheistic even though their monotheism is difficult to understand for an outsider since they did not have their own written records (Pettazzoni 1965:40). Most Africans know God in his divine providence as a "Supreme Being" though He is given different names by different communities. These differences are mainly due to cultural diversity and the languages spoken by the different communities (Radin 1954:28) The African monotheism should be understood in terms of progression from simple to complex.

In Islam the concept of monotheism is, as we have seen, a straightforward issue. It revolves around the word "*tawhid*" which simply means the unity of God. Of the different parties of Islam, the Mu'tazalites would exclude the qualities and make the basis of monotheism *tawhid* alone. But unity is far from being a simple idea ; it may be internal or external; it may mean that there is no other god except Allah, who has no partner (*Sharik*); it may mean that Allah is a Oneness in Himself; it may mean that He is the only Being with real or absolute existence (*al-hakk*), all other beings having merely a contingent existence; assertion that Allah is All. Again, according to Islam, knowledge of this unity (monotheism) may be reached by the methods of systematic theology ('*ilm*) or by religious experience (*ma'rifa mushahada*); and the latter, again, may be pure contemplation or philosophical speculation. In consequence, *tawhid* may mean simply: "There is no god but Allah", (Gibb & Kramers 1974:586-687), or it may cover a pantheistic position.

The Christian stand has been from the beginning and continues to be that there is one God who reveals Himself in three personalities   There are three separate but

interrelated types of evidence: evidence for the unity of God – that God is one; evidence that there are three persons who are God; and finally, indications or least intimations of the Three-in-One-ness.

The religion of the ancient Hebrews was a rigorously monotheistic faith, as indeed the Jewish religion is to this day. The unity of God was revealed to Israel at several different times and in various ways. The Ten Commandments, for example, begin with the statement, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other god before me (or besides me)" (Exodus 20:2-3). The Hebrew translated here as "before me" or "besides me" is (*al panai*), which means literally "to my face". God had demonstrated his unique reality, by what He had done, and thus was entitled to Israel's exclusive worship, devotion and obedience.

The teaching regarding the oneness of God is not restricted to the Old Testament, James 2:19 commends belief in one God, while noting its insufficiency for justification. Paul also underscores the uniqueness of God. The apostle writes as he discusses the eating of meat which had been offered to the idols: "We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, and that there is but one God, the Father, from all things came, for whom we live, and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." (1 Cor 8:4b niv)). Here Paul, like the Mosaic law, excludes idolatry on the grounds that there is only one God. Similarly Paul writes to Timothy: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between man and God, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as ransom for all" (1 Tim 2:5-6). While on the surface these verse seem to distinguish Jesus from the only God, the Father, the primary thrust of the former reference is that God alone is truly God (idols are nothing); and the primary thrust of the latter is that there is but one God, and there is only one Mediator between God and men.

All this evidence if taken by itself, would no doubt lead us to a basically monotheistic belief. There are also Biblical references which identify the Holy Spirit as God. The Holy Spirit occurs interchangeably with references to God. One example is Acts 5"3-4. Anania and Sapphira held back a portion of the proceeds from the sale of their property, misrepresenting what they laid at the apostle's feet as the entirety. In this instance, lying to the Holy Spirit (v.3) was equated with lying to God (v 4), The Holy Spirit is also described as having the qualities and performing the works of God. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgement (John 16:8-11).

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 we read that it is the Spirit who conveys the gifts to the church, and who exercises sovereignty over who receives those gifts. In addition, He receives the honour and glory reserved for God.

In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Paul reminds believers that they are God's temple and that his spirit dwells within them. In chapter 6, He says that their bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit within them (vv 19-20). "God" and "Holy Spirit" seem to be interchangeable expressions. Also there are several places where the Holy Spirit is put on an equal footing with God. One is the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19; a second is the Pauline benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14; finally, there is 1 Peter 1:2, where Peter addressees his readers as "chosen and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood".

The understanding and practical expression of the concept of monotheism by African traditional religion, Islam and Christianity differs considerably. Our discussion has shown that the difference is more explicit in Islam and Christianity. In a multi-religious society it is important to avoid emphasising the differences, but instead to stress the concepts that bring these religions together while they still remain different. Monotheism is one example of the concepts held by the religions which should be confined to the limits of different religions for the purpose of dialogue and religious co-existence. To fill the vacuum left by monotheism as a possible basis for togetherness, emphasis should be placed on the concept of the "Divine", which is understood in a similar fashion in these religions and which can indeed serve to bring about a better understanding, an improved relationship and religious togetherness for good neighbourliness of the adherents.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONDITION OF SIN AND THE PERCEPTION OF THE DIVINE

In most theological thought sin is understood to be a reality/condition which excludes an individual from the kingdom of God. This view is very much rooted in the Biblical Scripture (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5). Sin is also described in terms of mortal and venial sins. A mortal (Latin: deadly) sin means a deliberate turning away from God. Sin committed with clear knowledge and full consent in a truly serious matter. It brings the loss of sanctifying grace and the risk of eternal damnation. It leads to total depravity of the attributes of the Divine in an individual and an opaque hope in God the Creator. Venial (Latin: excusable) sins truly harm one's relationship with God and others, but do not entail a fundamental option against God.

The sin traditionally considered to be the root of all other sins – as developed by Evagrius Ponticus (AD 246-399), St. Gregory the Great (ca. 540-604) and others – finally comes down to a list of so-called "mortal sins": pride, covetousness, lust, envy, glutton, anger, and sloth. "Sloth" is an inadequate translation of the word *acedia* (Greek: "indifference"), which means apathy, torpor or a distaste for spiritual matters.

In the Bible we read about the original sin. Traditionally understood as the loss of grace and wounding of nature suffered by our first parents Adam and Eve and which affected all later generations, the notion was developed on the basis of Scripture (in particular Gen. 3:1-24; Ps. 51:7 and Rom. 5:12-21) and the ancient practice of baptising infants for the forgiveness of sins. St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) argued against the Pelagians that, since infants are not able to commit personal sins against the Divine, the "sin" from which they are delivered in baptism must be an inherited sinfulness. The doctrine of original sin expresses not only the sinful condition into which all human beings are born, but also the fact that the new life of grace coming through baptism is no "natural" right, but the free gift of God. Thus original sin refers to our human solidarity and common call to the supernatural life in Christ. Eastern Christianity, while maintaining infant baptism, has developed no theology of original sin. Protestants have often over-stressed original sin and its evil effects (Elwell 1984: 1017-1019).

In this chapter we shall discuss man in the state of sin and how this affects his relationship with the Divine and his the fellow human beings, and is thus a historical source of religious animosity. Sin is the main impediment in the way of bringing about dialogue in a multi-religious society. We shall look at the way in which sin is seen in the African, Christian and Muslim contexts and will then suggest a way out of the difficulties it presents. The main focus in this discussion will fall on man and his relationship with "the Divine" in his Holiness.

5.1   Sin in African traditional religion

It is important that we shall discuss several aspects that relate to the original state of man in this subsection, namely the original state and nature of the first man, God's provision for the original man, God's relationship with the original man and the cause of their separation. God's commandment and man's disobedience will be observed from the African context. Several African ethnic groups will be highlighted to corroborate the fact of the infiltration of sin into African communities and the way in which such disobedience leads to disunity among them. The consequences of the separation will be sketched as they are depicted in the many different myths of African ethnic groups all over the continent to substantiate the fact that traditional Africans also believe that man fell from the divine state of holiness in which he was originally created.

According to the many myths, the state of the original man was one of happiness, childlike ignorance and immortality or the ability to rise again after dying. God provided man with the necessities of life, and man lived in a state which can be likened to paradise until sin came into the picture.

The Abaluyia of Kenya have a myth which states that the first couple lived in a house which was suspended in the air on poles. From this house they descended to the ground by means of a ladder, and every time they went back to their house, they pulled up the ladder. For many years the man and his wife did not know how to have sexual intercourse, but finally they discovered how to do it, and the wife became pregnant. The first child was a son named Lilambo, and the second a daughter called Nasio. The two children grew up and married each other and sons were born to them. The first couple also begot two more daughters and these married their nephews. Through this intermarriage, mankind increased upon the earth. God originally endowed men with the gift of immortality.

The Bukusu people who are a sub-ethnic group of the Abaluyia have the following version of the myth: it is told that in their ignorance, the first man and wife attempted sexual intercourse in the armpit, but discovered the right organ when the wife climbed the granary to get millet and her husband watched her from beneath. At first she refused to sleep with him and when she finally agreed it was painful, but a month later she conceived In this way men began to increase upon the earth (Wagner in Forde 1954:169-70).

According to the Ashanti, the first man enjoyed a privileged position in creation. God made things for man's use and protection. "He ordered animals to eat the plants, and he ordered man to do the same, and to drink from the waters; he also ordered man to use the animals as meat. Lastly he created the gods to protect men" (Lystad 1958: 164).

The Bacongo summarise the original state of man in their common saying that "man is God's man" (Claridge 1922:270). Thus man is specially connected with the Divine. As God's property he is linked to the Divine in an intimate manner which is quite different from the way in which other creatures are linked to God.

In one of the Bambuti myths, it is told that the first people lived happily, lacking nothing, as God provided them with food, shelter, and immortality. When they grew old, God rejuvenated them and they became young once more (Schebesta 1936: 177-8; 180).

The Tswana say that the primeval state was one of happiness, peace, and blessedness; the men neither ate, nor drank, nor died (Dornan 1925:288-9). The Meru of Kenya also believe that primeval man did not need to eat or drink.

The Fajulu picture two worlds which existed long ago and which were linked by a rope made of cowhide. The inhabitants of both worlds held dance parties and festivities, inviting each other by means of the sound of the drum. It was a very happy state of affairs, which ended only when the hyena cut the rope into two (Nalder 1937:200). The Lugbara and other peoples in the Upper White Nile valley tell similar myths in which men and God were originally in direct contact.

According to the Zulu, the first men came into being already "perfected", i.e. as adults. The husband and wife found themselves crouching on a bed of reeds, but did not see the One who had created them. But the story goes on to say that God gave them the

following order: "Let men circumcise, that they not be boys" (Callaway 1870: 34, 46, 58).

5.1.1 God's provision for the original man

We have already touched on this concept, but there are other examples to mention. The Abaluyia tell us that God let rain come down to fill the depressions and valleys with water, so that man would have something to drink. He also instructed the first couple to eat only the animals with hoofs and all types of fish, but neither crawling animals nor scavenger birds (Wagner in Forde 1954: 29, 43).

The Acholi say that God taught the first man all the essentials of living, including cultivation, beer-making, and cooking. According to the Acamba, God gave a cow, a goat and a sheep to the first human beings. In order to provide human beings with marriage partners without the dangers of incest (which is abominable to the Akamba) one myth says that God made two pairs of the first human beings. The children of these couples could then intermarry freely.

The Azande believe that God provided man with the art of magic. This included the knowledge necessary for making medicines, and of how to avenge crimes (Baxter and Butt 1953:95). The Bemba also say that magic is a gift from God, but it is not clear whether this was given to the original men or to their descendants later (Whiteley *et al.* 1950: 29). The Ewe believe that God sent magic power into the world when He had made the first men (Manoukian 1952: 50). According to the Lango, magic art is derived partly from God and partly from the spirits, but it is not certain when men first learnt it (Driberg 1923: 225).

So God created man and provided him with the means of inhabiting the earth. God's relationship with the original man and the causes leading to their separation form the main subject of focus under this subsection. In many of the stories we hear that there was a close relationship between God and the original human beings. Some people picture God as living among men or visiting them from time to time. It was like a family relationship in which God was the parent and the men were the children. We shall examine the nature of this relationship and the events or causes that led to its termination, alteration or change.

A long time ago, so say the Ashanti, God lived in the sky but close to men. One woman, who was pounding the national food (*fufu*) constantly went on knocking against Him with her long pestle. God decided therefore to go up higher. The woman advised her children to construct a tower of mortars piled one on top of another. This they did, and when they had used all the mortars, there was only a short distance left between them and God, the length of one mortar. The woman instructed her children to take the bottom-most mortar to fill up the last gap. They did so, but then the entire tower came tumbling down, killing many people. Those who survived gave up the attempt to reach God (Busia in Forde 1954:192; Lystad 1958: 163).

The Bambuti say that God actually lived with the first men (two sons and a daughter), but he was alone, without either a wife or a brother. He communicated with the men, but never showed himself to them. He lived in a big house, was kindly disposed towards the children, made them happy and supplied them freely with everything they needed. He commanded them that they should never seek him out. The daughter's duty was to draw water and fetch firewood for him, placing them at the door of his house, from where God took them in without being seen by the children. This close and happy relationship ended one day when the daughter was overcome by curiosity and tried to watch God as he took in the pot of water. She hid herself nearby and saw him "stretch forth his arm, which was well covered with brass rings, outside his abode, to take in the pot. She had seen it – the richly adorned arm of God. How her heart rejoiced! But alas, her sin was immediately followed by punishment". God had already seen her and her crime was not hidden from him. Immediately he summoned his children, reprimanded them for their disobedience, and told them that they would live without him. Their bitter weeping did not change his decision, and he withdrew himself from them. In one account it is narrated that "God left his children secretly and disappeared downstream along the banks of the river. Since then no one has seen him. But with God went also happiness and peace, and the people lost everything which he had formerly offered them freely: water, fish, game, and all kinds of fruit. Henceforth they had to work hard in order to eat their daily bread away from God (Shebesta 1936: 178-9). The "river" mentioned here is one of the Congo tributaries. Going "downstream" symbolises a departure, a separation, a disappearance and an irreparable loss to men.

In the story of the Chagga of Tanzania it is narrated that God used to visit the first men every morning and evening to greet them and enquire after their welfare. He provided

them with bananas, yams, and potatoes. But he forbade them to eat of one yam. So long as they observed this commandment, the relationship remained on a family basis, and the men were happy (Dundas 1924: 108-109).

The Mende tell that the first couple used to go to God so frequently to ask him for things, that he went off to another dwelling place where they could not reach him so readily. These first men did not know God's name, but referred to him as "Grandfather". Because he did not refuse to give them whatever they asked of him they began to call him *Mangee*, which meant "Grandfather take it". Before he completely left them, he made an "agreement" (covenant) with them, that they should not have an evil heart towards one another. The fowl was the symbol of this covenant and God said to them: "whenever one of you does wrong to his companion you must call me and when I come you must give me back my fowl". They agreed to it. Then he went to his abode in the heavens, and for that reason the people called him *Leve*, which means "up" or "high" (Harris in Smith 1961:278-279). This myth is a clear illustration of the relationship between God and the first men. From his side, he was generous and always at their disposal, and he required that they also should have a good relationship with one another. Even when he left them, he did not just desert them: he established a covenant, by means of which part of the relationship could still be maintained between him and the people, as well as between the people themselves.

According to the Yao, God originally dwelt on earth with men until they learned the art of making fire by friction. They set the grasslands alight, and God withdrew himself into heaven, ordering that men should now go there after death. The Pave believe that God dwelt on earth with men, supplying them with whatever they needed. He commanded them not to eat eggs, but they did not keep this law. When they ate the eggs, the happy relationship also ended. God took away all the food, and slaughtered everyone except a single woman and man. Then he withdrew himself from them, leaving them alone on earth. Similarly the Barotse narrate that God lived with the first man and woman, and the animals. The relationship ended when men killed and ate the animals which God had forbidden then to do as these were men's brothers. God withdrew himself from the first men (Young 1940: 44-5). This myth indicates that peace and harmony reigned among all the creatures in the primeval period, and that this peace and harmony ended only as a result of man's murderous deeds. Damage

to the relationship between man and animals resulted in a similar damage to the relationship between God and man.

The Barundi narrate that God lived among the first men, creating children for them. This in itself was indicative of God's care for men, and that he provided in their greatest need. It is told that one day God formed a crippled child and the parents became so angry that they threatened him with a spear or knife. He therefore withdrew himself and fled to the skies (Liehardt in Forde 1954:145).

Among the Bari, Fajulu, Lugbara, Madi, Mondari, Topasa and others in the Upper White Nile Region, the relationship between God and the early men is represented in stories telling that the sky or heaven and earth were originally united. The bridge, generally a rope, was a symbol of communication. God and men could communicate directly. According to the Bari version, God lived both in the heaven above and on earth below and the two worlds were joined by means of a rope. In some myths the rope was cut into two by the hyena, and thus the direct link or relationship between God and men was severed.

5.1.2   God's commandment and man's disobedience

We have already mentioned God's commandment to the first men in the discussion above. We have more examples to add here and shall also elaborate further on previous ones.

The Banyarwanda narrate that God commanded all the people to remain indoors, so that death, personified as an animal, would not find a hiding place while he hunted it. One old woman went to work in her banana grove, where the fleeing death came and begged for her protection. She took pity on him and allowed the animal to hide under her skirt . When God saw what had happened he punished men by letting death loose among them (Maquet in Forde 1954:174).

The Bushmen represent the Creator as having had a wife (Kruger 1995). When he had finished creating men, she fell sick and he left her in a cave, and went on a long journey to fetch medicines. He commanded the people not to bury her if she died in his absence. She died, but the people disobeyed and buried her. This made God angry. He told them that had they obeyed him, he would have given them the gift

rising again after death. So they had lost the resurrection and God withdrew himself from them (Kidd 1904: 78).

The Elgeyo narrate that God told the first man to wait for him, and to refrain from eating until he arrived. The snake persuaded the man to eat, which he did. When God arrived, he punished the man for his disobedience (Mbiti 1969).

In the Chagga story mentioned above, it is told that God commanded the first man telling him "to eat all the fruit of the bananas, also all the potatoes in the banana grove. But the yam which is called Ula or Ukaho, truly you shall not eat it. Neither you nor your people may eat it. And if any eats it, his bones shall break and at last he shall die." A stranger visited the first man, and deceived him about eating the forbidden yam. The man disobeyed. Immediately sickness broke out among the first men. When their elder prayed to God for mercy, he intervened with the message that when the man grew old, he would cast his skin as the snakes do, and become young again. This was to be done in secret so that none of the other people would see him in course of the process of rejuvenation. When the time came for him to remove his skin, he sent away the granddaughter who looked after him to fetch water. While alone in the house, he removed the skin from half of his body and when he was about to remove the rest, the granddaughter arrived and saw him. The process ended at once and the gift of rejuvenation vanished away. The old man cried out aloud in sorrow:

> So be it, I have died
> All of you will die
> I have died
> All of you have died
> For your grand daughter
> Entered while I cast my skin
> Woe is me, woe is you!

Then he died (Dundas 1924:108 ff). In this dramatic way man disobeyed God.

In a myth which may not be altogether original, the Meru say that when God had created the first man, he gave them food but forbade them to eat the fruit of the tree. A crawling creature (*Mugambi*) came and deceived the woman who climbed up the tree, picked one fruit, ate it, picked another, and gave it to her husband. At first the man refused to take it, but she threatened to leave him. He succumbed and ate it.

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"Having eaten it, his throat apple ... came out. It is since then that man has got a throat apple" (Bernardi 1959: 53 ff).

In another myth the Bambuti tell that after creating the first man (*Baatsi*) God gave him and his children one rule, he said to them, "From all the trees of the forest you may eat, except the *Tahu* tree, and the woman asked her husband to fetch it for her. At first he refused, but she persisted until "her husband crept into the forest secretly, plucked the fruit of the *Tahu,* peeled it quickly, and hid the peel carefully in the foliage, so that his act should not be discovered. But all the precaution was in vain. The moon had already seen him and had told what she had seen to God: 'The people which thou hast created have eaten of the fruit of *Tahu* tree!' God was so angry at the disobedience of his people that he sent death among them as punishment" (Schebesta 1936: 178).

The Zulu believe that God decreed a path in which they should walk, but that they no longer know what the path is. They say that certain customs, such as circumcision and marriage, were instituted or ordered by God from the very beginning. These, the people seem to have kept and observed (Maimela and König 1998).

5.1.3   The consequences of the separation

In giving an account of the different myths concerning the separation of God from man, we have mentioned some of the consequences as far as man is concerned. We may now give a summary of these and a few others.

People	Broken commandments as cause of the separation	Consequence
Bambuti	1. Forbidden to eat the Tahu fruit. 2. Forbidden to look at God.	1. God left men alone; death came among men. 2. God withdrew himself; man lost happiness, peace and the free supply of food; man was cursed to work hard in order to eat; the woman was cursed "to be the wife of her brothers. In pain she would bring forth children and death came upon men" (Schebesta 1936:178-9)
Banyarwanda	Forbidden to hide death.	Man was told to keep death.
Barotse	Forbidden to kill and eat animals.	God withdrew himself.
Bushmen	Forbidden to bury a dead woman while God fetched medicine.	Man lost the gift of resurrection; and death came among men.
Chagga	Forbidden to eat the Ula yam, and to be seen while taking off the skin in old age.	Diseases and old age came; the gift of rejuvenation was lost; and death came.
Elgeyo	Forbidden to eat before God arrived.	Man told to work for food; the snake to move on his stomach and suffer the enmity of men (Massam 1927:194-5).
Meru	Forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree.	The throat apple of the man "came out"; later death came; and the snake was cursed to "be crushed"
Pare	Forbidden to eat eggs.	God withdrew from among them, taking away food and causing all mankind to perish

In another group of stories the separation between God and man came about by accident, and the consequences are generally less dramatic, though still serious. According to the Ashanti, it was the long pestle of the old woman which, by constantly knocking against God, "forced" him to withdraw further. The men tried to follow him by building a tower of mortars, but this crumbled and killed many of them, and the survivors gave up trying to reach God by this means. Among the Bari, Lugbara and others who speak about the broken rope or bridge which once united heaven (sky) and earth, the main consequence is said to be man's loss of a direct path by which he can reach God or a way to heaven (Schmidt 1998). In the Yao story, men set the grassland on fire "forcing God to retreat into heaven. But he decreed that men must

die in order to be able to go to him, when they would then become his slaves (Idowu 1973).

And so this state put strain on the original direct contact and relationship between God and man. This is what we indicated from the beginning as man in the state of sin from the African point of view. The myth stories of different African ethnic groups vividly express this concept. The unfortunate consequences for man include the loss of immortality, resurrection, rejuvenation and free food, in addition to the coming of death and suffering. Yet, through acts of worship, man tries to counteract this separation caused by sin, and to maintain some form of contact with God. This will be discussed in the next chapter under the title *Salvation and the perception of the Divine*.

5.1.4   Conclusion

We can then say that African anthropology accepts and understands sin as a basic condition of mankind and that this condition resulted from one form of violation or another of the original relationship with the Divine. In the mind of an African religion pervades all activities of life. The Divine is believed to exist in everything an African does. Interpersonal relationships also fall under the realm of the Divine. The theories of different African communities concerning the origin of sin, as expounded and explained above, tell how, from the African point of view, the relationship with the Divine was violated resulting of the entrance of sin. The myths discussed above provide a sample of the views of the rest of the African ethnic groups. Appeasement for the violation for the purpose of restoring peace with the Divine can only be achieved through sacrifice. This subject we shall discuss in the next chapter. However, in the African view the sacrifice of animals cannot lead to a complete restoration of peace with the Divine once sin has insinuated itself into a community. The African must seek a lasting remedy in the Person of Jesus Christ who is Himself a complete and satisfying sacrifice which can wholly cleanse sin.

5.2   Man in the state of sin: the Christian viewpoint

The problem of the origin of sin is one that necessarily forces itself upon the attention of thoughtful men, and which continues to baffle those who are not satisfied with the Biblical account. Some earlier and later theologians simply pushed the problem back a step by saying that the souls of men sinned in some previous existence, and that consequently all men are now born sinners. The great philosopher, Immanuel Kant,

recognised the existence of radical evil in man, but despaired of explaining its origin (Kant 1933:18-20). Evolutionists find its explanation in the tendencies, impulses and passions inherited from the brute (Freud 1923). The Bible, however, directs our attention to the fall of man. It teaches us that the root of all moral evil and departure from the Divine lies in the first sin of Adam, the natural and representative head of the human race in the Christian context (as in Islam and Judaism). Paul asserts, however, that man does not clearly perceive God in the general revelation. Sin comprises the fall of the human race and the continuing evil has a double effect upon the efficacy of the general revelation. On the one hand, sin has marred the witness of the general revelation. The created order is now under a curse (Gen. 3: 17-19). The ground brings forth thorns and thistles for the man who would till it (v. 18); women must suffer the multiplied anguish of childbearing (v. 16). In Romans 8: 18-25 Paul speaks of the creation's having been subjected to futility (v. 20); it wails for liberation (vv. 19, 21, 23). As a result its witness is somewhat refracted. While it is still God's creation, and thus continues to witness to Him, it is not quite what it was when it came form the hand of the Maker. It is a spoiled creation. The testimony of the Divine (the Maker) is blurred because of sin (Calvin Vol 1:6:1845).

5.2.1   The nature of the first sin

The first sin consisted in man's eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This eating was sinful because God had forbidden it. We do not know what kind of tree this was. It was called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil", because it was destined to reveal (a) whether man's future state would be good or evil; and (b) whether man would allow God to determine for him what was good and evil, or would undertake to determine this for himself. This first sin was of a typical character, clearly revealing the essential nature of sin. This lies in the fact that man refused to subject himself to the will of God and to have God determine the course of his life, and decided to settle this for himself. Different elements can be distinguished in this first sin. As far as the intellect is concerned, it reveals itself as unbelief and pride, as far as the will is concerned, as a desire to be like God, and, as far as the affections are concerned, as an unholy satisfaction in eating of the forbidden fruit.

5.2.2   The results of the first sin

In consequence of the first sin man lost the image of God in the restricted sense of the word, the knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness; and moreover, became totally depraved, that is, in every part of his being and utterly incapable of doing any spiritual good. This change in the actual condition of man is also reflected in his consciousness. It was followed by a sense of pollution, which revealed itself in a feeling of shame and a sense of guilt which found expression in an accusing conscience and in fear of God. In addition to that man became subject to the law of death in the fullest sense of the word (Gen. 3:19 Rom. 5:12; 6:23), though the full execution of the sentence was stayed. Finally man was driven from paradise and barred from the tree of life, which symbolised the life that was promised in the covenant of works. The more serious effect of sin and the fall is that upon man himself (Erickson 1983: 170). Scripture speaks in several places of the blindness and darkness of man's understanding. We have already mentioned Romans 1:21 where Paul says that men knew God but rejected this knowledge with the result that blindness followed. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul attributes this blindness to the work of Satan: "In their case the god of this world has blinded their minds from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God". Although Paul is referring here to the ability to see the light of the gospel, this blindness without doubt affects the ability to see God in the creation as well.

5.2.3   The essential character of sin

There are many erroneous conceptions of the real character of sin. It is only from Scripture that we can learn just what sin is. In connection with the Scriptural idea of sin several points should be emphasised:

5.2.3.1   Sin is a specific kind of evil.

In the present day many people show a tendency to substitute the word "evil" for "sin". But this is a poor substitute. While it is perfectly true that all sin is evil, it cannot be said with equal truth that all evil is sin. Sickness may be regarded as an evil, but can hardly be called a sin. Moreover, the modern tendency to speak of evil rather than of sin finds its explanation largely in the fact that people prefer to regard sin simply as a disease or as an imperfection, for which man can hardly be held responsible.

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Not all sin is committed voluntarily in the sense of being a distinct and conscious volition; for an evil disposition and state often precede and occasion evil volition, and an evil disposition and state are themselves sin (Strong 1970:557). All sin, however, is voluntary as springing either directly from will, or indirectly from those perverse affections and desires which themselves have their origin in the will. "Voluntary" is broader term than "volitional" and includes all those permanent states of intellect and affection which the will has made what they are. Will, moreover, is not to be regarded as simply the faculty of volition but as primarily the underlying determination of the being to a supreme end.

Deliberate intention to sin is an aggravation of transgression, but it is not essential for making any given act a sin. Those evil inclinations and impulses which rise unbidden and master the soul before it is well aware of their nature, are themselves violations of the divine law, an indication of an inward depravity which, in the case of every descendant of Adam, is the chief and foremost transgression. The Bible teaches us to regard sin as a specific kind of evil, as a moral evil for which man is directly responsible and which brings him under a sentence of condemnation (Berkhof 1958:138).

This is the message that the missionaries brought to the continent of Africa: that man has sinned against God and hence stands without the divine blessings and is living under a curse. Most Africans, especially in Kenya, accepted the message, but only partially as expounded by Professor J.N.K. Mugambi in his *African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity*: "African Christians accepted the gospel message. At the same time, however, they did not entirely abandon the traditional understanding of rituals" (Mugambi 1989a:100). These sentiments of Mugambi may, in terms of our subject, be understood as that Kenyan Christians in most part of the country understood what sin was in response to the gospel brought to them by the missionaries, but that they traditionally continued with all the activities of sin privately. These included fornication, adultery, sacrifice to idols, traditional circumcision rites and dances, to mention a few.

5.2.3.2   Sin has an absolute character.

In the ethical sphere the contrast between good and evil is absolute. There is no neutral condition between the two. This is the clear teaching of Scripture. He who does not love God from the heart, is thereby already characterised as evil. The Bible

knows of no position of moral neutrality. It urges the wicked to turn to righteousness, and frequently speaks of the righteous as falling into evil; but it does not contain a single indication that either the one or the other ever lands in a neutral position. Man is either on the right or on the wrong side (Matt. 10:32, 33; 12:30; Luke 11:23, Jas. 2:10). "Whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all" (Good News Edition).

5.2.3.3   Sin is always related to God and his will.

Modern theology insists on interpreting sin in a social way, that is, with reference to one's fellowmen. Sin is a wrong done to one's fellow beings. But this misses the point entirely, for such a wrong can be called sin only in view of the fact that it is contrary to the will of God. Sin is correctly defined as "Lack of conformity to the law of God" and this means that it is the opposite of that love of God which is required by the divine law. It is quite evident that Scripture always sees sin in relation to God and the law, either as written on the tablets of man's heart or as given by Moses (Rom 1:32; 2:12-14; 4:15; 5:13; Jas 2:9,10; 1 John 3:4. "Whoever sins is guilty of breaking God's law, because sin is a breaking of the law" . [Good News Edition]).

5.2.3.4   Sin includes both guilt and pollution.

Sin is first of all guilt, that is, it is a transgression of the law, which makes men liable to the punishment of a righteous God. Many indeed deny that sin includes guilt, but this denial goes contrary to the fact that the sinner is threatened and actually visited with punishment and to the plain statements of Scripture such as Matt 6:12: "Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us", Romans 3:19; 5:18 and Ephesians 2:3. Sin is also pollution, an inherent corruption to which every sinner is subject. Guilt always carries pollution with it. Everyone who is guilty in Adam is, as a result, also born with a corrupt nature. The pollution of sin is clearly taught in such passages of the Bible as Job 14:4; Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 7:15-20, Romans 8:5-8 and Ephesians 4:17-19.

5.2.3.5   Sin has its seat in the heart of man.

Sin does not reside in any faculty of the soul, but in the heart, which in the psychology of Scripture is the central organ of the soul, out of which are the issues of life. (Proverbs 4:23: Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the well spring of life.) And

from this centre its influence and operations spread to the intellect, the will, the affections, in short, to the whole man, including his body. It also leads to the natural death in shame as is the case with AIDS in our day. This view is clearly based on the representations of Scripture in such passages as the following: Proverbs 4:23; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19,20; Luke 6:45 and Hebrews 3:12.

5.2.3.6 Sin does not consist in outward acts only.

Over against Pelagians and semi-Pelagians of every description, the fact should be emphasised that sin consists not only in outward acts, but also in sinful habits and the sinful condition of the heart of man. These three are related to one another as follows: the sinful state is the basis of sinful habits such as hatred, animosity and guilt, and these, in turn, lead to sinful deeds or a drifting away from the divine law. That the evil thoughts, affectations, and intents of the heart should also be regarded as sin is clear from passages such as the following: Matthew 5:22,28; Romans 7:7 and Galatians 5:17, 24.

5.2.4 Divergent views of sin

We should now embark on the discussion of the divergent views of sin. There are several views which are not at all in harmony with the Scriptural representation of it as held by most Christians. Just a few of these can be indicated briefly here.

5.2.4.1 The Pelagian view of sin

The Pelagians do not believe in original sin, and therefore do not share the conviction that every man is born as a sinner. According to their view, Adam was created and everyone of his descendants is born in a state of moral neutrality, neither positively good nor positively bad. Sin is the result of the free choice of every man. No one need sin if he does not want to. There is no such thing as a sinful nature or a sinful character; neither are there sinful dispositions. Sin consists only in a deliberate choice of evil by a will which is perfectly free and which can just as well choose and follow the good. The Pelagians are sharply opposed by Augustianism which emphasises the absolute necessity of God's interior grace for man's salvation (Elwell 1984:833-34).

5.2.4.2 The Roman Catholic view of sin

According to the Roman Catholics, original sin is primarily a negative condition, consisting in the absence of that original righteousness with which man was supernaturally endowed. It is a state of aversion to God, and therefore a state of sin. Actual sin consists only in those actions of man which are the result of a deliberate choice of the will. The unholy disposition, desires and affections that lie behind these deeds may be of a sinful nature and may tend to produce sin; but cannot themselves be considered to be sin in the strictest sense of the word.

5.2.4.3 The evolutionary view of sin

In modern liberal theology the evolutionary view of sin is very popular, though it is not always presented in exactly the same way. It was developed particularly in the works of Tennant. According to him, there are many impulses and qualities which man has inherited from the brute. These are not in themselves sin, but naturally become sin under certain conditions. There is a gradually awakening of moral sense in man, which condemns those impulses and qualities. And these actually become sin if man decides to yield to them in spite of the condemning voice of conscience (Hick 1973: 34-37). Sin therefore consists in this that man, as a moral being, still allows himself to be controlled by the appetites and passions of his sensual nature rather than by the aspirations of his higher nature (Maritain 1953:60).

5.2.5 Conclusion

The preceding paragraphs focused on the origin and nature of sin. The question before us is: How does sin contribute to the understanding of the Divine in relation to human sin? We shall have to deal with this fairly summarily. In a word, the evangelistic message is the gospel of Christ, and Him crucified, the message of man's sin and the divine grace, of human guilt and divine forgiveness, of new birth and new life through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The message to be preached has the objective of redeeming man from sin which means death and damnation before the Divine.

The gospel is a message about sin. It tells us how we have fallen short of the divine standard; how we have become guilty, filthy and helpless in sin, and now stand under the wrath of God. It tells us that the reason why we sin continually is that we are sinners by nature, and that nothing we do, or try to do for ourselves can put us right, or

bring us back to the divine favour. It shows us ourselves as the Divine sees us, and from the gospel we are taught to think of ourselves as the divine thinks of us. Sin leads us to self-despair. Not until we have learned our need to make things right with the Divine, and our inability to do so by our own effort, can we come to know the Christy who saves from sin.

There is a pitfall here. Everybody's life includes things which cause dissatisfaction and shame (Parker 1977:59). Everyone has a bad conscience about some things in his past, matters in which he has fallen short of the divine standards or a personal standard set by himself, or which was expected of him by others. All these points to the fact of having drifted away from the Divine which is here understood as sin. Sin violates our relationships with the Divine and our interpersonal dialogue with our neighbour, not to mention religious coexistence. For the very idea of sin in the Bible is of an offence against the Divine, which disrupts a man's relationship with God. Unless we see our shortcomings in the light of the law and holiness of the Divine , we do not see them as sin at all. For sin is not a social concept; it is a theological concept. Though sin is committed by man, and many sins are against society, sin cannot be defined in terms of either man o society. We never know what sin really is till we have learned to think of it in terms of the violation of and rebellion against the divine law, and to measure it, not by human standards, but by the yardstick of his total demand on our lives.

What are the signs of a true conviction of sin, as distinct from the mere smart of a natural bad conscience, or the mere disgust at life which any disillusioned person may feel?

The signs seem to be three in number:

(i)   Conviction of sin is essentially an awareness of a wrong relationship with the Divine. This wrong relationship is not just with one's neighbour, or one's own conscience and ideals for oneself, but with one's Creator, the Divine, in whose hand one's breath is and on Whom one depends for existence every moment. To define conviction of sin as a sense of need, without qualification would not be enough; it is not just any sense of need; but a sense of a particular need, namely for restoration of fellowship with the Divine. It is the realisation that, as one stands at present, one is in a relationship with the Divine. That this, if not changed, spells only rejection, retribution, wrath and pain for the present and the future; and the

realisation that this is an intolerable relationship to remain in, resulting in a desire that it might be changed at whatever cost and on any terms. Conviction of sin may centre on the sense of one's guilt, before the Divine, or one's uncleanness in his sight, or one's rebellion against the Divine, or one's alienation and estrangement from Him; but always it is a sense of the need to get right, not simply with oneself or other people, but with the Divine.

(ii) Conviction of sin always includes conviction of sins: a sense of guilt for particular wrongs done in the sight of the Divine, from which one needs to turn in order to be rid of them, if one is ever to be right with the Divine. Thus Isaiah was convicted specifically of sins of speech (Isaiah 6:5) and Zachaeus of sins of extortion (Luke 19:8).

(iii) Conviction of sin always includes conviction of sinfulness: a sense of one's complete corruption and perversity in the sight of the Divine, and one's consequent need of what Ezekiel called "a new heart" (Ezek. 36:26), and our Lord a new birth (John 3:3 ff), i.e. a moral recreation. Thus, the author of Psalm 51, traditionally identified with David, convicted of his sin with Bathseba confesses, not only particular transgressions (verses 1-4), but also the depravity of his nature (verses 5-6) and seeks cleansing from the guilt and defilement caused by both (verses 7-10). Indeed, perhaps the shortest way to tell whether a person is convicted of sin and shortcoming before the Divine or not is to take him through Psalm 51 and see whether his heart is, in fact, speaking anything like the language of the psalmist.

The description above depicts man in the state of sin and living away from the divine law of impeccability. According to Scripture all men, and therefore the human race, is under condemnation and therefore need the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is on the basis of this condemnation that dialogue among members of the human race remains difficult to achieve. Children are never made an exception to this rule of hatred, animosity and condemnation. This follows from the passages quoted under (1) and also from John 3:3,5, Ephesians 2:3 and 1 John 5:12. They all need the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit unto salvation in order to live harmoniously in a multi-religious society.

5.3   The Muslim view of man in the state of sin

Several words are used in Islam to distinguish between degrees of sins. To start with, it is necessary for us to arrive at a clear understanding of these words by way of definition. It is on the basis of these definitions that the Islam conception of sin will be understood, making it possible for us to draw a comparison between Islam, the African traditional Religion and Christianity in this regard

The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam by Gibb and Kramers provides a list of words which can be remotely translated as sin in the Qur'an sense, but not in that of the Bible. These words are '*Bátil*', '*Khatia*', '*Zanb*', '*ithm*' and '*shirk*' (Gibb and Kramers 1974:60). *Batil* is simply taken to mean futile, vain. In the religious and orthodox language of the Qur'an it denotes the vain and unreal as opposed to *hakk* in the sense of the real (S. 22:62; 31:30; 34:49). Those who pursue ungodly aims are therefore called *mubtiluna*. In the logical sense it means false, wrong (*khata*); in the juridical sense: null and void, without legal effect, the lowest degree on the scale of legality in the Islamic law (*Sharia*) (Van Donzel, Lewis and Pellat 1978).

Khata, sin, synonymous with *dhanb*. The root *khit* has the meaning of stumbling (in Hebrew: Proverbs 19:2), committing an error. The definition of *khatia* is "a sin committed on purpose", that of *khit'* (S.17:31) simply "a sin", whereas *ithm* is applied to heavy sins. It is only in accord with the general character of the Qur'an that it does not contain an elaborate theory of sin. Frequent are however, the passages in which the consequences and forgiveness of sins are spoken of. Allah, *al-Rahmán al-Rahim*, through the preaching of his apostles and prophets, calls men for the forgiveness of their sins (Sura 14:10; 46:31; 71:4,7). He who avoids heavy sins and immoral deeds will find plenteous forgiveness with his Lord (Sura 53:32), who "forgiveth sin and accepteth repentance" (Sura 40:3). He is the best of forgivers (Sura 7:155). He forgiveth sins totally (*djami*; Sura 34:53).

"*Zanb*": a sin, a crime (Sura 24:14; 81:9). This word is also used for faults of Muhammad (S 47:19; 48:2). *Ithm*, as already seen under the definition of *khatia* above, means anything forbidden in the law – a happy sin. Last of the sins is "*shirk*". In Islam and according to the Qur'an this implies adding a partner to Allah and amounts to. polytheism. We have already indicated above that shirk was coined by Muhammad and included in the Qur'an simply as an attack on Christianity with its doctrine of the divine nature of Christ. *Shirk* is also based on the rejection of the

Christian teaching of the Trinity as discussed in the previous chapter. We shall now proceed to discuss sin in the Muslim context; given the above definitions.

Much of the *fiqh* (systematic theology in Islam) and the *Shariah* (law of Islam) is occupied with sin. Let us take a look at the Islamic concept thereof. First of all we must understand that Islam, with its integrated understanding of religion, knows no separation between the temporal and the eternal. Law therefore includes civil law, criminal law and religious law. Man's sin against a fellowman subsequently does not constitute an offence against Allah or the Divine. The idea of the original sin as articulated in the Torah and the Bible finds no root in the Qur'an.

A false understanding of the holiness of God and the depravity of man is followed by a minimising of sin:

> "Observance of ... duties is called virtue, and the negligence or breach thereof is called sin. Virtue and sin result from lawful and unlawful things."

> "In every act there is sin and virtue."

> "Any breach of the fundamental dues of which the performance is compulsory and obligatory is called great sin. Any breach of other minor duties is called a minor sin. Breach of any duty which the Holy Prophet used to do constantly without any break is a great sin. Constant repetition of a minor sin makes it a major one" (Mishkatu' Massabin 11:121-129).

Subsequently Islamic theologians divide sins into *Gunahii* - "*Kabirah*" and *Gunahii*- "*Saghirah*", great and little sins. Since Muslim are divided into four schools of law, those founded by Abu Hanifa, Malik, Ash-Shafii and Ibn-Hanbal, there is no agreement on the exact number of "*kabirah*" sins. The "*Mishkat*" lists 53 (Vol 3:128), however, one may consider the following seventeen sins as those roughly agreed upon (Hughes 1885:594):

1. *Kufr* (unbelief, spiritual infidel).
2. Perpetual commitment of small sins.
3. Despairing of Allah's mercy.
4. Imagined immunity against the wrath of Allah.
5. False witness.
6. Falsely charging a Muslim with adultery.
7. Perjury.

8. Practice of magic (Although this is very commonly done by nominal Muslims – and is considered to be in agreement with Islam.)

9. Drinking of alcoholic beverages.

10. Appropriation of the property of orphans.

11. Usury.

12. Adultery.

13. Unnatural crime.

14. Theft.

15. Murder.

16. Fleeing in battle before infidel enemies.

17. Disobedience to parents.

According to Gibb and Kramers (1974:250)."light sins" may be repaired by good works; this explains why Islam is mostly understood as a religion of works. A man who finds himself in a state of heavy sins as described above (*ithm*) requires "*instighfar*" i.e. seeking forgiveness of Allah, "*Shirk*" is the severest of the sins to be committed by a Muslim against the Divine. A man finding himself in this state of "*shirk*", requires "*taubah*", repentance.

The Qur'an says S. 39:53):

> "O my servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the mercy of Allah, for Allah forgives all sins, for he is oft-forgiving, most merciful.

This view is, of course contradicted by others, that state that certain sins are heavier than others.

> "To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth and punishes whom He pleaseth. But Allah is oft-forgiving and merciful". (S3:129) or "He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punishes whom he pleaseth. For Allah has power over all things" (S 2:284).

What does the Qur'an teach about sin? We make a list of the quotations from the Qur'an concerning sin below:

> "Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, only (falling into) small faults, verily thy Lord is ample in forgiveness" (S. 53:32)

"Nay, those who seek gain in Evil, and are girt round by their sins – they are companions of the Fire: therein shall they abide" (S. 2: 81).

"Kill not your children for fear of want: we shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you: verily the killing of them is a great sin"(S. 17:31).

"Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to who He pleaseth…. (S. 4:48).

"Those who ... go on increasing in unbelief Allah will not forgive them" (S.4:137).

"Those who reject "Allah ... Allah will not forgive them" (S. 47:34).

"Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins (S. 39:53).

"Allah, who forgiveth sin, accepteth Repentance, is strict in punishment" (S. 40:3).

"Believe in Him; He will forgive you your faults" (S 46:31).

"It is He who invites you, in order that He may forgive you your sins" (S. 14:10)

"Say to the Unbelievers, if they desist (from unbelief), their past would be forgiven them" (S. 8:38).

"To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth and punishes whom He pleaseth" (S. 3:129).

"He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punisheth whom He pleaseth. For Allah hath power over all things. (S. 2:284).

The Qur'an articulation to Muslims is that sin entered the human life through the persuasion of *Iblis*. Sin in this regard violates the relationship of man with the Divine. (Allah). *Iblis* disobeyed the Divine even before the creation of man. This obedience is the source of sin and all evil causing animosity for humanity. Although the first man Adam and his wife *Hauwa* (Eve) sinned, it was not a deliberate desire to disobey their Creator. They were tempted by the master of sin and evil – *Iblis*. This they sincerely confessed to Allah, who granted them pardon. According to the Qur'an mankind does not suffer sin and evil because of Adam's disobedience. Sin is not hereditary. Adam, having repented, was reunited with Allah and his relationship with the Divine was restored. He was made Allah's first messenger on earth. He was to provide guidance for his children. According to the Qur'an, Muslims' relationship with the Divine is

restored as soon as they genuinely repent as Adam did. They are wholly pardoned directly by Allah who works through no mediator (S.47:34).

Apart from the Qur'an, another book of religious significance and authority in Islam is the *Hadith*. What does the *Hadith* teach about sin? Abdullah-b-Mas'ud reported that a man asked: 'What sin is greatest near the Divine?' He replied: your calling up a partner for Allah ... What is next? He replied: your killing of your child ... What is next? He replied: adultery ... And those who do not call another god with Allah and do not kill one whom Allah has made unlawful except for just cause and those who do not commit adultery" (Stanton 1919:56).

> "Abdullah-b-Amr reported that the Apostle of Allah said: The greatest sins are to associate a partner with Allah, to disobey parents, to kill a soul and to take false oath (Abdul-Haqq 1980:157).

> "Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: Avoid seven harmful things – setting up a partner with Allah, sorcery, killing souls whom Allah has made unlawful except for just cause, devouring usury, devouring the properties of an orphan, keeping behind on the day of fight and slandering chaste, believing heedless women."

> "Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: Verily Allah pardoned my followers for what their breasts prompt towards evil so long as they do not do it or utter."

> "Mu'az reported that the Apostle of Allah instructed him with ten counsels. He said: set up nothing with Allah ... not be disobedient to your parents ... nor give up the compulsory prayers .. nor drink wine ... beware of flight from holy war ... and spend for your family out of your means."

> "Sajwan -b-Assal reported ... set up nothing with Allah, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill a soul ... nor take an innocent man to a man of power that he may put him to death, nor practice sorcery, nor devour interest nor cast blasphemy on a chaste woman, nor turn back for flight."

As a matter of comparison, we know that the Christian teaching about sin as contained in the Bible contradicts such a view of sin as articulated in the Qur'an and corroborated altogether by the Hadith. The mild view of sin, combined with the expectation of

generous forgiveness and mercy held in Islam, does away with a need for salvation and a saviour. Accordingly adherence to Islam and obeying the rules stated in the Qur'an, Hadith and Sharia are sufficient. Works of good intentions and taste accordingly lead to spiritual gratification and internal peace in man. The Qur'an teaches that a man in a state of sin is delivered by the performance of good works and deeds acceptable to the Divine. Deliverance is merited by the sinner himself, amounting to intrinsic freedom (Mishkatu'l Masabin 111: 129-139).

5.4 Conclusion

From these quotations from the Qur'an and the Hadith about the nature of sin, we learn that *Iblis* (Satan) has been the arch enemy of man from the time of creation to the present (Qur'an 7:14-15). Satan started his evil activities on the first man whom Allah created. The uprightness of man was destroyed by the infiltration of Satan into human life. This strained the relationship between man and the Divine bringing forth suffering., According to the Qur'an *Iblis* is the author of sin. Sin has continued to dominate the life of man ever since. Islam portrays sin as the main cause of human misunderstanding, but teaches that it can be pardoned on the ground of genuine repentance, except in the case of the gravest sin which involves *shirk* (other gods besides Allah).

After the Divine had cursed Iblis, He said to Adam; "Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden and eat from whence ye will, but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrong-doers" (Qur'an 7:19).

At this time, Islam points out, our first parents, Adam and Hauwa, were quite innocent in spiritual and material affairs. They had a close relationship with the Divine spiritually as well as physically. They had been placed in a divine garden of innocence and bliss which was not on earth but in the heavens. At this point in time, they did not know sin. However, as God's *khalifa*, they had been endowed by the spirit of the Divine with the faculties of knowledge, will, and choice. Although they had the capacity to do wrong, they needed to choose to reject sin. The Divine God, who is all-knowing, and all-wise, decided to test his *khalifa* by giving him a choice, a small prohibition from approaching only one tree – the forbidden tree. But man succumbed to the temptations of the Master of Sin (Iblis).

About this event the Qur'an (7:20-21) says:

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The Satan whispered to them that which was hidden from them of their shame, and he said: Your Lord forbade you from this tree only lest ye should become angels or become of the immortals. And he swore unto them, (saying): Lo! I am a sincere adviser unto you.

So through deceit, Iblis seduced Adam and his wife Hauwa to eat of the tree, hence bringing about their fall from the garden to earth. The fall involved the breaking away from the innocence of the divine position of intimacy with Allah to sin. What was more dramatic is that when they ate, their shame became visible to them from that time onwards – the realisation that they had sinned against Allah through this act of rebellion. They hurriedly covered themselves with leaves from the "Garden". Soon their Lord called to them saying (Qur'an 7:22): "Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you Lo! Satan is an open enemy to you?" Thus the author of sin managed to swerve the progenitors of mankind from the divine path, away from the will of their Lord.

Muslims consider that Adam and Hauwa ate the fruit of the forbidden tree as a result of Satan's deceit and temptation. Of course they disobeyed God and thus committed a sin, but at the same time Muslims realise that actually it was not a wilful and deliberate disobedience. Again, we note that when God called on them, they quickly realised their sinfulness, and prayed to Him to forgive them. Islam teaches that they did not turn away from the Divine. They said: "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, surely we are of the lost" (Qur'an7:23).

Adam and Hauwa felt shame, guilt and remorse for their disobedience towards Allah. They lost the joyful state of the Divine Garden. That is why they prayed for God's mercy. Muslims deduce from this event that man is imperfect, even if he lives in heaven. At the same time, we learn that according to Islam committing a sin of the gravity of Adam and Hauwa's does not deter the human heart from spiritual reform.

Man as the *Khalifa* of the divine attributes has been endowed with the sufficient knowledge to enable him to realise his sins and pitfalls. Better still, this knowledge helps him to know where and to whom to turn for a guidance. Islamic witness is that Allah is always ready through his mercy and grace to forgive the sins of all those who sincerely seek his guidance and make up their minds to change for the better. The worst sin is *shirk* (associating Allah with other gods); but according to Islam even the

atheists, polytheists, or pantheists can be forgiven by Allah if they confess their sins before Allah and sincerely submit to his commands and will.

When Adam and Hauwa prayed for Allah's mercy and forgiveness, they even lacked the correct word and expression, but Allah, who is all-merciful and most forgiving, taught Adam and Hauwa the prayer for seeking repentance. And Allah pardoned them as the Qur'an witnesses: "Then Adam received from his Lord words (of revelation), and He relented toward him. Lo! He is the relenting, the Merciful" (Qur'an 2:37). According to Islam Adam and Hauwa were thus absolved of the sin of disobedience, and their future descendants were made immune from its effect. Allah did not only accept man's repentance, but went ahead and appointed him as his messenger to give guidance to mankind.

Nevertheless, after Allah had pardoned Adam and Hauwa, He sent them down to earth from the heavenly garden. The expulsion from Paradise included *Iblis*, the bitter enemy of man. This is shown in the phrase: "Enemies to each other" (Qur'an 7:24), which means that God decreed that *Iblis* and man shall be adversaries of one another. *Iblis* tries his most to divert man from the divine path onto the path of sin. But, according to the Qur'an, man is commanded through divine guidance to fight *Iblis* as his number one enemy. Islam further observes that sin only touches those who yield to it, and has no power over Allah's sincere servants who have been forgiven because of his mercy.

Thus, in Islam, sin is avoidable if one is sincere in one's worship of Allah. It is forgivable if the sinner confesses to Allah. It is not hereditary.

What then is the Christian response to this Islamic position regarding sin? The Christian witness is that the origin of sin is the misuse of personal freedom. Satan misused his freedom. He rebelled against God and subsequently became exceedingly sinful. Multitudes of angels and spirits followed his example. The Biblical witness is that Satan tempted man to sin, and man decided to yield to Satan's temptation. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. They took the fruit which God had forbidden. They ran from the divine presence and hid in the bushes. They decided to turn away from the Divine (Gen. 3:1-24). The decision of mankind to turn away from God is the root of sin. In our disobedience we become sinful. The image of God in which we were created is tragically spoiled and distorted because we have collectively and individually turned away from God. God is not to be blamed. We ourselves have

turned away from God. For this reason we experience guilt and death. The Biblical witness says: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

Finally, in both Christianity and Islam sin is theologically understood in a way as alienation from the Divine. It is regarded as having distorted the image in which man was created. There are great differences with regard to the theological interpretation of the significance of sin, but a central view of sin is found in both religions. Sin is the cause of animosity and therefore also renders togetherness impossible as regards the major religions in Africa and even those of the world at large.

CHAPTER 6

SALVATION AND THE PERCEPTION OF THE DIVINE

The Greek New Testament verb *sozo*, "to save", its cognate noun *soter*, "saviour", and *soteria*, "salvation", and adjective, *soterios*, absorbed Hebrew meaning via the LXX translation which somewhat enlarged and modified the classical idea. *Sozo* classically meant to make sound, heal, save, preserve, and, in regard to people, so save from death or keep alive in contrast to *apollum* or *apothnesko*. These saving acts were sometimes performed by gods, and the particle was sometimes used substantively as their name. (cf. Deiss LAE; LSJ, in Kittel Vol. 11 1964:179;1748, for other special uses). Of 473 uses of *sozo* and cognate in the LXX (HR) 278 translate *yaso* and its cognates so that this root supplies the basic meaning in the LXX. The central Hebrew idea of *yasa*, which in Arabic means to be capacious, is freedom from that which restricts and binds. The *Hiphil* means to deliver save, liberate, save from moral troubles, give victory, while the *Niphal* conveys the meanings in the passive voice. The cognate nouns crystallise the idea of the verb (cf. BDB: 446-48). Of the other uses of *sozo*, sixty-eight are translations of *salom*, "peace" or "wholeness" and its cognates. However, fifty-five of these are *soterios-on* (adj. As subst.) for *selem* "a thank offering for covenant deliverance" which occurs in the Pentateuch, leaving only thirteen other occurrences, and these are other roots which are translated more frequently or nearly as frequently by *sozo* and it cognate. Most LXX uses of *sozo* and its cognate mean deliverance, escape or to save, and it may conservatively be said that sixty to seventy per cent of these uses relate to the deliverance by Yahweh whom we have referred to as "the Divine" from the beginning of this study.

Soter, "saviour", was used of philosophers (e.g. Epicurus) or rulers (e.g. Ptolomy IV, Nero) and also widely of Gods (e.g. Zeus, Attis). In the LXX God, "the Divine" is declared the only *soter* (Is. 45:21; 43:11; Ps 61:2) because salvation wrought by men is vain, as will be seen below when we discuss salvation in the context of the African traditional religion (Ps. 59-60:11; 107-108:12). Only in the sense that men such as the judges (Judges 3:9, 14; 12:3; Nehemiah 9:27) and Mordecai (Esther 8:13) were God's instruments, could they be regarded as saviours. Although soter is used thirty-seven times for God in the LXX, it is seldom used as a title because it has the pronoun (1 Chron 16:15; Deut. 32:15, et al). But occasionally it is used as a title (e.g. the LXX uses *soter* in place of Yahweh (Prov. 29:25) and as an appositive (Is. 45:15).

So much for the definition! We should now embark on the theology of salvation in the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam while looking back to the meaning provided here in the introductory notes and which has its root in the Greek, Arabic and Hebrew languages. A discussion of "salvation" in the context of the African traditional religion should give us equivalent terminologies which have their roots in the fact that African ethnic groups carried with them the description of "salvation" as it occurs in the Greek, Arabic and Hebrew languages. Salvation depends on the acknowledgement of the divine state in which the Divine first placed man and the standard which applied to him in this state. It is implies knowing the correct path which will lead to the attaining salvation. God's way of saving sinners is to bring them to faith by bringing them into contact with the divine truth. Salvation is therefore a state of Divine Presence where the original standard of the Divine is restored in man.

6.1 Salvation in the context of the African traditional religion

In the African sense, the word "salvation" broadly means man's act or acts of turning to God. This can be inferred to articulate the meaning of turning to "the Divine" the subject of our investigation. From the African point of view these acts may be formal or informal, regular or extempore, communal or individual, ritual or unceremonial and may take the form of word or deed. For the sake of description, salvation is arrived at where "sacrifices" and "offering" are involved. "Sacrifices" involve the destruction of animal life in order to present the animal, or part of it, to God, the Divine, a deity, supernatural beings, spirits or the ancestors (the departed). "Offerings refer to the remaining cases which do not involve the killing of an animal, being chiefly the presentation of foodstuffs and other items" (Mbiti 1969:58).

Salvation in the African context entails the idea of putting things right with the Divine and getting things straight with others in the community. Salvation is not primarily a cognitive acceptance of restitution, but is involves the performance of healing, redress and restoration. (Oosthuizen 1987:10). It is important for societal values of doing or setting things right with the Divine. In African societies salvation involves an experience of mending and healing a sinful person to make him acceptable in the society.

In the African context salvation does not only imply receiving from the Divine, but also doing. We find a similar idea in Christianity where we talk about the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man (Packer 1977:18-36). The antinomy encountered in

Christianity is also part of the African experience of salvation where God heals individuals so that society can be healed and restored as well. In the African sense individuals have to engage sacrificial activities to bring about the Divine Presence.

Sacrifices and offering constitute the commonest acts aimed at effecting salvation among African peoples. Examples of these are overwhelmingly many. In some cases, the sacrifice or offering is made to God alone; in others it is made to God, the spirits and the departed; in others it is only to the spirits and the departed, who are considered intermediaries between God and man. It is through the working of the sacrifices that an appeasement can be effected, resulting in salvation and the restoring of man to the original acceptable standard of the vertical relationship with the Divine.

There are four popularised theories about the function and meaning of sacrifice. These four can be reduced to two main functions involving vertical and horizontal purposes. These are the gift theory and the propitiation theory. The vertical purpose is directed at the Divine and is meant as an appeasement for man's sin. The communion theory and thank offering theory are both horizontal in nature since they involve man in his environment and his fellow human being. We do not intend to enter into details here. We may add, however, that sacrifices and offerings are acts aimed at restoring the ontological balance between the Divine (vertical) and man (horizontal), the spirits and man, and all the departed and the living. If this balance is upset by sin, people "experience" misfortunes and sufferings or fear that these will come upon them. Sacrifices and offerings help, at least psychologically, to restore this balance (Farmer 1942: Ch. 9). They are also acts and occasions of making and renewing contact between God and man, the spirits and man and, to use the term which is the subject of our discussion, to effect "salvation" in the African context. When the sacrifices and offerings are directed toward the departed, they are a symbol of fellowship, a recognition that the departed are still members of their human families (Shepard 1978:286) and tokens of human respect and remembrance of the departed. The departed who are still remembered personally by someone in their family, are the chief recipients of sacrifices and offerings from the family group. These go back four or five generations and we may call them the recipients the living-dead. This too is a fellowship which has a horizontal significance different from the one directed to the Divine which carries with it vertical significance.

It is best to take different peoples in the traditional African context separately and summarise their acts and concepts of sacrifice as a means of restoring a good relationship with God and hence of effecting "salvation".

The Abaluyia sacrifice to God, for which reason they refer to him as "the one to whom sacred rites and sacrifices are made". They believe that he receives or rejects the sacrifices, which are made at harvest time or on the occasions of the birth, naming, circumcision, wedding and funeral of a person. They slaughter bulls, goats or chickens, and call upon God. At the naming ceremony the child's grandmother strangles a white chicken. At a funeral, the sacrifices and prayers are intended to secure peace for the deceased. At harvest time, they are an expression of joy and gratitude to God (Okwemba 1965).

The Akamba consider God to be so good that he does them no evil, and they see no reason, therefore, for sacrifices to him. They make sacrifices only on important occasions including planting time, before the crops ripen, at the harvest of the first fruits, at the threshing time, when purifying a village after an epidemic, when men return from successful raids, and most of all when the rains fail or are delayed. Normally the sacrificial animals are oxen, sheep, goats, or the mountain Coney. In cases of severe drought, they formerly sacrificed a child whom they buried alive in a shrine (Middleton 1953:93; Lindblom 1920:244). Professor J S Mbiti adds that these sacrifices have nearly all died out, except those which are made for rain (Mbiti 1970:302).

The Akan and Ashanti have altars in their home compounds at which they make offerings to God. The offerings consist of food (especially eggs among the Akan) and wine (Manoukian 1950:55).

The Elgeyo consider the sun (asis) to be the intermediary which forwards their supplications to God. They therefore sacrifice a sheep or goat, and offer prayers for rain, a good harvest and other needs, which they entrust to the sun to convey to God. Because of their dignity and reputations in the community, it is the old men who perform the necessary ceremonies and offer the prayers (Massam 1927:187; Huntingford 1953:73). The old men are considered to be free from sexual immorality and immune from sinful desires and there therefore well placed to bring sacrifices and offerings before God pleading on behalf of the community for salvation to be granted to them. The Embu offer sacrifices to God when crises occur, such as drought,

epidemics or war, which they interpret as punishment from God. The Embu people believe that such crises are caused by the sin of individuals. Sin makes God angry and kindles his wrath against the entire community resulting in punishment. Sacrifice is made to appease the Divine in order that He may save the Embu community (Njeru 1965).

The Gikuyu make sacrifices and offerings to God on several occasions. These include periods of crisis such as famine, drought and epidemics; and events such as planting and harvesting time; and the birth, initiation, marriage and death of individuals. Communal ceremonies are conducted at the sacred groves (*Mugumu*) by local or regional elders. For minor family needs it is the eldest male member who makes offerings and sacrifices to the living-dead. For communal sacrifices to God, a lamb or goat of one colour is used; and at the harvest ceremony grains of food from the fields are offered to God (Kenyatta 1938:243 ff).

The Gisu of Uganda who share a similar ethnic background with the Bukusu of Kenya, make offerings of the first fruits, consisting of millet, potatoes and a bit of the previous year's grain, in addition to sacrificing a fowl. This is done at harvest time before people eat of the new crop (*buyaayia*). At the initiation of young people (*Musikhebo*) more offerings and sacrifices are made; and if cows do not bear well, the priest sacrifices one barren cow. All these sacrifices are directed towards God, but the divinities also receive attention. The divinity of plague is given meat and food which are placed at the foot of special trees planted in front of houses. During an epidemic, the divinity of small pox is given a goat. The birth of twins (*bukhwana*) is regarded as a great misfortune due to the wrath of the divinities and the medicine-man sacrifices a fowl (*khuosia*) in addition to the many offerings made by the members of the clan where the twins are born. These are thought to pacify the divinities (Roscoe 1966:167, 170).

The Kipsigis have altars erected outside their houses, on the right-hand side of the door. Here the people sacrifice animals and make offerings to God. The communal ritual is conducted by a hereditary head (*orkyot*) whose duties are to involve God in all important ceremonies. This man (*orkyot*) is regarded as an intermediary between God and men (Huntingford 1953: 52).

The Luo get together in times of trouble and cook and eat the meat either nearby or away from the shadow of the sacrificial trees. Before building new houses, the people

make offerings to God, hoping to that he will drive away any harmful spirits and will bestow prosperity on the children and livestock (Roscoe 1966: 290-1; Muango 1965).

6.2   The Christian view of salvation

Salvation is one of the key terms and concepts in Christianity. Indeed, for some people it is the centre of Christianity as a religion, and everything revolves around it. Salvation has been and continues to be proclaimed by Christian missionaries and African converts as the Christian message, as the gospel. From the point of view of overseas missionaries and many African Christians it is salvation of the soul from sin, to put the matter in a nutshell. In this section we wish to look at how African Christians actually experience and understand the theology of salvation as a reflection of Divine Presence within the framework of the Bible. In traditional African religion salvation is sought through sacrifice and offerings. This view is completely different from the Christian articulation of salvation as derived from the New Testament.

While the term *salvation* occurs frequently in much of the preaching and writing done in Africa, surprisingly little careful study has actually been done in this regard. Thus there are very few resources available for investigation of this subject. There is one excellent study by a Roman Catholic priest, Kenneth Enang, viz. *Salvation in a Nigerian background : its concepts and articulation in the Annang independent churches* (Enang 1979).

Dr Enang provides rich material which contributes directly to our intricate subject of investigation. The Annang people numbered about 1,2 million in 1977, and live in Cross River State in the south-east of Nigeria. Missionaries first arrived there in 1919, and the missions have had remarkable success in their missionary preaching and in the gaining of followers with the result that over 50 per cent of the total population of Annang has professed the Christian faith. Mission bodies to the Annang come from several churches in Europe and America, including Methodist, Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches. Many indigenous churches have also sprung up in Annang as a result of separations from mission churches and from one another due to administrative and doctrinal differences. Enang's book is a study of the concept of salvation among these independent churches, of which he surveyed and interviewed thirty-two. The Nigerian case is only an example of the many independent churches in thel countries of Africa. The Annang people's view of salvation provides a glimpse how redemption – which in the context of our investigation is taken to depict a

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reflection of the Divine Presence among such believers – is seen in most African independent churches

In the Annang language *salvation* is rendered by the word *endinyanga*. It its setting, the word has "six different basic meanings".

Negatively it means

1. transference from a state of danger to a peril-free one;
2. freedom from physical attack; or
3. protection from whatever would inflict a jeopardy.

Positively it signifies

1. increase and progress in the state that is conceived as safe, prosperous, glorious; or
2. maintenance of a peaceful relationship with the objects and persons on which or on whom one's own harmony and that of the world around one depend.

These five different meanings lead to the sixth, namely actions which bring about *edinyanga*. Thus the Annang can only say that he has been saved when the different eventualities which took place on his behalf and because of him, produced a successful outcome in the end (Enang 1979:107 ff).

Enang goes on to explain that every Annang stands before the brutal facts of this existence that is constantly a threat. But the Annang is also aware that he has his existence open to him with the possibilities for making it meaningful. He therefore goes beyond himself and searches for whatever makes his life useful, good and full of meaning. Enang sees the Annang independent churches as pursuing salvation on four fronts, namely through baptism, the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit, and healing. We shall look at each of the fronts separately.

6.2.1   Baptism and salvation

Enang describes the baptism ceremony in one such church in which the candidates make eleven baptismal vows. Three of these are the following (Enang 1979: 11):

Vow 8   I herewith swear that I shall always read the Scriptures.

Vow 9   I herewith swear that I shall renounce Satan and all his riches.

Vow 10 I herewith swear that I shall obey the Holy Spirit, live a Christian life all the days of my life so that, at my death, I'll be buried by the church according to her rites.

Baptism is by "complete immersion using the Trinitarian formula":

"The independents understand baptism as a rite whereby new members are admitted into their community. The members are present at the baptism to welcome the newly baptised into their midst and to share in their joy ... To estimate the importance of the day of salvation as the day when the new members are incorporated into the community, other church activities are suspended on that day ... the feast of the newly baptized" (Enang 1979:117).

Immersion as a way of baptism is taken to be very significant – as a sign that when a person is buried with Jesus, he will also rise with him in order to have a new life ...Only complete immersion guarantees the spiritual fruit of dying and being resurrected with Christ. The Annang independent churches believe that baptism as an initiation rite contributes to salvation in two ways:

"Firstly the incorporation, which assures the recipients that baptism of salvation is christo-centric. The baptized into Christ ... In Christ salvation is made real ...being in Christ, a relation to him brings salvation ... secondly, ... the baptized is accepted into a community in which he can find his identity ... Fellowship creates and promotes real persons and helps towards a realization of an authentic selfhood which can be described as salvation" (*ibid*.:121-125).

But that alone does not exhaust the values of salvation inherent in baptism:

"Baptism is a rite through which sins are forgiven. So it is understood by independents ... The original sin ... is not mentioned by independents. They pour rather vast emphasis upon only personal sins and their destruction by baptism since baptism purifies from personal sins, infants are not baptised by the independents because infants do not commit any sins ... The washing away of sins in the river destroys immediately sins and its (sic) results. When these are destroyed, there is salvation" (*ibid*.:125-134).

Baptism is also viewed as protection, which is another dimension of salvation (*ibid*.:134-141). Some of these churches hold that "(b)aptism repels the devil every

time the evil power gets near the baptized ... it protects the baptized right from the moment of baptism from the devil and his unremitting harassments ... Baptism offers this protection because of the significant but indelible sign it leaves in the soul of the baptised." This view is derived from the Bible and the African traditional background. On the Biblical side, the Annang independent churches are of the opinion that: sickness and death come upon man as a result of the intrigues of the Devil (Luke 33:37). At the stage of his healing actions Jesus appears as a powerful exorcist who subdues Beelzebub and as a result cures the blind and dumb demoniac (Matthew 12:22-29). His very name, when implored, casts out the devil (Luke 10:17f.; Acts 19:13 ff.). The early church could therefore use his name with success to bind the Devil and his legions. Since the name of Jesus can exert such as exorcising effect, baptism in his name is consequently an anti-demonic rite since it remits the previous sins (Acts 22:16; Eph. 5:26) believed to be caused by the devil's influence. Remittance of sin is tantamount to the defeat of Satan. The name of Jesus effects not only exorcism but it remains also in the soul of the baptised to drive away present and future assaults of the devil When a person is baptised, he puts on Christ at the very moment of baptism. Therefore, baptism protects such a person from misfortune, ill-luck, dangers and disasters which the devil might cause. The condition on the part of the recipient of baptism is faith in Christ. Baptism without faith cannot help (Enang 1979:133 -140).

Enang refers to traditional Annang religion in which it is held that benevolent divinities exist (Idowu 1973). They are believed to possess the capacity of rendering protection to the needy and threatened people against the evil schemes of their supposed enemies. Now, with their unshakeable belief in the protective ability of Jesus Christ, the Annang independents have, consciously or unconsciously, transferred the power to protect and prevent, formerly and originally ascribed to the divinities, to Christ. It is no longer the divinities which offer protection against the devil, rather it is now Christ, especially when one has been baptised in this name, who is believed to secure the baptised against the attacks of the enemies.

Enang uses "divinities" and "gods" interchangeably. We prefer to use only "divinities" according to our main theme of the theological reflection on the "Divine" which in the traditional African religious context denote an ontologically superior Being. As already pointed out above, He is the ultimate reality in all spheres of life, but under Him He has divinities who effectively manifest salvation in the traditional African sense.

By way of summarising the link between baptism and salvation among the Annang independent churches, Enang makes several observations:

1. Whatever offers protection to man in order to make him survive is seen here in a religious context. This has been a fact among the Annang in their primal religion which expresses itself in the independent churches in a very practical way. It is only given a Christian qualification as far as the protection is believed to come from the name of Jesus Christ into whom one has been baptised.

2. A person who believes that his life is constantly under the threat of dissolution, caused by what one holds to be one's enemy, is ready to cling to a person or thing whom he recognises to be in possession of the power to prevent this dissolution. The prevention of such an evaporation of life into a dark abyss of nothingness is an aspect of what an Annang terms salvation. This is a very different way of looking at salvation from the orthodox Christian cosmology discussed in the introduction to this chapter. This is the type of salvation the independents believe to be afforded by Christ at baptism.

3. They (the independents) believe that it (baptism) is a meaningful occurrence which brings them into bond with Jesus Christ who victoriously and can really save them.

4. Man is a being with a strong passion for self-preservation. The urge to protect himself from attack impels the adherents of the independents to keep their eyes on what provides them with protection and security. If a person is secure in life, he can say with some degree of certainty that he is in a state of salvation.

5. The protection the Annang want from Christ is what we represented in this chapter as of horizontal dimension. The vertical, as much as it remains abstract, is not sought seriously. In fact what they want from Christ is protection in their daily life as they live here on earth (*ibid*.:142-144). The eschatological hope takes care of itself as much as one is secure on this earth.

6.2.2 The holy communion and salvation

The holy communion is another channel for experiencing salvation among the Annang independent churches. Enang informs us that "one very striking aspect of the whole rite of celebration of the Lord's supper in these churches is the extensive and long preparations, characterised by a rigorous fasting for days, the confession of sins and

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the abstention from sexual advances. Fasting lasts from three to seven days, covering twelve hours a day, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Holy communion is for the independents a sacrament full of awe and to approach it, one has to be fully sanctified by a ritual ceremony, embracing repentance, purification and reconciliation. The communion service ... is mostly a celebration full of life and gets right down to the marrow of the participants, fully punctuated with prayers, dances, sermons, announcements, and concluding with a benediction. It is included in the Sunday worship service which starts at 8 a.m., and by the time the Eucharist is celebrated, it is about 11:45 a.m. The frequency of celebrating the Holy communion varies: some independents celebrate it yearly, others quarterly and some monthly. The yearly celebration takes place at Easter and those who observe it, probably wish to associate the sacrament most intimately with the death and resurrection of the Lord; believing that Jesus celebrated it only once with his apostles before his death may well display another ground for the yearly celebration. In this sense the Holy communion would be conceived as an annual service, just like the new yam festival which comes up only once a year in Annang. The Holy communion celebration could well be seen too by the Annang independent churches as a yearly anniversary of the Lord's supper and therefore executes the command of the Lord to celebrate it at a time most close to the biblically recorded Supper before the Lord's suffering and death" (ibid.:155).

Enang comments on the relation between the Eucharist or Holy communion and salvation in the Annang independent churches. He says that a number of aspects "in the eyes if the independents, are capable of bringing them the experience of salvation: the forgiveness of sins, the participation in the Lord and the share in communal solidarity ... The long period of preparation for the Eucharist celebration in these churches, as we have seen, is distinguished by fasting, praying, the confession of sins and ritual washing with water. Fasting for the independents implies rather the self-punishment to win forgiveness of sins from him to whom they pray. In greater relief still is the ritual washing in certain churches. Sin causes the anger of God and divine retribution upon the sinner. Misfortune and distress in life are immediate consequences of sin in the Annang view of life. Therefore the forgiveness of sin eliminates the root cause of the mishap of life. Where such mishap registers, where there is distress, the opposite of salvation is the case, in the life of a person who undergoes these disturbing factors. His salvation lies in their absence and elimination. Here there is a coming to terms with God and oneself."

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Enang concludes that there is, therefore in the Holy communion celebration a symbolic representation of the death of Jesus Christ which brings forgiveness and thus salvation to the participants (*ibid*:185-188).

The independents, interpret their participation in the holy communion in this fashion: The Saviour at whose table the congregate finds himself, is the same historical Jesus who shared with many during his lifetime on earth. Sharing in Him mediates divine gifts which are meant for man in his concrete life. They therefore partake of Him, the Tree of Life, the fruit of which brings healing to the sick (Ezek. 47:12; Rev. 22:2, 14,19). They participate in Him whose meal emits salvation and life. In the Annang independent churches the Biblical idea of the eschatological meal is very current. This meal disseminates divine blessing (Matt. 5:6; 8:11).

In the light of the above it is clear that the independents associate the participation in the Lord with joy and happiness. When they share in the Lord's supper they cherish expectations of immediate healing for their bodily ailments (in the faith that the Eucharist will heal), blessings for their temporal undertakings and welfare and protection from the forces which pose a threat to their life.

The element of 'communal solidarity' is a contributing factor to salvation. By participating in the Eucharist in an intensified fashion each communicant expresses his solidarity with the other. By being together a reconciliation sets in and peace rains like refreshing drops upon all participants from Him who hold the community together. With the reign of peace among the communicants hatred ceases to be the rule of conduct and makes place for peace, where hitherto envy has reigned there is now joy at the success of a brother, and those who came laden with despair return home charged with hope. All these are to them the different aspects of salvation which is a sense reflect the Divine Presence.

6.2.3   The Holy Spirit and salvation

We now come to another aspect of appropriating and experiencing salvation in the Annang Independent churches. This is the Holy Spirit, something which is extremely important in other independent churches such as Legio Maria, African Israel Niniveh, Akonino, Zion Church, to name a few, all over Africa.

With regard to the belief concerning the Holy Spirit Enang observes that the Holy Spirit is seen as a power from God. This is like striking the nerve of the whole belief system with regard to the Holy Spirit. He is not believed to be the messenger of God the Father alone, but also to be a power sent by Christ. Christ sent Him to continue its work of salvation in the world. The Spirit has the main responsibility for salvation in the world and church. With regard to spiritual beings other than God, the Holy Spirit is the most powerful of all existing spirits with an enormous capability to cure, heal, provide fortune, good health and ensure victory over malignant enemies and evil forces. The Holy Spirit is therefore viewed as a functional entity. Its importance is to be judged exclusively in terms of what it does. God and Christ are still believed in, they still speak through the Holy Spirit, but they seem to be obscured by the strong dynamism of the Holy Spirit (*ibid.*:193-196).

These churches therefore emphasise the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a belief for which they find Biblical basis in the events at Pentecost in Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea and Ephesus (Acts 2:1-4; 8:15 ff; 10:44-48; 19:1-7), and the experience of the early Christians in the Corinthian community (1 Corinthians 12 -14). They understand the main chapters of the Acts to imply an ecstatic baptism of the Holy Spirit clearly distinguished from water baptism. Baptism in the name of the Lord serves as an initiation into the community. This is similar to the practice of the Qumr'an community in the time of the New Testament (Ladd 1974:234-236). Baptism accordingly does not imply the reception of the Holy Spirit. Both events are distinct and of the two the baptism of the Spirit is held to be predominant. The Spirit, being the power of God, emits a physical and a spiritual *odudu* (power, strength, energy) for diversified activities in the church. Personally it signifies an inward strength for security and protection.

According to African independent churches the gifts of the Holy Spirit are manifested in "ecstatic phenomena. They demonstrate a true and genuine reflection of the Divine Presence and His infiltration into the lives of the believers. The ecstatic phenomena include trances, violent movements of the body and speaking in tongues and prophecy which embraces visions, dreams and revelations. Healing is another central feature in which the gift of the Spirit is demonstrated" (Enang 1979:197-202).

Enang describes the manifestations in some detail. For example, possession trance occurs mostly at the summit of the service. At this moment the church is sufficiently electrified with loud singing, intense drumming, clapping and feverish dancing. People twist and jostle to the music and thereby slide quickly into trance. It is mostly women

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who get possessed. Biblical passages referring to glossolia are mainly to be found in the Acts and 1 Corinthians. In the Annang independent churches it is one of the most central features and it is characterised as a gift of the Spirit (ibid.:209-215). Like Paul (1 Corinthians 14:26) the independents "believe too that the gift of tongues is for the good of the community. But they add that it helps the individuals, when the hidden, things are explained to them, to recognise their enemies and to know what they would not otherwise have known. Here they vehemently accuse the old churches of withholding the Spirit and suppressing the gifts of tongues" (ibid.:212).

The independent churches believe the gift of prophecy to be a direct manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church and hence of the Divine Presence. Prophetic predictions are judged to be the climax of the whole process of Pentecostal revelations. It is so important that we can formulate their place and value in these words: the independent churches rise and fall with prophecy. Take it away and you cut off the central nerve of their whole spiritual life and foundation. Usually the time for prophecy is during a service, a prayer meeting or in a short liturgical celebration. It is believed that the Holy Spirit can move anyone at all to prophecy. The messages of the prophetic revelations cover a wide range of subjects which mostly express mundane concerns; they principally give hints of and reveal approaching dangers.

When predictions fail to materialise this is due to "lack of faith", improper preparation on the part of the clients or 'lack' of readiness to follow without reserve the injunctions of the Spirit (Daneel 1970:36-37).

The independents see dreams as vehicles of divine communication and revelation. Dreams are valued as precious gifts through which the Holy Spirit makes its presence felt in the churches. The purpose of dreams are threefold: spiritual admonition and warning, spiritual message and group solidarity (Oosthuizen 1987:26).

Visions are "one of the central means of communicating spiritual message. The independents believe that they are a gift from the Holy Spirit to members of the church. In visions, the visionary perceives images of objects and persons which pass swiftly away" (Daneel 1970). In the end, the visionaries enjoy a tremendous feeling of satisfaction, joy and peace, especially if the vision occurred in a trance state. The independent churches which are so Biblically minded see mostly angels, archangels, the prophets and even demons since these occur so often in the Scriptures. Fasting for long periods, as practised by members of the independent churches, is a very apt

method of inducing visions. Independents maintain that visions as well as audition have a supernatural origin. Some believe that a devil or an evil spirit may be the agent behind some visions (Daneel 1970:37). They nonetheless hold that the Holy Spirit of God is the principal cause of visions. Angels and archangels too are frequent instruments of visions when they function as God's messengers, events confirmed by the Scriptures itself (2 Kings 19:35, Exodus 14:19: Matthew 2:1 ff; Luke 2:9).

But the activity of the Spirit in the church is by no means exhausted in these external signs. It is believed also to be operational in the church and in its members in a way that does not demand overt and externally perceivable features.

As far as the church is concerned, the Holy Spirit is believed to direct the establishment, the choice of site for building and the ways and means of getting the necessary material for this purpose. In matters of discipline within the church the direct hand of the Spirit is believed to be felt. During services and prayer meetings the direction of the Spirit of God is held to be real.

Dr D.B. Barret (1968) reports that in one of the African Israel Nineveh Churches of Kenya it "is believed that the inspiration of the spirit makes the thunderous singing get to the bones of the people and the clapping of hands which accompany these hymns accelerate in intensity, at the end of which all join in the praise of God with 'Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, alleluya'. New hymns are made possible by the same inspiration. Fasting and its duration is a major one of the spirits inspiration. It may demand fasting and abstinence for three, seven or ten days."

Enang once more looks at the relation between the Holy Spirit and salvation. He observes that the gifts of the Spirit, both externally and silently "have contributed to salvation in different aspects":

1. The message of the Pentecostal revelation mostly concerns affairs which constitute dangers to human life. For those plagued with these problems, the mere discovery of their aetiology is a major step on the way to salvation where salvation means freedom from the self-same problems.

2. Another aspect of salvation is seen in the precautionary line taken with regard to the prophecies revealed to the members of the church. An attempt is made to prevent enemies from exercising an evil influence on them by taking the precaution of avoiding any encounter with them.

3. Spiritual values such as joy, peace and happiness, which are regarded as gifts of the Spirit, are interpreted as a dimension of salvation by the church member who experience them personally.

4. It is believed that it is possible to receive forgiveness of sins through fasting which may gain a person the saving favour of the Divine (God), thereby enabling such a person to escape any eventual retribution for his/her deeds.

5. By strengthening community solidarity and reinforcing oneness, the church members experience a sense of belonging and acceptance which could be interpreted as a manifestation of salvation.

6. Salvation is also bestowed on those towards whom the community practise practical charity at the direction of the Spirit.

7. Very significant with regard to spiritual revelations on the whole is the injunction of the Spirit to turn away from other gods to the living God. In Him, through the working of the Spirit, do these churches believe to have salvation (Enang 1979:237-249).

Enang argues that the Annang independent churches have come to believe in the "concept of the Holy Spirit as a divine power laden with energy" because of the Annang belief that the country is "animated by the belief in spirits ... It is in the context of this spirit-filled culture that we have first to place the belief of the independents in the Spirit of God as a mighty power from God". Furthermore, they hold that the Bible also supports this belief, and that examples which illustrate this are the community at Corinth (1 Corinthians 12:7-11), the first Pentecost (Acts 2), and so on (*ibid.*: 240 ff.).

6.2.4 Salvation and the name of Jesus

On various occasions we have come across the use of the name of Jesus in prayer, in exorcisms and in rituals such as baptism. It also needs to be stressed that the name of Jesus is extremely important in matters of salvation. While in the Old Testament salvation is wrought by God through the mediation of human or other agents, in the New Testament salvation is focused on Jesus. Indeed his very name, Jesus (Jeshua), connotes saviour (Moshiya, Jeshua), a title which has won a leading place in Christian usage even though it is rarely used in the New Testament. The portrait of Jesus painted in the Gospels is one in which his saving activities are prominent, from the beginning to the end. Jesus is not Saviour only on the cross, as is often said and

implied in Western theology and preaching. African people see Jesus at work as Saviour right from the beginning of his public ministry and see Him addressing them directly in his ministry of teaching, healing and exorcising of spirits, as for example in the opening chapter of the Gospel of Mark. Identification with the name of Jesus therefore means investing oneself with the name which carries authority, power, salvation. People are not only themselves saved in the name of Jeshua (Saviour) but they speak, preach, pray and perform healing and exorcisms in the same name, that is by the same authority which the name of Jesus had and still has (Mbiti 1986:166).

While some African Christians, including many in the independent churches, lay great emphasis on the physical saving acts of Jesus, such as those recorded in the gospels, we must not limit the African understanding to the physical level of life. There are many who also put great emphasis on the cross of Jesus and its saving grace. Perhaps the best example of this is the East African Revival Movement (Kritzinger 1996:348-349), which emerged simultaneously in Rwanda and Uganda in the years 1928-1930, and later spread to Kenya championed by the Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches, and also to Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Southern Sudan and other neighbouring regions. This revival, locally known as the Balokole Movement, laid emphasis of spiritual experience under the impact of the cross. These experiences were expressed through confession of sin, giving testimony to the divine goodness (God's), witnessing to the saving power of the blood Jesus, singing to the glory of God, praying, reading the Bible, having fellowship with other members of the movement, and genuinely seeking to lead a dedicated Christian life, under the slogan "walking in the light". The famous hymn of the Balokole Movement originated from the English Keswick Hymn Book, Number 170, written by L. M. Rouse and set to music by D Boole, but it is usually sung in the Luganda Version, even in the region where Luganda is unknown (Church 1981:271):

"*Tukutendereza Yesu*	We praise you Jesus
Yesu Omwana gw'endiga	Jesus lamb of God
Omusaigwo gunaziza	Your blood cleanses me
Nkwekabaza, Omulokozi	I praise you, Saviour
Chorus:	Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
	Glory, glory to the Lamb
	Oh, the cleansing blood has reached me!
	Glory, glory to the Lamb!"

The verse and the chorus of this hymn very much reveal the type of salvation experienced by people receive under the umbrella of the revival movement. Often, when members meet one another for prayer and fellowship or at conferences, they sing this verse and chorus repeatedly with much joy and they embrace one another to show Christian love.

The Balokole Movement has spread over a vast area of Eastern Africa and has brought about a new understanding and experience of the saving effect of the cross of Jesus. This experience tends to be personally or individually centred in the sense that each member of the Revival experiences a personal encounter with Jesus (the Divine Presence), an encounter which is spoken of as 'being saved' (hence the term *Balokole*). Like other mass movement revivals, it has had its ups and downs and has been subject to suspicion and criticism from those who do not belong to it, or from church leaders who feel uneasy about its methods of functioning (Patricia 1971).

Members of the Balokole Movement have interesting experiences to narrate. Their gatherings have a warmth of spirit which one cannot experience in any group – a spirit of brotherly and sisterly love, a spirit of openness, a spirit of sincerity and honesty a spirit of fellowship in Christ that cuts across barriers of denominational, ethic and class differences. It is a spirit of joy in the Lord, which often breaks forth in singing and caring for one another. Some of the public confessions of sin at the fellowship meetings, however, cause unnecessary embarrassment which could have been avoided if they were made instead in privacy before God. But since there is a strong feeling of the "Divine Presence" in such fellowship, the testimonies are given openly at conferences irrespective of the embarrassment. The researcher remembers one extreme case where a woman confessed publicly to having committed adultery with a high-ranking clergyman many years before. The clergyman was subsequently suspended from his duties. Did the spirit of the Balokole Movement go too far in this case? However there is no doubt that the Balokole Movement has enriched Christianity in East Africa. It provides people with a taste of salvation and an experience of the Divine Presence in their lives which makes sense for them in their daily lives. An early protagonist, J. E. Church (1981: 258 f) summarises well what is happening in this movement:

> "We think of those meeting of fellowship in almost every village church; the
> fellowship at Kabale that meets week by week in the cathedral, of those at the
> tea plantation at Namutamba where they meet nearly every day. Then on to

the capital Kampala, to the Old Synod Hall on Uganda's Hill of Peace (Namirembe) where the 'Friday Meeting' has been held almost without a break for more than forty years. Then across the border into Kenya we remember the brethren at Eldoret and Nakuru and at Nairobi, the capital, where brethren of many tribes and denominations meet on Sunday afternoons at St. John's Church, Pumwani. Then the groups at St. Luke's Church Mombasa Island, at the end of the causeway where many from almost every tribe of East Africa meet and praise God in Kiswahili, the lingua franca but still punctuate their testimonies with the Luganda chorus *"Tukutendereza"*, 800 miles from Kampala!

Then south to Tanzania to Dar-es-Salaam, on the coast, and up-country to Dodoma to Tabora and in three towns of Buoba Musoma and Mwanza on Lake Victoria. And lastly to the groups in Rwanda and Burundi where this story began.

the characteristics of these fellowships can be summarised! Love of the brethren – confession of sin – willingness to be challenged and to challenge – concern for the lost and bereaved – team, witness – freedom in prayer and preaching – wanting light and openness – lack of embarrassment between the races and denominations – joy, singing and laughter and lastly the safety of homes where Christ dwells, and this Divine Presence is vividly seen in peoples' faces."

Nobody can deny that through the channels of this Revival Movement, people are appropriating Biblical salvation which makes sense to their lives and satisfies their yearnings. The concentration here is more on Jesus and his cross, and less on his other activities prior to the cross. The Revival also embraces the life of the believer after death, as it holds firmly that the Christian goes immediately to be with the Lord in heaven - a belief which gives raise to much rejoicing even in the midst of death (Mbiti 1986:174).

The central emphasis on Jesus and the cross, as it is found in the Balokole Revival Movement as well as in many mission churches, obviously gives a clearly Christological type of soteriology. In contrast we also take note of the additional emphasis put on the Holy Spirit in other developments of African Christianity influenced by the American Pentecostals, and in many independent churches such as those of the Annang people of Nigeria referred to above. Here one could say that a

pneumatological soteriology seems to reach the needs of people in a way which Christological soteriology centred around the cross alone does not seem to do. Again we do not wish to polarise the situation. Both emphases have a place in the New Testament, and it is to the credit of the African Christians that we see these two strands of salvation at work simultaneously. Further it can be observed that in general salvation in the African situation is basically Trinitarian, even if one member of the Holy Trinity is given greater prominence at times at the expense of others. The New Testament uses the term 'our Saviour' sparingly to refer to God the Father or to Jesus, and not directly to the Holy Spirit at all. We may, however, rightly assume that within the Trinity, the Spirit is also at work in the saving acts of God. Indeed, it is the Spirit who moves the hearts of men to turn to God, who makes us the saved children of God, who builds us into the community of God's people, the church, who dwells within us and teaches us the life of salvation and enables us to enter into dialogue with people with different beliefs and to co-exist peacefully in a multi-religious society.

6.2.5   Salvation as the dynamic power of God

From our survey of salvation in African Christianity there is no doubt that African peoples take the Biblical message of salvation seriously. Salvation is unleashing onto the African scene the dynamic power of God or ,in our own terminology, the unleashing of the Divine Presence. Many bear witness by word and deed as the apostle Paul did: "I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith" (Romans 1:16). Many are experiencing this power of God unto salvation; and many are turning to the church in its various forms: divided, weakened by human sin, bogged down by tradition, crippled by self-interest, institutionalised, and even persecuted in places. Yet the church is the living focus and instrument of Biblical salvation. It mediates salvation, and under its umbrella, men and women do experience something which for them amounts to salvation. Some work hard to maintain this salvation through their life. Others tend to leave the issue more in the hands of God. Perhaps this is the paradise of salvation where we have the sovereignty of God and human responsibility interacting in the struggles of man to maintain redemption – there is God's grace offering salvation and there is human striving for salvation (Parker 1977). By grace we are saved (Romans 5, Ephesians 2 etc.). Yet, we are urged by the great apostle of salvation to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you" (Philippians 2:12 ff.).

The Biblical message of salvation thrusts people to the centre of Christianity. It is the kernel of the gospel. What they get out of it, as many in Africa evidently are getting, is for them more important than how they actually get it. Ultimately salvation in the Bible is made available in and through Jesus Christ. There are, indeed, many meanings and nuances of Biblical salvation, which make it possible to proclaim salvation to people in all circumstances of life. The Bible does not prescribe one and only one experience of salvation. It is rather like the old story of the ten blind people who came across an elephant and each touched and felt some part of the great animal and described only that, which made it possible to say rightly that each had described the elephant correctly but not exhaustively. One can take up the call and say, with the children of Israel when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem at the time of King David:

Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name,

Make known His deeds among the people

Sing to the Lord, all the earth!

Tell of His salvation from day to day

For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised

(1 Chronicles 16:8, 23 f.)

The psalmist knew salvation in different forms and sang many times in acknowledgement of the same. Perhaps that is also what we see happening in African Christianity – a celebration of God's salvation in many different forms, embracing both the physical and the spiritual dimension of life, for human beings and for creation at large. Surely this is in line with the vision of John the Divine, as he describes it in Revelation 7:9 ff.:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number,

from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the

throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their

hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'salvation belongs to our Lord who sits

upon the throne and to the Lamb!"

Yes, "salvation belongs to our God", and this is the great discovery of African peoples when they come to the message of the Bible. They realise that God's salvation is applicable to the whole of life. They take this up in a literal way. They experience it but do not exhaust it. Many stand before the Lord and sing out this salvation, dance it on

the streets on Sunday mornings (African Israel Nineveh), celebrate it, drink it, eat it, tell it aloud and if need be suffer for it, and finally come to the grave clinging to it. Surely salvation is valid in this life and in the life to come, and this how African Christians understand it. And the Biblical record encourages this hope in passages such as, among others: "I am the resurrection and the life and the way; he who believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.." (John 11:25); "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38 ff.); and the vision of the new earth and new heavens described by Isaiah and in the book of Revelation. The Bible record stretches the outreach of salvation beyond our human imagination. Only faith can probe into ultimate realms of salvation. African Christians, with the eyes of faith, are doing precisely that. And in this great exercise they are not alone in the world, since it is the Biblical "good news of a great joy" which will come to all the people, news about the "saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10 f.).

6.3 Salvation in Islam

The Qur'anic concept of salvation is a different kind and it is attuned to the constructive and progressive forces in man. In the first place Islam teaches that the world of matter is regarded as embodying a purpose – a purpose which is consonant with the purpose inherent in the human self. The following verse should be noted:

> And we created not the heavens and the earth, and what is between them, in sport" (S.21:16).

It is a world which is responsible to man's needs, both physical and human (Martin 1982). It is a world which man, if he likes, can mould "nearer to his heart's desire". It is a world which offers full scope for the development and fulfilment of his being. Knowing that he can engage in fruitful activities in the world, he has no excuse for infirmity of purpose.

Moreover, in the Qur'an the emphasis is on the positive content of salvation. It is not conceived as a negation of pain and liberation from evil. It consists in the sense of fulfilment, the feeling of realisation and the thrill of expansion. Man is endowed with a number of potentialities. By developing these he reaches his full stature and qualifies

for still higher stages awaiting him. Man must discover in what direction his self can develop and then he must create the conditions, physical as well as social, which this life is, to develop his self by conquering the forces of nature and employing them for the development of mankind:

"He is indeed successful who causeth his self to grow and he is indeed a failure who stunteth it (S. 91:9-10).

Life is a constant struggle against forces hostile to it, forces which would destroy it if they were not successfully opposed. In the external environment, there are wide variations in temperature. Sometimes it is too cold (winter) for man, sometimes it is too hot (summer). Homeostatic mechanisms in the body usually keep the body temperature at the normal level. Without them, the human body would burn up or freeze to death. Again, the body is assailed by a variety of pernicious germs which tend to destroy it. As long as man lives, he keeps up the fight against these destructive forces. The struggle ceases only with death. It is, however, not only on the physical plane that the struggle is carried on. On the moral plane too he has to struggle against forces of destruction which would disintegrate and disrupt his self. Here the problem is more difficult and complicated, as the self has to contend with the destructive forces of the external world as well as the impulses of debasing animalism which rise in man if not checked. Man naturally looks around for help as he very often finds it difficult to keep the enemy at bay. The divine guidance in the Qur'an offers man effective help in the moral struggle. This help is given according to a definite programme.

The first part of the programme may be characterised as prophylactic. It helps man to guard against both the open and insidious attacks of destructive forces. This form of help is termed *maghfirah* in the Qur'an. *Ghafrun* means "to cover" and *mighfar*, which is derived from it, means the helmet which protects the head of the warrior from the blows of the enemy. The Qur'an protects the human self just as effectively from the blows of the destructive forces. Man quails when he finds himself facing the formidable array of the forces of destruction. He begins to weaken and to give way to despair. The divine programme prevents him from yielding to *batil* by replenishing his store of moral energy and by inspiring faith in his heart that the *haqq*, though weak at the moment, will finally prevail over *batil*. Man may feel defenceless against the forces of *batil*, but when the divine revelation has instilled in his heart *iman* and courage, he

enters the arena with renewed confidence and hope. This is how the first part of the programme helps him.

The second part, *tauba*, in the terminology of the Qur'an, is curative. Many may have yielded to *batil* and may have followed the wrong path. Even then, the Qur'an says, their case is not hopeless. *Tauba* offers them a sure remedy. *Tauba* is derived from the root *taba*, which means to return. The Kiswahili equivalent is *tubu*, meaning to repent. *Tauba*, therefore, does not mean vain regret or futile remorse. It means that when man realises that he has been following the wrong path, he should have the courage to stop and retrace his steps. In this sense *tauba* means heart-searching, re-appraisal of the situation and reassessment of the policy he has been following. Suppose a man suddenly realises that the path he has been following is taking him farther away from his real goal. Is he is wise, he will not merely sit down and give himself up to unrestrained grief. He will resolutely hasten back to his starting point and when he has reached it, he wil,l after due deliberation, choose a new path. *Tauba*, or the moral plane, represents the same sensible way of acting. But *tauba* has in it an ingredient of Divine Presence and help. The man who has realised his mistake and is eager to rectify it, is not left to his own resources. Unstinted divine help is given to him in the shape of divine guidance which never errs. Otherwise, the sense of having wasted his time and the feelings of uncertainty about the results of his further efforts will weigh heavily on him and will hamper his efforts to regain the right path. The divine help, the concomitant of *tauba,* refreshes and re-invigorates him so that he acts with re-doubled energy. In short, *mighfirah* assists a man in warding off the blows of *sharr*, but when he is hit, *tauba* helps to repair the damage done. It should be noted that *tauba* is not a passive act of regret; it is positive effort at restoration of the last position, with regeneration of energy born of hope and confidence. *Tauba* is not merely withdrawal from what was destructive; it is the annulment of its consequences. Says the Qur'an (S. 11:114): "Lo! Good deeds annul the ill deeds". Tauba thus fortifies the constructive forces in man and enables them to repair the damage to the self, which was caused by his destructive deeds. The Qur'an assures man that if he does not surrender himself to *sharr* with regard to the big issues, his paltry lapses will not be permitted to impede his progress to his goal:

> "And if ye avoid the great things which ye are forbidden, we will remit from you
> your lapses and make you enter a noble gate" (S.4:32).

The constructive results of your noble deeds outweigh the destructive consequences of your lapses. As already pointed out in Chapter three, man is not an object of salvation, but its subject. Man is God's partner, but a partner worthy of God because he is trustworthy as his *Khalifa*, not because he is pitifully helpless and needs to be "saved". Salvation in the Islamic sense has to be worked by the self and attained by him under the Divine Presence and guidance as discussed above.

It will be seen that the concept of salvation set forth in the Qur'an is a positive achievement by the self, as against the Christian salvation which requires a mediator and saviour to bring about the same experience. In the Islamic understanding this Christian means of salvation is negative and in fact taken to be a barren concept of escapism similarly seen in the soteriology of Hinduism. According to Islam, the Christian conception of salvation springs from a misplaced notion of man's nature and from a misconception of his relationship to the world. It throws man into turmoil with the handicap of a tainted soul in a perverse world. It creates a deep sense of guilt, giving him the only resource of renouncing the combat and fleeing from it. Islam asks: Why set such a futile stage at all? Divine purpose runs through the world, a purpose which is akin to the purpose for which man is endowed with a self. No doubt, the odds are set against him. But the obstacles are there not to frustrate him, but to call forth the best in him. They are designed to put him on his mettle, to permit the indomitable spirit he possesses to reveal itself is all its glory. Man develops his powers in the course of overcoming obstacles (Troeltsch 1931:83). Frustration forces him to reconstruct his personality. Rebuffs and set-backs toughen and harden him and by facing them, he develops a mature personality. This confirms a stance that Islam is a legislative religion in so far as it stresses the law of Allah which every believer must observe wholeheartedly (Bavinck 1981:27). So we see that even when the world at times appears to be stern and unkind, in the long run it turns out to be man's ally and not his foe. And hence goes the saying: "behind a suffering hand there is a smiling face of Allah" (Hoosen Elias 1996:12).

Certainly man often goes astray. As a free being it is his privilege. When he commits a mistake, he has to pay the price for it and in the process he realises that he is fully responsible for his action and that the freedom he enjoys is real and not illusory. To err is human, according to the Qur'an, and it is natural for a man to commit a mistake now and again. If he acts wrongly, his self is stained, but the stain can be removed. If he realises his mistake and sincerely tries to make amends for his wrong-doing, he

can recover his poise. This is the truth that is clearly set forth in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is a gospel of hope in Islam. It forbids man to give way to despair. A man may have led a wrong life for years, but if he resolutely turns his face in the right direction and persists in acting correctly, he will not find the path to self-realisation blocked for all time. Right actions nullify wrong actions. The man who is saved is not one who has never committed a mistake, which is impossible, but one whose right actions outweigh his wrng actions. Says the Qur'an (S. 23:102-103).:

"Then those whose balance
(of good deeds) is heavy,
They will attain salvation
But those whose balance
Is light, will be those
who have lost their souls;
In Hell will they abide."

What exactly is meant by saving one's self or losing it? These phrases become intelligible only when viewed in relation to the goal – seeking activity of the human self. The deepest urge in man is for self-development and self-realisation. When he is making progress towards this goal, he feels happy and knows that he is on the way to qualify himself for promotion to a higher plane of existence. For the self lives in and through activity. The activity is natural and it is always in an upward direction. Inaction is the death of the self, and so is movement in a downward direction. When the self of man is making steady progress towards the goal, it may be with occasional deviations and backsliding, but it slowly moves forward until it finds itself in a state which is symbolised by *Jannah* or paradise. The picturesque imagery with which it is presented has misled many into thinking that it is a place which provides gratification for the senses. It is not a place, but a state of mind, a state charged with the sense of fulfilment and the feeling of high aspiration. It is akin to the feeling that the mountaineer experiences when after wearily climbing the hillside and avoiding boulders, he finally reaches the lofty peak. Loftier peaks swim into his vision and invite him to fresh conquests. For him it is at once the end of a journey and the beginning of another. His joy at successful achievement is blended with the thrill of excitement at the discovery of fresh fields for adventure. Such is the state of mind of those who have fully realise themselves on the human plane and are ready to ascend to a higher one.

The state of mind directly opposite to *Jannah* has been designated as *Jahannam*. It is the Arabic form of the Hebrew word *Gehenna*. Originally *Gehenna* meant the valley of Hannom, where human sacrifices to Baal and Moloch were offered. *Jahannam* symbolises that condition of existence in which the self's purposeful activity is brought to a stand-still. Enfeebled and debilitated by the continuous and persistent wrongdoing, the self loses its capacity for progress and for moving towards a higher state of being. Its urge for progress is crushed and the enervated self surrenders itself to regret and remorse. It has voluntarily relinquished its right to participate in the pursuit of the good. If it ever feels the desire to rejoin the march of free selves, the desire is too weak to pull it out of the slough of despair and inaction. In the words of the poet, Robert Frost, it has: "Nothing to look backward to with pride and nothing to look forward to with hope".

The Qur'an asserts: "Whenever in their anguish they desire to come forth therefrom, they shall be turned back into it" (S. 22:22).

The inmates of *Jannah* will be spared the sight of this slough of despondence. They shall not hear the slightest sound thereof (S.21:102).

They will continue their forward march, steadily rising in the scale of existence and testing the joys of self-fulfilment. The process of their self-development will be continuous and unlimited. When they have attained a high stage, the vision of a still higher one will spur them on to put forth fresh efforts. For them, the rewards of victory will not be well-earned rest but a greater zeal for action and a new vista to their ambition.

Such is the picture of heaven and hell that the Qur'an presents for the edification of man. According to the view upheld by the Qur'an salvation is not liberation from "evil"; evil is in ourselves or in the world. To achieve salvation is to prove one's fitness for entering a higher plane of existence. Reward and punishment are wrongly conceived as coming from an external source. They are the natural consequences of what we do and think and manifest themselves in the enrichment or impoverishment of our self. Heaven and Hell do not exist outside us somewhere in outer space. They are states of the self. Hell is the state in which the self finds its progress blocked. Heaven is the state in which the way to development lies open to the self. To cease to aspire is to be doomed to Hell, to be able to aspire is to be in Heaven. There is therefore, no room for intercession and redemption in Islam. What we become, we become through our

own actions. There is no saviour. We cannot carry the burden of any other person and no one can relieve us of the burden we must bear. The concept of sin also must be reformulated so as to bring it into harmony with the above view. Sin should not be conceived as the trait of evil that clings to the soul from birth, being either the legacy of our forefathers or the result of our own previous life. There is no original sin as held in Christianity. Sin is the ill effect on our self of our own wrong doing. It can be obliterated by our own right action and not by the action of any one else. If we have committed wrong unwillingly, heedlessly, or even with our eyes wide open, we can draw solace from the reflection that we hold the remedy in our own hands.

6.5   Conclusion

In the African traditional religion salvation is attained through the sacrifice of an animal to appease the wrath of God. In Christianity, as seen above, salvation is attained through acceptance of Jesus Christ as a saviour and indeed, as the African Independent Churches teach, the sins of believers are washed away through baptism. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and the blood which was shed play a major role in this salvation. The Holy Spirit works miracles in the believers. The Islamic version of salvation as held in the Qur'an and expounded above, is one which has to be worked upon by the self to attain it. Good deeds play an important service in outweighing the bad ones. Islam teaches that, there is no one who carries the burden of another person. One has the responsibility of working out one's own salvation. However, the Qur'an has magical "power" in helping an individual by providing the hope of being able to outweigh the bad actions. It is this "power" to achieve salvation and without which salvation is impossible which we, in this study, understand to be a pointer to Divine Presence in the three religions

There are major differences between the three religions, African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam as regards salvation. The differences do not, however, mean that they do not also exhibit similarities with regard to the attaining of salvation. They all emphasise the fact that in order to create a peaceful society there is a need to make things right with the Divine. Salvation is in itself a healing and mending of the loss of the divine attributes and qualities brought about by sin. Salvation involves the healing of individuals so that society can be healed and restored, as well as a belief in the power of the Divine. Restoration is important in the sense that a saved individual has respect for others and a yearning to live a life worthy of imitation by others.

According to all three religions a saved person will depend on the Divine in his vertical relationship with the understanding that this will result in a healthy horizontal relationship of togetherness. It is important to stress here that there are not such great differences as regards salvation between the African traditional religion and the other religions, as there are between the two mission religions in Africa, namely Christianity and Islam.

According to the Christian belief salvation basically centres on the mission and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This view is indeed in contrast with the Muslim experience. According to Islam, Jesus Christ, son of Mary, was a great Apostle of God. He was made to follow in the footsteps of the prophets and to confirm the law which was sent down before Him. He was given the Gospel (*Injil*), as the light and guidance for mankind. The Qur'an relates: "And we will make Him a Messenger unto the children of Israel, saying: Lo! I come unto you with a sign from your Lord. And I come confirming that which was before me of the Torah" (Qur'an 3:49-50).

The Prophet Isa (Jesus), like many prophets before Him, performed miracles e.g. curing the insane and the blind, curing the lepers and raising the dead. He did these miracles by Allah's will. They were meant to serve as proof of the truth of his mission. The important role bestowed on the Prophet Isa did not make him the "Son of God" or single Him out as the only Saviour of mankind. In fact, according to Islam, the Prophet Isa was only a servant and messenger of Allah. The Qur'an says: "Not one of the beings in the heavens and earth but must come to (Allah) most gracious as servant."

The Christian witness that man is forgiven because of the crucifixion of Jesus is not in line with the Muslim belief. The end of the Prophet Isa on earth is blanketed in mystery, and many Muslims prefer not to go beyond the explanation given in the Qur'an. On this issue the Qur'an (4:157-158)tells us :

> That they said (in boast); we killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the Messenger of God; But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but it was made to appear to them; and those who differ, therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow. For surely, they killed him not. Nay, Allah raised him unto Himself; and Allah Is ever mighty wise."

According to the true belief of Islam, it would seem most inappropriate for the Messiah to die as a result of a shameful crucifixion. God, who is just, would not permit the righteous Messiah to suffer in that manner. Muslims believe that Allah saved the

Messiah from the ignominy of crucifixion much as Allah also saved the seal of the Prophets from ignominy following the *Hijra*.

Islam also does not identify with the Christian conviction that man needs to be redeemed. The Christian belief is the redemptive sacrificial death of Christ does not fit the Islamic view that man has always been fundamentally good, and that God loves and forgives those who obey his will.

According to Muslims Islam is a way of peace. The Muslim view, which is in total contrast to the Christian experience, is that man experiences peace through total submission to Allah. Jesus Christ, like many prophets before him, and Mohammed the Seal of the Prophets, have all been examples of God's mercy to humanity.

The Christian response to the Islamic interpretation of the Christian salvation is that it may be that the Christian and the Muslim view of the crucifixion of Christ are more close together than it appears on the surface. The gospel emphasise that Jesus, the Messiah, gave His life. He said:

> "... I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of My Own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from My Father" (John 10:17,18).

The crucifixion of Christ is a drama of supreme self giving. The Messiah Himself gave his life; no one could take it from Him, for certainly no one can slay the Eternal Word of God. And although He gave Himself unto death on the cross at the hands of evil men, they nevertheless could not destroy Him for He arose from the grave. Certainly, Christians would agree that death cannot be triumphant over the Messiah. In his resurrection He has triumphed over death, thus effecting salvation for those who have faith in Him. This is the true Divine Presence which can result in animosity from a religious point of view being removed from society. It is a yearning that followers of the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam should strive to attain in a multi-religious society with the objective of working together. Salvation leads not only to vertical blessings being received from the Divine, but also brings with it horizontal blessings which are equally required for the coexistence of societies in Africa. It is only when people are right with the Divine that they can understand one another well enough to have common developmental goals irrespective of the differences in their religions. The basis for this is making things right with the Divine as expounded in this study.

This study has revealed conclusively that, irrespective of the differences which exist between the discussed religions, the concept of the Divine is the only means which can bring about dialogue in a multi-religious society. In Christianity and Islam the Divine is constantly personalised and identified either with the triune God (Father, Son [Christ] and Holy Spirit) or with Allah. In the African indigenous religion the Divine is associated with the Creator God, the faraway One who is nevertheless present in human events and happenings. However the clear personalisation of the Divine in the African traditional religion differs from the other two religions, viz. Christianity and Islam. Thus, although the African traditional religion actually also has a monotheistic view of the Creator God, it requires special explanation in order for a person outside this religion to grasp the way in which it works.

The attitude towards and experience of the Divine of the three religions also differ. In Christianity Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and man, forms the focal point of worship. In Islam the concepts of *tawhid* and Allah as the only God constitute the main theme of *ibadah*. In the African traditional religion the attitude towards the Divine finds expression in animal sacrifices which have to be presented at the shrines by intermediaries (priests, diviners, magicians, etc.).

When it comes to the concept of salvation, the Muslim doctrine of sin and salvation differs from that of the Christians. The Muslim religion does not recognise an original sin which has permeated the entire human race, whereas Christians do believe that original sin is inherited by every human being. In Islam salvation is obtained through personal merit. The Christian view is that salvation can only be obtained through the grace and mercy wrought by Christ.

Having now clearly delineated the differences as well as the similarities between the three religions which are the focus of our study we shall proceed to discuss the implications thereof and attempt to formulate guidelines for a way forward in the final chapter of this study.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND A WAY FORWARD

7.1   Possibilities for dialogue and peaceful co-existence in a multi-religious society

The study concerns the understanding of the concept of the Divine as held by the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. The discussion highlighted the views of the three religions concerning the attributes of the Divine and the theological elements attached to the Divine which mostly give rise to differences as they are interpreted differently. Islam's views concerning monotheism, predestination, sin and salvation are, for example, strikingly different from those of Christianity. We have seen that the differences should not be emphasised if one is to make an attempt to effect peaceful co-existence in a multi-religious society – such as the one we have in Africa. Religion is transcendental, and its role is to enrich human spirituality. The concept of the Divine ought therefore to be emphasised in the religions discussed in the African context. It is the vertical relationship with the Creator which is interpreted in a similar fashion by the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam and this should take priority in these religions instead of dwelling on polarities. Good vertical relationships with the Divine and his attributes, influence the horizontal dialogue in a multi-religious society. Religion belongs to God although it is a human instrument and it should serve to effect harmony and peace among the adherents of the different religions resulting in a feeling of togetherness and respect for the religion of the other.

People belong to a particular religion, but no religion belongs to people in such a way that they can use it to further their own narrow interests. Religion should not be used to fuel hatred and animosity at the expense of the ultimate goal of dialogue stressed in all religions of the world including the ones discussed here. There is no dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical. The Creator cannot be detached and divorced from the instrument of religion. When adherents cherish differences, they are using religion as a tool for furthering their own interest at the expense of the Divine. Religion should not be used to divide the human beings who belong to the creation of God and who are bearers of the image of God.

The deeper analysis done in the course of the study has shown that African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam reveal their common basis in the concept of the Divine.

They all articulate the fact that God is unknown and that He can only be known through his attributes. Africans believed that God is beyond human reach and lives way above in the sky and mountains and can only be understood through his intrinsic, external and eternal attributes as discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. These attributes are similar to those associated with the Divine in the Christian religion and also in Islam. These religions cherish a common belief in one God, the Creator of the universe, even though He cannot be known. This common belief in God as the Creator is not an import into the continent of Africa. From times immemorial our African ancestors have believed in the existence of one God (Idowu 1973:140-164). What has been imported into Africa is historical competition, not so much within the African traditional religions, but rather between Christianity and Islam. This competition and animosity is fuelled by emphasising certain theological areas at the expense of the concept of the Divine with regard to which there is agreement between these religions. Christian and Muslim religions have a common goal in Mission and Dawah – the goal of doing a complete surgery on the belief systems of the African in his cultural set-up. They are both foreign religions on the continent, but with regard to the African and his culture they emphasise differences. Each of the two religions has its own theology and vision of the cosmos. However, the common ground for both is life in totality. With the present trend of hostility and rancour between Christians and Muslims in Africa it is important to stress dialogue between the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam as a way of working together to achieve peace and harmony in a multi-religious society. Such religious symbiosis is only practically possible if the concept of Divine, which is common to these religions, is stressed. This is necessary in order to promote good relationships and harmony irrespective of the peculiarities of each religion.

In this study we have attempted to expound the key ideas regarding the concept of the Divine as a basis for dialogue in the multi-religious society of Africa. We have seen that, apart from the common understanding of God as the Creator of the universe, there are other elements of the concept that are the bases for major differences between these religions. We have, for example, seen that the concept of monotheism is understood and articulated quite differently by the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam and that there are differences of meaning that are peculiar to each of these religions. These differences should be respected by the adherents of each of the religions if we are to bring about a religious symbiosis and create a basis for dialogue for the purpose of promoting unity. It has been emphasised very strongly

that the possibility of togetherness of African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam depends on people being willing to build on the common concept of the Divine as it is understood in these religions and by their members on the continent and especially in Kenya. If this can be done, then peace, equity and tranquillity will exist on the continent. As we have pointed out in the study, commitment to the vertical relationship between God and man influences the horizontal and has the power of bringing about harmony in relationships and hence a lasting dialogue in multi-religious societies. If we can do this, then Africa and her peoples can be salvaged from her misery of tribalism, disharmony, racial hatred, genocide and marginalisation by the positive role played by religion under the succinct understanding of the concept of the Divine.

Dialogue and the search for consensus which has its roots in African culture need to be promoted among followers of the different religions. The dependable way of bringing this about is clear articulation of the Sovereignty of God in all aspects of religious life as opposed to stressing the differences which are and remain unique to each of the religions. The primary objective should not be to convert or to be converted. We believe that our role as Christians is to bear witness to our faith. It is Christ our Lord alone who can convert through the indwelling illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. Our approach to the Christian-Muslim relation should not be crisis-driven. Christians, as much as Muslims, should continually be involved in the interfaith dialogue.

Christianity and Islam are two living faiths which claim to have a mission to the whole of mankind. In this study we have highlighted, albeit briefly, some of the major issues which bring Muslims and Christians together or separate them completely in their attitude towards the Divine and their witness among their fellowmen.

There are beliefs that Christians and Muslims hold in common. They recognise the faith of Abraham and seek to understand and live in accordance with the faith which they cherish. They believe that faith needs to be enlightened through the witness of prophets, apostles, and the Scriptures. They believe that revelation is not a human invention, but rather the gracious gift of God to man. They believe that history has meaning, that it is moving towards a consummation in judgement. They both believe in the resurrection of the dead. They believe that all this springs from God who is the sovereign, transcendent righteous Creator of all (Parrinder 1961: 187-189). Christians and Muslims believe that God commands his people to witness and to invite

unbelievers unto repentance and into the community of faith. They both believe that God has established a witnessing community of faith.

While stressing the similarities between Christianity and Islam which can serve to unite them, we also have to accept that their respective witnesses differ in important ways. The Muslim witness is that the Qur'an is God's final and definitive revelation of his perfect will to mankind. The Christian witness is that Jesus, the Messiah, is the Living Word of God in human form. For the Muslim the Qur'an is the criterion of truth. For the Christian the total Biblical witness culminates in Jesus, the Messiah, who is the criterion of truth. And all that a Muslim or a Christian believes about man, God, salvation, guidance, righteousness, revelation, judgmental community, is determined by these respective commitments.

For the purpose of dialogue, we sense that there are areas in which the beliefs are complementary. These points of commonality are important in a religious symbiosis. But at the same time the Christians and Muslims should be aware of significant differences. Both Islam and Christianity agree that God is merciful and that He loves. These are very necessary virtues which can serve to nurture dialogue in a multi-religious society. The question is: How closely does God choose to identify with our human situation? That is the fundamental question: How does God express his love and mercy? Islam believes that God's mercy is supremely expressed through the revelation of a perfect law. According to the Christian faith, God's love is supremely expressed in the redemptive love revealed in the life, suffering, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah. These are not superficial differences. They deal with the most fundamental questions of the meaning of human existence (Keene 1993:119-123). There is no way that a Muslim and a Christian can honestly proclaim that these differences are irrelevant or insignificant.

The nature of the theological issue is so exceedingly profound that the questions at stake cannot be appropriately understood or resolved through prepositional polemics or logical positivism (Shanks 1995:68-108). Our dialogue in the interest of truth must centre more on the basis of the Divine, the ultimate reality, the reality which probes much more deeply into the meaning of human existence than mere rationalism is ever capable of doing. On this fact both Muslim and Christian agree: truth is the word of authoritative revelation from God. That common starting point is both the point of convergence and divergence between the two religions Christianity and Islam. Is the Word of revelation pre-eminently a Book or supremely evident in a Person? That

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issue cannot be resolved by argument, the very nature of the issue demands patience, listening, and witness by both communities of faith (*ibid.*:35-37)

Nevertheless, the pain caused by these differences should not prevent Christians and Muslims from continuing the dialogue or from living together in peace. The issues which divide them must not build a wall of hostility between them so that the dialogue ceases. If Christians and Muslims desire truth and a deeper understanding of one another, then their mutual dialogue on the basis of the Divine must continue. The dialogue should move on many different levels. This study is a written dialogue. But there are other levels of dialogue which are equally important. Probably the most significant level of dialogue should be the understanding of the concept of the Divine and the way in which the adherents of these religions live practically in accordance with it. This understanding is necessary for nurturing good neighbourliness. Christians, Muslims and adherents of the African traditional religion must learn to know one another as friends. They must pray to the Divine (God) asking Him to help them to build bridges of love between them. They must learn the dialogue of love, forgiveness, respect, good neighbourliness, listening and witness on the basis of the Divine.

The Christians and Muslims should re-examine their present stance and identity in relation to the indigenous tradition and culture of the people they serve in spiritual matters. Western and Arabic liturgical practices which are alien to the African way of expression in the divine worship should be replaced with contextually relevant practices. Music must be in touched with traditional or indigenous beat or rhythm. The design of church buildings and mosques should reflect African style and aesthetic taste. The style of dress for the clergy, sheikh, laity and *Muta Kallimun* should conform to the local understanding of religious celebrations in rituals, initiations and taboos.

Because of their common and similar understanding of the concept of the Divine which should be the life blood of their teaching, Christianity and Islam in Africa should mobilise their followers to form a common front against all forces which threaten life: hunger, war, disease, ignorance and tribal clashes. This could be achieved, for example, by (a) embarking on development projects which include the participation of Muslims, and (b) involving Christians in both sorrowful and happy moments in the lives of Muslims: funerals, illness, weddings, birthdays. The common force that eminently brings them together is the understanding that the origin of all religious life is God Himself. For indeed the Gospel of Matthew provides us with a concluding statement

from the Lord Jesus Himself: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). When people of different religions work in togetherness in the Divine Presence, God Himself is present among them. Animosity does not belong in the Divine Presence.

In Kenya, for example, teaching of and emphasis on the concept of the Divine should promote dialogue among the adherents of the different religions. This is necessary if there is to be any hope of eradicating the ethnic clashes which are rampant at present. The family situations as they can be seen in Mummias Town, Bungoma Township Area and Rabai in Mombassa provide practical examples of how relationships between adherents of the different religions can work.

In some families there are both Christians and Muslims, and every one actively participates in the life of the family without bothering about their religious convictions. During religious feasts (Christmas, Easter, *Id al-Fitr, Id al-Adha*), they exchange gifts among themselves irrespective of religious membership. Formal relations are not organised as such. Meanwhile, during some church ceremonies organised by church leaders, Imams are invited to take part, and *vice versa*. The atmosphere between Muslims and Christians in these areas is quite good. In contrast to what happens in the other parts of Kenya such as the North Eastern Province and some areas of the Coastal Province, Muslims and Christians in Mumias, Bungoma and Rabai live together in peace. The basis for their peaceful co-existence is a relationship that is vertically based on the common understanding of the concept of the Divine. They have a good dialogue and relationships with one another in practical, social and even some spiritual matters, and a mutual respect for the doctrines of their respective religions.

We have already indicated in this study what the African view implies, highlighting the principles of unity which, in our opinion, has its roots in a vivid understanding of the concept of the Divine. According to the African view, human life is seen as life in community (Oduyoye 1979:110). Human beings, and therefore also Christians and Muslims, belong together as members of one human community. "God is the originator of all humanity and as a corollary, there is one human family" (*ibid.*:111). It is a true expression of the Divine Presence as articulated in this study that, irrespective of religious differences, human beings should understand that we all have a common origin and therefore can and should work, live and operate together.

This provides a basis for developing relations between African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam in Africa. It is important to emphasise that human community and the Divine are not abstract concepts, but realities which manifest themselves in a wide network of human dialogue. One of the leading Christian families in Cameroon traces its history back not only to the chiefs of the coastal region near Limbe, but also to the first missionaries, Baptists from England and Jamaica, who came to the country around 1840. Members of this family had already been baptised by 1860.

Dr Ernest Kofele Martin, who headed the family until he passed away recently, was one of the leaders of the Baptist community in Cameroon and of the world-wide Baptist fellowship. Around 1910 his father was posted to the Muslim town of Garoua, in northern Cameroon by the German colonial authorities. Just before the young man had to leave for the far north, his fiancée died. A leading Muslim family in Garoua gave him one their daughters as a wife. This is how it came about that a very committed African Christian leader of his community, happened to be the son a Christian father and a Muslim mother. Professor Ali-Mazrui, a leading scholar in History from Kenya Coast, is himself a devout and fervent Muslim of our time but he is married to a Christian white lady of British origin. In the case of Dr Kofele Martin a Christian family living on the Atlantic coast has strong links with a Muslim family in a town on the Benue River. One of Dr Kofele Martin's daughters has been a member of Parliament for many years. These are just examples of the potential which exists in African society for establishing a deep Christian-Muslim relation (Mbiti 1986).

7.2   The Christian witness in a multi-religious society

What must a Christian say? What does Christianity have to say about African traditional religion and Islam? And what must it answer to the remark which we have already referred to in this study, that all religions are the same and that "if a man reaches the heart of his own religion, he has reached the heart of others too"? Reflecting on this, it is clear that we must begin with the two ideas expressed by Paul in Romans 1. We saw that it is said there that God has always revealed Himself to every man from the very beginning of the world. God concerns Himself with every man. Muhammad would never have produced the recitations of the Qur'an if God had not touched him. He would never have uttered his prophetic witness if God had not concerned Himself with him. Every religion as we have seen, contains somehow, the silent work of God.

We have seen that man has always repressed this silent work of God. In this connection we recall the two forces the apostle Paul mentions, namely repression and substitution. They show their pernicious strength everywhere. The Christian and the church can confess this quietly and honestly, because it judges itself by its confession. It is conscious that it has often been guilty of repression and substitution in the course of its history, and it also knows that its guilt in this respect is much greater than that of the other religions, because it has so often obscured the revealed and clear gospel of Jesus Christ behind all kinds of cunning, human reasoning. Every Christian knows that he is always apt to hide the truth through his own righteousness, and that only God's grace has taught him to acknowledge and confess this sin. With such humility a Christian can give his testimony in the world of the African traditional religion and Islam. The Christian should first and foremost seek an acceptable relationship with the Divine in accordance with the Bible. This is well corroborated by the word of J H Bavinck (1981) capsulated in this statement: "As long as I laugh at what I regard as being foolish superstition in other religions, I look down upon adherents of them." Then "I have not yet found the key to his [another religion's adherent's] soul. As soon as I understand that what he does in a noticeably naive and childish manner, I also continue to do again and again in a different form; as soon as I actually stand next to him, I can in the name of Christ stand in opposition to him and convince him of sin, as Christ did with me and still does each day" (Bavinck 1981:242). If we acknowledge these basic truths and come to understand that, as humans, we share in the same concept of the Divine and that all religions draw from the same fund of belief, it will ensure an atmosphere conducive to conversation, not only with Muslims but also with adherents of the African traditional religion. The process of repression is noticeable everywhere in the history of religion. Man seeks God and at the same time flees from Him; man tries to get to know God, but at the same time he is busy obscuring the image he receives of God's everlasting power and deity. Fear is the greatest cause of this. In his heart of hearts man has a vague sense that he is trying to fool God, and that he is guilty before God. As a result of this fear and his feeling of guilt, he represses the image of God and replaces it with his own ideas. Man is, as Calvin said in his Institute, a *fabrica idolorum* (Beveridge 1845).

It seems to us that this can best be illustrated by the meaning of the kingdom. The kingdom of God means the harmonious order of all creatures in one great relation so that every creature has its own place and dutifully fulfils its own function in the whole "holistic" domain, under the loving rule of God Himself. With regard to man, it means

that he is both a particle in the cosmos and at the same time more than that. He is God's deputy; he has a very special vocation. He is the object of God's activity and at the same time a fellow worker. This implies a marked responsibility. He is a person, because God addressed him. He may rule everything in creation because God entrusted it to him, but in ruling he remains God's servant all the time. The one thing that man is not allowed to do is to leave his appointed place and to make himself a new centre and ignore God. He is not allowed to put his trust in a particular religion at the expense of a relationship with the Divine which, in our view, is a basis on which human dialogue can be established in a multi-religious society in the cosmos and Africa in particular. Togetherness is possible where religion is seen in terms of the understanding of the Divine as expounded in this study

GLOSSARY OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION, CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC TERMS

The terms contained in this glossary are not defined in the text in which they appear in the study, or else they recur at some distance from their first appearance and definition, without adequate context for reminding reader of their meaning. In compiling the glossary, the researcher leaned heavily on the work of professor J.A. Naudé in his doctor's thesis, *The Name Allah* (1971). Gibb and Kramer's *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* and Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam* were also consulted for the meaning of Islamic terms which are mainly in the Arabic language.

African traditional religious terms

Abastirasti	Aluhyia sub-clan belonging to Banyore of Kenya
Adro	the immanent God among the Lugbara
Adroa	transcendent God among the Lugbara
ala or ani, ana	earth goddess, and the arch divinity among the Ibgbo
Akuj	name for God among the Turkana
asis	the name for the sun among the Kalenjin ethnic groups, Nandi, Kipsigis, Elgeyo, Tugen, Marakwet, Pokot, Sabaot and Sebei.
Asista	name for God who radiates through the sun
babini	wizards among the Babukusu
bakimba	rainmakers among the Babukusu
balosi	witches
baloosi	old women
bafumu	sorcerers, diviners among the Babukusu
bamia	the derogatory name for Teso ethnic group by the Babukusu
barwa	the derogatory name for the saboats by the Babukusu
barigooi	the prophets among the Babukusu
boatsi	first created man among the Bambuti

bukhwana	the birth of twins taken as a misfortune which has to be appeased among the Babukusu
Buyaayia	the new crop harvested among the Babukusu
emworon	the diviner among the Turkana
eng'ami	the grave
engaani	warning not to do something demonstrated by sneezing or a certain bird known to announce bad omen, or a grey antelope crossing the road from the left while one is on a journey
eng'orok	young warriors among the Turkana known for livestock raiding and wrestling from other neighbouring ethnic groups of Pokot, Marakwet, Tugen, Karamoja of Uganda, Taposa of Sudan, Marile of Ethiopia and Samburu of Kenya
Fufu	National food in Nigeria made from maize meal, planteen and cassata roots
Gatonda	name for God among the Bakanda of Uganda
Gomy	a saboat who lived around the slopes of Mt. Elgon
Jakuta	wrath of God among the Yoruba
Khulia Silulu	a means of innocence in an alleged crime against the community performed by the Babukusu
Kidiama	a term for the "above" among the Turkana
Khakaba	one who distributes the providence of God
Khuosia	sacrifices performed by the medicine man to appease the ancestors – usually a fowl is slaughtered and roasted to appease the bad omen brought by the ancestors or the birth of twins among the Babukusu
Legba	the divine messenger assigned with the responsibility of liaison between Mau-Lisa and other offspring and between offspring themselves
Leve	the high dwelling place of God where people cannot reach Him, a term used among the Mende

Lirango lie nchofu	the thigh of an elephant - a term of arrogance and bragging among the Babukusu as they refer to themselves to be superior than other ethnic groups among them and about them
Mangee	grandfather who provides everything used in respect among the Mende – a term used to represent God in the absence of the correct term for Him
Mawu-Lisa	the arch divinity who apportioned the kingdoms of the sky, the sea and the earth
Mugambi	the crawling creature among the Meru
mugumu	the sacred tree among the Gikuyu (fig tree)
mulungu	medicine man among the Bena
Mugwe	the religious leader among the Meru
Musikhebo	circumcision period and season among the Babukusu, mainly in August of the even year. The same term is used among the Batahomi, Bakabarasi, Bawanga, and Banyala, a western province.
Ngãi	the name for God among the Gikuyu and Masai
Nisio wele akhua ne kumukhona mulala Gakanila ne kamakhono kombi.	What God offers you with one hand, you should receive with both hands (thanks) as a sign of humility and dependence on God.
Nyasaye	the name of God the Lua and some parts of Luhyia in Vihiga; Kakamega and Malava/ Luguri districts.
Olodumare	Almighty, Supreme God among the Yoruba
Olokun	the son of Asanobwa among the Yoruba vested with power and majesty by his father
Olorun	the owner or Lord of heaven
Omweri	the name for the special python among the Lua of Nyakach. A special python who provides a ladder of blessings from Nyasaye to Nyakach, hence the entire Luo community
Onyan	the divinities' sons among the Akan

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Orisana	arch divinity among the Yoruba with the same attribute as Olundumare
Orkyot	divine ministers among the Kalenjin ethnic groups
Piny-kinyal	all powerful one - among the Luo
sangoma	diviner among the Zulu
shikakunama	the Besetting one – used by the Ila in referring to God who sits on the back of everyone and cannot be shaken off
sokogba or soko-egba	God's axe or wrath among the Nupe
tahu	tree from the fruits of which the Bambuti were commanded never to eat
Tororot	the name for God among the Pokot
Ukahu	the yam among the Chagga
Ula	the yam among the Chagga which is different from ukaho
Wele	name for God among the Babukusu
Xevioso	wrath of God among the Ewe of Dahomey

Christian religious terms

Agano	agreement, covenant, treaty
Agano lakale	Old Testament
Agano jipiya	New Testament
agios	Greek word for "Holy"
al panai	"to my face", "before me", "besides me" (Hebrew)
baptism	a sign involving water to show that an individual is accepted into Christian church. Done by sprinkling or immersion.
Divine	pertaining to God or a god
El-on Elohim	the name for God used by Abraham. El-on Elohim is the Hebrew form of the Arabic name "Allah"

election	God's positive choice of individuals, nations, or groups to eternal life and fellowship with Him – positive predestination
Elyon	"the most High" or "the most High God"
eucharist	communion – the sharing of bead and wine – Holy Communion
eudokia	"the good pleasure of His will"
foreordain	decisions of God with respect to any matter within the realm of cosmic history
Great Commission	the command of Jesus to His disciples to preach the Gospel in the whole world
I AM	the name of God which was revealed to Moses at the burning bush
incarnation	the belief that God has revealed Himself in Jesus the Messiah
Injil	the Kiswahili and Arabic word for the gospel of Jesus the Messiah
Mosaic law	the Torah – the commandments of God contained in the Pentateuch, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomium
Messiah	"the Anointed One", the Semitic form of the Greek "Kristos" or English "Christ"
monotheism	One God – the belief in one God and only one, personal, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God, who is the creator and Lord of everyone and everything and yet exists distinct from and beyond the whole universe
New Testament	the portion of the Bible written after the coming of the Messiah
numen	a Latin term derived from the German adjective "heilig" – with its derivative noun and verb, we have the words sacred and holy, sacredness, holiness, sanctity. "Gottheit" again gives us a triad of synonyms: deity, divinity, Godhead. The deciding factor in the choice of holy rather than sacred as the regular rendering of "heilig" was the fact that it is the Biblical word, found especially in those great passages (Isaiah 6) of which this study makes repeated use and which seem central to its argument.
Old Testament	the portion of the Bible written before the coming of the Messiah

ordain	the commissioning of leaders to their task by the bishops or ministry by the laying on of hands and praying for the Holy Spirit to give them the necessary gifts of leadership
Pater	Father
predestinate	the destiny of someone or God's plan as it related in particular to the eternal conditions of moral agents
predestination	the matter of eternal salvation or condemnation
qadosh	Holy, holy one; saint, from the Hebrew language
reprobation	negative predestination or God's choice of some to suffer or eternal damnation or lostness
sacer	Latin word for holy
sacrifice	an offering, often given as a sign of one's desire for forgiveness
salvation	the expression of forgiveness of sin and right joyous relationship with God
sanctus	Latin word for holy, similar to sacer
Satan	the devil, the evil one
Saviour	Jesus – which means saviour or Joshua; the one who saves mankind from evil
Shaddai or El-Shaddai	the Hebrew name for God which stresses the source of blessing and comfort for the people of God. The name carries with it the meaning of God as being in control of all powers of nature and making them subservient to his gracious purposes.
Shema	the great truth of which the people of Israel were commanded to absorb themselves and to inculcate into their children
Son of God	the Messiah who has a perfect relationship with God
Spirit of God	sometimes also called the Holy Spirit. God is present among mankind as "spirit"
Theos	the Greek name for God
Trinity	an attempt by Christians to express the unity and love of God as Creator, Saviour, and Spirit (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)

Yahweh	the Hebrew name for God which was revealedto the prophet Moses at the burning bush. This name "Yahweh" has been translated as "I AM" or "I WILL BE" or "I WAS". It is God as the one who enters into covenant with man. The German tetract is "Jehovah".

Islamic religious terms

abd	the servant or slave of god
Adam	the father of all people, the husband of Hauwa, who was the first woman
adhan	call to prayer
ahl al-kitab	people of the Book, that is Jews and Christians
al-asma' al husna	the ninety-nine beautiful names of God
al-Haqq	the Truth
Allahu akbar	God is greatest
aya	the praise statement which every Muslim must say before doing anything: "In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful" (Bis-mi-llah ar-Rahamani ar-Rahum). All Quranic surahs except one begin with the Basmalah
da'iyah	missionary
dar al-Islam	household of Islam
dawah	mission
dün,al	religion
din al-fitrah	natural religion
Fatiha, al	the opening chapter of the Qur'an, the perfect prayer for Muslims
fitrah	natural disposition
fugaha	Doctors of Islamic law
Garden, The	a heavenly paradise above the earth where Adam and Hauwa were placed before they yielded to the temptation of Iblis
ghusul	bathing in the prescribed Muslim manner

Hadith	the written traditions concerning the prophet which include both his teachings and practices
haj	the pilgrimage to the ka'bah (Mecca)
Hauwa	Eve, the mother of all people, the wife of Adam who was the first man
Hafiz	Quranic memoriser
Hijrah	the migration from Makkah to Yathreb (Medinah) A.D. 622, the beginning of the Islamic era.
Ibadat	devotional worship and submission
iblis	satan who is the source of evil
ihsan	right conduct
Imam	the head of the Shia Muslims who traces his genealogy to the Prophet Muhammad (PBVH)
imam	the leader of the prayer in the mosque
iman	belief or faith
isnad	the chain of witness through which the Hadith has been transmitted
iqra	recite the recitation of Divine revelation
jahannam	hell
jahilijyah	the time of ignorance in Arabia before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (PBVH)
Jahil, al	Most Majestic; one of the names of God
Janna	Paradise. The place Adam and Hauwa first lived, and the place to which the true slaves of Allah will return
Jibril	Gabriel through whom God has sent down His Books to the apostles
jihad	striving in the path of Allah
jinn	a spirit. Some jinns are evil and some are good. the evil jinns are followers of Iblis
Juma	Friday congregational prayer

Ka'bah	the house of God in Makkah in which there is a sacred black stone towards which all Muslims face when they pray
Khadija	Muhammad's (PBVH) first wife
khalifa	vice regent. Man was sent by God to the earth to be His khalifa or caretaker on earth in obedience to the divine command.
Lat, al	the sun goddess in pre-Islamic Arabia, who was worshipped as one of the three daughters of Allah
Lailat ul-Qadar	the Night of Power when Muhammad (PBVH) received his first revelation
manat, al	the goddess of destiny in pre-Islamic Arabia, who was considered to be one of the three daughters of Allah
Mi'raj	the ascension of the Prophet (PBVH)
Moses	the Prophet of God through whom the Torah was revealed
mosque	a building in which Muslims gather for prayer
mufti	a recognised exponent of the law
Munafiqun	hypocrite Muslims
nabbi	a prophet of God who proclaims the will of God
nafs al-ammarah	the rebellious spirit (of man)
Qibla	direction of prayer
Rabb al 'Alamin	Lord of the Worlds
Rahim	Most Merciful, one of the names of God
Rahman	Most Gracious, one of the names of God
Ramadhan	an apostle of God through whom God reveals a Book
sahaba	companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBVH)
salah	same as salat
salat	the ritual prayer in Islam
saum	fasting

shahadah	the Muslim credal witness: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah
sharia	the law of God
shia	the Muslim community who believe that the head of the community should be a descendant of the Prophet
shirk	associating Allah with other gods. The greatest sin in Islam
subhanahu	May He be praised and exalted
sunnah	the way or practices of the prophet
sunni	the Muslim community who look to the Qur'an, Sunnah and community consensus for authority
surah	a chapter in the Qur'an
taharah	purification
tajdid	renewal and re-establishment
tauzil	the sending down of Books from heaven
tarbiyah	education and training
tawbah	repentance
tawhid	or Tauhid according to Naudé (1971:92), Unity of God. Allah is one. He is the one and only God.
Tazkiyah	purification
'ulama	scholars of Islamic law and theology
'umma	the community of Islam
wahay	Divine revelation
wudu	ablution before prayers
zakat	obligatory alms

LIST OF AFRICAN PEOPLES AND THE COUNTRIES

PEOPLE	COUNTRY
Abaluya	Kenya
Acholi	Uganda
Adjuru	Ivory Coast
Afusare	Nigeria
Akamba	Kenya
Akan	Ghana
Alur	Uganda; Congo Kinshasa
Amba	Uganda
Ambo	Zambia
Ankore	Uganda
Anuak	Sudan
Arusha	Tanzania
Ashanti	Ghana; Ivory Coast
Anshi	Zambia
Azande	Sudan
Bachura	Congo
Bacongo	Angola
Bakene	Uganda
Bakwena	Botswana
Balese	Congo
Baluba	Congo
Bambaro	Mali
Bambuti	Congo
Bamileke	Cameroon
Bamum	Cameroon
Banen	Cameroon
Banyarwanda	Rwanda; Uganda
Banyoro	Uganda
Bari	Sudan
Barotse	Zambia
Barundi	Burundi
Basa	Nigeria

Basoga	Uganda
Basuto	Lesotho
Bavenda	South Africa
Baya	Central African Republic
Beir	Sudan
Bemba	Zambia
Bena	Tanzania
Berta	Ethiopia
Binawa	Nigeria
Birifor	Ghana
Bondei	Tanzania
Bongo	Sudan
Boran	Ethiopia; Kenya
Bukusu	Kenya
Bulu	Cameroon
Burji-Konso	Ethiopia
Bushmen	Botswana
Butawa	Nigeria
Chagga	Tanzania
Chawai	Nigeria
Chewa	Malawi
Chokwe	Angola
Chapi	Mozambique
Darasa	Ethiopia
Didingo	Sudan
Digo	Kenya
Dilling	Sudan
Dinka	Sudan
Dogon	Upper Volta, Mali
Dorei	Nigeria
Dorobo	Kenya
Duala	Cameroon
Dungi	Nigeria
Dumara	Kenya
Ebrie	Ivory Coast

Edo	Nigeria
Egede	Nigeria
Ekoi	Cameroon; Nigeria
Elgeyo	Kenya
Embu	Kenya
Ewe	Dahomey; Ghana; Togo
Fajulu	Sudan
Fang	Cameroon; Gabon; Spanish Guinea
Fanti	Ghana
Fingo	South Africa
Fon	Dahomey
Ga	Ghana
Gaalin	Sudan
Galla	Ethiopia
Ganda	Uganda
Gbari	Nigeria
Gelaba	Ethiopia
Gikuyu	Kenya
Gisu	Uganda
Gofa	Ethiopia
Gogo	Tanzania
Grushi	Ghana
Gumuz	Ethiopia
Gusii	Kenya
Gwere	Uganda
Hadya	Ethiopia
Hadzapi	Tanzania
Hehe	Tanzania
Herero	Namibia
Hottentots	South Africa
Ibibio	Nigeria
Idomo	Nigeria
Igbira	Nigeria
Igbo	Nigeria
Ijaw	Nigeria

Ila	Zambia
Indem	Nigeria
Ingassana	Ethiopia
Isoko	Nigeria
Itsekiri	Nigeria
Iyala	Nigeria
Jie	Uganda
Jukun	Nigeria
Jumjum	Sudan
Kadara	Nigeria
Kafa	Ethiopia
Kagoro	Nigeria
Kaibi	Nigeria
Kaje	Nigeria
Kakwa	Sudan
Kaliko	Sudan
Kamasya	Kenya
Kaonde	Zambia
Karamoja	Uganda
Karanga	Zimbabwe
Katab	Nigeria
Kemant	Ethiopia
Kiga	Uganda
Kipsigis	Kenya
Kissi	Guinea; Liberia
Kitimi	Nigeria
Koma	Ethiopia
Konjo	Congo; Uganda
Konkomba	Ghana; Togo
Kono	Sierra Leone
Konso	Ethiopia
Konta	Ethiopia
Kony (Sabaot)	Kenya
Korekore	Zimbabwe
Kpe	Cameroon

Kpelle	Liberia
Kuca	Ethiopia
Kuku	Sudan
Kullo	Ethiopia
Kuba	Congo
Kung	Namibia
Kuramo	Nigeria
Kyiga	Uganda
Lala	Zambia
Lango	Uganda
Lele	Congo
Lendu	Congo
Limba	Sierra Leone
Lobi	Ivory Coast
Lodagaa	Ghana; Upper Volta
Logo	Congo
Lokoiya	Sudan
Lotuko	Sudan
Lozi	Zambia
Luapula	Zambia
Lugbara	Congo; Uganda
Luguru	Tanzania
Luimbe	Angola
Lunda-Luena	Angola; Congo; Zambia
Luo	Kenya
Luvedu	South Africa
Maasai	Kenya
Madi	Uganda
Makaraka	Sudan
Male	Ethiopia
Malinge	Guinea; Mali
Mamvu-Mangutu	Congo
Mao	Ethiopia
Marakwet	Kenya
Maravi	Malawi

Masongo	Ethiopia
Matengo	Malawi
Meban	Sudan
Mekan	Ethiopia
Mende	Sierra Leone
Meru	Kenya
Mondari	Sudan
Moru	Sudan
Mossi	Upper Volta
Murle	Ethiopia
Nama	Namibia
Nandi	Kenya
Ndebele	Zimbabwe
Ndogo	Sudan
Ngombe	Congo
Ngonde	Malawi
Ngori	Malawi
Nkum	Nigeria
Nkundo	Congo
Nuba	Sudan
Nuer	Sudan
Nupe	Nigeria
Nyakyusia	Tanzania
Nyamwezi	Tanzania
Nyanja	Zambia; Malawi
Orri	Nigeria
Ovambo	Namibia
Ovimbundu	Angola
Pare	Tanzania
Piti	Nigeria
Pokomo	Kenya
Pondo	Namibia
Pygmy	Congo
Pyem	Nigeria
Rabai	Kenya

Rishuwa	Nigeria
Rukuba	Nigeria
Rumaiya	Nigeria
Safwa	Tanzania
Sakata	Congo
Sandawe	Tanzania
Sangama	Ethiopia
Sebei	Uganda
Serer	Gambia
Sherbro-Bullom-krim	Sierra Leone
Shilluk	Sudan
Shona	Zimbabwe
Sidamo	Ethiopia
Songhay	Nigeria
Sonjo	Tanzania
Sotho	Lesotho
Srubu	Nigeria
Suk	Kenya
Sukuma-Nyamwezi	Tanzania
Suri-Surma	Ethiopia
Swazi	Swaziland
Tallensi	Ghana; Upper Volta;
Teita	Kenya
Tembu	South Africa
Temne	Sierra Leone
Tenda	Guinea
Teso	Uganda; Kenya
Teuso	Uganda
Thonga	South Africa; Mozambique
Tikar	Cameroon
Tiv	Nigeria
Thlaping	South Africa
Tongo	Malawi; Zambia
Toposa	Sudan
Toro	Uganda

Tswana	Botswana
Tumbuka	Malawi
Turkana	Kenya
Turu	Tanzania
Twi	Dahomey; Ghana
Udhuk	Ethiopia
Urhobo-Isoko	Nigeria
Vai	Liberia
Vili	Congo
Walambo	Ethiopia
Warjawa	Nigeria
Watumbatu	Zanzibar; Tanzania
Xam	South Africa
Xhosa	South Africa
Yachi	Nigeria
Yako	Nigeria
Yao	Malawi; Mozambique; Tanzania
Yoruba	Nigeria
Zala	Ethiopia
Zinza	Tanzania
Zulu	South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The countries of Africa are experiencing important changes and development forms a major part of their political agenda. It is a period of economic awakening. This Renaissance of Africa is impossible to achieve without a new social order. This new social order is one that goes beyond sectional and ethnic hatred. This also implies a need for religious tolerance based on an acceptable concept understood equally by all religions and ethnic groups of Africa.

In this thesis, the researcher sought to contribute to religious tolerance by looking at similarities and differences between the conceptions of the Divine held by the major religious traditions of Africa, viz. African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam. The thesis also explored the possibility of employing the conception of the Divine as a unifying factor and a possible basis for dialogue between religious communities in a multi-religious society.

The investigation articulated the following three basic convictions which are central to the study:

(a) The concept of the Divine in the African context is a complex one.

(b) Christian theology in Africa has relevance for the ecumenical church.

(c) Islam, like Christianity, also suffers from a religious ethnocentrism.

In Chapter 1 attention was devoted to the problem and scope of the study, the conceptualisation of the problem, and the purpose and relevance of the study. The chapter contains a historical survey of African traditional religion, Christian Mission and the Islamic Da'wah in Africa. Lastly the researcher spelled out his personal stance as regards the subject under discussion and concluded with a discussion of African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam in Kenya.

In Chapter 2 attention was devoted to the theological views on the Divine. This took the form of a general definition followed by specific attention to the way in which the concept is understood from the African, Christian and Islamic points of view. Attention was paid to the way in which these religions understand the attributes of God and the names of God and to how these views may contribute towards preparing the stage for dialogue. The African conception of the Divine has been misunderstood by Western writers, especially by the missionaries who initially had a pre-conceived notion of Africans and their understanding of God. The researcher discussed these views

critically and concluded that Africans, like the Jews, believed in one God and that their concept of the Divine was evolving from simple to complex in a similar way as Yahweh of Israel and Allah of the Arabs also evolved from simple to complex up to the level at which the concept comes to us in the Bible and the Qur'an.

In Chapter 3 the respective attitudes of African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam towards the Divine were explored. Emphasis was laid on the African Christians who take the gospel to their fellow Africans and who can therefore be regarded as missionaries among their own people. The Muslim attitude towards Allah and the Da'wah was also discussed.

In Chapter 4 the theological views of the three religions on Monotheism, the Trinity and Predestination were explored. The findings revealed that the religions differ in this regard. The differences are more pronounced between Christianity and Islam. It was argued that, in order to achieve a religious symbiosis, the differences should be left to the adherents of the respective religions while emphasis should be laid on the concept of the Divine which is understood in a similar fashion in these religions. This could serve to effect a working togetherness in a multi-religious society.

In Chapter 5 attention was devoted to the condition of sin. Sin was discussed as the major reason for the separation between man and the Divine. The views of the three religions on sin and the resulting strained relationship with the Divine were investigated.. The researcher believes that sin is the main cause of religious animosity between the adherents of these religions in Africa and specifically in Kenya. The remedy lies in looking to the Divine for a complete restoration and the possibility of dialogue.

The question of salvation was investigated in Chapter 6. In discussing the theology of salvation in the African traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam attention was devoted to the way in which the theology of salvation relates to the perception of the Divine in these religions. The differences between the ways in which Christianity and Islam understand of salvation were discussed critically and the responses of each of the religions were articulated.

Chapter 7 contains a few concluding remarks and a way forward was discussed. It was stressed that a social order based on the concept of religious tolerance is necessary in a multi-religious society. It is possible for people of different religions to

work together under the umbrella of the concept of the Divine. Religious animosity is unnecessary in the 21st century and beyond, and quite untenable if Africa is to be developmentally conscious. There are common areas where African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam agree – especially with regard to the concept of the Divine. This should be emphasised in order to promote peace; yet the individual religious differences should be respected as such. Attention was also devoted to the Christian witness in a multi-religious society and it was pointed out that Christians should learn to listen to other religions in order to be understood and accepted in their witness to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

EKSERP

Die lande in Afrika ondergaan tans belangrike veranderings en ontwikkeling speel 'n groot rol speel in hulle politieke agenda. Die Afrika-renaissance is egter onmoontlik sonder 'n nuwe sosiale orde wat verder strek as faksies en etniese haat. Dit impliseer godsdienstige verdraagsaamheid gebaseer op 'n aanvaarbare konsep wat deur alle godsdienste en etniese groepe in Afrika eenders verstaan word.

In hierdie proefskrif het die navorser gepoog om 'n bydrae tot godsdienstige verdraagsaamheid te lewer deur te kyk na ooreenkomste en verskille tussen die begrip van die Goddelike in die vernaamste godsdienstige tradisies van Afrika, nl. die tradisionele Afrika-godsdienste, die Christendom en Islam. Die proefskrif ondersoek ook die moontlikheid om die begrip van die Goddelike as 'n verenigende faktor en 'n moontlike basis vir dialoog in 'n multi-godsdienstige gemeenskap te behou.

Die ondersoek artikuleer die volgende drie basiese begrippe wat sentraal in die studie staan:
(a) Die begrip van die Goddelike in die Afrika-konteks is kompleks.
(b) Christelike teologie in Afrika is relevant vir die ekumeniese kerk.
(c) Islam, soos die Christendom, vertoon en gaan gebuk onder godsdienstige etnosentrisme.

In hoofstuk 1 word aandag gewy aan die probleem en omvang van die studie, die konseptualisering van die probleem, asook die doel en die relevansie van die studie. Die hoofstuk bevat 'n histories oorsig van die Afrika- tradisionele godsdienste, Christelike Sending en die Islamitiese Da'wah in Afrika. Dit word gevolg deur 'n uiteensetting van die navorser se persoonlike standpunt ten opsigte van die onderwerp van bespreking, en eindig met 'n bespreking van die Afrika- tradisionele godsdiens, die Christendom en Islam in Kenia.

In hoofstuk 2 word die teologiese sienings van die Goddelike bespreek. Daar word begin met 'n algemene definisie, gevolg deur spesifieke aandag aan die wyse waarop die konsep van die Goddelike vanuit die Afrika-oogpunt, asook dié van die Christendom en Islam verstaan word. Aandag is gewy aan die wyse waarop die drie godsdienste die eienskappe van God en die name van God verstaan en hoe hierdie sieninge tot dialoog kan bydra. Die Afrika-sienswyse van die Goddelike is deur

Westerse skrywers misverstaan, en veral deur die sendelinge wat aanvanklik voorafopgestelde idees oor Afrikane en hulle begrip van God gehad het. Hierdie sienswyses word krities beoordeel en die gevolgtrekking is dat Afrikane, net soos die Jode, net in een God geglo het en dat hulle konsep van die Goddelike besig was om te ontwikkel van die eenvoudige tot die komplekse, soortgelyk aan die wyse waarop Yahweh van Israel en Allah van die Arabiere ook van eenvoudige na komplekse begrippe ontwikkel het tot op die vlak waar die konsepte in die Bybel en die Koran tot ons kom.

In hoofstuk 3 word die houding van die Afrika- tradisionele godsdiens, die Christendom en Islam teenoor die Goddelike ondersoek. Die rol van Afrika-Christene wat die evangelie na hulle mede-Afrikane uitdra en wat dus in hierdie verband as sendelinge onder hulle eie mense gereken kan word, is beklemtoon. Die Moslem-houding teenoor Allah en die Da'wah is ook bespreek.

In hoofstuk 4 word die teologiese sieninge van die drie godsdienste oor monoteisme, die Drieëenheid en predestinasie bespreek. Die bevindinge toon dat die drie godsdiense in dié verband verskil. Die verskille is die grootste tussen die Christendom en die Islam. Daar is aangevoer dat vir 'n godsdienstige simbiose die verskille aan die aanhangers van die verskillende godsdienste oorgelaat behoort te word, terwyl klem gelê behoort te word op die konsep van die Goddelike wat deur die drie godsdienste eenders verstaan word. Dit sou kon help om 'n werkende samehorigheid in 'n multi-godsdienstige samelewing te vestig.

In hoofstuk 5 word aandag gegee aan die toestande van sonde. Sonde is bespreek as die hoofrede vir die verwydering tussen die mens en God. Die sieninge van die drie godsdienste oor sonde en die gevolglike versteurde verhouding met die Goddelike is ondersoek. Die navorser glo dat sonde die vernaamste oorsaak is van godsdienstige vyandigheid tussen van hierdie godsdienste in Afrika en spesifiek in Kenia. Die oplossing lê daarin om na die Goddelike te kyk vir 'n algehele herstel en dialoog.

Die kwessie van heil word in hoofstuk 6 ondersoek. In die bespreking van die teologie van heil in die Afrika- tradisionele godsdiens, die Christendom en Islam is aandag gewy aan hoe hierdie teologie van heil die siening van die Goddelike in hierdie godsdienste beïnvloed. Die verskille tussen die wyse waarop die Christendom en

Islam heil beskou, is krities bespreek en die reaksies van elk van die godsdienste is uitgespel.

Hoofstuk 7 bevat enkele slotopmerkings en die weg vorentoe word bespreek. Die feit dat 'n sosiale orde gebaseer op die konsep van godsdienstige verdraagsaamheid noodsaaklik is in 'n multi-godsdienstige samelewing is benadruk. Dit is moontlik vir mense van verskillende godsdienstige oortuigings om saam te werk onder die sambreel van die konsep van die Goddelike. Godsdienstige vyandigheid is onnodig in die 21ste eeu en heeltemal onhoudbaar indien Afrika ontwikkelingsbewus wil wees. Daar is gemeenskaplike gebiede waar die Afrika- tradisionele godsdienste, Christendom en Islam saamstem, veral ten opsigte van die konsep van die Goddelike. Dit behoort beklemtoon te word om vrede te bevorder, terwyl die individuele godsdientige verskille nogtans gerespekteer moet word. Aandag is ook gewy aan die Christelike getuienis in 'n multi-godsdienstige gemeeenskap en daar is daarop gewys dat Christene behoort te leer om na ander godsdienste te luister ten einde verstaan en aanvaar te word in hulle getuienis vir die evangelie van die Here Jesus Christus.