

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Master of Sacred Theology Seminar Papers

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

5-21-1999

Christology in Africa: Work in Progress

Carl Rockrohr

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, carl.rockrohr@mailbox.org

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/stmsp>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rockrohr, Carl, "Christology in Africa: Work in Progress" (1999). *Master of Sacred Theology Seminar Papers*. 54.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/stmsp/54>

This Seminar Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Sacred Theology Seminar Papers by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

CHRISTOLOGY IN AFRICA: WORK IN PROGRESS

By

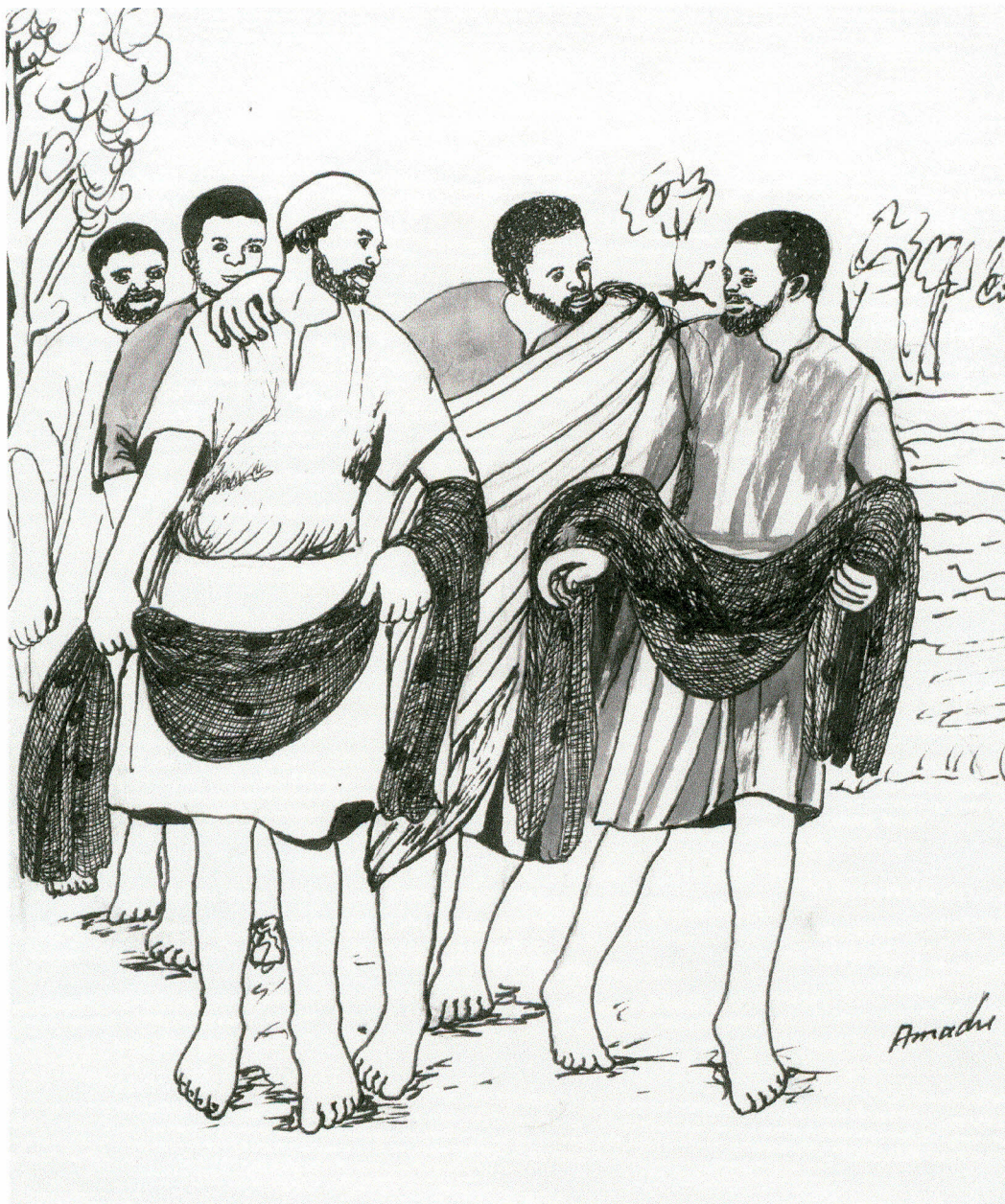
Carl Edwin Rockrohr

A Seminar Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Sacred Theology

Concordia Seminary

1999



Jesus Calling the First Four Disciples
by Amadu Yajim

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: SOME PROBLEMS IN THE TASK OF TEACHING JESUS IN AFRICA FROM A WESTERN WORLDVIEW.....	2
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGIES AND THEMES FOR AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY.....	6
BRIEF EXCURSUS ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF AFRICAN THOUGHT FOR CHRISTOLOGY AND TRINITY.....	9
CONCLUDING REMARKS TO CHAPTER TWO.....	24
CHAPTER 3: REVIEW THE CHRISTOLOGY TAUGHT IN A LUTHERAN CATECHETICAL SERIES USED IN NORTH-EAST GHANA.....	27
EXCURSUS CONCERNING THE KONKOMBA NAME FOR “CHRIST”.....	30
CONCLUSION.....	39
APPENDIX I: NYAMITI’S SCHEME FOR AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY.....	41
APPENDIX II: INTRODUCTION FOR BIBLE STORIES FOR BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION.....	42
APPENDIX III: BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FORMAT AND USE OF LESSONS.....	43
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	44

Illustration: Amadu Yajim, Nasuan N.R., Ghana, “Jesus Calling the First Four Disciples”
Copyright, 1998.

INTRODUCTION

Can Jesus Christ be preached, taught and confessed only through the worldviews, philosophies and languages of the writers of the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds? Can Christology be faithfully understood only from traditional Western perspectives? Now in the life of the Christian church in Africa at the end of 20th century, this is a question being addressed by a variety of African Christian theologians. This paper will: 1) briefly outline some difficulties currently being identified by African theologians and missionaries with Christology presented from Western worldviews in Africa; 2) overview some Christologies developed with an African perspective; and 3) review and critique the Christology contained within a Lutheran teaching series used in north-eastern Ghana.

CHAPTER ONE: SOME PROBLEMS IN THE TASK OF TEACHING JESUS IN AFRICA FROM A WESTERN WORLDVIEW

Not only are the myriad languages of Africa a barrier to communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but the traditional Greek, Latin and English creedal formulations confess Jesus with thought patterns that sometimes do not even occur in many African cultures. This problem can be quickly highlighted with just a few examples. First, we note comments concerning the definition of “person” from a classic Lutheran Christology, Chemnitz’s *Two Natures of Christ*:

...[I]n the language of the church of our day (for I shall not repeat at this point the controversies which once raged over these words) the terms subsistence (ὕφισταμενον), hypostasis or substance (ὑπόστασις), person (πρόσωπον), and individual (ἄτομον) are all synonyms, designating a singular thing which possesses the total and perfect substance of the same species; it subsists of itself and is determined or limited by certain characteristics or personal attributes (which the Scholastics call characteristic properties), and thus it is numerically separate but not essentially distinct from other individuals of the same nature. For the term “person” as it is usually defined is an individual, intelligent, incommunicable substance which is not part of something else, is not sustained by something else, and does not depend on something else.¹

With such definitions, worldview and philosophy Chemnitz begins his Christology. As helpful and orthodox as Chemnitz may be, we need only note several African proverbs which reveal some African definitions, worldviews and philosophies, to realize that there are challenges in presenting Christology to Africans, using traditional Western definitions.

An Akan proverb explains human lineage: *I belong by blood relationship; therefore I am.* In African tradition the community and the family are more important than the individual. A person receives his or her identity through the extended family and the clan. The universal proverb, *Blood is thicker than water*, is found in many African languages.

A fundamental African proverb says: *I am because we are; we are because I am.* A slightly different version is: *I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.* Still another version is: *I belong; therefore I am.* This is basic to the African world-view and understanding of the nature of human beings.²

¹ Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 29.

² Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 83.

Chemnitz's presentation of the definition of "person," which he assumes to be universally understood in the church in his day, is quite different than the personhood expressed by the African proverbs. Dependency upon others is a key quality of human nature for the African. The African mindset is the opposite of Chemnitz's definition (who calls subsistence, substance, person and individual synonyms), which proposes independence from others as an essence of being.

John Mbiti relates the foundational importance of relationship in African culture to define one's own identity as a person.

It is kinship which controls social relationships between people in a given community: it governs marital customs and regulations, it determines the behaviour of one individual towards another...

...each individual is a brother or sister, father or mother, grandmother or grandfather, or cousin, or brother-in-law, uncle or aunt, or something else, to everybody else... When two strangers meet in a village, one of the first duties is to sort out how they may be related to each other, and having discovered how the kinship system applies to them, they behave to each other according to the accepted behavior accepted set down by society.³

These interrelationships which define the African person reach into the womb and beyond the grave.

The kinship system also extends vertically to include the departed and those yet to be born. It is part of traditional education for children in many African societies, to learn the genealogies of their descent. The genealogy gives a sense of depth, historical belongingness, a feeling of deep rootedness and a sense of sacred obligation to extend the genealogical line.⁴

The contrasts between Western and African worldviews and philosophy become almost comical in an example noted by Healey and Sybertz. They give the proverb, *We dance; therefore we are*, and contrast this to Descartes', *I think; therefore I am*.⁵ The African proverb completely

³ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (Oxford: Heinemann, 1989),102.

⁴ *Ibid.*,102-103.

⁵ Healey and Sybertz, 101.

contradicts Descartes' work which was to try to establish a foundation of rational thought and proof of existence by eliminating all outside phenomenon except his own thought. "We dance" as a basis for ontology would have been unfathomable to Descartes.⁶

John Onaiyekan notes the agreement among most African theologians that there was always an indigenous belief and idea of a Supreme Being. However, since Christology is the heart of Christian theology it must receive further attention. Of necessity, Christology will be the point of departure from the traditional beliefs for the African. "If there is a radical discontinuity in the acceptance of the Christian faith, as indeed there must be, this is to be found in the person of the Lord Jesus."⁷

In 1967, John Mbiti's "Some African Concepts of Christology," was a wake-up call that in fact, "African concepts of Christology do not exist."⁸ Even though he says 25-30% of Africans were Christian in 1967, the African church was "without a theology, without theologians, and without theological concern."⁹ Mbiti says that though the missionaries who planted the church in Africa were devout and sincere people, they were not and are not theologians. The current missionaries were making little academic progress and most of the African pastors had too little education to make significant contributions. In 1967, Mbiti knew of only about 10 African theologians active in advanced theological studies.¹⁰ Mbiti's article was a call to seriously consider studying the interaction between Christianity and the African worldview. In 1991, John

⁶ Although philosophers such as David Hume brought much doubt to approaches such as Descartes', I believe it can be argued that Descartes', *I think; therefore I am*, still represents a popular presupposition of Western culture which stresses the utter prominence of the individual's own interpretation of reality over against other individuals. The pregnant mother *can think and is*, while the unborn *cannot think and is not*, is an example of such thinking in Western culture. The African's sense of identity and being joined to the unborn and dead is quite different. The final outcome and judgment of Western "post-modernism" upon philosophies such as Descartes' remains to be seen.

⁷ John Onaiyekan, "Christological Trends in Contemporary African Theology," in *Constructive Christian Theology in the Worldwide Church*, ed. William R. Barr (Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 355-356.

⁸ John S. Mbiti, "Some African Concepts of Christology," in *Christ and the Younger Churches*, ed. Georg F. Vicedom (London: S.P.C.K., 1972), 51.

⁹ Ibid.

Onaiyekan notes that though there had been some progress towards an African understanding of Christology, much thought still needed to be done since Mbiti's 1967 article.¹¹

John Onaiyekan notes that it is not the goal of African Christology to depart from the theology of traditional Christological formulations. Theology manuals used in Africa are the same as those used in other continents, which testifies to the Africans' awareness of receiving the common theology of the church. However, the catechetical formulations such as "true God and true Man," "One in substance with the Father," "One Person in two natures," have very definite cultural barriers despite some success in teaching these formulations.¹²

...we must also admit that the cultural barrier is real. The philosophical background of the Chalcedonian formula is far removed from the world of the contemporary African. Even with the serious effort made to initiate theology students into the world of Greek philosophy, it is always a difficult task for the seminarian to grasp what these formulae are saying about Jesus.

The problem is greater still for the ordinary Christian. In most African languages, to translate a creed is a great problem. In Yoruba, for example, while the Apostles' Creed is easily understood, the Nicene Creed is not so straightforward. Some of its key concepts, such as "person," "substance," "nature," have no direct equivalents in our languages, and the translations have to make do with approximations which can be tragically misleading.¹³

For many African theologians, their search for an African Christology is not an attempt to depart from the theology of the historic Christian church. Rather, they are attempting to communicate, understand and live Jesus Christ in Africa's own day-to-day life, language and worldview. In the last 20 years a number of methodologies and Scriptural themes have been suggested to accomplish this. Several of these will be considered in the next chapter.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Onaiyekan, 355-356.

¹² Ibid., 362.

¹³ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGIES AND THEMES FOR AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY

Some methodologies and themes proposed for various African Christologies will now be reviewed. Both to limit the scope and to also stay within the traditions of the writer, the African theologians reviewed will be those who confess belief in the traditional formulations of the councils of Nicea and Chalcedon. While holding to the traditional creeds of the Church, these theologians believe that to truly indigenize Christianity among Africans, African concepts, languages, images and worldviews that are complementary to the Scriptures need to be employed.

Mbiti's 1976 bell-weather article, "Some African Concepts of Christology," deserves close attention since it has foundational importance for later work of other African theologians. First, Mbiti notes the paucity of theological reflection and at the same time moves forward to suggest potential areas from which to draw Christology for the African context. Mbiti suggests four sources of material for theological reflection, "the Bible, the theology of the older Churches, the traditional African concepts, and the living experience of the Church in Africa."¹⁴ He states that the Bible "is the Church's book and the final authority on religious matters."¹⁵ The well-worked out theology of the older Churches, notably the European Churches, needs to be heeded and considered by African theologians so as to not waste efforts by duplicating areas of study already thoroughly undertaken.¹⁶ The African world with "its cultures and histories, its fears and joys, its concerns and worries, its weakness and strength, its inheritance and potentialities"¹⁷ must be seriously considered. The thought forms cannot be ignored because these strongly

¹⁴ Mbiti, "Some African Concepts of Christology," 51.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 51-52.

¹⁷ Ibid.

influence the Gospel. The final suggested source of theological reflection is the “Practical Theology” of the African church. Everywhere that the church makes herself felt in Africa as she grows and expands are sources of reflection.¹⁸

Mbiti notes that the narratives of Jesus’ birth, Triumphal entry into Jerusalem, death and resurrection have been important to African indigenous churches. These narratives, pointing to a theology of *Christus Victor*, have had special importance for Africans. The real and imagined enemies of African life, such as “spiritual powers, spirits, witchcraft, sorcery, fear, anxiety, sickness, diseases, the power of evil and ...death”¹⁹ are addressed by this theme. Africans often try to explain troubles as resulting from these evil forces. The African dominant concept of time as the past and present with little attention to the future gives the African person no traditional future hope for a reversal of evil. In this context, *Christus Victor* offers hope to the African that his traditions do not have. The resurrection and the eschatological hope of Christianity are a powerful message of victory over evil powers, from which traditional myths know no final deliverance.²⁰

Mbiti also believes that the narratives of Jesus Christ which show *rites de passage* provide special meaning for the African. He suggests that “the Birth, Baptism, and Death of Jesus, attract the special attention of African Christians because they portray Jesus as a perfect man, the one who has gone through the necessary *rites de passage*.”²¹

Mbiti also comments upon the cultural significance of various Scriptural titles of Jesus Christ. The titles of Jesus,

...the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of David, and the Son of Man have no special relevance to traditional African concepts. Some are historically rooted, others are bound

¹⁸ Ibid., 52.

¹⁹ Ibid., 54.

²⁰ Ibid., 54-55.

²¹ Ibid., 56.

up with the Jewish eschatological hope, and there are no parallels in African thought-forms, histories, and traditions. As such it is difficult to understand them, let alone recognize their christological significance [to the African].²²

Titles that have direct cultural significance include Son of God, Lord and Servant of the Lord. The title, Savior, has no direct cultural significance because there are no African concepts of a future eschatological hope. “But, precisely, because of this obvious gap with regards to matters of life, death, resurrection, and reconciliation to God, the concept of Jesus as Savior strikes the African world with dynamic meaning.”²³ The underlying themes of the perfect, complete man and kinship in the title of Redeemer make it rather significant to the African. Mbiti notes that the importance of kinship to the African can bring Jesus the Redeemer into close relationship in the African mind.

...each person has one “biological” father but a hundred kinship fathers; one biological mother, but a hundred kinship mothers; perhaps three biological brothers, but a hundred kinship brothers...Likewise every person is father, mother, sister brother, etc. towards everybody else in the network of kinship...The individual says: “I am because we are and, since we are, therefore I am”. He is conscious of himself only in terms of the corporate group.²⁴

Mbiti closes his article by suggesting that the language of Church as Body of Christ may carry great significance for the African. He asks, “can the Church, as the Body of Christ, take over this consciousness of self-existence, transporting the individual from the tribal solidarity to the Christian or Church solidarity centered and rooted in Jesus Christ?” He answers, “This I believe is possible, but it has hardly begun to take place in the Church in Africa.”²⁵ He suggests,

First, ἐν Χριστῷ, the individual says: “I am, because Christ is”. Secondly he says: “I exist because the Body of Christ exists”. At the individual level this is what the new kinship in Christ should mean: a discovery of one’s true being as hidden in the Man *par excellence*, and a discovery of one’s existence as externalized in the Body of Christ. This is a field of great potentiality in the practical existence of the Church in Africa. It may be

²² Ibid., 58.

²³ Ibid., 60.

²⁴ Ibid., 61.

²⁵ Ibid.

that it is here that she will make a great contribution in discovering and experiencing the meaning of the kinship in Christ.²⁶

Mbiti makes a final note that it is “only within the sacramental life of the Church that this discovery can be made and experienced.”²⁷

Brief Excursus on the Implications of African Thought for Christology and Trinity

Mbiti's statements along with Healey and Sybertz's statements [with agreement from many African theologians] on the African emphasis of personal identity based upon one's corporate relationship must make us pause. Will the African emphasis of personhood being identified not by individualism but by relationships affect the African's view of Jesus' relationship to God the Father? Part of the great struggle at Nicea and Chalcedon was how to understand Jesus as a distinct person from the Father, but also as God. The qualities of personhood were defined and redefined until later in Church history theologians such as Chemnitz felt confident that the nature of person could be readily defined and understood by all. The African emphasis of person as being found in relationships may lead to an emphasis of Trinity not in the demarcation of Who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and how they are distinct from one another, but rather on what meaning and definition their relationship gives to one another, to each Person, within the Trinity of the one God. Similarly, the African emphasis on finding personhood from relationships may show up in reflection upon the Personal Union of Jesus Christ. Mbiti notes that the theme Redeemer puts Jesus into kinship with the African. How will the African appreciation of kinship be reflected when speaking of the God/man's kinship to God the Father?

²⁶ Ibid., 62.

²⁷ Ibid.

Wolfhart Pannenberg, a Western theologian, emphasizes Jesus' "self-distinction" from God the Father as definitive of the Son's nature. He writes,

At the heart of the message of Jesus stood the Father and his coming kingdom, not any dignity that Jesus claimed for his own person that would thus make himself equal to God (John 5:18). Jesus differentiated himself as a mere man from the Father as the one God. He thus subjected himself to the claim of the coming divine rule, just as he required his hearers to do. He could even reject the respectful title "good Master" (Mark 10:18 par.), with a reference to God alone as good.²⁸

Pannenberg also writes,

The relation of the Son to the Father is characterized in eternity by the subordination to the Father, by the self-distinction from the majesty of the Father, which took historical form in the human relation of Jesus to God. This self-distinction of the eternal Son from the Father may be understood as the basis of all creaturely existence in its distinction from God, and therefore as the basis of the human existence of Jesus, which gave adequate embodiment in its course to the self-emptying of the Son in service to the rule of the Father. ...By distinguishing the Father from himself as the one God, the Son certainly moved out of the unity of the deity and became man. But in so doing he actively expressed his divine essence as the Son.²⁹

Pannenberg's doctrine of Trinity seems to work with the idea *I am distinct from Father, therefore I am Son*. Pannenberg suggests this self-distinction is then also carried out in the Incarnation. The God/man Jesus Christ is distinct from God the Father, thus Jesus reflects the true relationship of the Son to the Father from eternity. This Christology is running with a presupposition that an individual is defined by his uniqueness from everybody else. Such a definition of individual is still in line with the Nicene definition of a person. What happens to our understanding of Trinity if the Person of the Son of God is defined by an African emphasis that an individual is defined in regards to his kinship to everybody else? How is the Gospel understood if Jesus Christ is kin to the Creator God and we are kin to Jesus Christ? This emphasis of kinship and relationships abounds in Jesus' ministry, from calling his disciples

²⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. and Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1994), 372,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 377.

“brothers, sisters and mothers,” to teaching the disciples to pray “our Father,” to saying “I and the Father are one” and “Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

It is impossible for this writer, a Mid-west American (Westerner!) to reflect adequately upon the implications for Christology and Trinitarian doctrine from this African emphasis of individual defined in terms of community. However, it is important to recognize this fundamental difference between worldviews and note that this difference may help or hinder the task of communicating the Scriptural teaching of Trinity effectively and faithfully in the African context. In addition, the African worldview of individual in community may contribute to the Church’s understanding of the Three Persons in One God.

End of Excursus

Following Mbiti’s lead, a number of African theologians have reflected upon the person of Jesus Christ from the viewpoint of African worldview and traditions.

John S. Pobee takes up the task of Christology in his book, *Toward an African Theology*. Pobee first examines the biblical understanding of Jesus as truly human and divine. In his analysis a curious contradiction in assumptions appears that is not unique to his work. This is the assertion that the missionaries delivered a Christianity with Western worldviews; but then Pobee himself goes on to restrict various Biblical narratives with higher criticism theories. However, these theories themselves have their roots in Western philosophical thought. For instance, Pobee dismisses the virgin birth as possible Semitic myth and he does not want “to be bogged down by the problems raised by the biblical claims that Jesus’ birth was miraculous.”³⁰

³⁰ John S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979),83.

Next, being an Akan tribe member from Ghana, he takes up the task of understanding Jesus from an Akan perspective. He notes the Akan proverb, “I belong by blood relationship, therefore I am” and also believes that emphasizing the theme of kinship with Jesus can be a meaningful message for the Akan people. Jesus’ circumcision, baptism and death are points in the gospel narrative which have meaningful touchpoints with the Akan understanding of being a human being. Jesus’ dependence on God also marks Jesus’ humanity to the Akan traditions. Pobee believes the Akan people have cultural insights into Jesus’ divinity because of His sinlessness. Considering the Akan idea of sin as being sin against neighbor, Jesus is sinless both against neighbor and sinless before God (by being sinless against neighbor). Jesus’ divinity is also revealed to the Akan person by his ability to heal since in Akan society healing power is attributed to the Supreme Being.³¹ Pobee proposes that Jesus take on the Akan title of *Nana*, the greatest Ancestor of all ancestors.

With that will go the power and authority to judge the deeds of men, rewarding the good, punishing the evil. Again, in our context we shall seek to emphasize that even if Jesus is *Nana* like the other illustrious ancestors, he is a nonpareil of a judge; he is superior to the other ancestors by virtue of being closest to God and as God.³²

A very influential theme for Jesus in Akan society would be that as chief or king. Jesus as “linguist” in Akan traditions connects with the Johannine description of Jesus as the Logos. The biblical titles of Deliverer and Prince of Peace also would be meaningful in Akan society. Pobee notes that the title of Chief for Jesus would have to steer clear of a *theologia gloriae*.³³

Another theologian from Ghana, Kwame Bediako, contributed “Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion” in 1983. The first half of Bediako’s article traces the Western missionary approach in the 19th and early 20th centuries which maintained the

³¹ Ibid., 88-92.

³² Ibid., 94.

³³ Ibid., 94-97.

traditional beliefs of Africans were mostly devoid of any truth at all, thus also devaluing the African culture.

In their contact with African peoples, many missionaries were most struck by what appeared to them to be the “sheer paganism” and the “awfulness” of African “heathen superstitions.” In the process, missionaries became considerably less aware of Africans as essentially human, with their utterly *human* fears and joys, hopes and disappointments, and yearnings for salvation...By failing to view man-in-African-“heathenism” as *man* in the same terms as man-in-Christianity, they deprived themselves of adequate means for discerning the activity of God in the lives of Africans. They tended to confuse their particular institutionalized western Christianity with Christ, and to present the former as the giver of salvation.³⁴

After such critiques, Bediako favorably considers Mbiti’s early article, “Some African Concepts of Christology.”³⁵ He agrees with Pobee concerning the importance of considering ancestors in the African worldview and agrees with Pobee’s question of the Akan people, “Why should an Akan relate to Jesus of Nazareth who does not belong to his clan, family, tribe and tradition?”³⁶ Bediako argues that missionaries to the Akan ignored this question and preached the gospel as though “it was concerned with an entirely different compartment of life, unrelated to traditional religious piety.”³⁷ This leaves the African “‘living at two levels’--half African and half European--but never belonging properly to either.”³⁸

Bediako offers several proposals to meet the deficiencies he outlined. He argues that the incarnation witnesses the Son of God’s universal role of salvation.³⁹ Jesus as “ancestor” and mediator are other themes proposed. In these roles Jesus assumes the role of a proper and perfect African Elder Brother. “Being our true Elder brother now in the presence of God, his Father and

³⁴ Kwame Bediako, “Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religion” in *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World*, ed. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 91-92.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 96-98.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 99-100, quoting Pobee, *Toward an African Theology*, page 81.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

our Father, he displaces the mediatorial function of our natural ‘spirit fathers.’”⁴⁰ With this approach in Christology, Bediako sees Jesus’ resurrection and ascension as having a prime importance for the Akan person. This Christology reveals Christ as able to provide protection and guidance (also replacing these roles of the ancestors). Jesus’ defeat of the evil one in His death, resurrection and exaltation and his “high priestly” prayer can all be significant themes.⁴¹

Bediako then focuses on two particular Ghanaian Christian problems. The first is the fact that Akan chiefs had been baptized and confirmed in the Presbyterian church, but barred from being full church members because of their required traditional religious obligations as chiefs. He also notes the conflict between Christians and traditional believers in the town of Akim Tafo. Christian drumming in worship was disturbing the traditional “gods” of the village and an argument ensued over which worship was truly Ghanaian. In both these difficulties Bediako proposes that a strong and relevant Christology is helpful for Christians to answer the challenge to their faith. He suggests that the Christology of Hebrews might be the most helpful for an indigenous Christology.⁴²

A quite recent and comprehensive work on African Theology and Christology can be found in Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz’s *Towards an African Narrative Theology*. These two American missionary priests form the presentation and foundation of their book based on the themes, patterns and traditions of African oral society, Biblical material, and reflections and examples of theology in action (Mbiti’s “Practical Theology”). They purposely do not set out to write in an academic or systematic theology format, but rather very systematically (!) set out to draw upon elements of oral African societies. Each chapter deliberately includes:

- a. Two introductory African proverbs or riddles on the theme of that chapter...

⁴⁰ Ibid., 102-103.

⁴¹ Ibid., 104.

⁴² Ibid., 105-113.

- b. Concrete examples of African proverbs, sayings, riddles, stories, myths, fables, plays, songs, prayers and symbols explained in their historical, cultural and social contexts.
- c. Biblical parallels and connections.
- d. Theological reflections and insights and their implications for evangelization and pastoral praxis...
- e. African examples of narrative Theology and Practical Evangelization...⁴³

Two of the eight chapters in the book reflect upon Christological themes: Chapter Two, “Jesus, Chief Diviner-Healer and Eldest Brother-Intercessor;” and Chapter Five, “Jesus, Victor over Death.” In Chapter Two, the authors first reflect upon several African creation myths, noting a saviour figure in each myth. The myths reflect a sense of the lost relationship between the Supreme Being and mankind. The authors find a place for reflection about Christ as Mediator in the context of these myths.⁴⁴ Next, several myths with savior figures are considered.⁴⁵ These myths more clearly relate figures of personal saviors which might be touchpoints of understanding to various aspects of Jesus Christ’s salvation work for us.

Healey and Sybertz then reflect upon the African answer to the question, “Who do you Africans say I am?” An incident of a Maasi elder questioning Jesus’ identity is considered. Three questions were presented by the Maasi elder, “Did he ever kill a lion? How many cows did he have? How many wives and children did he have?” The authors note that these questions are critical to answer since they are the Maasi cultural way of estimating and evaluating heroes of mankind. They offer the answers, Jesus has not killed a lion, but he has swallowed up death; an acknowledged Maasi enemy. Secondly, “Jesus never had any cows but through his death and resurrection he had brought humankind everlasting riches and prosperity—the fullness of the Christian life forever.” The question of wives and children show a concern not only for Jesus’ wealth, but in the context of high infant mortality, of His contribution towards continuing the

⁴³ Healey and Sybertz, 16.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 62-64.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 64-75.

Maasi lineage. The authors note that though Jesus did not have wives or children in a physical sense, “he has given birth to many, many children in a symbolic sense. Aside from physical begetting children, there are different kinds of spiritual birth.” The apostle Paul had spiritual children. This understanding of a non-physical begetting of children is in the African traditions, such as the notion that the “master gives birth to the disciple” in the diviner-healer-disciple relationship.⁴⁶

Healey and Sybertz continue Chapter Two with several other exercises. They examine an extensive collection of African names for God.⁴⁷ They then argue that an African Christology must be “relational.” They suggest titles for Jesus as Elder Brother, Mediator and Intercessor as useful. One interesting suggestion is calling God the Father “the Ancestor of the Son.” The Christology taught in Hebrews, and Jesus’ activity in the Eucharist, are recommended as helpful Biblical and doctrinal points in developing an African Christology.⁴⁸ African themes of “Chief Diviner-Healer” and “Master and Disciples” as they relate to Christology are also considered.⁴⁹ The authors show the very close connection between some of these themes in African culture and the Biblical teachings. For instance they offer the African proverbs, *the disciple is not above his or her master*; and, *the ear does not surpass the head*; to give examples of how certain Biblical themes can be readily understood in traditional African cultures.⁵⁰ Chapter Two is closed with a discussion of how to portray Jesus in African art and with a series of examples of evangelization using narrative theology.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid., 77-78; (All references in this paragraph).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 80-82.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 82-85.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 85-91.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 89.

⁵¹ Ibid., 91-98.

In Chapter Five, “Jesus, Victor Over Death,” Healey and Sybertz again pick up a thorough discussion of Christology in the African context. In the first two sections of the chapter a number of African proverbs and traditional stories are examined to note African myths about the origin of death and the importance of the subject of death among Africans.⁵² In discussing the importance of the “living dead,”⁵³ the authors note the importance of church festivals such as *All Souls Day*. They note some Roman Catholic bishops have supported the veneration of ancestors, but suggest that more study needs to be given to the topic of ancestors and Christianity in Africa.⁵⁴ The relationships between death, evil and sin in the African context are then considered. Witchcraft is noted to be a very common belief associated with death. In some African traditions the witch is the most powerful evil, becoming a devil-like figure. The authors suggest that Jesus seen as “Chief Diviner-Healer” addresses these traditional fears.⁵⁵ The paradox of Jesus’ innocent death as the suffering Messiah has some parallel thoughts in African traditions as in the proverb, *the one who shows mercy will not have mercy*. Healey and Sybertz emphasize the importance of the theme of Jesus as the one and only sacrificial Lamb of God. They note new studies considering Jesus as sacrifice and renewed interest in Anselm’s theology of atonement. Jesus’ self-sacrifice has themes of victory in weakness and freedom from worry of necessary sacrifices to the ancestors important to African people. Examples of liturgies picking up these themes of Christ’s death and resurrection in African Christian worship are noted.⁵⁶ Examples of Africans who have sacrificed themselves for causes are noted.⁵⁷ Jesus as Victor over death is a significant message because,

⁵² Ibid., 203-211.

⁵³ Ibid., 22; the authors attribute this term for the belief in the ancestral spirits to John S. Mbiti.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 211-217.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 217-219.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 220-226.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 228-231.

In most types of African Traditional religion there is no belief in redemption, in resurrection from the dead, in eternal life, nor in permanent life after death. This highlights the central importance of Jesus' Sukuma Christian name, "Victor over Death." His greatest miracle and his most powerful act were to rise from the dead. Jesus overcame death. He is greater than death...In the light of the many African fears and superstitions connected with death, Christ's victory over death and his resurrection to new life are even greater. He overcame the evil powers of witches and witchcraft. He has the "Medicine of Life," not death. In fact Christ himself is the "Medicine of Life" and the "Medicine of Immortality." Jesus Christ is also called the "Doctor of Doctors" and the "Healer of Healers."⁵⁸

Healey and Sybertz close Chapter Five with comments on "Passing from Death to New Life," "Paschal Mystery in an African Context," "Witnessing to New Life in Christ in and through Struggle and Suffering," and "Examples of African Narrative Theology and Practical Evangelization."⁵⁹ Several African riddles are examined because they

...teach the Paschal Mystery, the baptismal experience of dying to our sins in the water and rising with Christ to new life, the Eucharist as the re-presentation of Christ's death and resurrection, and the many dyings and risings in our daily lives. If *life* is the basic value in the African world-view, Christianity brings new life, eternal life.⁶⁰

Three interesting examples of meditation on Jesus' death and resurrection are given at the end of Chapter Five. An order for worship following stations of the cross entitled "*African Way of the Cross Following Our Local African Situation, Especially the Sufferings, Crosses and Problems of Our Everyday Life*" is noted.⁶¹ *The Martyrs of Uganda*, a drama of an historical martyrdom of twenty-two Ugandan Christians and *Remembering the Wake of Jesus Christ* are also noted as effective models of proclamation, meditation and celebration of the victory of Jesus Christ over death.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid., 232-233.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 234-249.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 237.

⁶¹ Ibid., 244-246.

⁶² Ibid., 246-249.

Healey and Sybertz give an extremely comprehensive and well-documented presentation of African proverbs, stories, beliefs, etc. relating to Christian African theology and Christology. Their presentation covers a multitude of themes in African life. In contrast, *Christ, the African King* by Ukachukwu Chris Manus delves deeply into the one theme of chief, or king, as it is a reality in theory and practice in chieftaincies across African cultures and relates it to the Biblical theme of Jesus as King. Manus' work is notable on several levels. First, his presentation is an extremely systematic examination of the African theme of *king* in contrast to Healey and Sybertz' somewhat eclectic multitude of African themes. Second, Manus' work is also significant in that he delves deeply into the traditions of a specifically chosen (and he hopes representative) cross section of major African tribes representing the eastern, western, northern and southern sides of the African continent. In doing this he hopes to present in a very systematic way the theme of *king* which will be recognized by all Africans. Third, Manus spends considerable effort examining the Biblical narratives, texts and theology of *king* in an orderly manner. And fourth, Manus concludes with very thorough and specific comparisons and contrasts of African kingship with Jesus' kingship. This concluding effort not only mines out many points of *king* in the African mindset in the effort to communicate Jesus Christ adequately, but also is helpful to avoid communicating a theology of glory in teaching Christ's kingship. Thus, Manus' example of methodology is probably as helpful as his conclusions.⁶³

Manus' work will be overviewed in this paper by reproducing his chapter headings with a one or two sentence commentary on each chapter.⁶⁴

Chapter 1 – Methodological Questions

In this chapter Manus introduces the scope of his work, justifies the necessity of his study, outlines his objectives and notes his proposed methodology.

⁶³ Ukachukwu Chris Manus, *Christ, the African King*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1993).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, the Table of Contents is on pages 1-5.

Chapter 2 – The African Worldview

Manus briefly examines the worldviews of seven major African tribes in this chapter with the conclusion that *kingship* is a dominant and powerful component of African worldviews.

Chapter 3 – Contemporary Images of Jesus in Africa

Manus conducts a very helpful overview and commentary of African Christologies representing two decades of viewpoints ranging from Mbiti's 1967 (published 1972) groundbreaking article "Some African Concepts of Christology" up through A.O. Nkwoka's "Jesus as Eldest Brother" (1991). Manus includes reviews of several works published in French.

Chapter 4 – Kingship in Precolonial Africa: East–West, The Yoruba and the Baganda Kingdoms

In this chapter, anthropological studies of the Yoruba and Banganda traditions, rites and rituals of kingship are closely examined.

Chapter 5 – Kingship in Precolonial Africa: North-South, The Shilluk and the Zulu Kings

In this chapter, anthropological studies of the Shilluk and Zulu traditions, rites and rituals of kingship are discussed.

Chapter 6 – Jesus of Nazareth

Manus reviews the witness of the early church to the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament record, specifically noting the attempt to leave Western interpretations behind. That is, let the New Testament witness of Jesus speak directly to the African.

Chapter 7 – The Kingdom of God

This chapter reviews various aspects and implications of the concept of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament, Jewish culture, and Jesus' preaching.

Chapter 8 – The Kingship of Jesus: Some Texts and Their Exegesis

Nine New Testament narratives of Jesus' life/ministry and the selected readings for the "Feast of Christ the King" are closely examined to extract the meanings of Jesus as *king*.

Chapter 9 – Kingship: African and New Testament Ideas

Manus assembles, compares and contrasts all the data gathered in the preceding review of anthropological studies of traditions and rituals of African and all the Biblical data gathered concerning *kingship* and Jesus Christ.

Chapter 10 – General Conclusions King-Christology. Implications

Ecclesial implications, liturgical implications and social-political implications are briefly discussed in regards to King-Christology.

The last work we will review is Charles Nyamiti's "Contemporary African Christologies: Assessment and Practical Suggestions." Nyamiti begins by noting that African theology exists in the wide and narrow sense. "1) African traditional (or non-Christian) theology, as is found in African traditional religions; and 2) African Christian theology (meaning African theology in its narrow sense)."⁶⁵ The first category is the sense among African theologians that "even before the advent of Christian missionaries in black Africa, Christ was already at work among the Africans."⁶⁶ The second category is the specific Christian message as it is worked out in the African context. Within African Christian theology is systematic and nonsystematic formulations. Systematic formulations are specific theologies as espoused and published by African theologians. The nonsystematic formulations exist mainly in oral traditions among the Christian laity and indigenous African Christian churches. Nyamiti says there is no single African theology, but variances resulting from 1) Denominational differences, 2) political and cultural differences, 3) personal differences (among individual theologians), and 4) a variety of theological approaches.⁶⁷

Nyamiti notes that there are two models of African theology and Christology, the *Inculturation* model and the *Liberation* model. Within the Inculturation model there are several schools noted, the philosophical or speculative school and the sociocultural and biblical school, which has several different methodologies being practiced.

Nyamiti judges, "compared to the Christologies of liberation...African inculturation christologies are more widespread, more developed, and exhibit more originality and variety of

⁶⁵ Charles Nyamiti, "Contemporary African Christologies: Assessment and Practical Suggestions," in *Paths of African Theology*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 63.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 63-64.

method.”⁶⁸ The Liberation model has two schools, South African Black theology and African liberation theology. The former has its setting specifically in connection with the apartheid history of South Africa and the latter refers not only to political or economic, but various forms of oppression. Nyamiti hopes continuing development of liberation theologies will depend on African themes and wisdom, considering the “general discredit of Marxism.”⁶⁹

Nyamiti notes two areas that are neglected in African christologies. These are in the areas of African Traditional (non-Christian) Christology and African Nonsystematic Christologies. Considering the former he suspects that Africa’s early contact with Christianity may still be evident in African culture. He suggests “that rigorous systematic research in the traditional religions and cultures of black Africa might reveal latent forms of African Christian theologies, and even christologies, which were in existence long before the advent of Christianity in this part of the continent.”⁷⁰ Nonsystematic christologies exist among African Christian churches “in the sense of simple understanding and presentation of the Christian teachings on Christ to adapt them to the problems, needs, and ways of thinking of the African peoples.”⁷¹ Further study of these christologies may give clues to new directions in which more academic formations should proceed. Nyamiti goes on to provide hints for undertaking this kind of study. He provides a list of themes that could be researched.⁷² He suggests research of “sermons, catechetical or religious instruction on Christ of early (and even present) missionaries, catechists, and others.”⁷³ Research of African indigenous churches’ christologies could be helpful. Direct contact with people’s

⁶⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 65-66.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 66-67.

⁷¹ Ibid., 67.

⁷² Ibid., 68. Nyamiti uses some themes suggested by Pope Paul VI in his message to Africa (*Africae terrarum*, October 1967).

⁷³ Ibid., 69.

daily lives to see the integration of inculturation and liberation christologies could also be helpful.⁷⁴

Though there are many ways of approaching African christologies of inculturation, Nyamiti believes “the comparative analogical method currently used by many African writers is one of the most fruitful and useful.”⁷⁵ He would like to see continuing work to identify African themes “with the Christian mystery and the explication of the implications underlying such identification.”⁷⁶ He suggests several steps for this method: 1) Statements such as “Christ is our Ancestor” and “Christ is not a sorcerer” bring themes of African thought and the Bible together which can be effective in interacting with the African.⁷⁷ 2) The theological interpretation of the Christian mystery vis-à-vis the African correlate is a deep step which Nyamiti believes most African writers have not successfully achieved. 3) The final step is the interconnection of Christian mysteries. Nyamiti knows of few African writers able to do this. For instance, “African christologies should be elaborated in the light of their close link with the mysteries of the Trinity and ecclesiology.”⁷⁸ Pastoral implications should be included. Nyamiti argues that the use of metaphysics can be a useful and valid resource for the African theologian.⁷⁹

Nyamiti concludes his article by supplying a detailed “Scheme for African Christologies.”⁸⁰ He hopes the scheme will help prod others along in the writing of textbooks for African seminaries and higher theological institutions.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 70.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 74-75. See Appendix I.

Concluding Remarks to Chapter Two

Several themes among the reviewed African theologians and missionaries stand out. The first theme is a great contemporary dissatisfaction with the Gospel as delivered by missionaries to Africans during the 19th and early 20th centuries. There is a general sense that the African culture was not appreciated by the missionaries and this hindered their presentation of the Gospel. Moreover, the general atmosphere of the slave trade under which the early missionaries operated left a dehumanizing element even in succeeding missionaries. The missionaries tried to plant not only the Gospel, but also Western culture in Africa. This left the African convert “half African and half European” with no good solution for his and her traditional fears and troubles. The result was that Christ was not presented as the Savior for the African, but the white man’s Savior. Mbiti’s opening salvo of 1967 indicates the opinion that the missionaries were probably not theologically capable of delivering a truly relevant Christology anyhow. God used the missionaries yes, but the theological work and integration into the culture had only begun.

An overwhelmingly positive theme of the writers reviewed is that despite the missionaries’ lack of abilities and effectiveness in preaching Jesus Christ appropriately, the African people have not soured on Jesus Christ. The African has received Jesus and desires to confess something positive, true and powerful about the Son of God Incarnate. There is a sense of the African honestly wrestling with the Biblical message as God makes Himself known in Africa. This is a wrestling, a wrangling and a clinging to the message of Jesus Christ, and to Jesus Himself, until finally the African is blessed with the great blessing he knows God has to give. A common theme communicated by the writers reviewed was that the African truly does desire to be delivered and blessed within the African context. The African believes Jesus can do it and the African is looking for that message of deliverance to be preached and received. The

image of Jacob striving with God throughout the night to obtain a blessing comes to mind. From this writer's perspective, that blessing of God which the African desires is already taking place in the form of a faith, confidence and hope that will not quit.

Several specific cultural themes and difficulties continued to appear in the reviewed writers. The strong African sense of past and present times, but a traditional lack of sense of future time, limits the traditional thinking in terms of Savior and ultimate delivery from troubles. The message of an ultimate Savior and an eschatological hope is foreign to the African's ears, but it is not unwelcome. On the contrary, some writers noted that it is a very welcome message.

Another specific common cultural theme is the contemporary consensus among African Christian theologians that truth of the Supreme Being had always existed in African Traditional Religions. This is not disputed among Christian Africans. However, the particularity of the message of the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, is the "new" message. There may or may not be remnants of the Christian message from ancient African contact with the early church, but Who the God/man Jesus is for the African is the question to be addressed. Despite the historical fact that Jesus was a Jew 2000 years ago, can Jesus speak to the Akan today? The African theologians are saying yes, Jesus can speak the African dialects and think African thoughts. Thus, the question never is whether a Supreme God exists, but Who is Jesus Christ? What is Jesus' relationship to the Supreme Being the African has always known to exist?

The deep regard African societies hold for ancestral spirits continues to be a specific issue confronting the African Christian and theologian even today. One common proposed solution is to regard Jesus as Ancestor *par excellence*. This appears to be an unresolved problem for the African Christian, and will take more study and reflection. Fear of witchcraft continues to be an overwhelming burden for the African. It was a common theme among the writers reviewed

to view Jesus Christ as having victory specifically over witchcraft and all other evil powers among the African peoples.

There is also a sense that the African desires a wholeness in his and her salvation. Does Jesus speak to issues of how Africans living with one another should treat each other in society? What about a reduction of physical hardship and suffering for the general African population? These questions have political overtures. In Africa, religion is not so easily separated from politics. However, the African theologians reviewed did have a sense of Jesus as servant, Christianity as service, and a decided awareness to avoid a theology of glory.

Another recurrent specific theme from Mbiti onwards was the issue of ecclesiology, and to some degree the theme of sacraments. For the African man and woman who are so oriented towards life as being in community, what does new life in the Body of Christ, the Church, mean? What are the “rites of passage” in the Christian family? What is our place and position in the Body of Christ in relationship to one another and to the Head, Jesus Christ? What does African tribal membership mean vis-à-vis membership in the Church?

Finally, the theologians reviewed and acknowledged valuable insights and truths of the Gospel existing among the day-to-day life and ministry of the local pastors and the laity. Theology and Christology does not have to come from the university and seminary printing press to have truth and validity. There is a strong willingness, even desire, to study and know Jesus Christ’s activity and doctrine among His everyday people.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW THE CHRISTOLOGY TAUGHT IN A LUTHERAN CATECHETICAL SERIES USED IN NORTH-EAST GHANA

Nyamiti expressed the usefulness of reviewing catechetical materials used by missionaries to analyze Christologies that may be useful in Africa.⁸¹ This chapter will undertake this exact suggestion for a two-fold purpose: 1) To analyze and critique the Christology to determine whether it addresses issues put forwards by the reviewed authors. 2) To suggest refinements in the catechetical series for future use.

This chapter will proceed in three parts.

- A) Historical Background and Format of the Catechetical Series
- B) Cataloging of Christology Presented in the Series
- C) Comments and Analysis of the Christology

A) Historical Background and Format of the Catechetical Series

Historical Background

In 1984, Rev. Tim Heiney and his family began his work among the Konkomba people of north-east Ghana. The Konkomba people were an unreached people group, who were very open to listening to the Gospel. In his efforts to plant churches and train leaders, Rev. Heiney developed an order of worship using symbols. He also developed a sermon series based on drawings and a teaching series using *100 Bibles Stories*. Thus, even though the Konkomba dialect of the area was not in a written format, through drawings, pictures and oral teaching the Word of the Lord moved ahead quickly. After a few years, a core set of leaders were able to use the worship order, sermon and teaching series to help evangelize new villages.

In 1993, Rev. Carl Rockrohr and his family joined the Konkomba work. By this time, there were approximately 1600 baptized Konkomba people. One of the main objectives for Rev. Rockrohr's work was to strengthen the teaching that would lead to confirmation and reception of the Lord's Supper. Rev. Heiney had to leave the Konkomba work in 1994, but his strategy of using Bible stories proved to be the most effective manner of preaching the Gospel among the Konkomba people. By 1996 it was determined that a teaching series using the story format, along with teaching points and illustrations showing the stories in an African context could prove to be most useful. In January 1998, the first edition of a 62 lesson, illustrated teaching series was printed. In addition, pastors and evangelists of the ELCG who were also working among tribes in north-east Ghana

⁸¹ Nyamiti, 69.

enthusiastically received the teachings and were trained to use them in a seminar. Both English and Konkomba versions were printed.⁸²

Format

To the end of making and strengthening disciples of the Lord Jesus, *Bible Story Lessons for Baptism and Confirmation* is designed to be able to be used for the “sermon” for public worship. The “text” of the sermon is the Bible story itself. Perhaps the Bible passage itself will be read from the Scripture. If not, the speaker should learn the story very well for memory, in a way that is faithful to the text. Whether read or recited, it is best that the story be recounted to listeners in the most convincing manner. These stories are not intellectual activities, but a recounting of the Creator God’s actions. God intends to create and strengthen disciples of Jesus Christ. The stories are God’s own testimonies to Himself. Not only is the speaker telling the story, but in actuality the Holy Spirit is speaking a divine word to the listeners. The Bible story is a dynamic divine action and communication within the worship setting.

For nearly all lessons, there are three suggested teaching points to also give to the people. These teaching points are meant to guide the speaker into a helpful interpretation of the story for the listeners. Sinful people can easily force stories to support their own agenda. Therefore, it is good to lead people to Biblical understandings about the story.

The points can be blended into the retelling of the story, or they can be taught separately after the story is told. Generally, the three points follow this pattern: 1) Emphasis of certain points from the story; 2) a Law and Gospel interpretation of the story; and 3) a local application of the story. The format of the three points in *Bible Story Lessons for Baptism and Confirmation* underlines the most important theme in each of the three points. The format is meant to be flexible. If the teacher is semi-literate, he can relate only the underlined portion of the three points. Or, one can also develop the three points into a full-fledged sermon.⁸³

Further descriptions of the format and use of *Bible Story Lessons for Baptism and Confirmation* can be noted in Appendices II and III.

⁸² From Teacher’s Guide for Bible Story Lessons for Baptism and Confirmation by Rev. Carl E. Rockrohr, June 1998.

⁸³ Ibid.

B) Cataloging of Christology Presented in the Series

Of the 62 lessons in *Bible Story Lessons for Baptism and Confirmation*, 30 lessons specifically teach prophecies, narratives, and theology concerning Jesus Christ. In reviewing these lessons they align themselves into 4 categories:

- 1) Christology of Life Events of Jesus
- 2) Christology of Miracle Accounts
- 3) Christology of Prophecy and Birth Narratives of Advent/Christmas/Epiphany
- 4) Christology of Lenten/Passion/Death/Resurrection

To help catalog the lessons, a chart will be used including: category of Christology, lesson title and number, Scripture reference for the lesson, and topic of the lesson. In addition, the theme(s) of each lesson will be considered as to whether it addresses any of the following important contemporary issues as noted by the reviewed African theologians above:

Theme A: Jesus is an eschatological Savior who is capable of overcoming fears about troubles in the future.

Theme B: Jesus gives everlasting life and freedom from death.

Theme C: Jesus is a universal Savior for the African who is able to relate to specific African problems and is able to deliver the African from those problems.

Theme D: Jesus is a Mediator between God and mankind, and also mediates between human relationships, bringing forgiveness and harmony to the relationships.

Theme E: Jesus has authority and takes priority over ancestral spirits.

Theme F: Jesus has authority and gives protection against witchcraft, evil spirits, curses, etc.

Theme G: Jesus brings a wholeness and fullness to life, such as in health and society relationships.

Theme H: Jesus is the Head, the Chief, and unifying factor of His people in His Church.

Theme I: Jesus gives gifts of deliverance and blessing in His sacraments.

Theme J: Jesus is the obedient, suffering Servant who gains salvation and victory through the “weakness” of the cross. (Theology of the cross.)

The catechetical series also includes suggested teachings from the Small Catechism or Bible passages to study each week along with the Bible story. This suggested additional teaching follow the abbreviations *SCT* or *SBT* which indicate “Small Catechism Teaching” or “Special Bible Teaching,” respectively. Usually these extra teachings relate to the topic of the Bible narrative and thus can give additional insights into the intended theme(s) of the lesson.

Excursus Concerning the Konkomba Name for “Christ”

At this point it is important to review the significance of the name used among the Konkomba people for Jesus Christ. In determining which themes as listed above are addressed in which lessons of *Bible Stories for Baptism and Confirmation*, the theology packed into the Konkomba name for Christ will be considered. “Isa” is just a transliterated form of “Jesus.” However, the name for “Christ” is packed with theological significance and meaning for the Konkomba people. The Konkomba name for Christ is, **Wɔn Wo Uwumbɔr Nann Gan**.

Konkomba traditional religion includes sacrifices to many spirits. Konkomba believe that the dead grandfathers spirits still have influence over their lives. They must continually offer sacrifices of chickens, pito, eggs and other things to these dead relatives to maintain relationships and receive blessings and protection. The Konkomba people also believe they need to get blessings from various other spirits. These spirits might protect a village, a local market, the reign of a chief, a household or a large area of land. A few Konkomba people also hold idols called “luwal.” It is believed that these luwal idols are connected to very powerful spirits that for special sacrifices will give money, vengeance against another person, or other things. Therefore on many occasions, at times of trouble, at times of festival, and at times of need the Konkomba will consult a soothsayer, who will give instructions of what sacrifice is necessary to give to what spirit.

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” (Psalm 14:1) and For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. (Hebrews 3:4)

Yet the Konkomba are no fools in this way: they know all these spirits came from somewhere. The Konkomba know that there is a Creator God above all these spirits. They call this Creator God, Utindaan Uwumbør . This title of the Creator God calls Him the LandLord God, the One Who Holds Everything. Thus, the Konkomba people believe it would not be right to offer to lesser spirits without at least acknowledging the Creator God, the Creator of all spirits. So before each sacrifice is made, the person doing the sacrifice will pour out some water and say, "Utindaan Uwumbør, Gafara." That is, excuse me, Creator God. This is a powerful testimony to the religious wisdom within the Konkomba culture. And yet Paul writes,

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1:20-21)

And so also the Konkomba, as all sinful people blinded by sin, do not call on the true, Holy God nor give thanks to Him. They offer excuses to Him, but they seek other powers for help, blessings and give them thanks. Without God's light and salvation, we altogether have gone astray.

But the Creator God has had mercy on us sinners. All mankind are His creation, we are His love. He takes no pleasure in the death of any. Therefore, He sent One Who could bring us back to Him. God sent His Son to tell us about the true, Creator God, who is our Father.

Jesus, God's Son, did not only come to teach us about God, but He was God's Chosen sacrifice. The world's sins had to be atoned for. But sinful humans could never choose nor make a holy Sacrifice, therefore God chose His own sacrifice: His own, Holy Son. John the Baptizer recognized that Jesus Christ was God's Chosen Sacrifice,

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

Jesus was the Christ, that means the Anointed One, The Chosen One. And so in Konkomba Jesus is called Wøn Wo Uwumbør Nann Gan. This means, "The One God Has Chosen." Jesus was the One chosen by God to be the holy sacrifice to atone for all sin, that whoever would trust in Jesus' sacrifice would be saved.⁸⁴

This theology of Wøn Wo Uwumbør Nann Gan (Christ) is kept in mind, so that motifs of Chosen One of God (God's choice versus man's choice), one true and only Sacrifice

⁸⁴ Excerpt from Rockrohr newsletter from Africa, "Rockrohr Chronicles Chapter 11", Christmas 1995.

(versus many sacrifices), sent from the Creator God (universality), and divine authority (higher authority than ancestors and spirits) are recognized as being addressed by any particular lesson.

End of Excursus

Christology of Life Events

Lesson Number and Title	Biblical Reference	Topic and Theology	African Themes Addressed by the Lesson
18 The Baptism of Jesus, The Holy Sacrifice from God	Matthew 3:13-17 & John 1:29-34	Jesus is the chosen one from God. The sacrifice (Lamb) of God. The Holy Spirit gives us power to believe in Jesus as God's true sacrifice. SCT: Review 1st and 2nd articles of Creed, learn 3rd article (HS is active in saving us by pointing to Jesus.)	Themes C, D, G
19 Satan Tempts Jesus	Matthew 4:1-11	Christ, the Chosen One of God, obeys His Father's will perfectly. He relies upon the Word of God. SCT: Review 1st and 2nd articles of Creed, learn 3rd article (HS is active in saving us by pointing to Jesus.)	Themes A, C, E, F, H, J
20 Jesus Calls His First Four Disciples	John 1:35-51	Jesus chose disciples, disciples did not choose Jesus. Andrew is known by Christ. God knows His children before they even know Him. SCT: Review 1st and 2nd articles of Creed, learn 3rd article (HS calls people to belief.)	Themes A, C, D, E, H
25 Peter Confesses that Jesus is God's Son, the Chosen One	Matthew 16:13-23	God the Father sent Jesus to suffer, die and rise again. Peter thought human thinking of human glory, not God's thinking of victory through suffering. Theology of the Cross. SBT: 2 Peter 2:24 – Peter's letter clearly teaches Jesus' mission on earth.	Themes B, C, G, H, J
26 Transfiguration	Matthew 17:1-13	Jesus is true Son of God who is the Holy Sacrifice from God. Jesus points to His suffering, death and resurrection, not transfiguration glory. Sin, Satan and death to be defeated by Jesus' death. SBT: 2 Peter 2:24	Themes B, C, D, E, F, H, J
27 Jesus' Death and Resurrection	Mark 15:1-16:7	Story and meaning of Jesus suffering and death: <u>A Holy Exchange Sacrifice</u> (Vicarious Atonement) for Us by God's Holy Son. Jesus suffered God's punishment and not us. Jesus' victories and complete power shown by His resurrection. SBT: 2 Peter 2:24	Themes A, B, C, D, G, H, J
28 Jesus' Return to Earth	Luke 21:5-36	Jesus' teaching of His second coming. Jesus' words and teaching are dependable to give faith through wars, persecution, plagues and false teachers until he returns. SBT: Matthew 28:18-20 (Watching by keeping in His teaching.)	Themes A, B, C, F, H
Ascension Day Teaching	Acts 1:1-11	When Jesus ascended to heaven we are not left alone but we are given Holy Spirit in order that we might have power to teach Jesus' message. SBT: Matthew 28:18-20	Themes A, D, H,

Christology of Miracle Accounts

Lesson Number and Title	Biblical Reference	Topic and Theology	African Themes Addressed by the Lesson
21 Marriage at Cana	John 2:1-11	Jesus' presence in a believer's marriage. Jesus' protection and care for Christian marriage. Special Topic: Christian Marriage SCT: Lord's Prayer (3rd Petition - His will for our life, including marriage.)	Themes A, C, F, G, H
22 Jesus Feeds 5000	John 6:1-15	Look to Christ for all needs like food, house, family, etc. (not Juju). Character of Christianity is not to force God's blessings but to trust in God's free gifts. Special topic: Juju SCT: Lord's Prayer (4th and 5th Petitions)	Themes A, C, E, F, G, H
23 Jesus Casts Out Demons	Luke 4:31-41	Jesus came to defeat Satan and deliver people. Only Jesus has complete power over evil spirits. Ancestors' traditions are false and soothsayers, jujumen do not have power like Jesus. SCT: Lord's Prayer (6th & 7th Petitions – Deliverance from Satan and all evil temptation)	Themes A, C, E, F, H
24 Jesus Walks on Water to Save the Disciples	Luke 4:31-41	Jesus has total power over heaven and earth. Our protection rests with Jesus who can control heaven and earth. Special Topic: Witchcraft – Jesus provides complete protection and we do not fear any witches or evil spirits. Special Bible Teaching (SBT): Matthew 28:18-20 (Jesus' Complete Authority over all.)	Themes A, C, E, F, H

Christology of Prophecy and Birth Narratives of Advent/Christmas/Epiphany

Lesson Number and Title	Biblical Reference	Topic and Theology	African Themes Addressed by the Lesson
Lesson 4 The Lord God Promise to Send a Savior	Genesis 3:15 and Hebrews 2:14-15	Creator God will defeat the three enemies of His people. Jesus alone (not other spirits) will put his foot on Satan's head. SCT: Review 5th and 6th, learn 7th and 8th Commandments.	Themes B, C, D, F, H, J
1 Advent - The Prophet Micah Foretells the Birth of God's Son	Micah 5:2	Jesus Christ is true God, "origins are of ancient times." His birth place is announced 700 years before He is born. The Person of Jesus Christ: He is True God. SCT: Review Creed.	Themes C, D, E, H
2 Advent - The Prophet Isaiah Calls the Savior Four Special Names	Isaiah 9:6	Explain the meanings of the Four Names: Wonderful Counselor (divine knowledge and wisdom), Mighty God (true God), Everlasting Father (equal with Father), Prince of Peace (Peacemaker between God and people, Mediator) SCT: Review the Creed. The Work of Jesus Christ	Themes C, D, E, F, G, H

3 Advent - Birth of John the Baptizer	Luke 1:5-25, 57-80	The baby John was born to prepare the way for Jesus. God's messengers preach His word about Jesus. Forerunners for Christ. SCT: Review Creed.	Themes C, H
4 Advent - The Birth of Jesus Christ	Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-7	The Story of Jesus birth. God's Son is born a true human being. SCT: Review Creed. Jesus is both true God and true man.	Themes C, H
Christmas Eve Teaching	Luke 2:1-20	Angels pointed to Jesus as Savior from God. God wants us to trust in Jesus and not in ourselves. Special Bible Teaching: John 3:16 - Jesus was born to save the world.	Themes C, D, H
Christmas Day Teaching	John 1:1-14	Jesus Christ is the same as the Creator God. Through Jesus we know the Creator God. SBT: John 3:16	Themes C, D
Epiphany Sunday Lesson: Jesus is Worshiped by Strangers	Matthew 2:1-18	The Story of the wisemen greeting Jesus. Jesus is the Highest Chief and True Savior of all people from all tribes. SBT: John 8:12	Themes C, G, H

Christology of Lent/Passion/Death/Resurrection

Lesson Number and Title	Biblical Reference	Topic and Theology	African Themes Addressed by the Lesson
Lent Lesson 1 (Ash Wednesday) - Jesus is God Suffering Servant	Isaiah 53:3-6	The meaning of Jesus' death on the cross. ("Theology of Cross.") Jesus Christ gained victory and salvation for us through His suffering and death. SBT: Isaiah 53:5 - Jesus died to save us	Themes B, D, G, H, J
Lent Lesson 2 (1 st Sunday in Lent) - Jesus Died to Defeat our Three Enemies: Sin, Satan and Death	John 1:29 and Hebrews 2:14,15	The reason Jesus Christ died was to defeat the three enemies of sin, Satan and death. SBT: John 1:29	Themes B, C, D, E, F, G, J
Lent Lesson 3 (2 nd Sunday in Lent) - Jesus Gives His Holy Sacrifice Food to His Disciples	Matthew 26:17-30	Jesus gives His own Body and Blood in the bread and wine to give us His victory over sin, Satan and death. SCT: Learn Words of Institution, teach Real Presence	Themes B, D, H, I
Lent Lesson 4 (3 rd Sunday in Lent) - Jesus' Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and Judas' Betrayal	Matthew 26:31-56	Great suffering of Jesus was not from Judas' betrayal, but from <u>our</u> sins. Jesus made Himself weak against enemies to die sacrifice death. SCT: Words of Institution, forgiveness of sins from Jesus sacrificed body and blood is given in the Holy Sacrifice Food of the Lord's Supper	Themes C, D, G, H, I, J
Lent Lesson 5 (4 th Sunday in Lent) - Jesus' Trial Before the Jewish Elders and Denial by Peter	Matthew 26:57-75	Lies told against the Holy Jesus and He is abandoned. He saved us by His own power and love; nobody helped Him. Our salvation is from Him alone. SCT: Words of Institution, the power of the Holy Sacrifice Food comes from Jesus' promise and His sacrifice death not from any other human power.	Themes C, D, E, H, J

Lent Lesson 6 (5th Sunday in Lent) - Jesus Before Governor Pilate	Matthew 27:1-26	The King Pilate declares Jesus to have no reason to die. The government said Jesus was innocent, but still He died. <u>Holy Exchange Sacrifice Teaching</u> . (Vicarious Atonement) SCT: Words of Institution. We receive three Victories in the Holy Food: Forgiveness of sins, salvation from Satan and life over death.	Themes C, D, H, I, J
Holy Week Lesson 1 (Palm Sunday) – Jesus Rides Into Jerusalem as God’s Servant King	Matthew 21:1-17	Jesus is the king above all kings who died for His people. Jesus will gain victory, forgiveness and be king through His own death, not through a strong army. Review <u>Holy Exchange Sacrifice Teaching</u> . SCT: Words of Institution. Jesus’ Holy Sacrifice Food is only for those who believe Jesus is the only true King and Lord. His Holy food is not for unbelievers, Muslims and idol-worshippers.	Themes A, C, D, G, H, I, J
Holy Week Lesson 2 (Maundy Thursday Service) Jesus Teaches Us to Serve One Another	John 13:1-17 and 34-35	Jesus’ true mission is to serve others. He served us by defeating Satan, sin and death. We also serve others. SBT: John 13:34	Themes C, D, G, H, J
Holy Week Lesson 3 (Good Friday) – Jesus’ Holy Sacrifice Death and His Seven Last Words on The Cross	(Matthew 27:11-56; Mark 15:1-41; Luke 22:66-23:49; John 18:28-19:37)	Sermon is on Jesus’ Seven Words from the Cross	Themes B, C, D, H, J
Holy Week Lesson 4 (Resurrection Sunday) – Jesus’ Resurrection	John 20:1-31	Jesus’ resurrection is God’s power. Holy Spirit helps us to believe. Jesus is our Lord and God. Forgiveness and peace is on us. SBT: John 20:21-23 - Review: <u>Holy Exchange Sacrifice Teaching</u> .	Themes A, B, C, D, G, H

C) Comments and Analysis of the Christology

Numbering the total occurrences of African Christological themes addressed in the lessons is as follows:

African Theme Addressed in Lessons	Number of Occurrences of this Theme in 30 Lessons Reviewed
Theme A: Jesus is an eschatological Savior who is capable of overcoming fears about troubles in the future.	11
Theme B: Jesus gives everlasting life and freedom from death.	10
Theme C: Jesus is a universal Savior for the African who is able to relate to specific African problems and is able to deliver the African from those problems.	27
Theme D: Jesus is a Mediator between God and mankind, and also mediates between human relationships, bringing forgiveness and harmony to the relationships.	20
Theme E: Jesus has authority and takes priority over ancestral spirits.	10
Theme F: Jesus has authority and gives protection against witchcraft, evil spirits, curses, etc.	10
Theme G: Jesus brings a wholeness and fullness to life, such as in health and society relationships.	13
Theme H: Jesus is the Head, the Chief, and unifying factor of His people in His Church.	27
Theme I: Jesus gives gifts of deliverance and blessing in His sacraments.	4
Theme J: Jesus is obedient, suffering Servant who gains salvation and victory through the “weakness” of the cross. (Theology of the cross.)	13

Although a thorough analysis cannot be accomplished merely by a statistical review of occurrences of themes (and admittedly the assignment of themes to lessons is rather subjective), the exercise does reveal some initial trends in the Christology taught in *Bible Stories for Baptism and Confirmation*. It should be remembered that this catechetical series was developed without any resources of African theologies such as have been reviewed in this paper. Therefore, the occurrences of the themes were the natural outgrowth of the writer’s

impressions and understandings of the Ghanaian culture generally, and the Konkomba culture specifically. Obviously, when one is teaching the lessons not all the themes will be taught at any given time. However, by identifying what variety of themes may be addressed by any one lesson, potential topics are identified upon which a teacher can focus as needed by the audience or situation of the ministry.

Themes C, D and H are very well represented in the teaching series. This probably reflects the overall attempt to reveal Jesus as the Creator God's chosen universal King. Being a foreigner in Africa, the writer was sensitive to the need to present Jesus as Savior for the African; He is not for the white man alone. The theme of king or chief is prominent in Ghanaian culture and, as Manus' *Christ, the African King* demonstrates, is a Biblical theme that seems to effectively communicate the Gospel.

Themes A, B, E, F, G and J all seem to be represented fairly well in the 30 lessons dealing with Christology. However, theme I is under-represented. This theme of Jesus' working through the sacraments did not at all go unnoticed by the writer, but it appears to need more emphasis. It may be that the choices of narratives did not lend themselves to sacramental theology. Taking Mbiti's suggestion that the African's value for community opens up opportunities for understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ, ecclesiology and sacramentology linked with Jesus as the "Head" needs further refinement. The topic of Christian Baptism is taken up in other lessons not strongly linked with the Christology. This also needs to be further refined.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter 1, some of the cultural barriers of “Western” Christology have been reviewed. While in the Western tradition the individual as an independent entity has had great importance in the definition of being, in the African traditions the definition of being is tied into an individual’s relationship with others. These differences have great influence on the way Jesus Christ is presented to any given audience, and how well the audience interprets Jesus’ Person and Work in his own worldview. If Jesus is described with words that do not even have equivalents in a person’s mother tongue and worldview, he may never understand that description. Moreover, if important distinctions in a person’s language and worldview are overlooked when presenting Jesus Christ, the fullness of Jesus’ *for me* can be lost.

In Chapter 2, six works concerning African Christologies were reviewed. The writers noted the shortcomings of previous Christology delivered to Africa by missionaries. The writers made various suggestions as to what approaches for Christology in Africa might be helpful. Several of the writers reviewed offered different Christologies already in use in Africa. Themes such as Jesus as Chief (king), Mediator, Redeemer, Elder Brother, Healer, Universal Savior and Ancestor were commonly suggested as helpful for the African to know and trust in Jesus. There was consensus that important African issues which must be addressed by any Christology include ancestor veneration, witchcraft, importance of community, holistic issues (physical and societal concerns), and a means of delivery of the Christology which is meaningful in oral societies. All of the writers reviewed valued the Biblical revelation of Jesus Christ as foundational for all African Christologies. All the writers reviewed valued the traditional Christological formulations as true, yet, the traditional formulations alone are not sufficient for the African.

In Chapter 3, the Christology of the catechetical series, *Bible Stories for Baptism and Confirmation*, was analyzed with themes that were suggested by the works reviewed in Chapter 2. It was concluded that the teaching series is sensitive to African themes, but further refinement is needed especially in the areas of Christology as it relates to Ecclesiology and Sacramentology.

It is quite evident to this writer that a great concern for a meaningful Christology exists among many African Christians and theologians. Priceless testimony is coming from the African church as she struggles to answer with the rest of world Christianity that question of Jesus, "Who do you say that I am?" The African Christian wants to speak of Jesus for himself and herself. May God grant that we will continue to teach one another the truths of God's Word, so that the apostles' prayer may also be true among all Christians today.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:16-19 NIV

For the sake of clarity, I am going to present a scheme for African christology. I have tried to follow the prescriptions of Vatican II with regard to how dogmatic theology should be taught in the seminaries (*Optatam Totius*, 16).

Scheme for African Christology

I. Positive Part

- A. Revelation of Christ in non-Christian religions (especially in African religions and cultures)
- B. Christ in African independent churches and "folk" Christianity (latent christology in African traditional churches)
- C. Christ in Judaeo-Christian religion
 - 1. The Bible
 - 2. Church tradition (the patristic epoch to the contemporary period, including African christologies today)

II. Systematic Part

- A. The Incarnation as redemption
 - 1. Incarnation in the light of christologies from above and from below
 - a. Summary of biblical teaching and official position of the church
 - b. Traditional theological positions (Catholic and non-Catholic)
 - c. Modern theological views
 - d. African theological views
 - i. Already given answers (if any)
 - ii. Author's views
 - iii. Practical relevance (spiritual and bodily)
 - 2. The hypostatic union
 - a. Summary of biblical teaching and official position of the church
 - b. Traditional theological positions (as above)
 - c. Modern theological views
 - d. African theological views (as above)
 - 3. Inferences from the hypostatic union (natural divine sonship of the man Jesus, Christ's right to adoration, communication of idioms, christological *perichoresis*)
 - a. b. c. d. (as above)
 - 4. Incarnation as establishing the reconciling Mediator, Ancestor, Healer, Elder Brother, Liberator, King (Chief), and so on
 - a. b. c. d. (as above)
 - 5. The role of the Trinity
 - a. b. c. d. (as above)

- 6. Perfections and limitations of Christ's humanity (his true humanity, holiness, knowledge, liberty, power, passibility, *kenosis*)
 - a. b. c. d. (as above)
- B. Redemption as continuation and fulfillment of the Incarnation
 - 1. Redemption in general
 - a. b. c. d. (as above)
 - 2. Realization of redemption through the events of Jesus' life (his virginal conception, birth, circumcision, presentation in the temple, flight to Egypt, life in Nazareth, public ministry, culminating in his passion, death on the cross, descent into hell, resurrection, and ascension)
 - a. b. c. d. (as above)
 - 3. The event of Jesus' life as ancestral, onomastic, initiatory, liberative, and vitalistic mysteries
 - a. b. c. d. (as above)
 - 4. Realization of redemption through Christ's offices (teaching office, pastoral office, healing office, priestly office)
 - a. Theology of sacrificial death and the cross and descent to hell
 - b. Theology of Christ's exaltation and its relation to the eschatological transformation of humanity and the cosmos
 - a. b. c. d. (as above)
 - 5. Incarnation viewed from the African ancestral, onomastic, initiatory, vitalistic, liberation points of view

The above scheme needs little comment. In the systematic part, the Incarnation is inseparably linked with redemption, not only because the two mysteries are presented as indissolubly joined together in the Bible, but also because, as shown by most of (if not all) today's African christologies, these two mysteries cannot be treated separately when viewed from the African perspective. The last subdivision of this part (5) is related to what has been written on these issues by modern African christologists. For a bibliography relevant to these issues, the reader is referred to *Jesus in African Christianity* (J. N. K. Mugambi and L. Magesa, editors) and to the bibliography in this essay.

Needless to say, this scheme makes no claim for perfection. Nor is it the only possible scheme for African christology. Besides, it would be possible to construct a similar scheme based on *one* African category (for example, ancestor, healer, or liberator) as a point of departure. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the above scheme appears to be a better alternative.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Christian Friends,

This teaching book is our attempt to give teachings in the Christian faith through the medium of the Bible's own stories. The following are our basic goal and objectives:

+ + + + +

Goal: That the listener will learn Old Testament and New Testament Bible stories along with teachings for traditional Christian festivals which will prepare them for Baptism and Confirmation (readiness for the Lord's Supper) and ongoing life in the Christian Church.

- 1) Old Testament and New Testament Bible stories will be chosen, illustrated and presented in a way which is meaningful and applicable for the rural West African person.
- 2) Each Bible story will have accompanying teachings that will:
 - a) emphasize certain teaching points from the story.
 - b) give a Law and Gospel teaching from the story.
 - c) make a local application of the story.
- 3) In the process of learning the Bible stories; the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer and Matthew 28:19-20 will be learned for baptism. In addition, the Words of Institution and the meaning of the Office of the Keys will be learned for Confirmation.
- 4) Issues important for Christian living in rural West Africa will be addressed including:
 - a) Polygamy
 - b) Ancestor and Idol-Worship
 - c) Witchcraft
 - d) Proper and Improper Medicines (Juju)
 - e) Jesus' Holy Sacrifice vs. Traditional Sacrifices
 - f) Christian Family Relationships
- 5) The lessons will be presented in a book in a standardized format which will help the leader remember and teach the lesson, even if only semi-literate.
- 6) The lessons will be scheduled in such a way as to be able to refer to the traditional Church year calendar and major Christian festivals to help the new Christians celebrate church festivals with all Christians throughout the world.

+ + + + +

You the reader and teacher will finally determine whether this book helps to reach the above goals. We will be happy to hear your comments. We know the teachings may have many shortcomings, but we pray that the Holy Spirit may still use this work for His purpose to call many to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, to their eternal salvation and to the glory of God.

Your Servant in Christ,
Rev. Carl Rockrohr
5 January 1998

APPENDIX III.

Brief Description of Format and Use of Lessons

The teaching lessons are designed so that either the Bible story is read directly from Scripture or it is told by memory. The three teaching points listed are interpretations and applications of each story. The Bible story and three teaching points all put together can constitute a very short devotion or even up to a full sermon, depending on the abilities of the person teaching. Each of the three teaching points has the first sentence underlined. This underlined sentence is to be the main thought of the point, which the non-literate can memorize or semi-literate study well. It is hoped that this format of the teaching points will be flexible for a variety of situations and abilities.

After the three teaching points, each lesson has special teachings referring either to the Small Catechism as used in the Lutheran church, or emphasizing a certain point of doctrine or important Bible passage. It is intended that the memory work is followed through carefully to aid the person in his/her preparation for Baptism and confirmation. This section from the Small Catechism or Special Teaching could be in the worship service itself, or else given at a time outside of worship for those preparing for Baptism/confirmation. In the future, we plan to give a suggested hymn from the *The Lutheran Hymnal* for each lesson.

The Bible stories have two main divisions: Old and New Testament Bible Stories for Baptism and Confirmation; and teaching for Christian festivals, especially Advent/Christmas, Lent/Holy Week, Ascension and Pentecost. It is envisioned that the Old and New Testament stories can be begun at anytime of the year, but at the time of Christian festivals the festival lessons would be used. When that festival is over, the Bible story lessons can be resumed where left off. Lessons are also offered for the Baptism and confirmation services themselves.

The doctrinal teaching of the lessons emphasizes who God is, man's condition of sin, and that true life, salvation, protection and blessings come to us only through faith in Jesus Christ and not through any effort, sacrifice or idea of mankind. The sacrifice death of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins is frequently emphasized not only because it is a major Biblical theme, but also because I believe it is helpful theme for the rural West African steeped in traditions of sacrifices. That Jesus' victorious sacrifice death comes to us in power and blessing in Baptism and the Lord's Supper is a Scriptural truth that needs to be taught with the authority and power Scripture gives the Sacraments.

The use of this teaching material is not meant to be read by rote in a dry and ineffective manner. These Bible stories are the very Word of God to us and by them the Holy Spirit changes us from condemned sinners to saved children of God. This is a holy and wonderful work by the Holy Spirit, to which we as Christians should not be lazy, but give ourselves fully to His working. Therefore, I urge the lessons are learned to the point of memory, the teachings fully studied and much prayer offered to the Lord God as preparations are made to teach these lessons.

These lessons are intended to be used under the guidance and supervision of ordained pastor or commissioned evangelists as called by Jesus Christ through His church. To my fellow called workers in the church, I give an especially warm encouragement to lift up the name and teachings of Jesus Christ to the nations! Jesus' Word will always bear fruit and shall never pass away! To God be the glory!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barr, William R. *Constructive Christian Theology in the Worldwide Church*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.
- Chemnitz, Martin. *The Two Natures in Christ*. Translated by J. A. O. Preus. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971.
- Gibellini, Rosino, ed. *Paths of African Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994.
- Healy, Joseph and Sybertz, Donald. *Towards an African Narrative Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.
- Manus, Ukachukwu Chris. *Christ, the African King*. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.
- Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1989 (second edition).
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, and Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd, 1994.
- Pobee, John S. *Toward an African Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1979.
- Rockrohr, Carl E. *Teacher's Guide for Bible Story Lessons for Baptism and Confirmation*. Not published, copyright 1998.
- Rockrohr, Carl E. *Rockrohr Chronicles, Chapter 11*. Christmas, 1995. Not published.
- Samuel, Vinay and Sugden, Chris, eds. *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983.
- Vicedom, Georg F., ed. *Christ and the Younger Churches*. London: S.P.C.K., 1972.