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AFRICAN THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL CHANGE:

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

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McGill University, Montréal.

April 1993.

**A Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

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AbstractAfrican Theology and Social Change

The dissertation documents the rise of African Christian theology in anglophone and francophone Africa, exploring the possibility that following the development of the two long-recognized phases of "adaptation" and "incarnation" there has been a "third phase." In the period since 1980 we find an explosion into theological diversity and maturity, marked by serious wrestling with all the social problems facing Africans in contemporary African life. Since 1980 there is a proliferation of new Christological paradigms, and increased inter-religious tensions have brought new urgency to inter-faith dialogue, with a growing number of theological responses. An explosion in the numbers of African women theologians brings a new voice on women's roles. Economic and ecological crises bring increasing reflexion on justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

The paradigmatic diversity is strongly linked with changes in the concrete social conditions in which the various theologians live. This discovery confirms the thesis that theology in Africa is always related to social context.

* * * * *

RésuméThéologie africaine et changement social

La thèse concerne la théologie chrétienne africaine en Afrique anglophone et francophone introduisant la possibilité qu'à la suite du développement de deux phases reconnues, celle de «l'adaptation» et celle de «l'incarnation», il y a eu une troisième phase. Depuis 1980, il est apparu une explosion dans la diversité et la maturité théologiques, marquée de vifs débats concernant les problèmes sociaux auxquels doivent faire face les africains dans la vie africaine contemporaine. Depuis 1980, il y a une prolifération de nouveaux paradigmes christologiques et la croissance des tensions inter-religieuses a entraîné une nouvelle urgence de dialogue entre les diverses religions avec un nombre croissant de réponses théologiques. Une explosion du nombre de femmes africaines théologiennes a apporté une insistance nouvelle sur les rôles de la femme. La crise économique et écologique a entraîné une réflexion croissante sur la justice, la paix et l'intégrité de la création.

La diversité paradigmatique est fortement liée aux changements des conditions sociales dans lesquelles vivent les théologiens. Cette découverte confirme la thèse que la théologie en Afrique est toujours liée au contexte social.

* * * * *

Table of Abbreviations

AACC = All Africa Conference of Churches.
AICs = African Independent Churches.
AMECEA = Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of East Africa.
ATR = African Traditional Religion(s).
CIEA = Catholic Institute of East Africa. (at Nairobi, Kenya)
CIWA = Catholic Institute of West Africa. (at Port Harcourt, Nigeria)
EATWOT = Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians.
IMF = International Monetary Fund.
OAU = Organization of African Unity.
OPEC = Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.
SECAM = Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar.
UNCED = United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. (popularly known as the "Earth Summit" of Rio de Janeiro, 1992).
WAATI = West African Association of Theological Institutions.
WCC = World Council of Churches.
WSCF = World Student Christian Federation

* * * * *

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of John James Harold Ritchie, September 28th, 1912 - April 6th, 1993. Truly a gentle man and a scholar, who gave me the love of learning and the gift of life.

* * * * *

Preface

African Christian theology has been an interest of mine since my own experience of teaching in Nigeria from 1980 to 1985. While in Nigeria I became fluent in the Hausa language, lingua franca of Northern Nigeria, and began my interest in African culture and tradition. My attendance of meetings of the Jos-Bukuru Theological Society from 1981 initiated my inquiry into African theology, which was further developed at the 1984 Conference of the West African Association of Theological Institutions in Ogbomosh, Nigeria.

I wish to acknowledge the help of several African theologians in the research for this dissertation: John S. Pobee of Ghana, Jesse N.K. Mugambi of Nairobi, Kenya, and Edward Antonio of the University of Zimbabwe, Harare, each of whom offered their time and helpful opinions. Takatso Mofokeng also proffered a helpful analysis. Mercy Oduyoye and Sr. Teresa Okure also gave me some of their time to discuss their projects and African theology. Dr. Kofi Appiah-Kubi of Ghana, with whom I had several too-brief conversations at the January 1992 EATWOT Conference in Nairobi, was the co-editor of one of the most important volumes of African theology, a founder of EATWOT and a pioneer in African theology. His work was an inspiration and his death in February 1992 leaves a gap among African theologians.

Among Canadians living currently in Canada, Grant LeMarquand has been helpful in many conversations and in reading the manuscript. Among those living in Africa, I thank Harold Miller, and William and Ingrid Reimer in Nairobi.

For providing part of the funds towards my participation at the 1992 EATWOT Conference in Nairobi, I thank the Anglican Diocese of Montréal, Partners in World Mission, Toronto, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, and my parents, Harold and Esther Ritchie.

* * * * *

PART I: THE AFRICAN BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

In the period since 1960 independent Africa has seen the rapid growth of a new group of African Christian theologians developing a new discourse within the churches planted by European and American missions. It has been established for some time that the theology of this group has gone through a first phase, which is generally called the theology of "Adaptation." This mode of theology was superseded in the early 1970s by a second phase, commonly referred to as the theology of "Incarnation."

My initial reflexion upon works published by the African theologians that I examined for my M.A. thesis at McGill University in 1987, followed by further reflexion upon my own experience of five years in Nigeria, led to a growing sense that African theology since 1960 has developed in three phases, the third of which is unfolding in the 1980s and '90s. However, after collection of a massive amount of data from the already vast African theological literature, I came to the conclusion that my original hypothesis of a third phase marked by a single paradigm was untenable. The current phase, if one may call it that, is in reality an explosion of African theological creativity and maturity marked by a serious wrestling with all of the issues posed by modern African life. So it seemed that the dissertation should document this explosion of paradigmatic diversity, and the plural concerns.

Having observed quite a number of new theological developments after 1980, I asked the question, "what social conditions had shifted at that time?" There were many such changes: increased urbanization, increased educational levels, changing religious affiliations, etc. I discovered that it was not possible to understand the plural theologies of Africa without relating them to the concrete historical conditions in which they arose. Despite a common heritage, there is so much diversity in Africa that most generalizations are almost impossible. Theology in Africa is thus, regionally located.

The two discoveries, (i) the explosion beyond a single paradigm, and (ii) the rootedness of theological reflexion in local conditions forced a reorientation. The task now was to

document the explosion and to clarify the social contexts in which the various theological orientations arose. This twofold aim demands that the work be interdisciplinary. While my primary training had been theological, since 1988 I had undergone extensive training in anthropology and consequently felt qualified to undertake this task.

This dissertation brings together for the first time the theological literature of both anglophone and francophone Africa, and perhaps its most important contribution to scholarship is a methodological thesis: that theology is inevitably contextual - by showing the light which this approach sheds on African intellectual developments. It might also be said that the same method could be applied to European and American theology.

Part I traces the theological evolution, the phases of "Adaptation" and "Incarnation" and the new phase. Here, the exposition of what I have called the "third phase" demonstrates that the new developments transcend a single paradigm. Therefore it might be argued that we do not have a distinct "third phase", for as rapid social change engulfs Africa and the rest of the world no one can know what the outcome will be, or how Africa will appear several decades hence.

Part II deals with several concrete issues of African life today that have particularly challenged African Christians, especially in the 1980s and 90s. Here, we explore the various developments of the theological explosion by relating them to the concrete conditions which gave rise to them. Implicit in this methodology is a critique of theological studies that analyse the ideas theologians propose without realizing that these ideas cannot be properly understood unless they are related to their social base.

While several surveys of African theology are available, each of them suffers from one or several lacunae. Gwinyai Muzorewa has written an introductory survey entitled The Origins and Development of African Theology (1985) which is helpful but limited. First, it covers only the period up to 1980, and I shall argue that some of the most significant developments have taken place in the twelve years since; second, it does not treat francophone Africa; and third, perhaps partly because of that omission, it deals only superficially with the fundamental tension between the liberationist paradigm and the predominating inculturationist paradigm (see Tutu, 1975).

Until the time of this writing, there has been no book-

length survey of African theology covering developments in both francophone and anglophone Africa, and the need of such a survey is voiced increasingly by scholars working in this field (Mbiti 1986, 63; Hastings 1988, 196-7; and Schoffeleers 1990). Indeed one weakness of books in the entire field of African theology generally is that they do not give equal attention to francophone and anglophone Africa.

A work more similar in nature to the present work than any other is that of Zaïrean theologian Bénézet Bujo, now translated into English as African Theology in Its Social Context (1992). First, he seeks to set the development of African theology in its social context, a task that is essential to the understanding of contemporary African theology and is key in my own work. Second, he pays far more attention than do most authors to developments in both English and French speaking Africa. Bujo goes beyond discussion of social context to draw the outlines of a new African theology, one which he feels is more attuned to African realities. Because it is the task of African theologians to articulate, shape and define African theology I do not attempt that task here. What I aim to add to the discussion is as follows:

- (i) A documentation of the explosion of African theological diversity in the period since 1978 in terms of the investigation of a possible third phase: while there is much in the work of Bujo and other African theologians to support my hypothesis, none have expressed the current development in these specific terms so far.
- (ii) A more focused examination of the link between social change and theological development. Bujo does not address the importance of social change in the shaping of African theologies, either at the grassroots level in the AICs or in the "mission" churches.
- (iii) A comprehensive treatment of recent developments: Bujo's work in the original German was published in 1986. His preface in English to the (1992) English edition provides a brief update on the impact in Africa of the great historic events in Eastern Europe, the end of the cold war, and the release of Nelson Mandela in South Africa, but the book itself remains as it was in 1986. Thus, it does not deal with those developments in any depth, or with other developments such as new responses to the ecological crisis and the rapid growth in the numbers of African women doing theology.
- (iv) Introduction of new material based on my own original research, particularly the work on the sensorium in Africa.
- (v) A comprehensive bibliography.

The present study does not set out to measure African theological discourse in the court of western anthropology or by western standards of rationality. Rather, our method seeks to set African theological discourse into its sociological context to better understand its development. In the interest of brevity, we limit our discussion to African Christian Theology in sub-Saharan Africa excluding South Africa, with special reference to Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Zaïre and Cameroon. It is those five countries that have produced the greatest volume of African theology, and I have first-hand experience in Nigeria and (briefly) in Kenya. It should be clear that the term "African Theology" is a genre description, not a geographical description.

I shall refer to several lines of evidence: published works by African theologians and Africanists, and personal conversations with African colleagues during my five year stay in Nigeria, during two weeks in Kenya in January 1992, and with visiting African scholars in Montréal.

* * * * *

CHAPTER 1: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY

Studies have suggested that in the twenty-first century there may be more Christians in Africa than in any other continent (Barrett 1970). Already there are more Anglicans in church every Sunday in Nigeria than in all of England, the U.S.A. and Canada combined. With growth rates in African churches generally exceeding those found anywhere else in the world this is not surprising. As Lamin Sanneh has observed, "the irruption of Christian forces in contemporary Africa is without parallel in the history of the church." (1989, 188). This fact alone should be reason enough for westerners to take a look at what is happening in African Christianity, but even if this were not the case the very dynamism and vibrancy of African church life shows promise to a western church which, at best, often seems to struggle merely to survive in an increasingly secular culture.

Of further interest to sociologists, anthropologists and theologians is the fact that although Africa is now recognised to be the poorest continent, economically, theologians in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) have not generally embraced "Liberation theology", rather, most have chosen to go their own route, for the form of oppression which they feel most keenly is not economic oppression, but rather a cultural oppression; the derogation of African people and things African. This is what E. Mveng and the other African theologians have referred to as "anthropological oppression" (Fabella and Torres, eds, 1978).

Signs of African Christian disenchantment with the style of white missionary activity were already visible as early as 1821 in Sierra Leone, with the formation of an African Independent Church (AIC) there. In Nigeria, Independent churches began forming in the 1890s. The United Native African church formed as a break away movement from the Anglican church in Lagos, Nigeria in 1891. From that time to the present there has been a great proliferation of new independent churches, each with its own particular emphasis, and each attempting to preserve the African flavour, to become more authentically African than churches planted by the European and American missionaries. In 1970 the AICs claimed 15,971,000 adherents in 5,980 denominations (Barrett 1982, 815) and their growth rates averaged 4.33 % per year between 1970 and 1985 (Barrett 1982, 782). Today, these churches number well over two thousand in Nigeria alone. In some countries, notably Ghana, it is

projected that members of Independent churches will outnumber those of either Protestant or Roman Catholic churches by the year 2000 (Barrett 1982, 323). The experience of these Independent churches may be called, in one sense, the first phase of African theology,¹ for apart from the churches of Ethiopia and ancient Nubia, here was the first articulation of a Christian theology by sub-Saharan black Africans on their own terms. However, the focus of our attention in this dissertation shall be primarily upon the expression of this type of feeling from within the existing mainline churches. Reference to the Independent churches shall be made when it is necessary in order to understand developments in academic African theological discourse.

Within the Roman Catholic church in Africa the most significant early questioning of western Christianity was a collection of articles entitled Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent penned by a group of nationalistic African priests in 1956. They expressed some of their questions and doubts about the very European and alien manner of their church life and theology, and argued for "adaptation" of the church to the African context. When similar feelings existed in the Protestant churches they often had issued in the formation of independent churches, but voices within the mainstream Protestant churches also began calling for a new type of Christianity in Africa at this time. In 1958 an inter-church conference of African church leaders was held at Ibadan, Nigeria, which gave expression amongst the widest range of denominations thus far to the new desire for an Africanized church. This conference led eventually to the formation of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in 1963 at Kampala, Uganda.

This period coincided with the appearance of new works from anthropologists such as Marcel Griaule (1966), E. Evans-Pritchard (1956), and scholars of religion such as G. Parrinder, (1954) which sought to examine African Traditional Religion (ATR) in a more positive and sympathetic manner than had been previously the case. At the same time Présence Africaine began publishing in Paris, with an agenda very much consonant with the new, more sympathetic approach in anthropology. With the convergence of these developments and the rise of African nationalism in the 1950s a "new wind" was blowing.

¹ I credit here Dr. John Pobee (personal communication 1991) for reminding me of this fact.

1: First Phase: "Adaptation"

The major concern of those writing and directing the course of African theology in the first phase was "adaptation". The thrust of this movement was to make Christianity adapt to its African environment. This was usually conceived of in terms of such practices as wearing African clothes, using indigenous African music in liturgy, and the indigenization of the clergy: the work of evangelization and pastoral care was to be shifted to Africans. This in itself was not a new idea; indeed, it was the goal of Henry Venn, General Secretary of the Anglican Church Missionary Society from 1842 to 1873, whose guidelines for missionaries stressed that the new churches in Africa must be "self-planting, self-supporting and self-propagating" (Kalu 1978, 348). But Venn's guidelines were largely ignored in the field, and the result was that the new churches in Africa remained very European in nature. In fact the 1880s and '90s saw the decline of African agency in Christian missions due partly to the increased effectiveness of malaria prevention, which enabled Europeans to enter the African mission field in much larger numbers. European management of missions insured a very European style of church life, which continued until the pressure for "adaptation" began to mount in the 1950s and '60s.

The term "African Theology" first appeared in the context of a debate between Zaïrean theologian Tharcisse Tshibangu and his theological teacher Alfred Vanneste, held by the «Cercle théologique du Lovanium» at Kinshasa, Zaïre in January, 1960. The proceedings of this debate were published in Revue du Clergé Africain in that year. In the "Débat Sur La «Théologie Africaine»", Tshibangu posed questions as to whether certain aspects of African traditional religion might be used as points of contact with Christianity and argued that a distinctly African theology should be possible. Vanneste argued that Christian theology is universal, and therefore an African theology was neither possible nor desirable. At this time, Tshibangu, as he did in the Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent, stayed, for the most part, at the level of posing the question of whether an African theology might be possible.

Following the independence of most African nations in 1960, there was increasing acceptance of the agendas of the adaptation movement, by the European missionaries (some of whom were primary advocates of it) as well as by African Christians, who were beginning to see it as the measure of the maturity of Christianity

in Africa. In 1963 the All Africa Conference of Churches was formed at Kampala, and in 1966 it sponsored the first Consultation of African Theologians at Ibadan, Nigeria, which stressed the need for an African theology. This conference was key in the development of African theology as a distinct movement. The papers from this conference were later published in the volume Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs (1969).

In the Roman Catholic church Vatican II (1963-65) brought great changes in Catholic attitudes towards other religions. Increasing acceptance of African identity was indicated when in 1969 Pope Paul VI, visiting Uganda for the canonization of the Ugandan martyrs, told the Roman Catholic bishops: "you may and you must have an African Christianity". Aylward Shorter reports however, that despite the great volume of talk about "adaptation" and "Africanisation" in the Roman Catholic church in the years between Vatican II and 1975, in practice it had only amounted to: "the production of vernacular liturgical texts and the creation of local musical settings for these texts." (Shorter 1975, 146).

In the Protestant churches the 1970s saw the introduction of African musical instruments and African musical styles in most of the Protestant churches, including the evangelical churches, many of which embraced Africanized worship most enthusiastically (see Olson 1971). The Africanisation of the clergy was virtually complete: by 1975 it had become very rare to see a white missionary acting as an evangelist or pastor of an African congregation in Nigeria. But in terms of serious attempts to make the church African at the core, "adaptation" had gone very little further than in the Catholic church, and Shorter's comments that little had been done to grapple with traditional religious ideas, or to create typically African Church structures is almost equally applicable to the mainline Protestant mission churches. One exception was the Methodist Church of Nigeria, which adopted a new "Africanized" structure with a "Patriarch" at the head of it, Bolaji Idowu. He tried to move the church towards African structures and thought, a move that was praised by his fellow African theologians, though it caused a split in the ranks of the Nigerian Methodist Church.

(ii): The "Négritude" Movement and "African Philosophy"

In 1928, the young Léopold Sédar Senghor left his home in Senegal to study in Paris (Guibert 1962, 13). Disillusioned by the ill-treatment of Africans in France and its colonies, he joined

with his friend Aimé Césaire in 1929 to found a review called L'Étudiant noir, which proclaimed the principle of «négritude» (Guibert 1962, 15). The «négritude» movement sought to revalue the thought and culture of traditional Africa (Mudimbe 1988, 83). Disenchanted with the racism they experienced in the French Communist party in Paris, the négritude group eventually broke with many aspects of communist ideology. In 1948 Senghor renounced his membership in the S.F.I.O. (Guibert 1962, 24). Césaire retained his communist affiliation longer, but he too left the party in 1956 (Mudimbe 1988, 91). Though they retained a critique of western imperialism, the aspect of it which they most criticized was its utter contempt for the conquered peoples, their achievements and cultural values. The idea of "African personality" was central in négritude philosophy. The négritude scholars conducted research into the oral traditions of their own people and published these traditions so that the world could share the deep cultural riches of Africa. They also wrote poetry as part of the cultural revaluation process. Senghor later became ruler of his country, Senegal, upon independence in 1960.

Associated with the négritude movement was the development of the discourse of "African Philosophy", which attempted to understand traditional African worldview in philosophical terms, to say that Africans did indeed have something of value to offer to the world in the field of philosophy. The Belgian missionary Placide Tempels was important in the development of the term "African philosophy." Tempels came to the conclusion that "Bantu behaviour...is centered in a single value: vital force" (Tempels 1959, 44), which is rendered variously in the French edition as «force vitale, vivre fort, la force». This vital force Tempels saw as the central category of "Bantu philosophy" (Tempels 1959). Both these concepts were modified and adapted by the African scholar theologian Alexis Kagamé, in works which are now considered classics in the field. "Bantu philosophy" coined in the 1940s, was found useful by Senghor and Césaire, and became popular among the French-speaking élites of Africa.

Anglophone African theologians adopted a more qualified, more empirical and less speculative approach, and many have not referred to "African philosophy" per se, though they aim at the same basic goal, the revaluation of traditional African thought, culture and religion. For example, though Mbiti uses the term "African Philosophy" in his 1969 work, he rejects Tempels' "vital force" concept, while holding that Africans believe in the

existence of "force" permeating the universe and similar to what anthropologists call mana (1969, 16). The difference in approach between the Anglophone and Francophone theologians may stem from the fact that Africans from British colonies learned from the British school of anthropology, which is more empirical, while Africans from French colonies learned from the French school, which is more theoretical and speculative.

By the late 1970s "Bantu philosophy", négritude and "vital force" as categories had come under increasing fire from African neo-Marxists, and from anthropologists of all schools, and in their original formulations are now largely considered "passé". Éla points out (1988, 171) that at the very moment in 1969 when Pope Paul VI was praising négritude in Kampala, it was being dismissed as obsolete in Algiers.

Among African theologians still working with the concept of "vital force" today the most notable would be Vincent Mulago.

2: Second Phase: "Incarnation"

The next phase of African theology sought a Christianity more deeply and authentically rooted in African soil. One of the ways in which this task was undertaken was to research the traditional African religions of the various ethnic groups from which the African theologians arose. Since many of them were second or third generation Christians by this time, it necessitated a considerable adjustment process and the pursuit of research methodologies more familiar to anthropologists than to theologians, but in contrast to anthropologists the African theologians had the advantage of knowledge of the indigenous languages as their own mother tongues.

In 1962 Bolaji Idowu's book Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief appeared, challenging many current assumptions about the uniqueness of Judaeo-Christian monotheism. In 1963 Harry Sawyerr wrote an article on the nature of theology in Africa which was one of the earliest articulations of the new mood. Throughout the 1960s it was clear that new winds were blowing. Acceptance of the agenda of the adaptation movement was to continue to grow in the 1970s. But by the end of the decade of the '60s it was already becoming apparent to many that mere "adaptation" was not going far enough: merely replacing a white pastor with a black one who did exactly the same things in exactly the same ways as did the Euroamerican pastor helped very little, if at all. A few rather superficial changes in musical styles and dress still left the

central core of the problem untouched. Furthermore, Africans were beginning to voice suspicions that much of the enthusiasm of the European missionaries for "adaptation" was conceived within a framework wherein European theology still set the parameters, outside which Africans must not go, thus retaining a certain theological control for Europeans (Fasholé-Luke 1981, 22).

One of the results of the new research carried out by African theologians on their own traditional religions has been the critique of western scientific anthropology. The earliest phase of anthropology had sought to put discourse concerning the societies which Europeans called "primitive" into a scientific framework. This was to be an improvement over previous discourse on such societies because it was to be systematic and "objective", unlike the observations of travellers and missionaries. Leading anthropological thinkers such as E.B. Tylor, J.G. Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl developed theories of the evolution of human consciousness which, in one way or another harkened back to Auguste Comte's "trois états" of humanity, a division which split the human condition itself into three rather unequal parts (Mudimbe 1988, 67). Given the coincidence of this categorization with the period of colonialism, an African reaction was inevitable, and when it came it was quite a sharp one. In a succession of scholarly conferences in the nineteen-sixties and 'seventies African theologians "broadened the scope of the critique of anthropology and the philosophy of mission activity" (Mudimbe 1988, 60-61). They criticized the ideological assumptions which underlay anthropological and missionary thought, even in the works of apparently sympathetic anthropologists such as Marcel Griaule and E. Evans-Pritchard, and missionary/anthropologists such as Placide Tempels.

African scholars in this period scrutinized and criticized the Euro-American definitions of Africanness more thoroughly. One facet of the myth of white superiority is the definition of the "otherness" of Africans in terms of their religion. In the 18th and 19th centuries accounts written by travellers commonly stated that Africans "had no religion". These attitudes have angered African theologians and they have been at pains to demonstrate that Africans traditionally did indeed have a religion, that it was not merely "magic", but that it had a creator God who provided for the needs of humanity. John Mbiti opened his book African Religions and Philosophy with the words: "Africans are notoriously religious" (Mbiti 1969, 1). Bolaji Idowu of Nigeria wrote the

words "Africans are in all things religious" (Idowu 1962, 1-10) and even "Africans are incurably religious" (Idowu 1973). Some recent scholarship has tended to qualify these statements somewhat by pointing out the secular and pragmatic motives and orientations which can often lie behind apparently religious practices in Africa. A theme issue of the Journal of Religion in Africa (1985, no. 3), devotes several articles to this insight (see Platvoet 1985, Chakanza, 1985). But these cautionary notes are a relatively minor footnote in a corpus which has overwhelmingly stressed the pervasive religiosity of Africans.

This is still so much the case, that the western visitor to Africa may at first be taken aback by the quite different undertones which the term "religion" has there. Whereas "religion" or "religious" is most often used in a derogatory manner in Euroamerican contexts, the word has positive connotations to Africans. The phrase "It is good for a man (or a woman) to have a religion" is often said with proverb-like resonances. Signs of religious belief are everywhere in such countries as Nigeria and Kenya. Even the taxis, buses (called "matatus" in East Africa) usually have mottos on their windshields such as "God Provides" or "Allah Ya Kiyaye Hanya", Hausa for "God guard the road" or "Halin mutum sai Allah" meaning "the character of man only God knows." This approbation of religion may account in some part for the typically negative African reaction to Karl Barth's theology, which rejects all religions as false; this is not mitigated by Barth's assertion that even Christianity is also false.

In the introductory chapter of virtually every book on ATR written by an African scholar of religion, one can find a list of the words used by European travellers, anthropologists and missionaries to define African religion: "fetishism, animism, ancestor worship, naturism, tribalism, paganism, primitive religion" etc. The African theologians have shown how each term is inadequate to describe African religion and is derogatory in its intent. "Fetishism" was a common definition in the first half of the nineteenth century. The word derived from the first Portuguese visitors to Africa, who saw a similarity between the charms used by Africans and their own amulets, and so called these objects feitico, or "charm". In the 18th century European scholars began using the word as a general descriptive term, and then it gained currency through Auguste Comte's use of it to denote a general theory of primitive religion in which all material objects are thought to be animated with life. African theologians object to

this definition, for it had come to be used in a derogatory manner, intended to emphasize difference between Africans and Europeans: when an African performs a certain action, it is called "fetishism" or "fetish-worship", while when a European does exactly the same thing, it is called "owning an amulet." Pioneering anthropologist E.B. Tylor in his 1871 work Primitive Culture had laid out his theory of primitive religion as "animism", by which he meant that "primitive" cultures believed that all things are animated with "spirit" or "breath, life". African scholars object that ATRs adherents did not hold that all material things are animated with spirit, only that certain objects are, and furthermore, that one cannot define all of African religion by this one aspect of it.

The term "naturism" or "nature worship" had been put forward by Sigmund Freud and by Willoughby, who said that "primitive" religion developed out of feelings of awe in the face of the powerful forces of nature. However, no evidence of this development was ever gathered in the field. As Evans-Pritchard pointed out:

none of the anthropologists whose theories about primitive religion have been most influential had ever been near a primitive people. It is as though a chemist had never thought it necessary to enter a laboratory (Evans-Pritchard 1965, 6).

The other definitions of African religion have each been exposed as inadequate because they are freighted with ethnocentric over-generalization, based upon misunderstanding or mere speculation (see Mbiti 1969, 6-15 and Idowu 1973). Idowu's 1973 work African Traditional Religion: Towards a Definition was very critical in this regard. In the mid 1970s criticism of the old Eurocentric definitions of Africans and African religion reached a crescendo, sometimes marked by harsh polemics.

Another aspect of the ideological myth of white superiority was the so-called "curse of Ham". Research has shown that even after thirty years of independence, deep-seated feelings of racial inferiority still persist in Africa and people of African descent. This is, in large measure, a legacy of the colonial system, which indoctrinated Africans with the myth of racial inferiority, and the consequent psychological effects have been devastating. We explore this in more depth in chapter two.

The African theologians are critical of the development of categories of thought based on evolutionary models which always placed Africans at the bottom layer of humanity, as if they were

not quite human. The work then, of African theologians in this second phase has been to rehumanize Africans by changing the modes of discourse about them, to reassess and revalue ATR in a more affirmative manner. This led to a large research effort focused upon the traditional religions of the ancestors of the African scholars, a focus which was to become the major preoccupation of most African theologians in the period from 1966 to 1983 approximately. Before 1960 there were only a few significant works by Africans on their own traditional religions. Those most commonly noted are Jomo Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya (1938), J.B. Danquah's The Akan Doctrine of God (1944), Oluide Lucas' The Religion of the Yorubas (1948), and Alexis Kagame's La Philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'être (1956). The new wave of interest in ATR in the 1960s was initiated by Idowu's 1962 work, Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief. It was followed by John Mbiti's 1969 work African Religions and Philosophy and his 1970 Concepts of God in Africa which, together with his The Prayers of African Religion (1975a) form a "trilogy" which constitutes a mountain at the centre of African theology. Since then a flood of new works have come out by African scholars of religion. We cite the work of Idowu African Traditional Religion: A Definition (1973) as representative of generalizing studies in this period, and the work of Edmund Ilogu (1974) Christianity and Ibo Culture as a representative of works on one specific ethnic group.

The literature of this movement is directed primarily to the African church, both clergy and laity, and as such is not in the same mode as academic theology in Europe. It is intended to make the masses more aware of their religio-cultural roots, and in this it has been very successful: Mbiti's African Religions and Philosophy (1969) can be found in every secondary school and college library in English-speaking Africa and has deeply affected most African students today. Since the 1970s ATR is a course on the post-primary school core curriculum in African secondary schools and teachers' colleges, and most African students have taken at least one course in it by the end of secondary school.

By 1974 it was emerging that the primary impetus of African theology was no longer merely adaptation of Christianity to an African environment, but the "Incarnation" of a Christianity with truly African roots. By 1974 the Roman Catholic church in Africa had come to the point of making the choice: the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) conference officially rejected the theology of "Adaptation" in 1974, and

chose the theology of "Incarnation" in its place. The distinction was brought to a sharp focus in the title of Aylward Shorter's 1975 work African Christian Theology - Adaptation or Incarnation?

What African theologians were now in search of was a church with African leadership, with truly African mind and spirit, and where Africans could feel free to explore the meaning of a truly African Christianity, without restrictions imposed from outside mission agencies, without Euroamerican Christians constantly looking over their shoulders. They wanted the freedom to innovate in their attempts to Africanise Christianity in a manner analogous to the founders of the African independent church movements. By the mid-seventies the trickle of African theologians studying and writing on the traditional religions of their ancestors had grown into a mighty river.

During this period there was an increased sense of confidence in the African identity and African national pride, leading to a call in 1974 from the AACC for a moratorium on missions from the west, an extension of the widespread reaction against western imperialism in all its varied forms. The stimulus was what the African participants at the first Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) meeting in Dar es Salaam identified as the "anthropological oppression" of the African. In this, the African representatives differed with their Latin American colleagues who were pioneering Liberation theology at that time. The Africans stressed that the major category to them was not economic oppression, but an "anthropological oppression", which manifests itself in the derogation of all African people and African cultural attributes.

Several theological and anthropological concerns stand out as frequently recurring themes in the works of many African theologians in this period. I shall briefly note five areas here, a number which is arbitrary but shall serve the purpose of brevity. 1: The prominent role of the ancestors in ATR and what this means to the church in Africa today; 2: The role of healing; 3: The belief in supernatural forces, magic, divination and witchcraft; 4: The role of polygyny, and the question of admittance of polygynists to communion; 5: Négritude and/or African philosophy.

While one might list more or fewer areas of concern, the sum of discourses by African theologians in this period was marked by exposition of cultural conflict, the devastating impact of western imperialism in its anthropological and cultural manifestations.

The decade of the 1970s was a crucial one in the development of African theology. At its beginning, the work of exploring ATR was only just beginning; by its end, the movement was so strongly developed that many scholars who had gained their higher education through the church were showing greater interest in ATR than in Christianity, at least as an academic pursuit. One can see such a development in the career of Joseph Omosade Awolalu, who acquired Bachelor of Divinity, Sacred Theology Major (STM) and Ph.D. degrees through his church, and at the doctoral level shifted his attention to the study of Yoruba traditional religion. This field was much in need of scholarly adjudication at the time. Bolaji Idowu was no longer involved in scholarly writing by 1979, the year in which Awolalu's major study, Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites was published. By that time Awolalu had become Senior Lecturer in African Traditional Religion at the University of Ibadan. In the late 1960s most African universities transformed their schools of "Divinity" into "Religious Studies Departments." Through the 1970s courses in ATR were developed as a vital part of the curriculum in these departments, lending a new status to ATR as an academic study, and giving it more autonomy as a scholarly endeavour in its own right, apart from any connection with church agendas of any kind. In addition to the many Christian theologians whose pursuit of ATR studies eventually led them into academic careers exclusively in that department, there is also now at least one active practitioner of ATR involved in teaching at the university level: Wande Abimbola is an Ifa priest and Professor of Yoruba culture at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile Ife, Nigeria.

3: The Third Phase

(i): Cultural Setting

By the early 1980s it was apparent to some African scholars that out of the process of revaluation of ATR a certain tension arises. Some have begun to voice concern that much of the work is being done in a vacuum, for it does not fit the every-day context in which most Africans now live. The modern African reality is one in which many of the old ways have died out to the extent that they cannot be properly recovered, while "modern" and western ways have not been fully established. In a context neither wholly modern nor wholly ancient, a majority of Africans live with a daily reality of grinding poverty in which clean water, food and the basic necessities of life are increasingly difficult to obtain. Additionally, Africa is now much more urbanized and

educated than it was in 1960, a point we shall further elaborate in chapter 2.

The burden of Liberation theologians such as Jean-Marc Éla has been to expose this reality and direct the attention of the African church to it as a matter of primary concern. While he shares the critique of anthropology and many of the concerns of John Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu, Kwesi Dickson and others working within an "Incarnational" paradigm, Éla is concerned that a preoccupation with the past should not be used to obscure the causes of poverty and oppression in the present. His voice is the clearest and sharpest theological critique of négritude philosophy in Francophone Africa and several of his works, translated into English in the eighties, are beginning to have an impact in Anglophone Africa as well. Concern for the poor and for human liberation is also found in the works of Bénézet Bujo of Zaïre and Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga. These concerns have been echoed in a different way in Anglophone Africa by John Pobee, Mercy Amba Oduyoye of Ghana, Laurenti Magesa, J.N.K. Mugambi and bishop David Gitari of Kenya, but because négritude as a distinctive philosophy had never been wholeheartedly adopted there, the critique of it is muted and peripheral.

The theological literature written by African scholars today is usually not in the highly refined modes of discourse one finds in the academic theology of the European university. They are writing to a more general audience whose primary concerns are often very different from those of Europeans and Americans. Furthermore, communications and travel within Africa are very difficult and books and journals are often much more difficult to obtain than in the developed countries of the west. Consequently theological conferences and oral exchanges between African scholars have a greater importance. Mbiti states (1986) that most theology in Africa today is oral theology. One of the developments to watch in African theology is the attention given to oral theology. Mbiti's 1978 article entitled "Cattle Are Born With Ears, Their Horns Grow Later; Towards an Appreciation of African Oral Theology" is a start; this, and Pobee's 1989 work are indicators of what we expect to be a very fruitful line of inquiry. Pobee goes further than Mbiti in endorsing oral theology, appropriating the term "preferential option for the poor" in regard to the need to give value to the stories of those peoples without writing. This is a significant insight, which we shall be exploring further in our chapter on African orality.

(ii): Key Distinctives of the Third Phase

Probably the most exciting phase of African theology has begun in the decade of the eighties. Theological discourse in this decade is marked by several developments:

1) The introduction of the Liberation paradigm into a wider context of debate with the translation of Jean-Marc Éla's works into English. In some cases this follows lines familiar to Liberation theology from other parts of the world such as South Africa and Latin America. In other cases, such as Bujo and Kolié, there is a mixing of paradigms of Liberation and Incarnation, bringing a mixture uniquely African.

2) A widening of the definition of liberation to include physical and spiritual forms of oppression. We shall explore this expansion in several parts of this dissertation, particularly our chapters on healing and Christology.

3) The development of a greater refinement of various debates concerning the role of ATR and a general reduction of emotional heat in the conduct of these debates due to a lessening of polemical exaggerations and over-generalizations. For example, Kwesi Dickson's research reported in Theology in Africa (1984, 55ff.) indicates that the role of subordinate deities in various traditional religions is more complex than had previously been allowed. Also note his work concerning trajectories in theological education. The fresh and finely imaginative work of Osadolor Imasogie can be noted here as well.

Another example of this sharpening process is the increasing insistence upon the term African Christian Theology as opposed to the oft used term "African Theology". Although Shorter had made this distinction clear in one of his works (1975) it has not been until the 1980s that numbers of leading African theologians have started to insist upon this designation. One factor contributing to confusion and overheated polemics in the mid-seventies was Byang Kato's mis-understanding of what was meant by "African Theology" as that term had been used by Agbeti and by Turner (see Kato 1975, 54); a confusion which Kato passed on to Adeyemo and many others in the "evangelical" wing of the church in Africa. Kato had taken that term to mean the advocacy of a full return to ATR by African Christians, or a type of syncretism. The definition of African Theology proposed by Agbeti and Turner had perhaps left room for that interpretation, but they were not the only persons, nor even the leading persons, in the movement. Some confusion remained, due not only to Kato's misunderstanding, but also (says

Dickson 1984, 121ff.) to the sometimes unclear expression of the goals of African theology by its proponents. Clarification of this point by Dickson (1984) and by Mugambi (1989c) has led the way to a less polemicized atmosphere and greater understanding. Thus, Osadolor Imasogie and Kwame Bediako continue in an evangelical mode of discourse in the 1980s, but they repeat none of the errors and "straw man" arguments of Kato, thereby bringing a more irenic character to the discussions.

4) A Deeper outworking of the implications of a truly African Christian theology. This trend has many facets, one of which is a stronger and more finely honed criticism of the agenda of the earlier phases of African Christian theology. Kwesi Dickson (1984) criticises the theology of "indigenisation" for its methodology, which, he says, must always suffer from limitations because it seeks to "translate" beliefs and concepts from traditional Christianity into African categories, without reference to the shape of African thought in general.

We also note the work of J.N.K. Mugambi of Kenya, who, with others, rejects such terms as "indigenisation", "inculturation" as categories because no matter how well motivated, to "indigenise" or "inculturate" something implies a starting point from outside of Africa. The starting point of Christian theology, for Africans, is now seen to be from within African culture (Mugambi, personal communication 1992). At the same time, however, we must add that one sees a greater volume of new material on "inculturation" in the 1980s than ever before, with much of the material being written by Catholic priests. Those who pursue this line of development hold that inculturation has never yet been fully articulated or accepted in the African church.

5) A noticeable trend away from exclusive attention to ATR, back to themes considered more a part of the usual domain of a theologian, such as Christology, Ecclesiology and biblical exposition. An example is John Pobee's development: his first three books, written in the 1970s, dealt with ATR and integration of ATR into theology. By the late 'eighties he had written or co-edited four books centred on biblical themes such as martyrdom in St. Paul's thought and the Beatitudes. J.S. Mbiti's four earliest published books were on ATR but his articles and books in the 1980s dealt with themes such as Bible and Theology in the Church (1986), a work which includes a good survey of African biblical publications up to its publication date. Mercy Oduyoye's 1979 essay is on ATR while many of her 1980s projects have been

biblical e.g. Hearing and Knowing.

V. Mulago's work of 1973 was on the traditional religion and worldview of the Bantu, while by 1981 he was writing on evangelisation and «authenticité». Fr. Justin Ukpong dealt with ATR in two of his first published articles (1982, 1983). He then moved on to deal with African Theologies Now in 1984 and Gospel Parables and The Acts of the Apostles in 1988 (a and b). He criticises the process leading to the African Synod in his 1992 work.

In the 1970s Leonidas Kalugila compiled a collection of Swahili proverbs, which he published in 1977. By 1980 his attention had turned to a study of the "wise king" in the Old Testament, and by 1985, to an inquiry into the ministry of women in the priesthood of the early church. The works of Kofi Opoku of Ghana and Emefie Ikenga-Metuh of Nigeria show similar shift in emphasis from the 'seventies to the 'eighties.

Gwinyai Muzorewa's work completed in 1981 (published 1985) dwelt largely on the influence of ATR in the origin and growth of African theology, while in his work of 1990 he has moved on to deal with An African Theology of Mission, a work much more explicitly biblical and evangelical in nature than his earlier work.

Bolaji Idowu, a leader in the debates of the early 'seventies, became absorbed in church politics and had dropped out of scholarly writing completely by the late seventies. However, in the field of Yoruba traditional religion studies he had cleared a path which many were walking by that time. One such scholar was Osadolor Imasogie, whose work began to appear in the eighties. One of his first published works was African Traditional Religion, published in 1982, but based on research done in the seventies. While it retained a great respect and empathy for ATR, it was less polemical than Idowu's work, introducing needed refinements to Idowu's contentions regarding Yoruba religion. His work is scholarly and careful, eschewing polemics, yet building upon the work on Yoruba religion which Idowu did so much to advance. He does not attack Idowu's work so much as suggest more fruitful new directions. For example, in place of Idowu's description of Yoruba traditional religion as "diffused monotheism", Imasogie posits a "bureaucratic monotheism", an image at once much more colourful, dynamic and three-dimensional. It also has a slightly comical air to it, as anyone who is familiar with Nigerian (or any other) bureaucracy will attest. The thought of a heavenly civil service

shuffling one's petitions and requests from one department to another with all the potential for delays, getting lost or even trashed (as sometimes happens accidentally or when there is a backlog) is hardly a comforting one. This ironic humour is charming and disarms the potential conflict in an area of scholarship which is still controversial and potentially explosive. It is also a sign of a maturing theology which can reflect in a more relaxed atmosphere of good will, one more conducive to the mutual sharpening process characteristic of the search for truth. This, I propose, is one of the most valuable characteristics of the new phase of African theology.

Works published by Imasogie since 1982 have concentrated more upon biblical themes and pastoral issues. Dr. Imasogie's wife, Yewande, stated the new mood well at the conference of the West African Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI) in August 1984. She stood in for her husband who could not be present, and read his keynote address, adding her own, very significant comments and emphasis:

What is the result of all of our scholarly conferences, colloquia and forums on African Traditional Religion over the last twenty years? We have talked and talked and talked and written books and researched and come back and argued and debated. We have hundreds of churches and tremendous resources in a town such as this [Ogbomosho]. There ought to have been a revolution by now! But instead we see that the church is shallow and has little or no impact upon the lives of the people it is meant to serve. Is it really because our church is not traditional enough? Is it really because we have not done enough research into ATR, and that if we just do more and deeper study into it we will start to "get it right"? I do not think so. I think it is because we leaders in our pride are not in touch with the people, with their everyday needs. We love the best seats in the churches and wearing long academic robes and being saluted by men, and making long erudite speeches in language our countrymen cannot understand. I submit that this is the real reason why our churches are superficial.

The audience was electrified. In the auditorium one could have heard a pin drop. The silence was eventually broken by the most senior academic in the assembly who proposed a motion that her words should be included verbatim in the proceedings of the conference, unedited. Her words had struck a very deep chord in all present. This speech would not have been made in the 1970s, as the interest in ATR was still too new at that time.

Associated with the shift back to biblical studies is an increasing interest in Christology. In 1979 Pobee posited a Christ as ruler or chief Christology, and Christ as ancestor has been proposed in several variant forms. Since 1981 published works on

Christology have multiplied rapidly. Several African theologians have proposed a Christ as Healer model, while one has posited a Christ as Guest model as most appropriate for the African context. In the 1980s the Christ as Liberator model has reached a wider audience than previously. Meanwhile, the Christus Victor model seems to enjoy a de facto allegiance in the churches, particularly in the Independent churches, where emphasis is upon the Christ as liberator from all the various forces which oppress humanity, such as illness, spiritual oppression, and poverty.

Mercy Oduyoye points out that the Independents gravitate towards this Christological model, and therein lies a challenge to the established mainstream churches. But to her, this Christus Victor model is not the same as the lordly ruler Christology she sees in Pobee's 1979 work. It is rather a Christ as liberator from all oppressive forces, and therefore is more akin to a liberative and egalitarian model which she, as an African feminist, advocates. To her, Pobee's ruler Christology is too static and hierarchical, and fits traditional patriarchal patterns too easily. But the type of Christus Victor she envisions is more dynamic, not based on inherited authority, but on life-giving power. Pobee more recently has stated that he would not articulate his Christology the same way now. He says that in 1979 he started from a "construct", which he would not do today (Pobee, personal communication 1991).

The trend I describe could also be traced through an examination of articles appearing in some of the leading journals of African theology, such as the Africa Theological Journal, which first appeared in 1968, the Africa Bulletin of Theology which commenced publication in 1979, and the Ogbomosho Journal of Theology which began publishing in 1986.

The above evidence should be adequate to demonstrate the existence of the trend. Associated with this trend is a noticeable cooling of the great "Moratorium" debate. In the early 1970s there were calls for a moratorium on all missionary activity from the west. The AACC requested a moratorium in 1974. This received much publicity at the time and coincided with a general heightening of the critique of imperialism and neo-colonialism in the first half of the seventies. The late seventies and early eighties saw some reduction in the frequency of such calls, although the goal which motivated them remains. Muzorewa's 1990 work on mission gives an extra dimension or refinement to his earlier advocacy of moratorium. He stops short of a retraction, but his redefinition

softens it, a refinement perhaps influenced by his own very successful period of several years of being a missionary to an American Lutheran congregation in the mid eighties. His personal experience is parallel to the phenomenal growth of missions from Africa by Africans in the 1980s, in spite of the serious financial hurdles.

Parallel to the theological trend we have been describing is the shift in the themes explored by African novelists. In the 1960s the themes most often developed by African writers were that of cultural conflict resulting from the colonization of Africa by Europe. In the late seventies and eighties they have shifted more towards cultural reaffirmation, and cultural recovery: a revaluing of African tradition with a view to its reintegration into the modern African context. The element which this shift shares most strongly with the shift in African theology in the same time period is the sense of "getting on with the job", of moving on from the arguments of the '70s with a new sense of purpose. Workers in other fields, such as international development and even ethnomusicology, have noted parallel trends in African studies in their respective disciplines (Harold Miller, personal communication 1992).

One logical extension of the interest in ATR is to incorporate important elements from it into African Christianity: this is sometimes called "syncretism". "Syncretism" however, is a word which has pejorative connotations and is usually used to denote a style of religion which the user considers to be overly compromised and/or lacking in the non-negotiable essentials of Christian faith. The missionary theologian Hendrik Kraemer warned of the influence of "syncretism" in his widely influential work The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World in 1938, and this warning rang in the minds of most missionaries since that time, whether they had actually read the book or not. While fear of "syncretism" still remains in African missionary discourse, most now prefer to speak of the positive aspects of "contextualization" as the proper designation for their work, which signifies a proper recognition of social context and an incorporation of one's life into that context, while at the same time retaining the essential(s) of the Christian faith. We should add that most often the AICs do not understand themselves as syncretistic in any sense whatsoever. Rather, they hold that they have tried to be more biblical than the mission churches, whom they claim have withheld crucial parts of the biblical message, particularly those having

to do with healing.

Whether or not "syncretism" is the appropriate term in any given case, the path of incorporating significant elements from ATR has proved to be the most popular option for African theologians today, and it is strongly held that unless the African church has the freedom to experiment at the edges of what the western church would consider "orthodoxy" then it is not truly free. African theologians generally speak favourably of the Independent churches as one genuine expression of an African Christianity, and hold that the mainstream churches must have this freedom as well, while also maintaining that there are indeed limits to the procedure. Fasholé-Luke says (1981, 38):

However, we must recognise the fact that Christian experience in Africa is not confined to the Independent Churches: the ideas, structures, sermons, (oral theologies) and halting innovations of mission founded Churches must not be neglected in the creation of African Christian theologies. Nor are they less African, because they have resisted the dangers of syncretism; even if it is at the flashpoint between syncretism and orthodoxy, that genuine African theologies will emerge.

While theologians have embraced ATR in their theological proposals, popular support for radical changes (polygyny excepted) at the grassroots level of church congregations has not been as great as one might imagine. Most Nigerian pastors have actually rejected any radical changes. Nigeria has been a leader in the movement to indigenize music and even dance in many churches. These changes are widely popular, and have been widely accepted in the Protestant, Catholic and Evangelical churches of Africa. But the pouring of libations to ancestors and other controversial practices such as healing practices, (some of which have occult overtones) have not generally been accepted. The most consistently cited reason for the growth of African independent churches is their strong emphasis upon healing. Generally, while African theologians have spoken positively, and even longingly, of the independent churches in this regard, the discussion has tended to stay at the level of question-asking rather than implementation, for the mainstream churches have resisted most moves towards a greater healing emphasis in practice. To date, most exceptions to this rule have been dealt with severely; the case of Roman Catholic bishop Milingo being a notorious one (Milingo 1984), another being the excommunication of charismatic youth movements within the Anglican church in Benin State, Nigeria (Barrett 1982, 527).

Suggestions of using Eucharistic elements more culturally familiar to Africans, such as millet cakes or pounded yam instead of wheat bread, and palm wine instead of wine from the grape, have been often voiced by scholars, such as Éla, and by some pastors, but the churches have been slow to implement such changes.

A major step has been taken by the Anglican church in that the worldwide Anglican communion now accepts the right of polygamists to full communion. The 1988 Lambeth Conference agreed to this change, largely due to pressure of the Ugandan bishops. Prior to this, the only mainline church to adopt such a policy was the Lutheran church in Liberia in the 1970s. There seems to be an emerging recognition that any significant changes in church order (such as the admittance of polygamists) are going to have to be shown to have a firmly biblical rationale.

It would be a mistake to understand the three phases I outline as self-contained wholly separate streams having mutually exclusive concerns. It is not clear-cut and there are no neat divisions in time. It does seem, however, that by the late 'seventies the "Adaptation" mode had been reduced to a more or less peripheral status in African scholarship, at least if one is to judge by the number of books and articles published. Tshibangu, whose thought had seemed radical in 1960, was still saying the same things in 1980, a consequence, according to Bujo, of his being appointed bishop soon after completing his doctorate, thereafter being consumed with administrative chores, the chairing of conferences and the writing of forewords in other people's books. Bujo (1992, 66) borrows the words of Thomas Kramm who says that Tshibangu had become a theologian "manqué". Nyamiti is one scholar who still uses the term "adaptation" but in his hands it seems to have more depth and maturity than in the earlier formulations.

African scholars by 1979 were pointing out that the time for debate over the possibility or appropriateness of an African theology was long past (Pobee 1979, 9). It was, by that time an established fact which could not be denied. Mudimbe even goes so far as to say (1988, 61):

At scholarly conferences, [in the seventies] no one really cared any longer about the scientific evidence of the past. African scholars now preferred to deal directly with the issues that involve African responsibility in theology and social sciences, as well as in the humanities (Glele, 1981; Ngindu, 1985).

Research into ATR continues up to the present unabated. In

fact, there may be at present more African scholars in the field doing studies on the ATR of their own ethnic groups than ever before in history. But if one is to judge by the concerns of articles and books published by the leaders (e.g. Mbiti, Pobee, Oduyoye, Dickson et. al.) there is a very noticeable shift from broad works on ATR in the seventies to biblical themes and pastoral issues by the mid-eighties and nineties. The Africa section of the EATWOT General Assembly in Nairobi 1992 reported that the years 1986 to 1992 have seen an increasing number of African theologians writing works critical of ATR in one respect or another. This development could be seen either as a necessary correction or refining impulse, or as a conservative pulling back to the "safety" of orthodoxy, or yet again as a consequence of a move towards the theology of Liberation, which has generally been more sceptical of the use of the African past in the construction of a relevant theology and praxis today. All three possibilities are open, and we may find that the answer varies from one case to another, or in some cases may be a combination.

I have observed certain trends or currents, and these have become more dominant in certain places at certain times. We have nothing that one might call a "paradigm shift" in African theology in the '80s. However, this is a term which is overused in reference to arts subjects in general, and certainly is inappropriate in the realm of theology, where there hasn't been any consensus for at least one thousand years, and one cannot speak of any one theology ever becoming the one new paradigm. Even in the early '70s Mbiti was warning us that we should be looking not for one African theology but for African theologies. What we can say is that there is a sense of the "preliminaries" having been finished with by 1979. Pobee's work of that year very strongly creates that impression: one finds in this work that there is no longer a need to rehash the rationale for an African theology, rather, he gets right to work in the first chapter actually to write one. There is a refreshing sense of "getting on with the job" and a welcome absence of jargon. This sense persists in the work of O. Imasogie, Bujo, Éla, Mugambi and others in the 'eighties.

The trends developing since 1980 should not be thought of as a "reaction" in the same sense as the reaction against missionary thought in the 'sixties and 'seventies is often depicted. It could more accurately be described as a change in "mood" or tone and generally is thought to be a building upon the

foundation of the 1970s rather than a negation of that work. This is clearly evident in the articles devoted to pastoral problems in the African context in the Africa Theological Journal and the Ogbomosho Journal of Theology. Many articles deal with the unique situations facing African families, such as divorce in polygamous families, the role of ancestors, witchcraft and occultism, secret societies and curses. These problems are dealt with increasingly from a pastoral point of view which takes into account the vast amount of knowledge and sensitivity which African scholars have gained in the past thirty years from the study of African traditional religion. Thus, while the concerns are increasingly familiar to traditional Christian theology, the focus is different, and the background knowledge necessary as a base is entirely different.

The second phase of African theology saw works like Mbiti's Concepts of God In Africa present a compendium of the ideas of God in the vast panoply of African religions. This field is so vast and the religions so variegated that many critics question whether such a study can really be accurate or helpful. Other critics have wondered whether Mbiti was trying to give us a kind of "Systematic Theology" of all of African religions, in which case, of course, it could only fail. This was never Mbiti's intention however. He sought only to give us a slice of the traditional religions of Africa and to present it in a favourable light, so that it could be received as the backdrop and ground upon which any African Christian activity today must build, recognizing and seeking to relate respectfully to it. In a sense, ATR was to be understood as the African's Old Testament. To Mbiti, rather than a "Systematic Theology", the discourse on ATR could be seen as a kind of "Prolegomena to any future African Christian Theology". If we see the work which African theologians have been doing in the second phase as "prolegomena" then we may expect to see a more developed body of written African Christian theology emerging now, in the third phase. The phrase "prolegomena", however, is more familiar to scholarly theologians of the west, who expect literate treatises of a highly erudite (and often irrelevant) nature. To recall Mudimbe's analysis the terms ought to originate from within Africa, thus it would be more appropriate to refer to ATR as the "ground" upon which future African Christian Theology must build.

In connection with the priority of African categories we may say that Mbiti's own comment that most African theology is currently oral theology is apposite, for the revaluation of Africa

and of all oral societies will necessarily give greater weight now than it has in the past to oral modes of discourse (see Mbiti, 1978a, Fasholé-Luke 1981, 38 and Pobee 1989d). When African theologies are understood in this manner, I think we are closer to helpful insight.

A number of significant events happened in the period between 1975 and 1980, each of which may be considered "pivotal" by a given scholar. J.N.K. Mugambi, head of Religious Studies Dept. at University of Nairobi, now Associate Registrar of the university, and one of the founding members of EATWOT and of African theology generally, opines that the real watershed for him was in 1975 when the Fifth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held in Nairobi, the first to be held in Africa (Mugambi, personal communication 1992). Before that time he had not found it possible either to convince western theologians that African theology existed or that it should exist. The WCC General Assembly of 1975 symbolized, to him, the acceptance of African Christianity by the world church, and he has noted a much greater level of acceptance since that time. He also notes that 1985 marked a major event for the Roman Catholic church, when the 33rd Eucharistic Conference was held in Nairobi, the first to be held in Africa.

The First Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians was held in Accra, Ghana in December 1977.² This event was taken as a major turning point by those African theologians who adhered to EATWOT. Indeed, while the English collection of the papers presented there was entitled African Theology En Route, its French translation was entitled Libération ou Adaptation? La Théologie Africaine s'interroge. Thérèse Souga goes so far as to say "In Accra, in December 1977, African theology opted to be a theology of liberation and not of adaptation" (Souga 1986, 26). But it is

² The term "third world" refers to the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America which are neither part of the industrialized western world, nor part of the "second world" (communist bloc), but are non-aligned. Many people from this later group of countries resent the term "third world" because it seems to give top priority to the industrial west, once again. So some prefer the term "two-thirds world" (see Samuel and Sugden eds, 1982 Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World which contains contributions by Kwame Bediako and David Gitari). Others, such as Pobee, now prefer to speak rather of the countries of "the North" and the countries of "the South," a designation which he and others began using in the 1980s and which has even greater relevance since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

not necessarily as simple as that. If the choice made by the 1974 SECAM conference had meant anything, then one would have thought that the choice was not between liberation and adaptation, but between liberation and incarnation. Had no shift taken hold in those years? Furthermore, the picture portrayed in African Theology En Route is actually one of theological diversity and shows that consensus was not in sight (cf. Bediako 1980, 158-9). The most prolific of all African theologians, John Mbiti, wrote an article in this very volume which criticizes liberation theology for its lack of biblical reference (Mbiti 1979, 88). The statements made by theologians in ecumenical meetings of like-minded individuals from many denominations can create the impression of unanimity when the substance is lacking. Another factor to consider is that inevitably the statements made by denominational synods, which must set the official policy of a given church structure, are more socially conservative than ecumenical meetings which have no officially binding status for any group. This remains true even when a considerable number of the actors are participants in both the ecumenical and the denominational gatherings.

Even if the quality of the offerings in African Theology En Route was somewhat uneven, and the points of view diverse, yet the volume stands as probably the most important collection of essays on African theology up to that time, and served as an indication that the Africa section of EATWOT would play an active and prominent role in the development of African theology.

The papers from the Accra conference of Dec. 1977 were published in 1979. This year was also significant in that it marked the appearance of J.S. Pobee's book Towards an African Theology. In that work I read for the first time in African theology the words which start from a position of acceptance and confidence. The opening sentence of the Preface begins thus: "The case for translating Christianity into authentic African categories hardly needs to be argued. That need has long been recognized in both Africa and Europe." (Pobee 1979, 9). Although quite a number of appeals and arguments for an African theology had appeared before 1975, no one at that time could have said with confidence that the case "hardly needs to be argued." Pobee's words, then, indicate that between 1975 and 1979 a "sea-change" had indeed taken place. Now Pobee can say that the time has come for a more positive and constructive African theology to be done.

In the Roman Catholic church, the visit of Pope John Paul II

to Africa in 1980 marked another important moment, for he reaffirmed the approval of African culture made by Pope Paul VI in Uganda eleven years previously and further encouraged African theological exploration and indigenous liturgies. The effect of these affirmations was to further increase African theological confidence.

The position of confidence, which assumes at the base the freedom to be African, is a major hallmark of the new "explosion" in African theology, which may be characterised neither as "adaptation", nor "indigenisation" nor "incarnation" nor even "inculturation." Pobee prefers the two terms "aggiornamento" and "skenosis" to any of the above (Pobee, personal communication 1991). Mugambi also rejects the terms proffered by Shorter (Mugambi, personal communication, 1992). He prefers multiple models and says the labels are too reductionist. One may see many of those categories, in Mudimbe's terms, as categories which still assume the priority of the western pole in discourse, for no matter how well-intentioned is the motive behind "adaptation" or "inculturation" or "indigenisation" the starting point is still outside of Africa, somewhere in the western world, therefore it cannot produce a Christianity which is authentically African. Mugambi believes that Africa possesses the categories for its own theology, beginning from its own starting point.³ The priority of the African pole in theological discourse, then, is a hallmark of the new phase of African Christian theology.

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³ This latter thought raises the question of Mudimbe's summary of the development of African theology. Mudimbe's work is clearly the most erudite work by an African scholar yet to appear in English on the subject of African philosophy. His is a highly erudite and subtle synthesis of the development of African theology, but one may be confused by his treatment of the terms "adaptation", "incarnation" and "indigenization" because he seems not to delineate these terms with quite the same boundaries as the theologians about whom he is writing. This may be because Mudimbe rejects those categories as they assume a western starting point (so Miller, personal communication 1992).

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL CONTEXT OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY

1: Socio-Historical Survey

Ancient Egypt developed the first of the great civilizations of world history. Egypt had already a long and illustrious history by the time ancient Greece reached its apex, and it is well established that Greek thinkers acknowledged their debt to ancient Egypt. Much has been written on Egypt and we need not repeat it here, except perhaps to mention that much current African and African-American scholarship is currently in the process of reappropriating Egypt as a specifically African civilization, in which the Cushites and black peoples of southern Egypt played a major role.

The "Afrocentric Hypothesis", as advanced by Cheik Anta Diop and his more recent African-American exponent, Molefi Asante, states that Egypt was the source of all the significant cultural ideas of the civilizations which followed it, Persia, Greece, Rome, etc., and that all of these ideas came from an African source in Egypt and the southern Nile region (see Diop 1954, 1974 and Asante 1987). While some of the more extreme ideas of the "Afrocentrists" remain controversial in historical scholarship, they are bringing the role of black Africa in the ancient world out of obscurity into the realm of debate, which in itself advances the achievement of Africans and has shed light on the manner in which Euroamerican scholarship has systematically denied and suppressed information about Africa's past greatness, a greatness which included the empires of Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia, Mali, Songhay, Timbuctoo, and Zimbabwe.⁴ Recent archaeological discoveries in Nubia have shown that much of European scholarly opinion on the importance of ancient Nubia and its antiquity must be revised (Time 1992). It is now much more certain that Nubia had a great culture, rivalling that of Egypt, from as early as 3,000

⁴ In Zimbabwe, the magnificent stone ruins of a great complex of buildings had been a source of controversy for over a century, as Europeans hypothesized in succession that they were built by Solomon's people, and then by Arabs, then later by an intermixture of Arabs with local inhabitants. Even into the late 1970s, historical and anthropological scholars did not want to admit that the local black African inhabitants had been capable of building the great structures all on their own. Correlation of the carvings of animals on the structures with the mythologies of the local inhabitants now confirms that they were, in fact, their builders.

B.C.E., and that it was not, as was formerly thought, dependent upon Egypt, but was a generator of original thought and cultural greatness.

African theologian Jesse Mugambi of Kenya begins his chapter on "The Social Context of Christianity in Colonial and Post-colonial Africa" with the period of Graeco-Roman colonialism in Africa (Mugambi 1989b, 77-91). Rome annexed the province of "Africa" in 146 B.C.E. following the destruction of Carthage. Mugambi (1989b, 77-78) tells us:

...the Roman emperors enjoyed the destruction of thousands of wild animals imported from Africa, including hippopotami from Nubia. In AD 80, for example, a total of five thousand beasts were killed on one day at the inauguration by Emperor Titus of the Colosseum in Rome. On two separate days, respectively, 2,246 and 443 wild beasts were killed for the entertainment of Emperor Trajan (AD 52-117). These animals include hippopotami, lions, tigers, and elephants.⁵ The destruction of the environment of northern Africa, while facilitating the production of grain to feed southern Europe and Asia Minor, ensured the encroachment of the desert and the migration of the African peoples to the tropics. The whole of Africa south of the Sahara abounds with stories tracing many ethnic groups to northern Africa.⁶

While Roman Africa covered the territory north of the Sahara, colonists from southern Europe marginalized the indigenous inhabitants. This process was halted by the invasion of Islam in the seventh century, which annexed Northern Africa to the Arab-Islamic world, replacing the influx of European settlers with an influx of Arab settlers. Several African theologians have indicated that the survival of Christianity in Egypt and Ethiopia under great pressure from Islam is a measure of the depth of the roots Christianity had grown in those cultures. Mugambi notes that the Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (325 C.E.) and Chalcedon (451 C.E.) had by that time declared the churches of Egypt and Ethiopia heretical: "Their refusal to submit to the pressures of Rome for structural conformity is further evidence of the transposition of

⁵ Jerome Carcopino. Daily Life in Ancient Rome. Trans. E.O. Lorimer, Yale University Press. Mugambi citing from the Bantam edition 1971, p.272.

⁶ Mugambi cites African historians whose research in oral history and archaeological sources seem to confirm the link between North Africa and the tropical zone: B.A. Ogot, G.S. Were, W. Ochieng and H.S.K. Mwaniki. In addition, my own research in oral histories confirms the same link for Nigerian ethnic groups: myths of origin collected in Plateau State of Nigeria indicated that many (though not all) in that region trace their origin to north Africa.

Gospel in the cultural keys of the Egyptians and Ethiopians." (Mugambi 1989b, 78).

Conversely, the rapidity with which Christianity disappeared in what is now Tunisia can be understood as an indicator of how shallow Christian roots were in that country. Some church historians have claimed that one of the most important factors, amongst others, was that while the Graeco-Roman settlers had the Bible in their own language, the scriptures had not been translated into the language of the Berber tribes who were indigenous to the land. Lamin Sanneh (1989) emphasizes the importance of the fact that Egypt and Ethiopia had had the scriptures in the vernacular for centuries. He demonstrates that the vernacular principle gave Christianity roots in those countries which even persecution could not erase. The Berbers of North Africa thought of Roman Christianity as foreign, and this had an impact on social development. Mugambi agrees with Stephen Neill in pointing out "the Donatist Schism was not only theological but also racial, linguistic, cultural and economic."⁷

Due to the intervention of Islam, European adventure in Africa did not resume until the 15th century, when competition between the European powers brought Portuguese sailors down the coast of Africa. In search of the spices of the Indies, they eventually found their way to the Indian Ocean, which they reached in 1498. Portuguese stations were built in several ports, but no mission activities were undertaken on the eastern coast for several centuries. Several mission stations were established in the Congo region, where some limited and temporary success was achieved, but the primary purpose of the Portuguese at this time was trade.

The modern missionary movement did not begin in any organized fashion until the nineteenth century, at which time many protestant mission societies were founded. In Nigeria, mission work began in 1842 when freed slaves, indigens of Yorubaland, sailed from Sierra Leone to Badagry on the Nigerian mainland to found a Christian mission. The Anglican and Protestant missions were chiefly under African and Afro-Caribbean agency until the 1880s, when a shift occurred, bringing white Europeans into much greater prominence in the mission movement.

At the Berlin Conference of 1885, the European powers sat

⁷ Mugambi (1989b, 78) citing Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions Penguin Books 1964, pp. 37-38.

down together at the request of Bismark to stake the spheres of influence to be allotted to each European country in Africa. This was done without the permission or the knowledge of anyone living in Africa at the time, but the borders set out at that time are largely the borders still in effect today, borders which have no reference to the ethnic groups which live in the area. As a result one finds ethnic groups severed by national borders in almost every country of Africa, for example, the Hausa people are found on both sides of the boundary between Nigeria and Niger, but because Nigeria was colonized by the English, the Hausa in Niger refer to the Hausa across the border as "English", while the Hausa in Nigeria refer to their fellow Hausa across the border as "French". A similar situation exists amongst the Yoruba who live on both sides of the border between Nigeria and Benin, and almost all of the other African countries suffer from similar divisions. It is an indicator, perhaps, of how far the colonial power relationships have marked African self-definition that they still use terms which were manufactured by outsiders with no reference to the needs or experiences of Africans.

(ii): Class Formation

During the colonial era a new social class developed in sub-Saharan Africa, that which is called in Kiswahili the asomi, or "book people" (G.C. Mutiso 1972, 318ff). Literacy was prized highly, and the colonial administration considered it to be the distinguishing mark of "civilization". So greatly did the missionaries foster the association of Christianity with literacy, that in many parts of Africa the indigenous peoples understood the two to be synonymous: to them the term "the readers" means "the Christians".

This new class, the literate class, were preferred for posts in the colonial administration, and they formed the nucleus of a new bourgeoisie. The fact that they were recruited largely from the ranks of the outcasts of society (as so many of the first African converts to Christianity were) did not endear them to their fellow tribe members. It was insulting to them that those who had been most despised under the old tribal system now occupied the positions of economic advantage, and even ruled their tribal brothers and sisters. The inversion of the traditional social order was thus a consequence of the incursion of a new, literate, social class.

In pre-colonial times literacy was not unknown, of course.

It was fairly common to find an illiterate emir or chief who employed literate scribes in his service because of the usefulness that type of knowledge had. But the value of literacy was greatly enhanced by the premium put upon it during the imposition of colonial rule. It was still possible for a chief to be illiterate, but for members of parliament, (first elected in the 1950s in British-ruled colonies of Africa), literacy was an absolute necessity. The financial remuneration provided to MPs was significant enough in itself to relativize the status of traditional rulers in a downward direction. The downwards mobility of chieftaincy status has continued into the post colonial era, and has actually been accelerated by the political independence achieved in the 1960s, largely due to the fact that ultimate authority and disbursements of national funds derives from the elected officials in the case of democratic regimes; or in the case of non-democratic regimes, from the ruling military or civilian dictator. This has left the traditional rulers virtually at the mercy of national rulers, whose authority does not derive from traditional (ethnic) lines, but from supra-ethnic authority structures: either the military hierarchy or national elections. This situation has continued up to the present.

Despite the attempts of military and civilian governments to "upgrade" the status of chiefs and emirs, the general feeling is that these moves are mere "window dressing" meant more to shore up popular support for the politicians themselves than to increase the chieftaincy's decision-making powers in any tangible way.

The boundaries decided upon in Berlin in 1885, then, leave a manifold legacy in Africa. While this remains a continuing source of pain with Africans generally, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) continues to uphold the necessity of those boundaries, for the simple reason that tampering with any of them would mean that every boundary in Africa would be put in question (since all of them were arbitrary), and this would lead to never-ending border wars in the continent, a consequence which everyone agrees would be intolerable.

2: Socio-Economic Analysis - The Voice of Grassroots Africans

Starting from African categories, as Mugambi, Mudimbe and many other African scholars advocate, requires us to remember to begin our analysis from the point of view of Africans at the grassroots level. This is a departure from the procedure considered normal in academic scholarship, but I believe it is

necessary in a dissertation of this nature to follow closely the insights of the African scholars under review, who have said that Africa must be defined and interpreted from an African starting point, in African categories (Mudimbe 1988, 200). Therefore we shall begin with an overview of African opinions at the grassroots level concerning socio-economic realities. Our survey should not be considered in any sense to assume absolute status or normative value. While there cannot be said to be any consensus amongst Africans at the street level, an examination of a cross-section of opinions may prove useful.

In oral discourse at the street level, one does not find extended histories or extended economic analysis; however one does find an analysis of economic realities often profound in its insight. We have access to some of these analyses through the writings of African novelists, many of whom have researched their own culture, and through transcriptions recorded by anthropologists, missionaries, African theologians and others.

One fascinating analysis of the causes of poverty found among the people of an independent African church in Ivory Coast, the Harrist Church, seems to encapsulate one type of traditional African explanation of poverty. In the view of the Harrists, Africans are poor because of their attitude towards wealth and its cause: they hold that when a white man envies the wealth of a rich neighbour that envy serves as a stimulus to work hard and become wealthy also, to outdo the neighbour in wealth by gaining more of it than he or she. They hold that when the African, on the other hand, envies the wealth of a rich neighbour, he or she seeks to destroy that wealth, primarily through witchcraft (Walker 1979). Therefore the average economic level in society cannot rise very far because jealousies prevent anyone from rising above the level of his or her neighbour. While one would be careful not to generalize about all African behaviour on the basis of this "rough and ready" theory, on the other hand, as an observation by people at the grassroots level it is thought-provoking.

Other accounts, such as the works on the "Balokole" in the East African Revival stress the general perception of the populace that the Balokole (who are "the saved" of the revival) are "hard working" and therefore prosperous. While questions can and must be raised about the accuracy of that popular view (cf. Winter 1983), it is enough in this section to note what that view is. Max Weber's hypothesis that attitudes toward work are linked to religious convictions has proved fruitful as an avenue of

investigation, even if it has not been confirmed conclusively in all cases.

At another level, grassroots level sociology may be understood as implicit in the creation myths of traditional peoples (See Lovin and Reynolds 1985). While one may not simply take African traditional cosmogonies in order to submit them simplistically to a Judaeo-Christian (or any other) grid of interpretation, in terms of such categories as "orders of creation", nevertheless, some African theologians have felt that it is fair to make certain analyses concerning the traditional lifeworld, based upon these myths. Jotham Kangdim recounts the creation myth of his own people, the Angas of the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria (Kangdim 1981, 3-6) of which I reproduce large portions here, for it is not easily available elsewhere and I shall be referring to it again in later chapters:

(i): The Angas Myth of Creation

At the beginning God existed as a Spirit by himself. How the Spirit came into existence cannot be explained. This Spirit was able to give birth to other spirits - male and female. The process of multiplication started when the last spirit, "Tingwut" gave birth to a son called "Kolji". It was Kolji who was responsible for the generation of bad spirits. It is held by the Angas people that the older spirits increased in power as their number also increased. In effect the first spirits had more power than later ones. As the spirits grew in number there were constant clashes between them because at that time they had no leader. The very first spirit had grown old and was said to have withdrawn himself higher up, away from the younger spirits. But before this could happen, all the spirits held a meeting during which it was decided that the name of this first spirit - because of his age and contributions - should be changed to "Nen" (God). In a miraculous way, not only his name changed to Nen but also even his appearance was changed and he acquired some hidden power that he was now able to use. Thus from that time, Nen as the High God of the Angas people became very powerful and respected. He then left the other lower spirits to distinguish himself from them. Though Nen withdrew himself higher, he was in constant contact with the spirit-world. He was very pleased with them and he blessed all of them. But the decision to change God's name was not accepted gladly by all among the spirits. When he blessed them, some received less than others, because they did not fully agree with his elevation, therefore some spirits have more power than others up till today.

At this time this world was not yet created. The decision to create the world came when one of the disgruntled spirits asked God to allow him to explore more areas around him. This displeased God so much that he planned to kill that spirit. But before God's order could reach the spirit-world, the bad spirit had run away with his wife. And with them they carried away a hoe and also a bit of soil belonging to the spirit-world in their bag. Since the earth he had was dry, the bad spirit could not make the

world. So he wandered about until at last God took pity on him, since he was his own making. God therefore decided to urinate for the first time and it was with the urine that the rebel spirit made this earth. That is how the earth came into being...

Up till this point, God had not yet made man. It was the son of the rebel spirit who became the first man. The story goes thus: When God's rebel spirit gave birth to his son he knew that his complexion was quite different from that of the other spirits. He gave him the name "Gurum". Therefore the rebel spirit became worried with the birth of a second son, and decided something had to be done. Before he could do anything, however, the second son died. This made him very sad, and he decided to seek God's forgiveness, and declared that he would prefer to return to him in heaven. This the High God agreed to. The rebel spirit...[left home]... leaving the child and the hoe behind.

As the young man woke up, he was surprised to see himself alone, and on going out of his house, he saw the hoe farming by itself. Until then, Nen, the High God, had not yet provided the son of the rebel spirit with a wife. God, on seeing the loneliness of man, decided to send one of his female spirits - after reducing her power - to become his wife. When man in the evening saw a woman walking in the field, he decided to call her into his house. Because she was very beautiful, man was moved by her attractiveness and decided to keep her in his house for ever, to become his wife. From this time onwards man began to multiply... But the wife of the man did not notice that the hoe had been farming by itself. Therefore when she saw the hoe resting she took it up and started playfully tilling the ground. As a result the hoe grew annoyed because it thought the woman was ungrateful in wanting it to work even more. The hoe afterwards refused to work by itself again! When the husband came back and discovered what had happened, he decided to beat his wife for her misconduct. Now his wife was already pregnant at that time. She tried to run away but slipped and hit her stomach on the ground. This later made her restless in pain, and in that pain she gave birth to her first son. This is the origin of all women's suffering in childbirth and, as for the man, he had to take the hoe and till the ground by himself.

Kangdim's own analysis is provided following his recounting of the tale: he says that there is a fatalistic air about the story, as the creation is spoiled by an act against which God had not warned the people. In the light of the hypothesis of Max Weber, expressed in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, it may be worthwhile to consider implications of the doctrine of work implicit in the Angas creation account. Kangdim finds that work occurs for the first time in human history as a curse in itself: it does not exist before "the Fall." Kangdim (1981, 7-8):

The underlying assumption of many Nigerian creation myths is that during the "Golden Age" there was not only a close fellowship between God and man, but also no need to work, because at that time food was supplied freely by God himself. Similarly in the Angas myth the hoe initially works

by itself. Only after the alienation of man from the High God, did man have to start working. This contrasts with the biblical picture in which man tills the ground before the Fall (see Gen. 2:15), which only makes his task harder.

In the case of the Angas hoe which works itself through the furrows before "The Fall", a doctrine of work is, one might argue, only implicitly stated, rather than explicitly. But it is commonly reported throughout many Nigerian ethnic groups that the phrase "work is a curse" is repeated with proverb-like resonances. In these cases, the doctrine implicit in the creation story becomes more explicit in the proverb.

Explicit doctrines legitimating layered social strata are also found in creation stories of Africa. T.O. Biedelman (1963) recounts what he calls "a Kaguru Version of the Sons of Noah" which, though not apparently derived from the biblical account, purports to explain why some groups of people enjoy superior status to others. We shall not reproduce the account here, as it is readily available elsewhere.

(ii): The so-called "Curse of Ham"

While indigenous African accounts of curses as origin of inferior status have been fairly widely reported, far more widespread since the nineteenth century in Africa is the well-known racist interpretation of the biblical account. The ideology of white racism promulgated this myth at that time and research has shown that even after thirty years of independence, deepseated feelings of racial inferiority still persist in Africans and people of African descent. This is, in large measure, a legacy of the colonial system, but the myth seems to have acquired a life of its own in many parts of post-missionary Nigeria and other African countries. A survey in the author's own classes in the College of Education Akwanga, Plateau State, Nigeria each year between 1981 and 1985 revealed that over ninety-five per cent of Nigerian College students believed that the reason for the black colour of their skin was the so-called "curse of Ham". This had emerged in the process of teaching a course on the biblical book of Genesis, one part of which consisted of a close reading of the text of Genesis 9, which reveals that there was, in fact, no curse upon Ham as such, rather the curse is clearly upon Canaan. Furthermore, it was made clear that there are no biblical grounds whatsoever for maintaining that this curse has ever had anything to do with blackness, nor with Africans. Nevertheless, the belief that the curse was upon Ham proved far more persistent than seemed probable

in post-independence Nigeria, which has so much stressed nationalism, African pride, and the reaffirmation of Africanness.

From the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century the idea that the curse was upon Ham and black Africans held sway and formed a major justification of the slave trade. By the end of the eighteenth century this association was rejected by scholarship in the west. The mainline Protestant churches rejected the doctrine at this time. When the first Vatican Council convened at Rome in 1871 the "curse on Ham" was reconsidered by the Roman Catholic church and rejected. Following Napoleon's conquest of Egypt the old Ham doctrine was replaced in European intellectual circles by a new one thought to be more "scientific". The so-called "Hamitic hypothesis" sought to identify the "Hamitic" peoples as a white-skinned race of Egyptian origin (see Sanders 1969). This hypothesis held sway (except in South Africa) until the middle of the twentieth century, when its attempt to trace all civilization and culture in Africa to the influence of the white "Hamites" completely unravelled. We should note that the period of missionary activity on the mainland of Africa did not begin until the middle of the nineteenth century; in Nigeria, for example, the first missionaries established work in 1842, and in Northern Nigeria not until the early twentieth century.

Elaborate attempts to maintain the identity of Ham with black Africans were made in South African Afrikaner theology and in the theology of the churches of the Southern U.S.A. before the American Civil War. These centres of dissemination were actively propagating the idea throughout the nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century American and European seminaries had ceased to accept the doctrine and were no longer propagating it. But the myth is still propagating on its own strength in Nigeria, more than thirteen years after the departure of the last South African missionaries, and more than thirty years after independence. Virtually all parts of the African "Diaspora" have been familiar with this teaching at least during a portion of their historical development, though in some places the doctrine is not currently taught.

Although many African theologians have decried the use of the "Ham" myth by white racists, to date relatively little of an extended nature has been written on this subject. Modupe Oduyoye has written a commentary on Genesis 1-11 (1984) which says more about it than any other work in African biblical studies up to the time of its publication. Oduyoye understands the "curse" as part

of an ideological mythology. To him the passage is not historical but ideological, purposely telescoping the names of Ham and Canaan in order to spread the effects of the curse more widely to both, and therefore to give an ideological justification to Hebrew hatred of all Hamites, not just the Canaanites. While the ideological component of the Ham story is clearly arguable, Oduyoye's stated evidence for this is rather slim: just one or two etymological similarities. He cites the similarity between the accursed ba'al-iyam of the Canaanites and the lu-baale of the Baganda people as the identical justification for conquering by those who identified with the Israelite religion (Oduyoye 1984, 100). He also claims that the Abore (Fulani) have some relation to the 'iber-iyam of the bible, both linguistically and in terms of their subjugation of Hamitic peoples. The use of one or two etymologies seems particularly strained as an argument for the identification of all sub-Saharan blacks with the "Hamite" race. One wonders if Oduyoye's stake in advancing his etymologies pushes him into an overdetermined argument here. However, his statement following may yet go some way towards educating Nigerian Christians:

We know that the belief that Ham was the father of Canaan mirrors accurately Hebrew ideology, however much it may be incorrect according to modern linguistic classification. It is the same ideology that prevented the Hebrew writers from leaving Ham out of a curse meant for Canaan. It is the business of blacks to expose the inherent anti-Hamitism, which resulted in the paradigmatic extermination of the Canaanites...(Oduyoye 1984, 100).

New works may yet help to transform the present ideological climate, but progress in changing the belief of the masses seems to be very slow. Nzash U. Lumeya (1988) has written a doctoral dissertation on the impact of the Ham-curse belief upon his own people in Zaïre, which remains the only full length treatment of this doctrine and its impact that I am aware of up to the time of this writing. He concludes that this teaching, still very widespread among his people, is the primary impediment to the acceptance of Christianity there. While scholars of religion may wish to qualify his assertion, the urgency of his plea is not diminished by admitting that other factors may also be playing a role. He presents enough evidence at least for us to conclude that this belief is seriously damaging his people's self-estimate and is undermining church life.

The belief in the Ham-curse continues to act as an impediment to empowerment of African people as it provides a ready

explanation for failure in all endeavours. Students in Akwanga normally would say: "How else can you explain the centuries we endured under slavery, then the years of colonial subservience, and even today when 'independent' we are still the poorest and least powerful continent."

(iii): Myth and social structure

The above discussion might leave one with the impression that traditional African myths normally legitimate an hierarchical status quo, wide gaps between rich and poor, and a static social structure. While this may often be the case, it is by no means certain that all of them do. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a radical African novelist, writes a book called Devil on the Cross, in which he relates what purports to be a traditional tale from Kenya in which it is told that when a man or a woman shuns the sharing, hospitable ethic of traditional Africa to begin to hoard his or her goods, acquires far more property than is needed and becomes far more wealthy than his or her neighbours it is due to witchcraft, the greatest of all evils in African society (Thiong'o 1982, 63-66). Thus greed, exploitation, and the neocolonialist and capitalist system itself are seen as stemming from witchcraft. Here, we are reminded of Sheila Walker's account of the Harrists in Ivory Coast, but Ngugi's account takes things several steps further. For he weaves together an ancient understanding with a modern, neo-Marxist one, in such a skilful manner that one hardly notices that it has happened.⁸ The point was not lost, however, on Kenyan government officials, who managed to confiscate and ban the book while it was still being written in prison.

Max Weber's conclusion that religious beliefs play a leading role in the formation of a nation's economic behaviour might find support in the mythologies we have been discussing. While the

⁸ It is interesting to note that the folk explanation of the cause of extreme wealth in Ngugi's African novel is identical to that found in folk stories of Eastern Europe and Russia, a fact which some historians have indicated helped enable the Communist Party to take root there in the post 1917 period, when the traditional explanation of wealth was continued in the form of an official demonization of the "kulaks", relatively successful private farmers who were executed by the thousands under Stalin. This may have serious implications for Russia's current attempt to introduce free-market capitalism, for if it is built on a base that is deeply suspicious of wealthy people then one can hardly expect an American-style "entrepreneurial spirit" to emerge quickly.

sociological assumptions implicit in traditional mythologies are suggestive, a more sustained analysis of the vastly variegated mythologies with which Africa presents us lies far beyond the scope of the present work. What we have here is a hint at the magnitude of the African mythic worlds. The fascinating blend of traditional African myth with modern sociological (Marxist) social critique afforded by the novel described above by Ngugi wa Thiong'o raises the point that there can often be points at which a view of modernity is very similar to that found in an ancient tradition, though expressed in a new way. To understand how this phenomenon can function, then, leads us naturally into the following discussion of modern sociological descriptions of the present social reality in Africa.

3: Socio-Economic Analysis - The Voice of Academic Sociology

(i) The Precolonial Relationship

We have described above the exploitation of Africa's resources by Europeans during the Roman period. Exploitation resumed in the period of "discovery" in the fifteenth century and reached its most brutal expression in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

In the precolonial period Africa was stripped of her people. Philip Curtin's widely respected research on the census of the slave trade estimated that 9,566,100 slaves were transported from Africa in the years between 1451 and 1870, with death rates in transit averaging approximately 18 per cent. Later studies have suggested that these figures are probably quite low; Ifill estimates 11,000,000. (Ifill 1986, 86).⁹ This does not include the millions who died due to ill-treatment by their owners in the "New World", or perhaps survived to serve permanently as slaves on white-owned plantations there.

Virtually all of the European powers participated in the slave trade. Queen Elizabeth I was shocked to discover that slave trading had taken place on a voyage of one of her subjects. But the trade quickly gained popularity when it was seen how much money it brought in. As the trade established itself, it became increasingly difficult to argue against, for it became a mainstay of the European and American economy. Although some attempts were made by abolitionists to demonstrate that the trade was actually

⁹ Mercy Oduyoye at the 1992 EATWOT conference stated that up to 30 million Africans lost their lives at sea in transit.

unprofitable, these arguments were not considered convincing by those who benefitted from the trade. The only strong argument the abolitionists had was strictly a moral argument: that it is wrong for people to enslave their fellow human beings. As long as economic considerations took priority, the moral argument could not gain a hearing amongst a majority of the decision-makers in Europe. In 1807, when Wilberforce finally managed to get his abolition bill passed in Britain's parliament, it was done as a measure tacked on to a law blocking aid to the enemy French armed forces. Thus the moral argument could only carry the day when aided by pragmatism.

(ii) The Colonial Relationship

In Africa, the religious and cultural beliefs vary from one ethnic group to another; there is amazing diversity. While many generalizations about African religion have had to be discarded over the years, Mugambi points out the following in this regard:

Walter Rodney has rightly emphasized that what has commonly characterized Africa in recent history is its political and economic exploitation (Rodney 1972). The continent of Africa has the greatest portion of the world's most necessary natural resources, and yet its people remain the poorest and most oppressed. In this political and economic context, Africa may indeed be regarded as a homogenous unity, comparable with other continental units such as Europe... (Mugambi 1989c, 6).

The work of Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (1972), remains perhaps the most succinct treatment of the economic realities Africa faced during the colonial period. Africa was skimmed of its natural resources by the colonial powers, who took away tremendous profits.

When the European powers banned slave trading,¹⁰ they entered into a period of paternalism in their approach to Africa. Men such as Livingstone encouraged Europe to get involved in Africa's hinterland in order to advance "civilization", as civilization was conceived of by Europeans. He understood this civilizing process as twofold: "Christianity and Commerce". The justification for direct colonial involvement in Africa was to stop the slave trade at its source, and to replace it with "legitimate" trade. This rationale was used to justify the establishment of trade routes which siphoned off the resources of

¹⁰ Britain and the U.S.A. banned the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1807, and other European nations followed. Britain abolished the institution of slavery itself in 1833.

the continent along trade routes designed to move raw resources out of Africa to Europe and Britain by the most direct route possible. Initially, this was done through the aeqis of trading companies, such as the Royal Niger Company, which was given exclusive authority on the Niger River by the British crown.

After 1885 there was increasing pressure both from external forces (Bismark), and from internal forces to exert a direct colonial presence in the African interior. By 1901 Lord Lugard was given a mandate to establish a British colony in all of Northern Nigeria, an act which when executed, completed European jurisdiction over all of Africa. Colonial rule changed the direction of all existing trade routes. For example, in Kanem-Bornu, the Islamic emirate in Nigeria's northeast, the trans-Saharan caravan routes greatly diminished in importance, while the trade routes to the south and west greatly increased, as these routes led to the coast and thence to Britain.

Even today, one can see on a map the results of this process. The existing rail and highway routes largely follow lines from the hinterland to the coast, with little or no lateral development between cities inland. Development of infrastructure between cities inland was not thought to have any benefit to the colonizers, so none was built.

(iii) Post-Independence Relationship

The economic relationship between Africa and Europe which developed in colonial times was not greatly changed in the post-independence era after 1960. In the 1960s the initial rush of enthusiasm about independence encountered sobering clashes with harsh economic realities. In Kenya, for example, after independence in 1963 Kenyatta expropriated most of the land which had been taken by the white settlers and gave it to the "Mau Mau" freedom fighters, who formed cooperatives for its cultivation. But within several years most of the farms owned by the Mau Mau were bankrupt and many were being resold to the English. That Kenyatta had allowed this trend to develop was the sore point which spurred Oginga Odinga to write his famous book Not Yet Uhuru?

(=Independent), in which he castigated Kenyatta for allowing a recolonization of Kenya by foreigners. To this Kenyatta replied in his work Suffering Without Bitterness that too rapid progress in Africanisation would bring chaos, and that top offices should be filled by experienced, competent persons, without regard to skin colour. The latter argument has been generally accepted in Kenya

up to the present, with the result that the capital investment side of Kenya's economy remains largely in foreign hands.

Other countries, such as Nigeria, tried more vigorously to curtail foreign ownership, especially in the period 1975 to 1979, when the oil industry was nationalized, but found that the exigencies of international trade were such that progress was made difficult to achieve on that basis. Success was to some extent tied to the success of the OPEC countries in imposing a uniform price for oil. Disunity in OPEC since 1979 has greatly diminished its power as a lobby.

Much has been written by African scholars on the imposition of a "neo-colonialism" wherein African countries are in positions of increasing economic servitude to their former colonial masters, this time chiefly through the personae of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The indicators of this new/old relationship were already apparent in the 1970s. Those exports upon which African countries relied, such as coffee in the case of such countries as Kenya and Tanzania, and rubber, had fallen in price relative to the world market prices for most other types of goods. Gheddo notes the following:

To take a specific case, Tanzania is the main source of an insecticidal powder derived from the dried flowers of the pyrethrum plant. There I learned that those farmers who had been persuaded to cultivate the pyrethrum because of its market value were all ruined in a few years. In 1962 a ton of pyrethrum was worth 225 pounds sterling. In 1969 the price of a ton had dropped to 80 pounds sterling. Why? Because European and American firms no longer made natural insecticide - for which pyrethrum was necessary - but they used chemical products that cost much less. Prices of all raw materials, with perhaps the exception of petroleum, continue to decline, while the cost of industrial products rises. For example, in 1954 the cost of an American jeep in Brazil was the equivalent of fourteen bags of coffee, in 1962 it was thirty-nine bags, in 1968 it was forty-five! (Gheddo 1973, 83).

The situation continued to worsen in the 1980s. Countries such as Nigeria, which due to remaining oil revenues had managed to stand proudly against the tide of pressure to submit to the IMF and World Bank in the early 1980s, had found by the end of the decade that there was no longer any other choice but to submit to the "austerity measures" and Structural Adjustment Programme which had already caused greatly increased misery on much of the rest of the continent. The result has been increased civil unrest, riots, strikes, and at least one coup attempt.

Additionally, many Nigerian social scientists have warned

that much of the current religious strife in Nigeria, is often (wrongly) attributed to Muslim-Christian inter-religious tensions as if doctrinal differences on their own were the source of all the murderous passions. Elizabeth Isichei (1987), for example, argues that the Maitatsine uprisings of the early eighties were "a revolt of the disinherited." We would thus gain a more helpful understanding if we recognize that economic problems are interwoven with the religious and ethnic situation in such a manner that they cannot be separated. Muslims in the country have usually had lower socio-economic status than Christians because of the Christian drive for education mentioned in the previous, historical section. Today, even in the northern part of the country where they are in the minority, it is said that the Ibo merchant can fix the price of everything in the local market. While Muslims do enjoy power resulting from their numeric strength in the country, they have often felt that given their numeric advantage there ought to be more real power flowing out of that position.

The worsening economic situation in Africa in the 1980s was also evidenced in Kenya, a country which had enjoyed such phenomenal economic growth during the 1960s that it was often held up as a model of what modern economic development in Africa could be. In 1966 Kenya's population increase was 2.7 per cent while its gross national product increased by 14.4 per cent, followed by 13.5 per cent in 1967 (Gheddo 1973, 94). During that decade Kenya achieved growth experienced by few African countries. The only other examples would be Ivory Coast during the 1970s, and Nigeria during its years of "oil boom" 1974-1981. Since 1980 the economic position of both Kenya and Ivory Coast have declined, due to the decline in world coffee prices since that time. The steepest portion of that decline has been in the last three years. In 1991-92, Kenya has suffered from greatly decreased revenues as the bottom has fallen out of the world coffee market, and news of civil unrest has made the country a less attractive tourist destination. Coffee and tourism are the country's two largest industries. As a result, there been increased unemployment, poverty and in turn, greater social unrest. Rioting has been reported with increasing frequency since autumn 1991, sometimes attributed to inter-ethnic rivalries, and more recently to inter-religious tensions, as in the case of Muslim riots in Mombassa reported in spring 1992, an entirely new phenomenon in Kenya.

Economic realities can overpower even the most brutal of

dictatorships. In certain cases no amount of military force can break the will of a people whose backs are already against the wall economically. This was a lesson which the humble market women of Ghana taught Kwame Nkrumah, when he tried to force them to submit to his price controls. Not even the armed forces were able to make them capitulate, as they said to his soldiers: "Shoot us! If you do, know that you are shooting your own mothers, and if we go with your prices we are dead anyway." Nkrumah backed down. But in the same way, those harsh economic realities are being used by the western powers to force African nations into subservience to the will of the World Bank and IMF.

After modest growth in the 1960s and stagnation in the 1970s, African economies have generally performed disastrously since 1980. To keep up with their people's raised level of expectations and decreased revenues from the only exports they had, African governments and institutions relied much more heavily on borrowing from western banks. Since 1980 Africa's external debt has tripled to about \$174 billion (Dowell, McAllister and Michaels 1992, 28).¹¹ The various debts accumulated have been "restructured" into gigantic debts all owed to the World Bank, who as sole arbiter of these debts increasingly insists upon stringent austerity measures in each country where the "Structural Adjustment Programme" is imposed. As part of the "Structural Adjustment Programmes" (SAP), the World Bank imposes massive spending cuts in the areas of education and health, two of the most basic essentials to any country's economic development, thus further undermining potentials for future development. The 1980s have unquestionably been Africa's worst decade economically.

Investors tend increasingly to avoid Africa. Even though the "drawing card" of cheap labour is plentiful, investors usually look for some "positive economic trend" which would indicate a reasonable hope of returns on their investment. According to Dowell, McAllister and Michaels (1992, 29) "African capital and operating costs are 50% to 100% higher than in South Asia, where the return on investment is nine times greater. Twenty-five years ago, the regions were even." This is both a further indication of how far Africa has slid, even in relation to other parts of the third world, and a chilling statement of economic prospects.

Added to this economic devastation imposed by the western

¹¹ Note that this is still relatively small compared to Latin America's debt.

world through the World Bank, the IMF and other forces, there is the spectre of famine and civil war, particularly on the Eastern horn of Africa, Mozambique, and Zaïre, where a combination of civil conflicts and disastrous government policies have in many areas completely obliterated infrastructures which once existed, reducing the countryside to starvation. At the same time, the AIDS epidemic has spread out of all control, with little apparent hope of stemming it in the foreseeable future. Many of the lives it claims are amongst Africa's best trained and best educated, those upon whom future development largely relied.

Until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, African leaders generally liked the fact that there were two alternative super-powers to which they could appeal for developmental models and cash aid. This gave African countries the opportunity of choosing between alternatives, and of playing the one off against the other in order to extract a better deal for Africa. This, it was felt, gave added leverage to African countries in their negotiations with the super-powers. The situation since the collapse of the Soviet Union and of communism there has left most Africans in a position of extreme uncertainty and anxiety over the future, for there is now only one alternative, or so it seems. In addition to the new constraints, they now find that even what little attention was once paid to Africa is increasingly difficult to sustain, for the attention of western aid agencies and investors is turned almost entirely towards the vast new markets of Eastern Europe and Russia.

Russia itself has closed down embassies in many of the smaller African countries, citing economic constraints. Now that Russia has no unique ideology to export to Africa, it seems that the cost of keeping embassies open outweighs the benefits. Conversely, with the end of the cold war the U.S. no longer needs a "bulwark against communism" in the region and consequently the U.S. has withdrawn its support of the regime of Mobutu in Zaïre, support which was covert until it was withdrawn. Immediately, Zaïre was thrown into chaos, as Mobutu first made promises to institute democratic government, then backed away from his promises and cracked down on dissent once again.

Due to western media reports which have greatly played up the disasters of western aid to Africa, it is now widely believed in the west that all aid to Africa is wasted money. This perception has also contributed to a sense of helplessness, which has in turn led to apathy and reduced government aid to Africa.

The "success stories" in African development, on the other hand, are seldom if ever reported in the large-circulation media channels, lending credence to the feeling generally held by Africans that the west still looks down upon Africa in a racist manner, despite the disclaimers.

We have stressed here the relationship between African countries and European powers, but this is not the whole story. Increasingly important in current discussions of how Africa may unleash its economic potential is the internal dynamics within each African nation at the microeconomic level. It is increasingly evident that Africa's future economic development and health is based upon activity at that level. Parallel to the "third phase" I have outlined in African theology, then, is the current phase in development theory which posits that Africa's economic development is best unleashed through indigenous forces, through strengths which flow from within African culture.

In summary, it is widely agreed that Africa's worst decade since independence has been the decade of the 1980s. In the conjunction of these multi-focal economic problems we see an Africa convulsed with forces destructive to human life, in which the economic is interwoven with the socio-historical, religious and medical phenomena. It is in the midst of these harsh realities that African theologians struggle to find answers.

(iv) Growth of AICs

The growth of African Independent Churches (sometimes also called "African Instituted Churches") has been remarkable. We present here a brief sociological survey.

Instructive in a sociological analysis is Frank Chikane's assessment of the type of grass-roots level ecumenism he experienced in his youth in a growing working-class Pentecostal Church in South Africa. He says that both Pentecostal and Zionist churches are known to thrive in working-class circles among the poorest and most oppressed sectors of any society in Africa, Asia or Latin America. There are many members of the traditional mission churches involved in this grass-roots ecumenical activity, a phenomenon which Chikane states is "a sign of the class contradictions within these churches, which leave most of the needs of the working class membership (about 80 per cent of their total membership) not met." (Chikane 1989, 7-8).

This analysis requires further testing and exploration, for certain aspects of it are increasingly controversial. Many

sociologists would agree that the grass-roots ecumenism is a survival strategy, but the question of whether the needs of the working-class people are met by these churches is a complex one. In fact, it is the thesis of sociologist David Martin that the central reason for the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil is that it does meet a wider range of needs at the social level than any church experience previously encountered by the members. Martin's work, based upon more thorough and systematic research than any previous study, is respected in the field of sociology of religion and it has done much to challenge previously near-unanimous opinions in this area.

It is my own contention that if similar studies were to be carried out in Africa they would confirm much of what Martin found in Brazil, and confirm it even more convincingly. For it is clear that most of the AICs in Africa were founded by Africans and received little or no help or inspiration from Europe or America. The exception might be the African Zionist churches of Southern Africa, which received some inspiration at their inception from the Zionist Church in Illinois. But the South African church is completely autonomous and has created its own forms.

It is the contention of Lamin Sanneh that the role of bible translations has been greatly underestimated in the scholarly attempts to understand the growth of AICs. He refers to the "vernacular principle" (Sanneh 1989, 239 et. passim). He points out that historically, AICs have usually developed in the period soon after the bible has been translated into a given society's vernacular. Historically, secessionist movements can be traced back to that time period in almost every case. A full exploration of this question lies outside the scope of the present study, but it should suffice to say that there are a number of social factors at the root of the independency phenomenon, among which use of the vernacular warrants more attention than most scholars have allowed. The growth of AICs has continued unabated in the 1970s and 80s, much as one might expect in the wake of the ever increasing number of vernacular translations in Africa.

On the basis of the above, we conclude that the success of AICs can be largely accounted for without recourse to non-African sources and causes. The dynamic is, for the most part, an internal, African one. The descriptive category which many sociologists have chosen to designate the AICs is that of the "revitalization movement" (cf. Jules-Rosette 1991, 158). Revitalization movements appropriate elements from the traditional

culture and integrate them into a new synthesis which incorporates elements of both the new and the old cultures, lending a new vitality to ancient cultures. There is some controversy over the question of whether the "revitalization movement" model is an accurate one to apply to the AICs: some feel that the term should only be applied to those movements which consider themselves to be a direct continuation of the traditional religion (cf. Hackett 1991, 136). One such group is the "Orunmilaist" movement, which puts a modern face on the worship of the traditional Yoruba divinity named Orunmila. Another example is the "Godianism" movement of Chief Onyioha. These movements do not consider themselves to be Christian churches at all, even though they may use the title "church" in reference to their movement: "The National Church of Nigeria" is the official name of the group which follows the "Godianism" philosophy. In a stricter definition, the explicitly Christian nature of such churches as the Aladura excludes them from the category of "revitalization movement" because they are not explicitly an attempt to revitalize the traditional religion. However, other scholars consider the implicit African beliefs and structures present in Aladura churches sufficient grounds to consider them a "revitalization movement".

That these movements have continued to proliferate in the 1980s and '90s suggests that the process of cultural self-redefinition is still very much an active one in Africa. The vitality of these movements acts as a beacon by which most of the African theologians steer, to greater or lesser degrees, even if they do not accept all of what is taught by them. Some, such as Gabriel Setiloane of South Africa, clearly consider their work to be the scholarly equivalent to that of the AICs.

(v) Growth of charismatic student movements

Since 1974 many African countries have experienced a rapid growth of a new type of religious movement. These new groups can be said to form a different type, for they differ in several significant ways from the AICs we have just described: (i) The new groups are largely young, most leaders are under thirty; (ii) they are largely urban, (iii) they are strongly anti-traditionalist and hence anti-village because the village is thought to be the source of everything evil and devilish. Most adherents try to keep their ties to their village to a minimum in order to reduce contact with those things which are connected with ancestral spirits,

witchcraft and amulets (van Dijk 1992, 169).

One such group in Nigeria is the "Deeper Christian Life Ministry", founded by a Nigerian named W. F. Kumuyi in 1973 (see Ojo 1988b, 143). Another is the "Nigerian Evangelistic Association." These groups both originated as student movements, though the former has recently become a church denomination. In Plateau State of Nigeria, many still speak of the charismatic revival which swept through that region in 1974, which was largely associated with student movements. In Malawi, these movements began also in 1974. More detailed description of the Malawian groups can be found in van Dijk's helpful treatment (1992), while Ojo (1988a and b) gives us a helpful overview of these groups in Nigeria.

Some African theologians have suggested that rather than referring to "African Independent Churches" we should more properly be referring to "African charismatic churches" (Teresa Okure, personal communication 1992). There is a point to this; it is said that the notion of "independency" is no longer a very helpful category because virtually all the mainstream churches are now "independent" in that they are entirely managed and largely funded by Africans themselves. The term "charismatic" is felt to be more descriptive because it indicates the type of theology involved, which stresses healing and speaking in tongues. This theology, though African, is closer to neo-Pentecostal theology than to any other theological type. However, while many of the AIC churches do fit into a pentecostal pattern in so far as they emphasize speaking in tongues, healing and prophecy, there are others that do not, particularly the earliest AICs such as the United Native African church in Lagos, which remained largely Anglican in doctrine and liturgical life, apart from its tolerance of polygyny. This type of church is often referred to as the "Ethiopian type" of Independent church, while the former (pentecostal) is often designated the "Zionist type", particularly in southern Africa, while in West Africa they are called the "Aladura type".

Additionally, the term "charismatic" is not subtle enough to indicate the clear differences between the older AICs and the newer mode of revivalist student movements since 1974, which we have been describing here. Therefore, in view of the very noticeable distinctions which consistently demarcate these two types of groups, I believe it may be more helpful to retain the existing definitions, unless one clearly wants to specify only the

charismatic (pentecostal) churches and movements.

In so far as the movements we have been describing here are largely an urban phenomenon and urbanization is advancing at a rapid pace throughout most parts of Africa, we can expect these movements to have an increasing influence on African churches and to gain increasing attention from African theologians, even if it is a highly critical attention. The most important change in this regard that we have seen in the period between 1975 and 1990 is that while African theologians completely ignored these movements in the 1970s, a number have turned their scholarly attention to them in the 1980s, a shift due mostly to their persistence on college campuses and to their increasing numerical significance.

(vi) Urbanization

The rapid urbanization of Africa is a social fact to which many aspects of the discussion up to this point have alluded, and upon which much of the following discussion shall depend. Therefore it is of paramount importance that we elaborate more fully the extent of this process and some of the internal dynamics involved in it. Matthew Schoffeleers has written that the primary social fact behind the cleavage between African theology and South Africa's Black theology is the difference in social context, South Africa being primarily urban and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa being primarily rural.

After World War II South Africa witnessed the emergence of a large urban population, born and bred in the townships, which had lost most of its links with the platteland. The rural areas for their part had become eroded, impoverished and dependable on food imports to such an extent that the population was transformed from a peasantry into a rural proletariat. One of the consequences of this process has been that the rural worldview, which had been the dominant ideological orientation for black South Africans, gradually lost its relevance and self-evidence. Against this background it becomes understandable that African Theology, derived as it is from a peasant culture, could not flourish in South Africa to the extent that it did in other African countries, and that in the end it more or less lost out to Black Theology, which is essentially an urban creation (Schoffeleers 1988, 101-102).

In order to assess the extent to which this claim is accurate, we shall need to explore not only the statistical manifestation of urbanization, but also its character.

Urbanization proceeded at a very slow rate in most of Africa in the precolonial period. The rate of urbanization increased significantly during the colonial period, as some industries developed in larger centres, but by independence in 1960 most

African countries had not yet acquired an urban population exceeding twenty per cent of the total population. The following table illustrates the rapid urbanization process in African countries.

Table 1

The figure in each box represents the percentage of the population living in urban agglomerations. Figures for the year 2000 are projected.

COUNTRY	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Cameroon	9.8	13.9	20.3	31.7	41.2	50.8
Central African Republic	16.0	22.7	30.4	38.3	46.7	54.6
Côte d'Ivoire	13.2	19.3	27.4	34.8	40.4	46.9
Ghana	14.5	23.3	29.0	30.7	33.0	37.9
Kenya	5.6	7.4	10.3	16.1	23.6	31.8
Malawi	3.5	4.4	6.0	9.1	11.8	15.6
Nigeria	10.1	14.4	20.0	27.1	35.2	43.3
South Africa	43.1	46.6	47.9	52.7	59.5	65.8
Tanzania	3.8	4.7	6.7	16.5	32.8	46.5
Uganda	3.1	5.1	8.0	8.7	10.4	13.8
Zaire	19.1	22.3	30.3	34.2	39.5	46.4
Zambia	8.9	17.2	30.2	39.7	49.9	58.7
Zimbabwe	10.6	12.6	16.9	21.9	27.6	34.6

Source: World Urbanization Prospects 1990 New York: United Nations, 1991. pp. 106-109.

It is important to note that for United Nations statistics each country defines "urban" according to its own definition. Most nations consider any town with more than 2,000 inhabitants, most of whom are not employed in farming, to be an "urban" agglomeration. But Nigeria's definition is much stricter: any urban agglomeration with more than 20,000 inhabitants, the majority of whom are not employed in farming. Therefore the reader must be careful to note that any comparison of Nigeria's urbanization statistics to those of the other countries in Table 1 above is a comparison of unlike things: we would expect higher percentages than are seen in the table for Nigeria if we extrapolate what the

figures would be for centres exceeding 2,000 inhabitants.

The statistical table can be misleading for another reason also: the total for Nigeria is a figure for an average over the entire country, which obscures the fact that the South is far more urbanized than the North. The most remarkable exception to Africa's norm of slow urbanization in the precolonial period was in Yorubaland, in southwestern Nigeria, where even in the early nineteenth century a majority of the population lived in towns (Bascom). In 1952 over half of the Yoruba lived in cities of over 5,000 population, and over thirty per cent lived in cities of over 40,000, of which six cities were larger than 100,000 (Bascom 1969, 3). These urbanization figures exceed even those of South Africa in 1975! The character of the Yoruba town, however, was different from that of the urbanized areas of South Africa. Farming still remained a major occupation in Yoruba towns, and the traditional life was not severed by the growth of urbanism (Bascom 1969, 18). Onibokun says that in cultural terms at least, Yoruba cities perhaps still have more in common with Yoruba rural areas than with other urban centres, even elsewhere in Nigeria (Onibokun 1989, 85). Thus Yoruba urbanism had a different character from that of South Africa, and the self-sufficiency of the rural areas in Nigeria could be said to lend a certain thrust to continued vitality of the traditional religion there. Statistically, however, the percentage of formal adherents to ATR is very low in Nigeria: 5.6% in mid-1980, according to Barrett (1982, 527).

This latter point, however, raises the question of how far urban life really disturbs traditional African beliefs. In response to Schoffeleers' hypothesis, Gabriel Setiloane replies that many beliefs of the rural past still hang on tenaciously in the cities. This is evidenced throughout Africa: traditional healers find a new marketplace for their wares in the large cities, witchcraft beliefs do not die out just because people now live in cities.

Lagos, with 8 million inhabitants, is now the 2nd largest city in Africa, and shall surpass Cairo at 10.3 million in 1995.¹² Ibadan, with 4,230,278 in 1984 is among the largest in Africa (Onibokun 1989, 72). Iboland, in Nigeria's southeast, today is also very densely populated, but the North, by contrast, remains relatively rural.

¹² Africa Statistical Yearbook 1987 (part 2) United Nations.

The table indicates that South Africa was already significantly more urbanized than any other country in sub-Saharan Africa in 1960. In that country there was a greater level of industrial development, chiefly due to the mining industry. However, average population densities in South Africa are no higher than one finds throughout Yorubaland today, a fact we should take into consideration in the discussion of theological preference based upon rural/urban context.

By regions, the greatest level of urbanization is evident in the countries of southern Africa, with an average of 61 % by the year 2000. Middle Africa should have an urban population totalling 45.6 % in that year, Western Africa 39.8 %, and Eastern Africa should continue to be the least urbanized region of the continent at 29.0 % in that year.

The point perhaps most relevant to our central hypothesis is the fact that in the period between 1970 and 1980 the number of nations with over 30 % urbanization moved from four to eight out of thirteen: a majority of African nations had over 30 % urbanization for the first time. Furthermore, awareness of the rapid rate of urbanization in Africa was, by 1980, widespread in Africa, even at the grassroots level, and this awareness in itself has an impact. Realization that the old ways of life would soon no longer be possible for a majority of Africans was now bringing large numbers of Africans face to face with certain realities, realities with certain implications for theology.

A final point to note is the very slow rate of urbanization in some countries. Notable amongst these are Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia. This group of countries have only a few things in common. There seems to be no correlation in terms of natural resources. In fact Uganda at independence in 1960 was called "the Jewel of Africa" because of its rich resources and educational facilities poised to put it into a strong position in the new Africa unfolding at that time. But a succession of unwise and destructive leaders in that country led to a long slide downhill.

The countries with slow urbanization are, for the most part, countries which have suffered severe political instability under successive regimes since independence. Uganda suffered from civil turmoil under Milton Obote, Idi Amin, and a succession of other dictators with no regard for human life. Sudan has suffered from unresolved civil conflict since 1960. Nigeria suffered from a civil war from 1967 to 1970, but this period seems to have been too brief to have produced any lasting effect on urbanization

trends, for Nigeria has experienced high and steady rates of urban increase from the time that records have been kept to the present. The conclusion may be drawn, therefore, that under continuous war conditions little or no new growth or development happens in the cities and there is hence no incentive to leave the farm.

(vii) African Theologians in their Context

As we have seen above, African Christian theologians in the mainstream churches are members of the "asomi" or "book people" class. As such they have become partakers of the same rights and privileges which accrue to all members of that class in Africa. In Nigeria today, where literacy is not yet over fifty per cent of the population in the northern part of the country, the literate class constitutes the ruling class and the middle class. However, the period from 1982 to the present has seen a period of diminishing expectations in Nigeria, as in most of Africa. In Nigeria, the years following the civil war of 1967-70 brought a gradual recovery, and with the expansion of the oil industry and the rise in oil price due to OPEC pressures on the west, Nigeria declared an "Oil Boom" in 1974. For six years the new oil wealth was used to fuel tremendous expansion in the educational system. Theological seminaries also grew, and by 1980 the numbers of educated Nigerians in seminaries had greatly increased.

The world economy took a serious downturn in 1982, and this had a damaging effect on Nigeria's economy, but Nigeria has not experienced the period of economic recovery which the western world experienced in the mid and late 1980s. By the late 1980s, the World Bank had imposed its "Structural Adjustment Programme" (SAP) on Nigeria and "austerity measures." The value of the currency has gone down relative to foreign currencies to the extent that a university professor who would have earned the equivalent of about \$1,300. per month in Canadian dollars now earns as little as \$50. per month. At the same time the cost of imported items has gone up astronomically. The real buying power of that money, even in local terms and when spent on locally made items is now far less than it was ten years ago.

Consequently, while many African theologians do still live in quarters provided by the university or seminary, which are usually relatively comfortable compared to the accommodation in which most Africans live, it is now usually the case that teachers grow more of their own food in plots of land close to their residence. This is in order to make ends meet, and not, as one

finds in middle class North America, a spare time hobby. In fact, by 1984 in Nigeria, many primary school teachers, who had not been paid their salaries in over a year, had to leave the towns in which they taught school, to return to their family's plot of land in order to grow food to survive.¹³ Onibokun points out that the impact of water shortages cuts across social class lines. He says (1989, 85):

A substantial amount of productive man-hours are lost daily as a result of workers searching for potable water in the city. Even within the University of Ibadan campus, lecturers and students alike have come to regard potable water as a scarce commodity to be sought after, even at the expense of their official duties.

While Nigeria has managed to avoid widespread famine and starvation since 1971, many other countries in Africa have not, notably the countries of the Sahel region, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Mozambique. Civil war and strife has exacerbated the problems of drought and famine in the last named countries.

In this context, while one can say that the educated élite have experienced some of the perquisites of power, they have not been out of touch entirely with the suffering of the masses. Many work under economic constraints unknown to westerners who are used to a more individualistic ethic. Many are expected to provide for distantly related persons and village members who come and stretch the definition of African hospitality to new levels. This situation Bujo and others have decried as "parasitism", a distortion of true African tradition, which had in reality required people who stayed longer than three days to work as hard as any family member (Bujo 1992).

For the above reasons I propose that the term "middle class" is not an entirely satisfactory one to use for the African middle class, at least not if one thinks in the North American sense of

¹³ Bujo provides a counterpoint to my survey: he reports, to his dismay, that the Roman Catholic priest in Africa is probably the most financially secure of all Africans. The reasons he puts forward are convincing, and although there are some analogies to the average Protestant clergy, in many regards their situations differ. Many Nigerian Protestant clergy, particularly those in rural areas who had not had the chance to study overseas, were not wealthy in the way Bujo describes. This happens partly because they have a wife and children to feed, and partly because the financial emoluments offered by the protestant churches are not usually as extensive. Furthermore, those who have not studied outside Africa have usually not had the opportunities to develop contacts with potential benefactors, an important source of wealth for African priests according to Bujo.

the term "middle class". For in countries such as Nigeria, those in the "middle class" cannot rely on the "basic necessities" such as regular water supply or regular electricity supply. Therefore the term "élite", though it applies, must be understood in context.

The previous section has alluded to the shift in consciousness brought about by growing urbanization, which had exceeded thirty per cent by 1980 in a majority of African countries. Concomitant was the realization that urbanization should exceed fifty per cent within two decades rather than two centuries, as might have been thought previously. This was particularly important to the younger generation of African theologians, as in their own careers they would increasingly have to grapple with African urban realities. Thus it was that in 1979 John Pobee wrote the following words: "Only let us consciously find out how and to what extent African countries and African people have changed, lest we waste time preparing to evangelize the Africa of 1800, which no longer exists." (Pobee 1979, 19). The awareness that Africa had changed and that it was not going to be possible to recreate all of the traditional lifeworld was much stronger in 1980 than it had been in 1965, and this reality was exerting a stronger influence on the formation of African theological reflexion.

As noted above, Schoffeleers has opined that the dichotomy between African theology and Black Theology in South Africa is primarily accounted for by the rural - urban dichotomy. I contend that the real situation is rather more complex than that. While it is true that Black theology had taken hold largely in South Africa, and that that country is more urbanized on the whole, it is not easy to generalize beyond that. Lagos, Nigeria, is a bustling urban centre of over eight million people, Ibadan has three million, and Nairobi is a modern city of over a million, yet in these places, African theology is popular and adherents of Black theology are hard to find. Furthermore, it is in fact Yorubaland, not South Africa, that is the most urbanized part of Africa, even if it is an urbanism with rural qualities to it. Yet Black Theology is not popular there. In fact, the cities of Yorubaland have been among the primary loci of the formation of African theology, being the home of Bolaji Idowu and Modupe Oduyoye at Ibadan, and Osadolor Imasogie at Ogbomosho to name a few. Conversely, South Africa does have at least one adherent of African Theology, Gabriel Setiloane.

One can say that South Africa's urbanization is of a different character, that it is an industrialized urbanism, thus creating certain unique social dynamics. But there is no avoiding the fact that the most decisive social fact in that country has been the institutionalized racism of the apartheid system, in which skin colour has been such an overriding determinative factor governing all social relations that its critique had to be foremost in theological discourse there. In the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the direct colonial presence of white masters and institutionalized racism had disappeared by the time African theology was forming in the mid 1960s, therefore the major focus shifted towards the themes of African cultural recovery and responsibility, as we shall explore in further depth in subsequent chapters.

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CHAPTER 3: HEALTH, DISEASE and WHOLENESS

The emphasis upon healing in the Independent churches has proved a challenge to the mission churches, which have largely rejected healing practices. African Christian theologians have responded to this challenge by speaking positively of healing practices in traditional Africa and the AICs, with a view towards incorporating these practices into the mainline churches. That Africans at the grassroots level gravitate towards a Christ as deliverer from all oppressive forces is evident in the AICs. O. Imasogie goes so far as to say that the mainstream churches are superficial largely because they fail to consider seriously these realities in the lives of everyday Africans. The concern of the people over health is evidenced in a 1980 survey which indicated that 75% of the population stated that health is their greatest concern, even above family (48%) and job security (33%).¹⁴ Given the high level of importance which traditional Africa gives to the family this is all the more surprising and significant.

We shall address the theological response more fully in a later section. To understand more fully the context in which the African scholars write, it is helpful for us first to devote the following section to one aspect of the social construction of disease and health in Africa. This section deals with African conceptions of mental health and with the ethnocentrism of western reactions to it.

1: Ethnocentrism and African Healing

The question we shall explore in this section is, to what extent is western ethnocentrism and the divergence of worldview between traditional Africa and the west at the root of an ethical dilemma in the treatment of certain forms of disease? The problem of ethnocentrism and the inadequacy of the western scientific paradigm lies at the root of a wide range of medical problems. One example which brings it out in a striking manner is the instance of mashawe. Reports come from all parts of Africa regarding the widespread belief in illness thought to be caused by witchcraft or sorcery: cf. Daneel (1970) on reports from Zimbabwe; Shorter (1985, 34) on reports from all over East Africa, and Last (1976,

¹⁴ Jeune Afrique (March 12, 1980).

118) on the Hausa of Northern Nigeria. These illnesses take varying forms and are known by many names, but share many characteristics throughout Africa and the rest of the world. One ethnic group refers to its local variety as mashawe (sometimes mashave). Shorter (1985, 188) relates Bishop Milingo's desire to treat mashawe while the hospitals and doctors had refused to consider it a disease. The Shona refer to this disease as caused by the midzimu (spirits).

Witchcraft attack or "soul attack" has a wide variety of symptoms: anxiety attacks, grave fear, the symptoms of nervous breakdown and even death. A study of Nigerian students studying in England who had suffered from nervous breakdowns revealed that over 90% explained the cause of their illness as witchcraft (Lambo, 1964). Using psychiatric terminology, Kiev categorizes this phenomenon under the headings "phobic states" (Kiev 1972, 75) and "dissociative states" (86). This condition is widespread: Lambo's research led him to the following conclusion: "Anxiety, which is the most common and crippling psychiatric disorder in Africa, also forms the central core of other neurotic reactions in the African." (Lambo 1964, 450).

The local hospitals do not treat mashawe, for the doctors, who are of western background or training, do not see this condition as a "disease" in the sense in which western medical science understands that term (Cf. Milingo 1984, Daneel 1970, and Shorter 1985, 34). Mainline churches also avoid involving themselves in treatment of this phenomenon. However, the belief in this disease is persistent, and still paralyzes many, even causing death in some cases (Shorter 1985, 34). Our contention is that the tendency to dismiss or down-play the importance of a condition which is regarded with great fear and anxiety on the part of the masses should be understood as a dilemma for modern medical ethics. If one says that modern medical science is "scientific" and therefore may only deal with diseases known to have some empirical reality, it should be pointed out that western doctors are known to give placebos to hypochondriacal patients, merely because they know that the patient will not rest until some kind of "treatment" has been offered. Yet mashawe sufferers do not receive even a placebo at the hands of western medicine. Bishop Milingo said:

Many missionaries have never accepted mashawe as a disease worth healing, since they call it by their own name as a hysterical, and psychosomatic disease. They therefore consider anyone engaged in it as an imbecile who chases the wind. It is the problem of inculturation, much more [than]

the refusal to plunge into it. (Quoted in Shorter 1985, 190).

It is universally observed that such sufferers inevitably seek help at the only places remaining which will offer it: at the abode of a local "native doctor" or ng'anga (often referred to as "witchdoctor") or perhaps that of a practitioner of one of the African Independent churches, some of whose practices resemble those of the ng'anga. David Barrett estimated the number of African Independent Church denominations in 1968 to be over six thousand (Barrett 1968). Since then, the number has grown dramatically and the Independent churches account for a sizable minority of all African church-goers. They combine many aspects of African traditional life, such as belief in the spirit world and magic with an organizational structure resembling western churches. Sheila Walker (1979, 1980) describes the healing centre at Bregbo in the Ivory Coast, a centre built by the Harrist Church (an Independent church dating from World War I) to cure witchcraft diseases in particular.

It is the belief of western trained doctors that such cases should be referred to a psychiatrist, as treatment of a disease without a discernible physical cause lies outside the scope of non-psychiatric medicine. This, however, is not an available option in most African hospitals, as very few psychiatrists practice there at present. It is reported that the entire nation of Malawi has only one psychiatrist in residence. The University of Jos Teaching Hospital in Plateau State, Nigeria, was considered relatively advanced in 1985 to be able to provide as many as two psychiatric practitioners for a general population of several million. In any case, the general attitude of doctors trained in universities of western orientation towards such conditions has already ensured that the populace do not look to them for answers. Una Maclean (1976, 306) reports: "Some people declared that 'hospitals can treat all diseases except smallpox and madness'." Some members of the general population warned of the inadvisability of taking to hospital patients whose illness was "due to the action of witches and wizards", and some prescribed prophylactic soaps to secure the goodwill of such potential evildoers. Virtually all the herbalists (some of whom were also diviners) claimed proficiency in this sphere. Maclean concludes (1976, 315): "mental illness, however defined, is deemed unsuitable for hospital care; here again the local judgement of the capabilities of general hospitals is justified."

It is our thesis that the ethnocentrism of western technological rationality issues in a wide range of problems for the practice of medicine as a whole. The manifestation of this wider problem which we shall address specifically here is the western scientific tendency to dismiss or merely "write off" such conditions as mashawe. We shall not argue that western medical practice should adopt uncritically all the approaches and treatments of the African ng'angas. Rather, western medicine could benefit from an infusion of the more holistic, social, and spiritual perspective of the African lifeworld with regard to conceptions of wholeness and disease. In so far as the disjuncture of worldviews is at the heart of the problem, it is to that disjuncture that we shall turn first.

2: African Lifeworld: the Unity of Religion and Medicine

There is not just one African "worldview". Each ethnic group sees and describes reality in its own way. Within each group there is increasing differentiation, and the perception of the peasant farmer is not necessarily the same as that of the witchdoctor.¹⁵ Yet there are certain statements which can be made. Anthropologists and other students of African culture and religion report that in the African traditional world, there is an integral unity between religion and medicine (cf. Glick 1967, 32). To think of them as separate spheres is inconceivable. This is so, as part of the larger conception that life itself is a whole, with no distinction between "sacred" and "secular" such as one finds in the west.

(i) Disjuncture, Real and Imagined

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Europeans viewed things African with increasing disdain. Theories of

¹⁵ One such differentiation might be evidenced by one of de Rosny's informants, an apprentice to a witchfinder, who stated his fears thus: "When you believe down deep inside in what a ng'anga does, it has too much of an effect...When you believe in them completely, you don't believe in God anymore." (de Rosny 1985, 79). Perhaps the informant means "belief" more in the sense of "trust" here. In either case, the statement seems to contradict much of the literature which often speaks of the African belief that magical powers are originally derived from God and that their practitioners have profound belief in God. The implications are far-reaching, but in so far as a detailed treatment of this subject would take us into the ethical implications of monotheism in general I shall merely direct the reader to other sources which cope with that topic more fully.

evolution, both social (Herbert Spencer) and biological (Darwin,) held that human progress was smooth, unilinear and inevitable, and belief in the innate racial superiority of Europeans was increasingly assumed by the intelligentsia of the day. In the twentieth century, scientific rationality has continued to function as a means for assertion of racial superiority, even after biological science has disproved the idea of racial superiority. The discipline of anthropology has increasingly enabled us to see the inadequacy of previous definitions, though it had been anthropologists and sociologists such as Spencer, Sumner and others who had originally largely contributed to it. By the 1960's many scholars had rejected earlier definitions, such as Lévy Bruhl's "primitive mentality", and Placide Temples' "vital force", and were searching for an entirely new approach. Leonard Glick, in 1967, wrote that the word "medicine" in many ethnographies was defined according to western criteria:

One is, for example, confronted with so-called medicines that have nothing to do with illness, that may in fact be used to cause illness (cf. Nadel 1954: 132ff.). One reads of curers who cause illness as often as they cure it (hence the term "witchdoctor"); indeed at times a man may cure the very illness he has caused. One finds only occasional associations of particular illnesses and treatments, the more common premise being that whatever cures, cures everything. And so on, until the paucity of meaningful correspondences is so obvious that the ethnographer is reduced to placing many of his key terms - medicine, treatment, doctor, diagnosis - in quotation marks (Glick 1967, 32).

In the same year Robin Horton wrote his seminal article entitled "African Traditional Thought and Western Science" which challenged, on a wider level, the whole group of assumptions on the part of western people about the differences between scientific thinking and African traditional thinking. He proposed that in practice, African traditional modes of approaching such problems as the diagnosis of illness are not so very different from that of western medicine, but westerners do not perceive this fact, for they are not attuned to the language and symbol structure in which these actions are carried out. Horton's article was carefully qualified and well argued. He did not try to say, as some have done, that western science and African thought are merely two versions of the same thing, the differences being merely superficial. But he did seriously challenge many comfortable assumptions about the manner in which scientific thought proceeds as opposed to non-scientific thought, most importantly the "closed - open predicament". Due to the influence of Karl Popper's

philosophy of science, it had usually been claimed that prescientific thought is "closed": it cannot conceive of any explanation for why an event happens other than the traditionally received one; whereas modern science (it is supposed) is "open": it conceives of alternative explanations (see Popper 1966). Horton concluded that most westerners living within a supposedly scientific worldview in reality live most often in a closed situation, and the only time the open situation actually functions is during those rare moments when the most brilliant scientists on the cutting edge of discovery creatively work out a new explanation which constitutes a radically new departure, a "paradigm shift" as T. Kuhn called it (Kuhn 1970).

In Kuhn's thought, paradigm shifts do not happen every day, but when they do, scientists make the new paradigm the accepted explanation (Kuhn 1970). This explanation is then accepted by the masses as the only acceptable explanation of that occurrence, thus returning us, ironically, to the closed situation, at least until the next paradigm shift happens. Horton's article sparked a flurry of controversy, and if one judges by the number of journal citations, it shows no signs of abating today. Frankenberg and Leeson, among others, have further developed Horton's argument to say that the African situation is not "closed" at all. Their work, in Lusaka, Zambia, reported that sick Africans had "a wide range of options and that they behaved empirically." (Frankenberg and Leeson 1976, 226). They elaborate further (1976, 227):

Douglas 1970, Turner 1964 and Van Velsen 1964 and others have long since demolished the deterministic model of beliefs even in village African society. There is always a choice of norms available to the actor to cope with the emergencies of life.

However, it is possible that their argument does not precisely address Horton's understanding of the "closed situation" in Africa.

Glick's article was concerned more specifically with "Medicine as an Ethnographic Category". A pioneer in the effort to sort out a more ethnically unbiased and scientific framework for the understanding of disease and curing, he complained that although it should have been logical to assume that responses to illness (treatments) would be the logical outcome of ideas about illness (diagnosis), the ethnographic literature seldom spells out this relation: "it is not made apparent that ideas and actions are complementary facets of a cultural system...[One misses] especially [the] relationship between medicine and

religion..."(Glick 1967, 32). Glick's insistence that we see African ideas about illness as part of a cultural system leads to the essential observation that there is a disjuncture between the African traditional worldview and that of modern science. African theologian Osadolor Imasogie in his 1983 work Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa holds that the shallowness and ineffectiveness of much church life in Africa (which characteristically results in reversion to the traditional African religion in times of crisis) are due to the disjuncture between the scientific worldview of the missionaries and that of traditional Africa. Traditional Africa, he says, resembles the European middle ages or ancient Israel in many respects. There, the world was thought to be inhabited by myriads of spirits, and miracles of healing and other signs or "works of power" were, if not commonplace, at least events that fit easily into the overall belief pattern.

We should mention at this point that even the term "world-view" is one conceived in an ethnocentrically western framework: as translation of the German Weltanschauung it evokes the idea of a systematically ordered picture of reality, which could reliably be conveyed in a philosophical mode of expression. Although one can appreciate the efforts of Fr. Placide Tempels, A. Kagame and others to articulate the "Bantu philosophy" as efforts to show that Africa does, in fact, have something of value to offer the world in the field of philosophy, it is now generally recognised that these efforts have been more expressions of the individual perception of the author, than an objective account of how Africans themselves would explain reality (cf. Mbiti 1969, 10). A Weltanschauung, then, is a concept foreign to traditional Africa, as well as to ancient Israel or medieval Europe. Some modern scholars have suggested that the term "life-world" is more appropriate for these societies, as it evokes the everyday life in which people work and live and think, rather than a speculative system. The African life-world is today still inhabited by the magical and the miraculous.

(ii) Disease Causation

Theories of disease causation in Africa are multifarious: some are empirical, some are ecological, and some are social. Minor ailments, such as mosquito bites, are not usually thought to have any particularly significant cause. But more serious ailments are often attributed to malevolent forces, particularly to a

person who has reason to bear a grudge against the afflicted individual (Daneel 1970, 22). In many cases, relatives of the afflicted person are suspected, because they may stand to gain an inheritance, or bear a grudge because the father did not favour them in some way (de Rosny 1985, 74). Although in many cases the people may be well aware of scientific theories which link germs in an infected water supply with intestinal disorders, the affected individual reasons that everyone drinks the same water; why then does only this person, or only that person become afflicted with the intestinal problem? They then look for more personal causes.

While the personal element of causation may seem absurdly "unempirical" to doctors trained in the western scientific medical tradition, the element of ethnocentrism in such judgements must be acknowledged. Note that in the 1850's, when western medical science did not yet clearly understand the cause of malaria, the famous explorer Sir Richard Burton made his famous disparaging remark about the Somali "superstition" that mosquitoes cause malaria (Burton 1966 [1856]: 53). Only a few short years later modern medical science "discovered" that, in fact, the *Anopheles* mosquito is the carrier of malaria. Although it may be correct to say that this type of categorization is the exception rather than the rule, it must not be forgotten that African beliefs concerning disease causation are often based on observations which are equally (and sometimes more) empirical than western observations. In some cases, African empiricism has observed causation where western medical science has missed it, perhaps sometimes because the latter has not yet had ample opportunity to make careful observations. Lévi-Strauss observed:

The experiences of the sick person represent the least important aspect of the system, except for the fact that a patient successfully treated by a shaman is in an especially good position to become a shaman in his own right, as we see today in the case of psychoanalysis. In any event, we must remember that the shaman does not completely lack empirical knowledge and experimental technique (Lévi-Strauss 1967, 36).

This observation serves both to illustrate our point concerning the use of empirical observation and experimental technique, and other similarities between African and western medical technique. Of course, the parallel that is drawn is between African medicine and psychiatry rather than general medical practice. Here, some of the more strict philosophers of science would hold, with Karl Popper, that modern psychiatry, being based on the theories of

Freud and others, has never had its foundational assumptions empirically verified, and is therefore not a science in the proper sense at all, but a pseudoscience (see Popper, 1968). However, Popper's claim rests on his notion of the closed - open predicament, which we have already seen has been demonstrated to be erroneous.

Disease causation as a product of "chance" may actually be an assumption more common to modern western people than to Africans. De Rosny reports that in the Douala language the words musima and bonam, commonly translated into French or English as "chance" or "luck" are properly translated as "grace" and "blessing." He says: "they are first and foremost the result of a favorable intention, not the fruit of chance." (de Rosny 1985, 81). He adds that the Douala are acquainted with the idea of chance, but it is non-functional in daily living, and is left as the province of diviners. The Douala see luck, however, as a grace bestowed by God: "I don't think one can add more luck to the luck God has given to each one," says Elimbi, de Rosny's informant (de Rosny 1985, 81). One may contrast African views with the secular viewpoint of twentieth century western culture which sees the predominance of random chance in the cosmos, though scientific rationality makes some sense out of disease causation through germ theory.

Frankenberg and Leeson report that to sociologists, anthropologists and ng'angas, though not to western medical personnel, it is obvious that "becoming sick is a social process" [emphasis mine] (1976, 232). Many scholars have made the observation that an understanding of the social dimension of illness and health is one contribution Africa can make to the world (Frankenberg and Leeson 1976, and Shorter 1985, 56ff...). The manner in which family and friends relate to the sick person, then, is taken into account in traditional African medicine. An African ng'anga in questioning a patient, rather than asking questions about food intake and bowel movements, will be more likely to ask about how the patient's relationship to her or his family is.¹⁶

The ng'anga is well acquainted with the frequent jealousies and vendettas within the familial structure in African societies,

¹⁶ Surveys from diverse parts of Africa report that women constitute a large majority of persons reporting illness. In a survey amongst the Maguzawa Hausa in Northern Nigeria, the proportion was over ninety per cent (Last 1976, 110-114).

and the psycho-physical damage these can do. He or she works to alleviate these problems.

The difference in paradigms also issues in a different perception of the physical basis of illness: one researcher reports that in terms of bodily orifices western medicine focuses on the mouth and anus, while African medicine focuses on the genitals. The difference of perception naturally leads to a different manner of treatment, to which we now turn.

(iii) Treatments

A number of scholars have pointed out the similarities between treatments offered by shamans and modern psychoanalytic approaches (Cf. Lévi-Strauss 1967, 36). Sometimes this comparison is merely a scholarly way of baiting the psychiatric profession, rather than an affirmation of the integrity of African shamans. When this motive predominates, ethnocentrism is evidenced, but some scholars show a genuine desire to appreciate and revalue African culture on its own terms.

A consistently recurring theme in the practice of many nq'angas is the goal of strengthening the ego of the patient. Clients come to nq'angas even to cure the problem of unemployment, a misfortune to which the nq'anga's treatment strategy is to strengthen the ego, the self-confidence of the patient. This strategy is frequently successful. The success of this approach is further evidence of the relative failure of western medicine and churches to meet the wider range of needs of the populace.

In the early 1960s Dr. Raymond Prince of McGill University discovered in his research amongst Yoruba native doctors that rauwolfia plant had been used to treat schizophrenia for centuries there (Prince 1964). Modern medical science had just, at that time, discovered that the extract of rauwolfia plant is beneficial in treating schizophrenia (Prince 1964). This discovery, along with a large number of similar such discoveries seriously call into question some of the assumptions often made about the "empirical" nature of western science as opposed to the supposed "nonempirical" or "irrational" status of African folk beliefs.

African treatments vary greatly, and some medicine men use a wider variety of methods for construction of treatments than others. The literature abounds with descriptions of these and we need not rehearse them here. Our point is to observe that anthropology now acknowledges that African traditionalists employ empirical observation and testing as one method among many in the

diagnosis and treatment of disease. The scientist points out that purity of motive, or monocausal explanations, are what science always looks for (Horton 1977). Horton acknowledges that the search for purity of motive is the chief feature that distinguishes modern science from African traditional thought, but he points out that this is also what has robbed the west of any sense of mystery about humanity and about life, and has made western life relatively unpoetic and flat (Horton 1977, 170). But beyond the result of stripping our world of mystery, scientific technorationality has resulted in the serious error of reductionistic explanations of humanity. Even Max Weber was greatly concerned about this particular tendency of modernity. He feared that the modern tendency was producing a flat, mechanistic world in which people in need of the mysterious are fleeing to "mysticism", but instead get mere mystification. Social analysts and philosophers have in recent years started to see this as a serious flaw in the project called "modernity".

Scholars such as those of the Frankfurt school, Jürgen Habermas, et. al. have made a penetrating critique of "scientism", in so far as it has become the new religion. Habermas wants us to retain scientific method, but to reduce the claim that scientific truth is congruent to Truth itself to more modest proportions, so that other modes of discovering truth may be accepted as equally valid. Scholars in diverse other schools of thought, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer (1985), Alasdair MacIntyre (1984), and Richard Bernstein (1985) have also decried this aspect of modernity and each has proposed his own solution to it.

Even after acknowledging the occurrence of such errors as Burton's, one may still argue that either medical science is right, or the sorcerer is right; because they cannot both be right, we choose whatever is most effective. The efficacy criterion, however, has also been shown to be operative in traditional medicine. This is merely an extension of the central category in magical systems, which many anthropologists report is "power". Power and efficacy are also seen as central categories in modern scientific approaches; in fact many critics hold that these are at the very centre of the dynamic of western civilization today. Jacques Ellul, for example, holds that Technique is the central category of western culture, exerting its own rationale and dynamic in every situation in life (see Ellul 1964). We may see the drive for mastery, or power over nature, then, as another element which magic and modern science share.

The element of ethnocentrism in western medical judgements of African traditional medicine is still real today, and prohibits the appropriation of a potentially fuller understanding of disease and wholeness. Although it may be simplistic to ascribe all such judgements to ethnocentrism (spiritism occurs amongst Caucasians as well, as seen in the New Age movement) nevertheless the paternalistic character of many of the assumptions regarding the inferiority of traditional medicine often takes on ethnically biased undertones. Even when this is not the case, the closed approach emphasizing the superiority of western techno-rationality prevents the acquisition of potentially valuable tools for healing. In I. Polunin's words:

Modern medicine is so rich in diagnostic, therapeutic and bureaucratic practices that the patient's point of view tends to be ignored...I suggest that tribal medical systems are sufficiently simple for us to understand the ways by which they satisfy human needs, and sufficiently different from ours to provide new insights. (Polunin 1977, 18).

One reference point could be the work of Gadamer, who suggests an "hermeneutical turn" towards a whole new paradigm. His approach would see the doctor-patient relationship in a way in which the agency of the patient is taken seriously and the whole can be interpreted by the doctor. In a different vein, Alasdair MacIntyre would have us look at life in its "narrative unity". He points out that it is a feature of modern life that it is atomistic; it looks at only one aspect of a person's life in isolation from others, thus destroying the narrative unity of life from its beginning to its end (MacIntyre 1984, 204ff). He emphasizes the seriousness of the implications for ethics that this disruption of life into atomistic compartments produces. Here again, traditional Africa may have something to offer the rest of the world by way of a therapy which sees life as a unity, not atomized into multitudinous fragments. The theme of narrative unity has obvious affinities for the still largely oral and story-telling cultures of Africa, where there is no division between "secular" and "sacred", and life is perceived wholistically. In oral narrative, there is a definite sense that each good story has a beginning and an ending, and a sense of purpose pervades the story. It is where this "narrative unity" breaks down that life comes to be understood as meaningless, anomic, and thus suicidal. We discuss orality further in later chapters.

While our survey has shown that we may not make simplistic generalizations about traditional healing methods, nor romanticize

them, these methods hold significant potential for a major contribution to western understanding of health and wholeness. The traditionalist's resistance to modern scientific reductionism provides him or her with a source of strength in the search to recover health and wholeness in a more all-encompassing framework than western medicine has provided up to the present, taking into account realities and symbols which are meaningful from the patient's point of view. The integrated nature of the African religio-social-medical complex is such that any attempt by westerners to appropriate the better insights from Africa will require more than a piecemeal approach: a shift of life-world, which can accommodate the transcendent and shun reductionism.¹⁷

3: Witchcraft

Witchcraft is clearly still much feared in Africa. Hopkins (1980) has written an article entitled "Theological Students and Witchcraft Beliefs", which illustrates this fact through the use of surveys. Mbiti (1969), in his section on witchcraft mentions the fear connected with witchcraft. Idowu made the following comments, which reflect the widespread feelings of African theologians:

In Africa, it is idle to begin with the question whether witches exist or not...To Africans of every category, witchcraft is an urgent reality...in speaking or writing about witchcraft, the actual belief of Africans must come first. African concepts about witchcraft consist in the belief that the spirits of living human beings can be sent out of the body on errands of doing havoc to other persons in body, mind, or estate; that witches have guilds or operate singly, and that the spirits sent out of the human body in this way can act either invisibly or through a lower

¹⁷ In conjunction with my Zairean colleague, Diafwila-dia-Mbwangi, I originally presented the section on African psychiatry and ng'angas to a seminar on medical ethics at McGill University in 1988. The main bodies of our essays covered two separate aspects of medicine in Africa, but we concluded our joint project with the following three recommendations: (1) Medical education both in Africa and the west should take the disjuncture of worldviews seriously and direct itself towards the elimination of ethnocentric and paternalistic attitudes. More stress could be laid on appropriation of proven therapeutic techniques of African traditional healers. (2) Health care funds should be shifted from the acquisition of high technology equipment for large urban hospitals to primary care in rural areas, upgrading the training, employing the services of, and making referrals to African traditional healers. Some African countries have already embarked upon such programmes. (3) Scientific education should make note of the inadequacy of the modern western scientific paradigm, of which our survey gives additional evidence.

creature - an animal or bird (Idowu 1973, 175).

That the fear of witchcraft pervades African societies is further evidenced by the proliferation of witchfinding movements. Chakanza has documented large numbers of witchfinding movements in his home country, Malawi, as a study preliminary to the identification of patterns in the development of such movements.

There are variations in the specifics of witch beliefs: for example, some ethnic groups, such as the Tiv of central Nigeria, believe that witchcraft is an actual substance, which may be found growing on the liver of a witch. Other groups say it is a spiritual substance only. But these differences are of a relatively minor nature in the context of the fear of witchcraft which remains pervasive in modern African society.

Related to witch belief is belief regarding ng'angas, or "medicine men" (or "women"), sometimes called "shamans". The precise terminology varies according to local custom, and terms considered incorrect in one locality or according to certain authors, may be considered quite acceptable in another. Several theologians have written extensively on African traditional psychiatry as practised by ng'angas (see Mpolo, Kirwen, de Rosny, Shorter). This has pastoral implications, which they draw out. Several recent works suggest the ng'anga paradigm is actually the most obvious one as parallel to Christ (Schoffeleers 1989, 1990).

4: African Theological Response

As early as 1932 a leader of an AIC, Ade Aina, wrote a pamphlet to defend the oft-criticised practice of healing in the AICs. This published work, rare from an Independent churchman, was reprinted in Parratt's 1987 collection (Aina 1987). The response of African Christian theologians to the question of sickness and healing has been varied. Some African theologians, such as Masamba ma Mpolo (1984), have written in depth on the integration of traditional therapies; one of his articles is entitled "Kindoki as Diagnosis and Therapy". Other African theologians to write on African ethnopsychiatry include Udobata Onunwa (1990). Wambutda (1976) has written a biblical study on healing. Mthethwa (1989) has written on yet another aspect of healing practices: "Music and Dance as Therapy in African Traditional Societies".

Others, such as Kofi Appiah-Kubi in his (1981) book entitled Man Cures, God Heals: Religion and Medical Practice Among the Akan of Ghana have also included the traditional use of herbs and plants with a view towards fully integrating the traditional

healers into the existing modern medical care system. Appiah-Kubi had pointed out (1976, cited in Parratt 1987, 76) that modern technological health services in Africa do not reach more than twenty per cent of the population. In the years following his editing one of the most important volumes in African Theology, African Theology Enroute (1979), he did original research on medicinal plants and plants with protein content as a supplementary protein source. His last job before his death in Feb. 1992 was for the Ghana Ministry of Health, working together with the traditional healers towards their fuller integration into the health system of Ghana, truly a pioneering work.

From the preceding survey, several things become apparent. Virtually all African theologians have spoken positively of the value of African traditional medicine and have sought to reappropriate it, at least at the theoretical level. Some have written only a few brief sentences on the need in the mainstream churches for healing practices similar to those found in the AICs and/or African charismatic churches, while others have written more extensive treatments of specialized areas within the topic. Relatively few, however, have sought to put health care into its wider socio-economic background as part of a comprehensive social critique. This is the task which Jean-Marc Éla's (1985) work pioneered. In the (1988) English translation the chapter is entitled "The Health of Those Without Dignity" in My Faith as an African (1988). The Guinean theologian Cécé Kolié, working from a manuscript from Éla, developed Éla's critique further. Here, the insights of the two paradigms of inculturation and liberation are combined in an adroit manner. I quote a few excerpts at length:

Today the medicines available on the market are inaccessible to the popular masses, village hospitals and infirmaries are only centers for the distribution of prescriptions. Only the upper class can receive decent medical attention.

While physicians leave their hospitals to make house calls for the colds or constipation of governors or ministers, hundreds of peasants walk for miles to the hospital, to be greeted with contempt and sent on their way with a prescription for something their meagre purchasing power cannot obtain - if it exists! While the peasant masses have no drinking water or suitable shelter in the potopotos, the slums, CHUs are built that swallow the bulk of the health budget; when members of the senior administrative class (10 per cent) fall ill they are sent to the hospitals and clinics of Paris, London, or Washington with the tax money collected from the ninety per cent, the peasantry.

In a word, we are dealing with a medical practice confiscated by the hierarchy of political appointees. There are no popular health organizations. Foreign medical assistance in medicines and personnel, unfortunately, tends

to maintain paternalism and underdevelopment. What good is treatment without health education at the grass-roots? (Kolié 1991, 140).

Kolié then goes on, in a section entitled "Political Power and Health" to unmask the power relations involved in the practice of medicine in his country. He says (141): "One need only pay a visit to the hospitals of Guinea...in order to realize that diseases are divided by social category and that new diseases have made their appearance."

The work of Éla, picked up by Kolié, indicates further, then, the "mixing" of paradigms, or the deeper integration of the insights of the two major paradigms of inculturation and liberation, a feature that I have indicated earlier is one of the marks of the "third phase" of academic African theology. In the economic climate of the "new world order", this type of critique is liable to gain momentum, and to be heard more widely as the social conditions which give rise to it continue to worsen. By 1986, when Kolié writes his article (later translated into English for Schreiter's 1991 volume), the "third phase" is already well under way. The insights of the adaptation and incarnational phases are fully incorporated, but sociological analysis of and critique of the current situation on the ground are now part of the mix, squarely addressing the everyday realities most Africans must deal with in the present. There is an urgency here and an impatience with what Kolié feels are overly intellectualizing or antiquarianizing approaches, which he feels marks the work of many African theologians. He concludes his essay with the following words:

We may ask ourselves, today, when the problems of the order of the day in Africa go by the name of famine, dictatorships, unemployment, emigration, corruption, embezzlement of public funds, and so forth, if our theological culturalism is not still back in "negro" times. One has the impression of a gap between theological language and the current discourse or concerns of our peoples. At all events, meanwhile, we are surely obliged to acknowledge that the face of Christ in Africa today is more that of the ill than of a healer. (Kolié 1991, 149).

Kolié emphasizes the importance of the risen Lord, whom he feels is a stranger to Africans in practical terms. Here again, we observe an emphasis more similar to the Christus Victor model of classical Christology, woven together with the Christ as "liberator" model more familiar to modern liberation theologians. He points out: "Latin American popular piety celebrates Good Friday with more fervor than Easter Sunday. Shall we be seeing the

same thing in Africa?" (Kolié 1991, 149, n22). The weakness of the crucified Christ of popular devotion, to Kolié, is what makes him remote to Africans. He wants a strong Lord, capable of delivering his people from all of the forces which oppress them, including sickness, disease, evil spirits and the exploitative social structures which produce them. In this, his Christology has much in common with the various grassroots organizations we have mentioned above, growing rapidly throughout Africa in the 'eighties and 'nineties, and whose growth constitutes one of the challenges facing African theologians in that period.

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CHAPTER 4: EXCURSUS:

The Shifting Sensorium and African Orality¹⁸

One aspect of the social context in which African theologians write today, and upon which many have written, is the oral lifeworld of traditional Africa. This facet is so important that we shall devote an entire chapter to it, in order to develop further an understanding of African social context and the ways in which Africa's social construction of reality contrasts with that of the modern west.

This chapter deals with the apparent shift in modern western culture towards the eye as the locus and arbiter of all knowledge, at the expense of the other four senses, while African cultures have retained, generally, an earlier and more evenly distributed sensorium; and with the implications of this newly ocularcentric worldview.

There is a large body of evidence suggesting that the modern western world has lost a sensorial balance it once had (See Howes ed. 1991). In English dictionaries published before 1850 we find a greater variety of words related to ears and hearing, for example "earwitness". As languages evolve they do tend to drop out words that cease to have a meaningful function, but there is also a more pronounced tendency to invent new words as new circumstances emerge. There is no clear reason why a term such as "earwitness" should have been dropped from the language while its analogue in the visual field, "eyewitness", persists in everyday usage up to the present. In the context of this and a large body of evidence culled by other scholars (see Howes 1991 and Synnott 1991) one can only conclude that the oral-aural complex had entered a process of devaluation by mid-nineteenth century in the modern western world.

The shift towards the eye seems to have had great impact at

¹⁸ In 1988-89 I was involved in a research group funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the purpose of which was to investigate the relative weight given to each of the five senses in various cultures around the world. The ultimate goal was to create a sensory map of the world. We paid special attention to the metaphors of knowledge in each language, for the metaphors of "knowing" come the closest to telling us how a given culture understands and/or locates knowledge, whether it is thought to be located in the eye, as the modern English phrase "seeing is believing" would have it, or whether it is in the taste buds, as in the proverb "seeing is not eating", a saying of the Hausa people of northern Nigeria.

approximately the mid-nineteenth century, a fact which has relevance for our study because the greater portion of Euro-American missionary effort in Africa happened after that time period. The resultant disjuncture of worldviews would thus have been heightened, and the mission churches left poorly equipped to cope with African thought structures and everyday realities. African Christian theologians have pointed to the inappropriate and inadequate nature of thought structures and cultural patterns inherited from the missionaries, and they are in the process of recovering the integrity and benefits of the traditional, balanced, African sensorium for the African church today.

Not all cultures divide the sensorium into the modern western division of five senses. In the Hausa language of Northern Nigeria, there are two general categories for the senses; gani which means to see, and ji which means to hear, smell, taste, touch and feel emotions. The latter is used far more frequently as a metaphor of knowing than the former. Kagamé (1956a, 186) confirms a similar division and categorization for the Bantu languages of central Africa.

We may say then, that the division and numeration of the senses is arbitrary, but in order to organize the vast amount of material in an orderly fashion I have five subsections corresponding to current western categories. Because African cultures have frequently been identified as "primary oral", we shall begin our survey with an examination of the oral lifeworld of Africa.

1: African Oral Lifeworld

(i): Orality In the AICs

Theological reflexion on African orality by Africans preceded the first academic theologians of the mainstream African churches by a century. African Independent Churches (AICs) were formed by African prophets such as Garrick Braide, in Nigeria, William Wadé Harris in Ivory Coast and Simon Kimbangu of Zaïre. They stressed the importance of bringing the gospel of Christ to Africans on their own, African terms. This meant in practice, the abandoning of long periods of literacy and catechetical training before baptism which had been normative in most mission churches up to that time. The Catholic church usually required three whole years of classes of instruction before baptising a new convert, while the Anglican church required a convert to be able to read and recite all the creeds before baptism, a process often

requiring up to three years. In East Africa, Mbiti reports that the Africa Inland Church required one and a half years of instruction, but he says in practice it was usually longer (1971b, 23). The movement led by Garrick Sokari Idaketima Braide, an African convert who started a new movement in the Niger Delta, experienced great success during the First World War (Tasie 1978, 325-328). Braide himself became an inquirer in the 1890s, but it was not until 1910 that he was baptised. After baptism, he had to wait a further two years before being confirmed as a full member of the Anglican church, as was the custom at the time (Tasie 1982, 100).

His phenomenal success is largely attributed to his simple emphasis upon orality above literacy (Tasie 1978, 326). Braide abandoned the literacy requirement, and had more success in his preaching in six months than the Anglican church had had in the previous fifty years. Braide's movement did not deviate from Anglican doctrine. In fact, the remarkable thing about his movement was that it was in all other respects entirely orthodox from the point of view of Christian doctrine: Sokari Braide's only real "innovation" was the acceptance of African orality.

While sociologists often assert that Christian missions have little success where they directly clash with indigenous belief systems, it is clear that Braide actually heightened the conflict with ATR in a sense: his only prerequisite for baptism was that people must bring their "fetishes" to be burned, in order to show that they had transferred their allegiance from the idols to Jesus. But it is argued that in doing so he did not so much negate the traditional diviner as continue the diviner's role by stepping into his place. One can thus see in Braide an early example at the grassroots level of the reassertion of Africanness, and the revaluation of African orality. (On Braide see Tasie 1978, 1982, Sanneh 1983, 180-3 and Omoyajowo 1973). Peter Probst (1989) elaborates on literacy and religious authority amongst the Aladura churches of Yorubaland.

Omoyajowo tells us that it is common in the AICs to find members "who could quote accurately from practically all the books of the Bible." (Omoyajowo 1973, 87). This feat is the more remarkable because they are primarily non-literate. They have memorized the passages on the basis of hearing them only a very few times in sermons. The accurate memorization of Biblical passages is to them a continuation of the ancient tradition of memorization of the deeds of the ancestors and recitation of the

ancient oral traditions. We should note that research has indicated that general ability to memorize declines in a culture as literacy increases, for the written text provides a type of extended "memory" which obviates and thus devalues the older form of information storage.

Alternative explanations of the success of the AICs do exist: Max Weber's ideal type, the "charismatic leader" is usually cited in this regard. The "charismatic leader" is certainly appropriate and fits well the experience of the AICs, but their success is not to be explained simplistically or as monocausal. Indeed, the weakness of the major sociological paradigms developed by Durkheim, Marx and Weber or even Parsons' more eclectic model(s) is that reductionism can lead to the researcher missing an important factor such as orality versus literacy, a factor which goes a long way towards explaining the phenomenon under study, but which does not fit neatly under any of the major categorizing lenses of the greater paradigms. If and when orality is mentioned, it is merely subsumed under one of the other categories such as "cultural self-readjustment", and it is left at that, while the salience of the important factor is relativized and down-played to the point where it almost disappears.

Another aspect of the oral-aural lifeworld is the importance of drums in African culture. Scholarly literature has drawn attention to the centrality of the drum not only as a cultural transmitter of culture, but also as a means of communication. Georges Niangoran-Bouah points out that the drum is the memory of African communities, and that the texts of a talking drum are as reliable as those of the written word (Niangoran-Bouah 1991, 87). This is in contrast to the view of traditional missionaries, who proscribed the drum. Missionaries in the colonial era had been instrumental in banning drumming in African communities (Niangoran-Bouah, 81). The current reappropriation of drumming in African Christian churches, which began in the 1970s, is another element of the cultural recovery pioneered by African theologians.

(ii): Oral literature and Négritude

Oral literature was a preoccupation of the négritude movement from its inception in the 1930s. Alexis Kagamé, an African theologian and student of African culture, modified Placide Tempels' theory of "vital force" as the central category of "Bantu Philosophy". He wrote on oral literature in Africa and was a pioneer in this field, publishing many major works on

African "oral literature". Some of the more important works are Kagamé (1951, 1956b, 1959, 1969, 1972, 1974). African theology since its inception in the 1960s has had a special place for the world of orality, and this has grown into an interest in "oral theology" in the young churches. The phenomena of oral literature was expounded upon at length by the founders of the négritude movement Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas, as well as by Alex's Kagamé, Tshibangu and Tshiamalenga. Senghor wrote poetry to try to revivify African oral modes of thought. Additionally the négritude scholars sought out the traditional elders of their own ethnic groups and transcribed into writing the ancient oral traditions which were in danger of disappearing from the world entirely. A notable example is found in the works of Camara Laye, whose book Guardian of the Word - Kouma Lafôlô Kouma recounts the traditional legends and oral history of the Malinke people of Mali.¹⁹ This work had the effect of preserving and revaluing the ancient oral histories. In spite of the errors and distortions they may have been guilty of, this revaluing of the oral history is something of enduring value.

Parallel to the works of the négritude scholars was the more sympathetic strain of anthropology developing in the 1950s and '60s, which among other emphases understood African cultures as "primary oral" cultures. While it is often now said that their work ethnocentrically derogated the cultures they regarded as "preliterate", to be fair, there were many who regarded the oral world of Africa with great respect. Jan Vansina, a pioneer in the field of African oral tradition, held it in high regard. Marcel Griaule's transcription of Dogon tradition in Conversations With Ogotemmêli (1966) remains a classic. The unheard-of complexity in the Dogon cosmogony recorded there brought Griaule into disrepute when he first published it! He was accused of lying, for most Euroamericans could not believe that Africans possessed anything so complex and sophisticated. Robin Horton wrote of his long-time preference for Africa which he expressed in many ways, but most obviously through his free choice to live there, though he could have chosen to live elsewhere.

(iii): Orality and the Anglophone Theologians

The anglophone theologians also stressed the importance of

¹⁹ See also Laye's 1971 work Radiance of the King.

orality in Africa. One of Mbiti's first published works, Akamba Stories (1966) recorded the folk stories of his people. Idowu mentions the importance of orality in both his 1962 and 1973 (84-86) works. While the anglophones spoke of orality as an integral part of the ATR lifeworld, they did not produce as great a volume of monographs on "oral literature" as did the francophone African sector in this period. Anglophone development of this topic was to reach higher levels at a later time, in the period I have designated as the "third phase" of African theology.

Mbiti sought to revalue and to promote orality in such articles as "Cattle are Born with Ears, Their Horns Grow Later" (1978a). Here, he states that among his people, the Akamba of Kenya, the worst condition of a person is described by the saying "so and so has no ears" (Mbiti 1978a, 15). To say this is to say that the person has cut him or herself off from the normal world of social interaction, becoming antisocial. One may see a biblical parallel to this in the words of Jesus recorded in Mark's gospel, when he chided his hearers with the words: "Are your hearts hardened...having ears do you not hear?" (Mark 8:17b-18). To Mbiti, the responsiveness of orality is key. The same phenomenon is documented for the Akan of Ghana, who have a set of liturgical responses for the installation of a new ruler. The people chant together: "we do not allow deaf ears", to which the ruler elect must answer "mate" meaning "I have heard and understood" (Platvoet 1985, 185).

Gabriel Setiloane, begins his 1986 work African Theology: an Introduction with a section on the centrality of oral discourse in African society. He says:

...illiteracy does not necessarily spell dullness nor ignorance, nor even an inability to carry on with the arts. In fact, literacy has destroyed certain forms of art and dulled some very enviable and important human qualities. Two vital qualities are memory and story-telling. Many of us can witness in our own lifetimes to this downward trend (Setiloane 1986, 1).

Pobee goes even further to develop reflexion on the significance of orality in Africa in an article entitled "Oral Theology and Christian Oral Tradition: Challenge to Our Traditional Archival Concept" (Pobee 1989d). Here, he elaborates the importance of respecting the oral culture of the grassroots level of society.

In summary, we have noted the concern for oral literature which has been central in African exposition of ATR since the inception of these studies in the 1950s, particularly among the

francophone African theologians. Additionally, there has been a new development of a consciously theological reflexion on African orality since 1978, particularly noticeable among the anglophone African theologians, a development which may be understood as one outgrowth of the "third phase" period of African theology.

2: Olfactory Language

(i) in African Tradition

There is also a less prominent but significant emphasis on the use of all the senses in ATR, and the Independent churches, e.g. the use of olfactory aids in healing rituals and exorcism, olfaction as a means of discernment, or the use of therapeutic touch by healers. The sensory world of traditional Africa may well be closer to that of the Hebrew bible, a fact which would help to explain the clear preference for the Old Testament which Africans almost universally express. The similarities in world view have implications for the biblical studies now being done by Africans. For to the extent that African exegetes have retained the traditional life-world, or can reenter it through their research, they can be expected to open up new paths of understanding for the rest of us.

Many works have commented upon the use of olfaction in rites of passage. The African theologian K. Enang, for example, notes in his 1979 work Salvation in an African Background the use of olfaction in transition rites in the traditions of his people. Enang cites favourably the use of incense and perfume smell in combatting witches in an African Independent Church (Enang 1979, 218). Sometimes olfaction merely marks transition states, other times it seems actually to invoke them. Amongst the Azande of Sudan, for example, a newborn child is fumigated with the aromatic smoke from various plants in order to usher it into the world, thus marking a transition into the new state of being. Other ethnic groups also fumigate newborn children and in some cases the process goes on for several weeks.

Omoyajowo points out that the African traditional worshipper who comes to an AIC is made to feel conceptually at home:

As with the diviner, he is even given concrete objects to aid his prayers and restore his confidence - holy water, candles, incense, consecrated oil, psalms to rehearse, Bible passages to recite (Omoyajowo 1973, 90).

Here, all the senses are brought into play, not merely sight. This type of worship experience is understood to be part and parcel of the African oral-lifeworld, in which visuality does not dominate

in the same manner which one finds in the modern west.

This is no mere matter of idle speculation: in fact it is usually cited by African theologians as a key to understanding why the AICs have gripped the imagination of Africans at the grassroots in a way the mission churches never have. The AICs stressed the importance of bringing the gospel of Christ to Africans on their own terms, African terms. This meant in practice, that concrete aids to worship that engaged all of the senses were employed; that long periods of literacy training before baptism were abandoned; and that African priorities such as healing were appropriated.

Michael Kirwen points out that in ATR one encounters "chief sniffers" who sniff every participant at the entrance door of the worship area, in order to discern whether the person's intentions are good or evil. "Chief sniffers" are found as well in many African Independent Churches, as well as in an experimental Catholic liturgy not approved by the Vatican (Kirwen, personal communication 1992). What this demonstrates is that olfaction in many African religions is considered a means of discernment in many respects superior to any other sense, for it can reveal important things not accessible through any other sense.

(ii) Parallels in the Hebrew Bible

The use of incense and perfume to combat witchcraft or evil spirits may be understood as similar to the use of the smell from burning a certain fish, which drove away the evil demon Asmodeus in the Book of Tobit (8:3) in the Old Testament Apocrypha.

The phenomenon of a specially gifted olfactory discernment might well remind us of Isaiah 11:3, which says of the coming messiah "He shall smell [סִיח] in the fear of YHWH, he shall not judge by what his eyes see or by what his ears hear but he shall judge the poor of the earth with equity." The verbal root סִיח in the hiphil stem means, in all lexicons, "to smell, perceive odour".²⁰ Ancient Jewish commentators such as Rava and Ibn Ezra had no trouble understanding the passage in precisely that manner, (see Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 93b, and Ibn Ezra on Isaiah). So also, the Protestant reformer John Calvin understood it to mean

²⁰ Brown Driver and Briggs. 1907/1978. Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament Oxford: Clarendon. p. 926. סִיח occurs as a verb eleven times in the Hebrew bible: Gen 8:21, 27:27; Ex 30:38; Lev. 26:31; Deut 4:28; Judges 16:9; I Sam 26:19; Job 39:25; Psalm 115:6; Isaiah 11:3; Amos 5:21.

that the Messiah would smell in the fear of the Lord (see Calvin's Isaiah Commentary). But modern biblical translators have refused to translate it that way, preferring rather to render it "His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord" (R.S.V.) or even, as in the case of the New English Bible, leaving the verse out of the translation altogether! Often the modern exegetes have referred to this verse as "dittography" from the previous verse (cf. BDB Lexicon, 926), even though the words of the previous verse are quite different. We should point out that while many techniques of the so-called "higher criticism" came into common use in the second half of the nineteenth century, the fact that textual transmission errors could be caused by "dittography" had been known by biblical commentators for centuries. Yet the ancient commentators did not conclude that Isaiah 11:3 was a dittography, probably because in their context there was no reason to seek an "explanation" for a problem which was not a problem in their lifeworld's conceptualization of the senses.²¹

We may partially explain the attribution of fine discernment powers to olfaction in terms of its unique properties: (i) it is of all the senses the only one which can travel around corners without diminution; (ii) it is of all the senses the only one which can determine whether something is rotten inside while the outside still appears sound; (iii) it can determine changes in the chemical make up of the atmosphere; (iv) amongst the senses, smell is the most evocative of memory. With these unique properties, it should not surprise us that many cultures have understood a strong link between smell and special discernment powers: the ability to discern things which cannot be known through any other means.

(iii): An Olfaction Avoidance Syndrome?

In Amos 5:21 the verb רָחַם was translated as "smell" by the Geneva Bible of 1560 and also by the King James Version of 1611: "I will not smell in your solemn assemblies." Thus it is apparent that in sixteenth and seventeenth century England the sensorium had not yet shifted significantly enough to create an "olfaction avoidance syndrome." Also, John Calvin's understanding of Is. 11:3 indicates that in sixteenth century France the sensorium had not

²¹ I elaborate more fully on the scholarly treatment of these texts in an article entitled "The Nose Knows: Bodily Knowing in Isaiah 11:3" to be presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Conference, November 1993.

yet shifted significantly. By the twentieth century the psychological avoidance of olfactory language had become so strong that the R.S.V. translators render it "delight." We have seen also from our brief history of the exegesis of Is. 11:3 that a tendency to avoid the mention of smell in connection with the messiah, or with God, is a feature of the worldview of the modern translator and not of the ancient, another indication that the sensorium has shifted.

There are several other instances of avoidance of olfactory language in modern English translations, worthy of brief mention here. In the R.S.V. translation of I Sam 26:19 David says to Saul: "If it is the Lord who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering...". The Hebrew text reads "may he smell an offering...". Here again, the original and correct meaning becomes obscured by a modern translator, even though the connection between the Lord's smelling an offering and acceptance/reconciliation has already been established where the same verb is used in the Genesis 8 and Leviticus 26 passages.

In Judges 16:9 (R.S.V.) we read: "he [Samson] snapped the bowstrings, as a string of tow snaps when it touches the fire." The Hebrew text reads "when it smells fire". In Job 39:25 we read: "when the trumpet sounds he [the war horse] says 'Aha!' He smells the battle from afar, the thunder of the captains and the shouting."

In Genesis 3:19, the passage in which God curses humanity, the Hebrew (BHS) reads: בְּזֵיעָת אִפִּיךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם. The word aph is usually translated "nose", but also can refer to the entire face, and sometimes to "anger", derived from the nose. Most English translations render this passage as "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (RSV, NRSV). The K.J.V. renders it "sweat of your brow". No English translations render the term aph as nose here. But the Nigerian biblical studies scholar, Modupe Oduyoye does chose this alternative. In his Genesis commentary he renders: "With the sweat of your nose you will eat food..." (Oduyoye 1984, 14). Regardless of whether Oduyoye's choice is a "correct" one or not (however one might choose to determine correctness) is of less importance than the fact that he chose to render it this way. For while there is a choice open to exegetes here because of the semantic range of aph, it is significant that Oduyoye, as an African scholar, is not affected by the "olfaction avoidance syndrome" which we have identified in the works of modern western exegetes, and he is thus free to employ the traditional African

sensorial balance in his translations.

In European speech, there is evidence to indicate that much olfactory language dropped out of the language, or was suppressed, in the middle of the nineteenth century. The term "nosegay" disappeared from English dictionaries at this time, as well as the term "to nose" used as a verb with the meaning of "to discern". English olfactory language has thus become impoverished in the modern era, while most other domains of the language, particularly those having to do with science and technology, have greatly increased in volume and complexity.

I conclude that it is the unconscious bias against olfaction which prevents modern western translators from translating it.²² This bias stems from the sensorial paradigm gap between the modern western "worldview" and the lifeworld of the ancient Hebrews. The modern western paradigm, as Edward Said has so ably indicated in his work entitled Orientalism, is profoundly visualist and textualist. This paradigm assumes the priority of the visual mode of knowledge and equates seeing, especially the seeing of texts, with knowing. Modern discourse so profoundly embeds this priority that the use of the non-visual senses in connection with modes of knowing are made to appear "nonsensical". Thus the avoidance in 20th century scholarship of any association between olfaction and "knowing" in any real sense.

The above analysis would explain the various convolutions modern exegetes have involved themselves in while explaining, expurgating and reconstructing Is. 11:3. For the same reason, I would expect an African sensitized to African traditional life to be relatively free of the visualist and textualist paradigm and therefore enabled to approach the verse in a manner similar to that of the ancient Hebrews, if we can determine that the African sensorium more closely resembles the Hebrew balance than either one resembles the modern western sensorium. Clearly, one cannot simply assume that because a phenomenon happens in one culture that therefore it also happens in another. But here we have sufficient evidence to conclude that Africans and the Hebrews had in common a more evenly distributed sensorium, as opposed to the modern western sensorium which is heavily weighted towards the

²² In another domain, it has been noted by Peter Gay in The Education of the Senses, 415, that when Thomas Carlyle's Journey to Germany, Autumn 1858 was edited by his nephew, the word "see" was substituted for the word "smell" in a phrase concerning the eagerness of a waiting crowd to "smell the Prince of Prussia."

visual.

From the above it is evident that a sensorial anthropology will give translators and hermeneuts a wider range of options to choose from. For when moderns are confronted with and take seriously the implications of a shifted sensorium then we may realize that many so-called "problems" of exegesis are not problems of the ancient world, but problems we have imposed on ourselves as a result of our ocularcentric worldview. In the process of challenging the sensory hierarchies of modernity this knowledge bursts existing artificial notions of what is "possible" according to current canons of "rationality" and presents us with new solutions. In this work the contributions of African theologians such as Enang, Omoyajowo and Modupe Oduyoye have already proved invaluable, and there is promise of much more in the future because of the orientation of African theology towards the exploration of African religions. It is of interest that most of the works I have cited in this section on olfaction were published since 1979, in the period I have called the "third phase" of African theology.

3: Gustation and Transition

(i): In African Culture:

I have demonstrated elsewhere (Ritchie 1990) that the Hausa people of Northern Nigeria exhibit in their folktales and proverbs a stronger propensity for gustatory metaphors of knowledge than is apparent in modern western thought. The Hausa have a folktale in which five tastes are the principal actors. The tastes, Salt, Pepper, Nari (a savory peanut sauce), Onion Leaves, and Daudawar Batso (a special sauce with a pungent smell) transform themselves into young women and go out into the world to find a certain young man whom they know little about except that he is "beautiful". In the end it is Daudawar Batso who gains the right to marry the man. What is striking about the story is that its principal actors are tastes, an idea which seems strange to modern western people, though not to the Hausa, who have retained the story in their oral repertoire because it remains meaningful to them.

My research in Hausa folktales showed a frequently recurring phenomenon: not only do the vast majority of them centre on eating something, but most also reach a point where category change is invoked by eating something (Ritchie 1990, 1991). After the object is eaten, the story goes off in an entirely new and unpredictable direction. Anthropologists (cf. Darrah 1985) have indicated that

in Hausa the verb ci "to eat" is a "root metaphor" - a metaphor which serves as an uncommonly fertile root for other metaphors and constitutes a major contribution to the social construction of reality within a culture.

A common practice in many African ethnic groups is that of spitting out water to represent the expulsion of a curse, or of witchcraft. This practice is shown in the anthropological documentary film "Witchcraft Among the Azande"(1982). Here, a woman who has been accused of employing witchcraft against her rival is made to drink water from a calabash and then spit it out, saying that she harbours no evil against her rival. Clearly, the words are not enough on their own, even though all students of African culture agree that words have dynamic power in African thought. There must be a physical gesture that marks the expulsion of witchcraft, and the expulsion of water ingested in the ceremony is considered adequate in this context.

(ii): In Biblical Culture:

Parallels to the phenomenon of category change or transition states invoked by eating something may be seen in the Hebrew bible. Moses, Aaron and seventy elders of Israel share a meal with God on Mt. Sinai to mark their covenant with the deity with whom their relationship has fundamentally changed (Ex 24:11). Jeremiah says: "Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart..."(15:16). Ezekiel is told to swallow a scroll as part of equipment for service (Ezek. 3:3). Here the transformation is most dramatic. After Ezekiel swallows the scroll, he is equipped for a new life of service. That the prophetic tradition continued to understand scroll swallowing as a strong expression of ingestion of the word of God and of inner transformation is evidenced in the New Testament book of Revelation, where the author is also told to swallow a scroll containing the word of God, in a manner reminiscent of that found in Ezekiel (Rev. 10:2-11). In both cases the scroll is found sweet in the mouth but bitter in the stomach, for while the words would seem right and good at their first reception, the task of carrying them to a hardened and stubborn people would bring bitterness.

Also in the New Testament we find the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: "take, eat, this is my body." (Matt. 26:26). The importance of fellowship meals has been noted in the Near East in particular, as well as in several religions and in a number of African cultures.

Parallels to the conception of category change marked by the spitting out of something ingested might be found in the words to the angel of the church in Laodicea in the book of Revelation (3:16): "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth." In a sense, the Laodicean Christians have become a kind of curse to the Lord, and therefore they are to be "spewed out" or expelled because of their lukewarmness.

In the Hebrew bible and in some Orthodox Jewish communities up to the present day the custom of conferring blessing on persons by spitting on them is reported, at weddings in particular. Some traditional African cultures have the same custom, thus indicating that spitting does not universally signify curse or expulsion of curse. This particular custom is not clearly evident in the New Testament or in most subsequent Christian traditions. This then, is another example of African tradition bearing closer resemblance to Hebrew tradition than either does to the modern western or Christian traditions. The symbolism is that of conferring the water of life to another, a particularly poignant symbolic gesture in countries where water is in short supply and is thus a highly valued commodity.

These brief examples serve to show that gustatory metaphors are found apt for marking transition states in African cultures and in biblical culture, even if this is not witnessed in modern western culture. Today we witness the trivialization of potentially rich custom through the promotion of fast foods, which you can eat while driving your car or rushing around. On plastic or styrofoam plates with plastic knives, forks and plastic spoons we eat plastic food in individually wrapped plastic packets. This is the antithesis of transformation. From here, we could move into an analysis of modern television culture, where no event, thing or person is considered "real" until it has been trivialized on television for thirty seconds, but such analysis lies outside of the scope of the present work.

4: Tactility

(i): African Culture:

Areas in which the importance of touch has been explored are the areas of African medicine, special rites, and in African sexuality. The power of touching with or pressing with the hand is considered an integral part of the healing phenomenon in many African societies. Akama tells us (1985, 37) that in the healing

rituals he studied, the sound of a drum is employed, and as it is sounding "the particular part of the body believed to be affected by the sickness (which the Igbe interpret as evil) may be pressed by the votary with his or her hand rubbing the sacred kaolin powder on the spot." While Akama's example comes from the Igbe cult of the Isoko people in Southern Nigeria, similar examples are cited from all over sub-Saharan Africa.

Belief in the restorative power of touch in ritual is also widespread in the AICs. Wyllie tells us that in the Ghanaian "Spiritist" (AIC) churches he investigated, healers "slap the afflicted part of the patient's body as they command the sickness to depart in the name of Jesus" (Wyllie 1985, 157). This practice may be a somewhat more aggressive version of the biblical practice of the "laying on of hands," as much as it is a continuation of African traditional practice.

Many African ethnic groups traditionally restricted male-female touch, as it is considered to be highly charged or "loaded". Fernandez, writing on the Bwiti religion of Gabon, has shown how the whole body is represented in the shrine of the cult, and he relates the symbolism to the human body. But in Bwiti, he says, though the symbolism is intensely intimate and sexual, no actual physical contact takes place between participants, and the cult is rather "puritanical" (Fernandez 1990). African scholars had criticised Fernandez's previous work for sensationalizing a phenomenon which is extremely rare in Africa (the Bwiti cult involves the use of drugs). In his 1990 article, Fernandez attempts to counter some of the sensationalization of African sexuality which western observers have been guilty of, by emphasizing the puritanical aspect of the cult. The area remains controversial.

In summary, the communication both of contagion and curse on the one hand, and on the other, of blessing and healing through the hands of spiritually gifted persons and of ordinary persons is very familiar to Africans.

(ii): Biblical Culture:

In the Hebrew bible we find that touch is important enough to be regulated heavily, in regard to sexual matters, and in regard to the various items considered to be unclean in Hebrew culture. Of the 613 mitzvot (commands) of the Torah a large percentage have to do with not touching things, such as carrion, unclean animals and foods, etc. It is emphasized that contagion is

most dangerously communicated through touch, hence the prohibitions.

The hand was used metonymically as referent for "power" or "control", as in Joshua 10:32: "and the Lord gave Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he took it on the second day...", and as in hundreds of other verses. In fact, concordances generally contain five pages of fine print listings of verses containing the word "hand", of which a larger fraction uses it in this metonymic fashion than in any other way. This is, perhaps, not surprising; but in modern English the word is seldom used that way, unless one is trying to speak archaically in order to produce a special effect.

Laying on of hands was employed as a sign at times of commissioning a person for a new role, as is indicated in Num. 8:10; 27:18; Deut. 34:9; Acts 6:6 and 13:3; I Tim. 4:14; and 5:22. In these instances touch marks and possibly invokes a transition. In the Acts of the Apostles, in particular, laying on of hands is frequently associated with new believers receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit: 8:17,18; 19:6. Laying hands upon a person was the accepted means for the transmission of blessing. This is found in Matt. 19:13-15. An alternate form, the lifting up of hands in a sign of blessing is found in Luke 24:50 and Acts 1:12.

We find that healing power is positively communicated through touch, more than through any other means, exceeding even that of words of blessing, and certainly more than beneficent gaze. For examples see Matt. 8:3,15; 9:18,25; Mark 1:41; 5:23; 6:5; 8:25; 16:18; Luke 4:40; 5:13; 13:13; Acts 4:30; 5:12; 9:12,17; 9:41; 28:8. In addition to healings "signs and wonders" were said to have been done by the hands of Jesus (Mark 6:2) and by the Apostles in Acts 14:3 and 19:11. Many of the cures effected by prophets and priests only became effective at the moment of the touch of the healer's hands. This demonstrates that while the other senses may prepare the person for the action of YHWH, touch was understood as the most intimate of the sensory modalities, making the experience real for the believer in a dynamic way.

The power also of curse was transferred through the hands of priests and prophets. The curse of the sins of the nation were transferred through the hands of the high priest to the head of the "scapegoat" on Yom Kippur (Lev 16:21).²³

²³ Note also the use of incense in this passage during the atonement ritual, vs. 12.

The biblical word yadah meaning "to know" is the idiom for sexual intercourse, the penultimate experience of tactility. Here we have evidence of a culture that understands touch as an equivalent of "knowledge", of understanding, one more example of the ways in which Israel's understanding of consciousness is distributed throughout the body more evenly than in modern western thinking. However, sexual behaviour was heavily regulated and male-female touch outside of marriage was restricted.

5: Sight

Most African cultures had a colour scheme consisting primarily of black, white and red. Pauline Ryan's (1976) work on Hausa colour terms indicates that among the Hausa it is black and white which are used most frequently, with far less attention to red. Other colours are known and referred to only by those employed in specialized occupations which require finer distinctions, such as the dyeing industry at Kano. I have demonstrated elsewhere (Ritchie 1990) that the inattention to red and other colours indicate a relatively less elaborated concern for colour distinctions and for the visual dimension as a whole.

Other evidence is found in proverbs, such as the following: "Ganin Dala ba shiga birni ba ne. = Seeing Dala [a suburb of Kano] is not entering the city [Kano], i.e. seeing your goal is not the same as reaching it." (Whitting 1940, 60). Even more decisive is: "gani ba ci ba" which means "seeing is not eating", (Whitting 1940, 52) a proverb which indicates that eating is preferred over sight as the proof of a thing's integrity.

John Mbiti tells us that to Africans the universe is alive and dynamic: "The invisible world presses hard upon the visible: one speaks to the other, and Africans 'see' that invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world" (Mbiti 1969, 56-57). This means that the universe that one sees is only a small fraction of what is really there; thus the invisible universe is to be understood as just as real as the visible one. A thing is not made valuable by its being visible, and the value of a thing is not to be found in its visibility. So to Africans, the proof of a thing is not in the seeing.

The foregoing evidence should not be taken to mean that sight is unimportant to Africans. Some individual Africans today might tell you that sight is the most important of the senses (though this may be due in large part to modern influences). The literature on the Hausa indicates that traditionally it was

considered important to make sure that one's physical appearance was one of glowing health, as this was a sign of one's vitality. The point we are making is that in traditional African culture visuality did not usually have the elaboration, and certainly not the controlling function, or the empirical finality which it exerts in modern western culture. Once again, we are not talking about innate mental capacities at all, but about actual expressed preferences.

6: Implications of the African Sensorium for World Theology and Anthropology

We have written in chapter 2 of the development of a new literate class in Africa. In this section we shall explore some of the implications of literacy for human thought itself.

The oral mode of communication and its uniqueness have been explored by Walter Ong, Jack Goody and others. They have outlined several phenomena unleashed in a culture when literacy becomes prominent and when the eye becomes the primary adjudicator of truth and knowledge. Of great importance is the dynamic of storytelling, an art which seems largely lost in modern western culture.

We may also point out the damage done when the communicative "Rubicon" of transmitting oral narrative into written text is crossed. When oral tradition is rendered into writing it inevitably decontextualizes and makes static that which was once fluid and contextual. The rabbis knew about this problem and openly worried about it at length at the time the Talmud was committed to writing in the sixth century C.E.. Much has been written about the impact of this decontextualization. It can turn that which was once story into an unchangeable commandment written in stone.

Scholars have identified many other changes resulting from the transition from orality to literacy. With the invention of writing new forms of information packaging made communication more efficient and portable. Goody (1977) and Yoffee (1979) note that writing brought us also the list, the table (that is paired lists forming rows as well as columns), the matrix (a more complex table) together with the development of more precise notions of "logic" (in the specialized sense), including the syllogism and other types of argument and of proof (Goody 1986 xiii). The literacy hypothesis holds that concepts of "rationality" itself are bound up in this, along with the western definition of "the

other".²⁴ While recent studies of the impact of literacy (e.g. Denny 1991) demonstrate that Walter Ong and Jack Goody had somewhat exaggerated the importance of literacy, particularly in their claim that it makes abstraction possible, the central thrust of their claims still stand: that literacy brings decontextualization. In fact, Denny (1991) holds that most of the claims they made for literacy amount to one type of decontextualization or another.

We have noted the loss of ability to understand Biblical texts the way they were meant to be understood, and the consequent rendering nonsensical of things which ought easily to be understood. This comes partially out of the decontextualization process, but even apart from contextual elements, once worldview has shifted in such a manner as we find today, even the restoration of contextual elements within the scope of biblical studies as it has been practised in the past one hundred and fifty years cannot recover much of the original meaning because the shift in the sensorium has pushed many concepts out of the realm of "possibility" according to the current paradigm of knowledge.

This means that the historical-critical method along with all of the other methods developed since Wellhausen, cannot go far enough to uncover the lost meanings. In biblical scholarship since 1970 anthropology has increasingly been used to enhance our understanding of the biblical text. Pioneering works were those by Norman Gottwald (The Tribes of Yahweh, 1979), B. Malina, Rogerson and many others. While these studies have gone a long way to open up new avenues for understanding the biblical text, it would be unreasonable to expect them to explain the textual conundrums mentioned above because the existing paradigm in anthropology

²⁴ Goody (1986 xvii) goes further, to say: "Here, as I think with law, the written book leads us to different ideas of what religion is, ideas that also relate to substantial matters of form and content. Form, because of the fixing of a boundary to 'belief' as well as to practice, which brings out questions to do with the nature of belief, truth and of conversion. Content, because of the tendency of writing to over-generalize norms. In both ways religion acquires an increased measure of autonomy in relation to other aspects of the social system. But the emergence of religion as one of the 'great organizations' (not simply as a partially differentiated aspect of, say, intra-familial interaction) implies autonomy at another level: the autonomy of the church as an organization... The 'great organizations' with their literate tradition acquire a certain independence of their own, promoted by their custodianship of the books as well as their interest in earthly continuity and other-worldly salvation."

itself is too closely identified with the textualist and visualist paradigm of modern western culture.

Anthropologist David Howes asserts that anthropology was on the verge of a rediscovery of the senses in the 1960s, but since the ascendancy of Clifford Geertz in the 1970s (see Islam Observed, 1968) a new and more profoundly visualist, textualist mode of inquiry has arisen, a mode which the current postmodernist discourse has done little to ameliorate.²⁵ Apart from the exposés of Valentin Mudimbe (1988) and Edward Said (1978, 1983), the visualist/textualist paradigm in anthropology has been criticized by anthropologist James Clifford's 1986 work Writing Culture.

An additional problem with current anthropology has been expressed by the Ghanaian anthropologist M. Owusu, (1978) who tells us that western anthropologists have paid inadequate attention to learning the language of the people they are studying. He points out that even Margaret Mead, who was one of the first anthropologists to insist that her students must do field work, actually advised against becoming a "virtuoso" in the native language. She feared that if she insisted upon a high level of language fluency it would scare potential students away from anthropology altogether. She asked them only to learn how to ask twenty basic questions. One of the consequences of this policy has been the serious errors, mistakes and distortions made by anthropologists about indigenous cultures, not the least of which are those made by Margaret Mead herself in her famous work Coming of Age in Samoa, which has now been entirely discredited with the confession by her major informant that she had lied to her (Freeman 1989).

Owusu and Mudimbe have pointed out that anthropologists seldom spent longer than one year in the field studying an ethnic group, and many studies, such as Coming of Age in Samoa were based upon less than three months of field work! So discourse on Africa by African scholars now rejects the foreign-manufactured discourse which pretended to define African reality without even bothering to learn the language in which that reality is expressed by Africans. The devastating critiques of Africanist discourse put forward by Mudimbe and Owusu assert that discourse upon Africa ought to be done by Africans themselves, and call into serious

²⁵ Foucault's works have been helpful in the critique of the textualist-visualist paradigm, but there are some questions about whether Foucault is a true "postmodernist."

question all discourse about Africans by non-Africans.

7: To Restore the Balance?

Michel Foucault has been a leader in demonstrating the distortions brought about by our increasingly ocularcentric worldview. His pioneering works on punishment (Foucault 1979), on modern medicine (1973), and other topics, have exposed the role of the gaze in the exercise of power. He shows (1979) how Bentham's model prison, the "Panopticon", which had a central point from which the guard could observe all the inmates but not be seen himself, reveals the preoccupation with sight as the medium of control par excellence. Recent feminist critique has also begun to elaborate on the role the male gaze has played in the oppression and control of women (see Ramazanoglu 1992 and Charles Davis "The Male Gaze and the Eye of Power", personal copy from the author).

Attention to sensorial "democracy" may help us to restore the lost sensorial balance and regain a more incorporative approach, but it will mean a long process of "resensorialization" going beyond the methods of traditional anthropology as well. For the "dead-ends" encountered by Biblical exegetes in their exploration of new methodologies in order to explain "problem" texts cannot be helped much by an anthropology which is enclosed by the same "hermeneutical seal" that encloses biblical exegetes: that of the modern western worldview with its sensorially distorted ratio.

David Howes has issued an appeal for a "return to our senses" which would enable anthropology to understand the lifeworld of societies under study in a new way (Howes 1990). There is an error at the very base of a discipline which defines itself at the start as the study of "nonliterate" societies. The very definition of anthropology creates a stumbling block at the outset. For it is primarily the contextuality, fluidity, the humanity fostered by orality that is missed because virtually all objects of study in the field exhibit the same characteristic: otherwise they would never have been chosen as an object of study in the first place. But as an "other" they exhibit "difference" only in relation to the dominant white paradigm of modern western culture.

Returning, briefly, to the historical-critical method, Sr. Teresa Okure of the Catholic Institute of West Africa opined at the 1992 EATWOT workshop on biblical hermeneutics that the critical methods developed in the past one hundred and fifty years

have had the effect of cutting the people off from the life-giving power of the text; it is not real to them. The power of text as story needs to be reappropriated. She was echoed in her concern by most other participants in the workshop, from Africa and other parts of the third world. She was countermanded, however, by George Soares, an Indian Jesuit, who asserted that the historical-critical method had liberated him from being a very conservative clergy man, and therefore he would not want to give it up completely. The discussion then turned to ways the bible can be used in a liberative manner, in a manner which does not shut out the common people, but rather brings them life in their concrete everyday experience.

Teresa Okure has also observed that there is a dearth of biblical scholars amongst African theologians; the major emphasis has been upon systematic theology. This, she says, remains a serious handicap. The problem of the disjuncture of worldview between Africa and Europe remains acute, and S.O. Abogunrin, one of Africa's best New Testament scholars, claims that the historical critical method can provide Africans at last with the tools they need to pierce through the hermeneutical barriers caused by the cultural baggage of the European missionaries and biblical exegetes. Through gaining a knowledge of the biblical languages and of the biblical lifeworld, Africans scholars are now gaining a more direct access to the ancient text, without the intervening mediation of European cultural assumptions, which, no matter how well intentioned they may be, can only have a distancing and distorting effect. There is ample evidence that not only Africans but also Europeans and Americans feel cut off from the biblical story by excessive intellectualizing. It lies beyond the scope of this dissertation to determine whether the historical-critical method in itself cuts the masses off from the biblical text. But there is a significant body of literature in the field of narrative studies which suggests that critical method ceases to serve people well when the exegete's research pushes him or her into fragmenting any sense of a story. In this discussion, then, the conscious programme of the African theologians towards the retention of orality in Africa becomes crucial. For the sense of a narrative whole is maintained through a conscious striving to retain it, and this is precisely the work which African Christian theologians have set for themselves.

Ultimately, we may learn more about the nature of language and of meaning itself as a result of this programme. For when we

understand that olfactory metaphors were chosen by many cultures as the best way of describing the special discernment powers of a messiah or of God, then we may also understand that it is most appropriate because this means of discernment pierces beyond mere appearances or mere words, below the surface into what a person really is. For smell is notoriously uncontrollable, despite the best efforts of modern technology to sanitize, deodourize, and control it; a humbling indication of human finitude. Although all human language ultimately falls short in describing this experience, perhaps olfactory language is, in most ways, the best suited to it as a metaphor for this reason. In this context, it is interesting to recall what it was that "the messiah" of Isaiah 11:3 would do with his extraordinary olfactory discernment. Vs. 4 tells us that "with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth." The connection with liberative models of theology is obvious, and this has been an increasing concern of African theologians in the "third phase", as our other chapters have suggested.

One may ask if it really is practical or possible for us in the modern world to return to an imagined state of pristine preliteracy, when the advantages of literacy are so obvious and so immense. I am not arguing that we should, for it is impossible to turn back the hands of the clock. But we can sensitize ourselves to the issues, become more aware of what we are losing as a result of the shifted sensorium and try to reintegrate the insights of a more balanced sensorium into our lives. Some are enthusiastic about the possibility of new technology restoring the balance. Marshall McLuhan spoke of the "global village" created by T.V.. McLuhan was wrong in his understanding of the nature of T.V. But more recent advocates point to the inception of "virtual reality suits" which will be able to reproduce not just two sense modalities but all five. This is one possibility, but I am sceptical about the possibility of this very expensive technology bringing about great cultural shifts significant enough to undo the damage done by ocularcentrism. Literacy brought about cultural shifts precisely when technology made it more cheaply and easily available to the masses via the printing press. We will need a more determined effort, a conscious effort on our part to reintegrate sensory balance, and apart from this, I doubt that any technology will provide the necessary impetus on its own.

The discussion of biblical hermeneutics done by the poor raises some serious challenges for the field of hermeneutics in

general. This approach seeks to value and respect the poor, those without writing, by making their oral discourse traditions carry just as much weight as those of the mighty and powerful. In order to do this, John Pobee says we must cast off the "Christendom mentality" wherein history is what the powerful ones do:

Even here the rediscovery of the biblical insight of the preferential option for the poor must inform our archival work. This conversion experience means a move away from the establishment mentality to search for the events of the grassroots (Pobee 1989d, 92).

The "preferential option for the poor" here is a category to be applied in ways which have not only economic implications, but also epistemological implications, which reach to the heart of our "ways of knowing" and our ways of being in the world. These challenges go to the very core of what it means to be human. Therefore, in their attempts to recover the orality of African traditional life in order to address a serious lacuna in current Protestant and Catholic church life, the African theologians are contributing a much needed dynamic to the wider world as well.

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PART II: CHALLENGES OF THE 1980s AND '90s

This part of the dissertation is devoted to the exploration of several challenges that have emerged with a new urgency in the 1980s and '90s: the challenges of religious pluralism; changing conceptions of the African family; new ideas concerning the role of women, justice, peace, and the integrity of creation; and the new exploration of Christology which has emerged in the decade of the 1980s in response to the various challenges and changes in concrete social conditions. These issues are not, of course, the only challenges faced by African theology, and none of them are entirely new in these decades, but I shall argue that due to changing social conditions there is a new level of seriousness and urgency in each of the issues discussed here during that period, and corresponding new levels of theological reflexion and response, in some cases where there was little or none previously.

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CHAPTER 5: CHRISTOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

One of the marks of African theology in the 1980s, and thus of the third phase of African academic theology, has been the proliferation and development of new Christologies, each of which strives to describe Christ in categories meaningful to Africans. In 1968, Mbiti wrote a survey article on African concepts of Christology for a German journal, which was translated into English without major changes for Vicedom's 1972 collection, Christ and the Younger Churches. Here he said: "African concepts of Christology do not exist" (Mbiti 1972, 51). He clarified that he was not referring to the church in Egypt or Ethiopia, but to the young church planted by western missionaries in Africa, which as yet lacked theologians and theology. His article attempted to put into writing some of the orally conveyed conceptions of Christ he had found in African churches at the time. In the 1970s a slow growth of academic discourse on this topic began.

Kofi Appiah-Kubi wrote some helpful thoughts on African Christology for the first consultation of African and Asian Theologians held at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland in 1976, but extended Christological discourse in published form was not to appear in quantity until the 1980s.

In 1981 the Fourth General Assembly of the AACC met in Nairobi with the theme "Following the Light of Jesus Christ" and focused its reflexion on Christology. Bujo published an article in that year (1981) which Nyamiti found helpful and which inspired his own later development (Nyamiti 1984, 7). In 1983 Kwame Bediako published a piece entitled "Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religions" which set out trajectories in the relationship between the bible and ATR in christological discourse. This task is also taken up by Joseph Ekuwem (1991).

Since 1984 we have witnessed a tremendous new growth, evidencing a new confidence and maturity. In that year the landmark study by Nyamiti appeared: Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology From an African Perspective. This was the first work of Christological reflexion of a more extended nature. Muzorewa (1988) devotes a substantial review essay to Nyamiti's book. Since 1984 several others have joined in developing a Christology based on the African reverence for ancestors.

Other African theologians have developed alternative christologies: Christ as Ruler (Pobee 1979, Kabasélé 1991); Christ as

Guest (Udoh 1988); Christ as Initiator (Sanon 1991); Christ the Healer (Kolié 1991); Christ the Liberator (Magesa 1989) have all been offered by African theologians as ways to contextualize Christ in Africa.

Since 1986 we have seen several collections of essays devoted exclusively to Christology: those of Kabasélé, Doré and Luneau (1986), Mugambi (1989), Schreiter (1991) and Pobee (1992). Additionally, it has now become standard to see entire book sections devoted to Christology in larger works on African Theology: Mugambi's 1989 work African Christian Theology devotes Part Three to the subject of "Christology and Ecclesiology", while Bujo's 1992 work African Theology in Its Social Context devotes Part Two, the larger of the two parts of his work, to "Christology and Ecclesiology", both of them in reference to the ancestors.

Simply keeping track of the new developments in Christology has become a large work in itself: we see now a proliferation of survey articles for that purpose, such as those by Stadler (1983), Nyamiti (1989, 1991a) and Onaiyekan (1991). At the 1992 EATWOT General Assembly, Christology was one of the three major themes around which formal presentations and discussion sessions were organized. In the group in which I was privileged to participate as an observer, Frank Chikane of South Africa, growing a little impatient, said: "Why are we sitting here discussing Christology while our people are suffering! Is it because it is our 'job' as theologians, because it is some kind of an 'industry', we feel we have to keep producing new ones?" There was uneasy laughter, then the well known Chilean Liberation theologian José Miguez-Bonino replied: "to the poor I work with, the question is not an abstract one. They would say 'of whom else can we speak'?" This brief exchange perhaps summarizes the tension felt by many African theologians on this subject.

Because many African theologians seek to develop Christology along the lines of the ancestor motif, we shall explore that theme first.

1: Christ and the Ancestors

The role of the ancestors in ATR has been one of the most consistently prominent themes in discourse on African religion. We note the following writings: H. Sawyerr (1968, 1970), Fasholé-Luke (1974b), Bimwenyi-Kweshi (1970a, 1970b), Nyamiti (1984), Muzorewa (1988). Of course, Mbiti, Idowu et. al. have also devoted chapters to the "living dead" in their major early works on ATR.

Additionally, a number of non-Africans have written their own contributions to the subject, such as Welbourn (1968), Daneel (1971), and Partain (1986).

Far from being considered an antiquarian pursuit, ancestrology is seen by some as the key to incarnating Christianity in Africa (cf. Nyamiti 1984, 8). It is clear then, that an understanding of the role of ancestors is essential to the central goal of the second phase of African theology, that of Incarnation, and therefore of great importance in the "third phase" as well.

Sawyer's major work God: Ancestor or Creator? Aspects of Traditional Belief in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone published in 1970 was an attempt to clear the ground concerning African traditional thinking on ancestors. He put forward the idea that God is understood as a great ancestor by the peoples of the three areas under study. In this he followed the thought of J.B. Danquah who wrote on his own people, the Akan of Ghana (Danquah 1928, 1944). Danquah's works were among the earliest academic studies by an African on his own traditional religion. While his (and Sawyer's) conclusion has been challenged by other African scholars and anthropologists, the book has proved thought-provoking. As a major work on ATR it fits the type of model we have seen was typical in the 1960s and '70s: investigation into the beliefs and practices of ATR, without elaboration on any specific implications for Christianity. In fact, in the preface to Sawyer's 1970 work he specifically disclaims any attempt to connect the study with Christian faith, saying that task would have to be left to another. As with many other areas of African theological endeavour, the work of developing a specifically Christian theological reflexion in an extended discourse based upon that earlier work on ATR was to wait until the 1980s.

Fasholé-Luke notes that one of the first conferences on African theology in the formative period was held by the African Staff Institute in East Africa, which met in Nairobi, Kenya in 1974 to discuss the theme "The Ancestors and the Communion of Saints." The consensus which developed out of this conference is summed up by Fasholé-Luke:

ancestors still had a significant religious role in the life of East Africans and ...this situation should be carefully considered and critically evaluated by African theologians. It was also agreed that Africans venerated their ancestors in a manner similar to the way saints were venerated by some Christian churches; thus there is a sound basis for developing African doctrines of the Communion of Saints...It

was felt that in developing the doctrines about the Communion of Saints, African Christianity can make significant contributions to global Christianity (Fasholé-Luke 1981, 29).

The question has not only been approached from the point of view of the problem of accommodating such traditional practices as pouring libations to the ancestors, or of the doctrine of "communion of saints." Several now present a Christology based upon the concept of God as ancestor (see Nyamiti 1984, Bujo 1992). The question of an ancestor-based Christology is an intriguing one, and is an illustration of the growing variety of new approaches to Christology which we have seen in the 1980s in Africa. In this decade, the question has shifted to how an African Christian may understand Christ in an authentically African way, yet without denying the uniqueness of Christ.

The appearance in 1984 of Nyamiti's work God as Our Ancestor was a watershed in the development of African Christology. Here at last was a sustained treatment of the topic, a work which could rightly be called a "Christology", and which starts from authentically African categories. Although many African theologians could and do disagree with one or another of his conclusions, or even with his whole approach, nevertheless here was a major work of African Christian theology which wrestled with the central theme of Christianity in a truly African way, and displaying a new theological confidence. This work, then, I consider to be a mile stone indicator of the new theological dynamic and diversity of the "third phase" of African Christian theology. Since 1984 we have witnessed the appearance of Bujo's sustained work including a Christ as Ancestor Christology, along with a host of new books and articles on the subject. Gwinyai Muzorewa (1988) provides us with a review article. The field has clearly matured.

More recently, many African theologians have criticised not only the "Christ as ancestor" model, but also the entire gamut of new Christologies. Sr. Teresa Okure, SHCJ, of the Catholic Institute of West Africa says: "The one thing which all of these approaches have in common is that they start and end in the classroom." (Okure, personal communication Jan. 1992).

This criticism is one to which Mercy Oduyoye in her earlier writings seemed vulnerable. For while she consistently maintained a high valuation of the ancestors and seemed to want to accommodate ancestral beliefs and practices within African Christianity, it was not at all clear how this type of

traditionalism could easily be wedded with her more modern sounding Christian feminism in practice at the grassroots congregational level. At least not in the context of the vast majority of African ethnic groups which are not matrilineal as are her own people, the Akan of Ghana. Why? It must be remembered that, to those great numbers of Africans who still believe in them, the ancestors are still alive: Jean-Marc Éla tells us (1988, 16) that the central affirmation of African thought is: "the dead are not dead!". The ancestors are still alive and are a very real spiritual presence. As Éla points out:

When the Mada pray over the pra [funerary jar], they speak as if they are really talking to an actual person, for it establishes a true channel of communication between the being symbolized and the person entering into contact with that being. The pra is a vital bond that permits the ancestors to communicate with the living and to exercise their immediate and direct influence (Éla 1988, 16).

Thus, as real people they are not subject to the agendas of presently corporeal persons. Rather, they seek to subject their earthly children to conformity with the ancestral traditions. As such they have most often spoken out through oracles and other means, against the innovations brought by Christianity and western culture in general.

One of the innovations to which the ancestors most commonly object is "women's liberation" as it has been conceived by the west. Thus, it seems difficult to accommodate the new view of women with the older view cherished by the ancestors in most cases. While Mercy Oduyoye has done much work to illuminate how modern western traditions have come to influence Ghanaian men towards practices more oppressive to women than the traditional Akan practices were, it seems that much of this can only be sustained in respect to her own people, the Akan, who are the only matrilineal people in West Africa. In a more recent article (1989a) she clarifies this point. Here, she points out that the Yoruba traditions, into which she married, legitimate male dominance and were thus quite jarring to her. This is a helpful clarification, but one still misses an exposition of the fact that the vast majority of the other ethnic groups of West Africa are patrilineal and seem to have had patriarchal social systems stemming back at least as far as the origin of iron age states in Africa in the first millennium B.C.E., if not even further. This means that the attempt to find "a usable African past" (cf. Ranger 1976) in the case of feminism is fraught with difficulties.

While it is indeed possible to join together two ideas in

the mind and in the university classroom, if praxis demonstrates the impossibility of their coexistence in the real world then one may question the validity of the construct. Can one transport a theological system designed for the Akan to another culture? One suspects that one end of the two poles would become relativized: either the ancestors as realities would be down-played, to the extent that they are no more life-guiding realities but more ceremonial functionaries, to whom libations are poured at meals and ceremonies, but whose advice is not sought or heeded in any real way. Or the other pole, that of women's liberation, would be relativized in such a manner that learning to be content with the status quo would constitute "liberation". This, of course, would not be a real liberation as far as Mercy Oduyoye and other African Christian feminists are concerned. Thus the dilemma remains, with no indication of how it might be solved outside of the theological classroom.

(ii): Recent Developments in Biblical Studies

As the question of an African Christian understanding of the role of ancestors is one of the most frequently debated topics in African theology, it becomes imperative that a more exact understanding of ancient Israel's practices surrounding the dead must be acquired. For assumptions have been made in this regard which are not always born out by careful research. The best recent study on the topic is that by Theodore Lewis, (1989) entitled Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit. This work, a careful scholarly treatment, suggests there is some evidence that in ancient Israelite popular religion there was in the early period a cult of the dead. This is evidenced in such incidents as king Saul's resort to the witch of Endor in order to call up the prophet Samuel from the dead, an event which the Deuteronomist recounts in order to emphasize its role in Saul's demise. It is significant that the Deuteronomist does not disallow the efficacy of the medium's craft, though Saul's resort to it results in his death. Deut. 18 condemns occultic practices, and specifically necromancy (consulting with spirits of the dead).

Lewis concludes there is circumstantial evidence of a cult of the dead, but that it was proscribed in the Yahwism which was later to become normative (note that Lewis does not speak of "normative Yahwism", but rather of "the form of Yahwism which was later to become normative"), while popular religion, including even the "official" cultus in Jerusalem often resorted to these

practices, even in later times.

The relevance of this study for African theologians is significant. For those African theologians who consider the scripture to be the normative ground of Christian faith, and to indicate the way of faith, the proscriptions of Deuteronomy need still to be taken seriously today. But the significant difference afforded by Lewis' research is that the ancient Israelite's worldview is taken seriously, and not explained away. Thus, the efficacy of the necromancy is not dismissed, rather its morality according to the moral standards of scriptural religion. The difference is a crucial one. It is precisely this point that many African theologians, particularly Osadolor Imasogie, feel has been misunderstood, to the peril of Christianity in Africa. It is the point which the independent churches capitalize on in their approach, which certainly acknowledges the reality of what traditional lifeworld in Africa knows as "spiritual realities", that is the spiritual realm. They do not even attempt to prove the existence of such a world, for to them it is a given, which need not be debated. To Imasogie and others, it is precisely the sensitivity of the independent churches to these spiritual realities that explains their success amongst African peoples.

(iii): Ancestors: a means of social control ?

It is widely asserted that ancestral cults are used as "instruments of discipline and control", in a general sense (Idowu 1962, 190ff).. Amongst the Yoruba, for example, the Egúnqún are masked figures who represent the dead ancestors, who make periodic visits from heaven during festival periods. While most African theologians would agree with Opoku (1978 155-6) in regarding this form of "traditional police" as a positive, life preserving force in African traditional society, some have seen it as repressive and coercive. Byang Kato, for example, said that in his ethnic group the ancestors play a role that is primarily concerned with social control, all or most of which is directed towards the control of women and children. Kato quotes the chief of Kagoro, Gwamna Awon as saying: "It seems to me 'dodo' worship has only two goals in mind. 1) To keep women in subjection and 2) To keep children under discipline." (Kato 1975, 34). Other scholars also cite the secret societies into which males are initiated, and in which severe punishments are inflicted upon any of the men who reveal any of the secrets of the society to a woman or child. To be precise, however, this evidence is not always directly

connected to ancestor veneration, but also to the veneration of other spirits.

Tekena Tamuno (1983) provides us with a balanced survey of traditional policing methods in Nigeria before the advent of colonial rule, which may help to adjudicate some of the claims made in regard to the role of ancestor veneration.

Lest a westerner should imagine him or herself to be superior in this regard, one might point to a similar phenomenon in modern culture though in a different guise. Until recently, it can be argued, modern universities were a "boy's club" with a secret language meant to keep women out. The very paradigm of "rationality" defined itself at the core as "the male way of thinking" over against "the female way of thinking". Walter Ong has shown how the use of Learned Latin in Medieval Europe contributed to the exclusive male control of knowledge and of "rationality" itself (Ong 1982, 112-116, 130), while the vernacular or "mother tongue" came to be associated with women and the uneducated. "Reason" in Western culture has been defined by and for males and lies at the heart of what it means to be male, as opposed to the imagined "irrationality" and "emotionalism" of women (Ramazanoglu 1992). Note further that "rationality" was considered the central insight of modernity, for Kant gave us the split between "fact" and "value" which has done so much to shape the worldview we call "modernity". So social control has taken on various guises in western culture as well as in African culture.

There are some indications that ATR devised sayings calculated to avoid disruptions of the status quo. But there are also cases where diviners used their powers against the status quo, notably in Zimbabwe during the period of Unilateral Declaration of Independence (civil war) when spirit mediums came over to the side of the guerillas. Ian describes this phenomenon in his 1985 work Guns and Rain. Here, the ancestors are understood to be "guardians of the land" and thus aligned with the freedom fighters working towards black majority rule and the recovery of lost lands from the white oppressors. Although this example, and others like it, such as the movement started by Alice Lenshina, do show the radical capabilities of ATR, they do not necessarily constitute a complete demonstration of the average impact of diviners vis a vis the status quo.

Welbourn and Horton both wrote articles in the 1960s on the parallels in role and function between ancestors and atoms, arguing that the ancestors provide explanations of the physical

world in many ways analogous to that provided by atoms in modern scientific thought: both are invisible, yet constitute the most basic components of order in the universe. Though his hypothesis might seem to have been damaged somewhat because of the development of equipment which now enables us actually to see atoms, nevertheless the parallel still carries some evocative power, and may be relevant to a discussion of the ordering powers of ancestor belief, but discussions of the role of ancestors has shifted to other questions in the nineteen seventies and eighties, leaving this thread loose. However, one may say that the ordering powers of the ancestors are considered as a given in the new ancestral discourse of the 1980s, the concept being subsumed under discussions of Christ as ancestor. In this connection Christian reflexion on the ordering powers of Christ has had a tradition dating from Christianity's first century of referring to Christ in this manner. Colossians 1:17 reads: "He is before all things and in him all things hold together."

(iv): Analysis and Questions

The works of Nyamiti and Bujo bring together a fascinating synthesis in the area of Christology, one which appeals to African Christian theologians across the wide spectrum of catholic, protestant and evangelical churches. There are several questions which still remain: (i) To what extent does the centring of ancestors bring a stasis to African life? This question lies at the heart of Black Theology's impatience with excessive discussion of ancestors, and may also be behind Éla's strangely brief treatment of the topic in his 1980 work. The weight of his critique actually seems to exceed that of his sympathetic sections in African Cry. (ii) Does one note an apparent blurring, in Bujo's work, between the categories of "ancestor according to the flesh" and "ancestor according to the faith"? Bujo holds that "Christ died for the virtuous [pre-Christian -ed.] ancestors too, and they live in communion with him, Proto-Ancestor and source of life" (Bujo 1992, 129). Bujo makes clear that in African traditional thought only "the virtuous" earn the right to be called "ancestors" and that the African conception of community includes both the living and the dead of that community, a conception he considers similar to the Christian doctrine of "the communion of the saints" (129). But it is not clear from his presentation whether the African conception of "the virtuous" dead could correspond to the Pauline notion of ancestry "according to the faith", although we are probably meant to conclude that it can.

The distinction between Abraham's ancestry "according to the flesh" and that "according to the faith" is one which Pauline theology considers non-negotiable (cf. Romans 4). In fact it is so important that the freedom to contextualize the Christian faith in the social context of Greek culture through dropping the requirements of circumcision, kosher food, etc., could have been greatly endangered if that distinction were blurred. If Bujo has indeed blurred the two categories then he may have inadvertently undermined the very foundation upon which one may base a freeing sort of contextual theology by the result of his contextualization programme.

2: Christ the Healer

Several African theologians have posited Christ as healer as the most appropriate Christology to the African context. We have already discussed this question in the context of healing in chapter three above, to which the reader may wish to refer for more elaboration. There, I have elaborated upon the obvious importance of healing in the African context today. Surprisingly only a few African theologians have gone beyond a discussion of the importance of healing to make healing the central category of an elaborated Christology. Kolié (1991) is our prime example.

The significance of a paradigm which actually makes "Healer" the christological title par excellence has far-reaching ramifications in Africa. Kolié says healing was the primary preoccupation of Jesus during his earthly ministry, and that this should guide our Christological reflexion today. The AICs, of course, have made healing a central activity, and we have demonstrated above the vitality of the healing ministry in the churches at the grassroots level. This underscores the enduring strength and potentialities of the "Jesus as Healer" Christology. Some scholars seek to relate Jesus as healer strongly to the following paradigm, that of Christ as nq'anga.

3: Christ As The Nq'anga

Amongst African theologians who have examined the work of nq'angas it is Masamba ma Mpoio who has gone further than any other in advocating certain of their practices and approaches (see Mpolo 1984a). But Mpolo does not elaborate a christological reflexion here. Some Africanists (Shorter 1985, de Rosny 1985, Kirwen 1987 and Schoffeleers 1990) have recently argued that Christ as nq'anga is actually the most obvious paradigm of all,

though no African theologian has proposed such a Christology. Kirwen makes the point that often the Christian missionary or priest in a traditional African village was actually perceived by the people as a kind of ng'anga, and certainly was the chief rival of the ng'anga. Several other scholars have argued that because of this perception, the transition to Christian predominance in many tribes was the function of a societal renegotiation of existing African categories, rather than a radical extirpation of one and its replacement by another.

Schoffeleers (1990, 317) claims that a ng'anga paradigm has been avoided for pragmatic reasons: the overseas funding agencies would cut off funds if the diviner were promoted as a type of Christ. Although there is possibly the risk that that might happen, I wonder if it is really that simple. Schoffeleers himself points out that the AICs see the ng'angas as their chief rivals, and seek to meet them at their own level. Would a move in that direction necessarily entail the cutting off of western funds? The question is perhaps worth asking in so far as its answer may be a barometer of how much real freedom African theology actually has, but as long as none of the African theologians themselves have taken up the discussion it can equally be said that it is not an African priority. As we observed in the case of the request for a Moratorium on western missions, African theologians have spoken out boldly against mission dominated theology, without blunting their message to please western ears, and without regard for the loss of Euroamerican funding. The call for a Moratorium was, in fact, a call for the cessation of funding. Thus it is unlikely they would stop short of making the same demand in this case, unless they have found the case for an ng'anga Christology unconvincing, up to the present time at least.

4: Other Christologies

Other African theologians have made their own suggestions concerning ways to contextualize Christ in Africa through alternative Christologies: Christ as Ruler (Pobee 1979, Kabasélé 1991), and Christ as Master of Initiation (Mveng 1973, Sanon 1991). Christ as Elder Brother has been put forward by Nkwoka (1990a), by Kabasélé (1991), and Christ as Guest by Udoh (1988).

John Onaiyekan suggests another possibility, "Christ the Great Orisha", an approach which pertains to the Yoruba religious milieu. Yoruba tradition, he explains, is "almost exclusively concerned with the cult of the divinities called

orisha." (Onaiyekan 1991, 22). The cult of the orisha has persisted in modern times, even as far away as Brazil, evidence of a very deeply rooted tradition. Onaiyekan points out that Yoruba converts to Christianity consider Orisha veneration to be incompatible with faith in Jesus, though they do not have a sense that they have converted to a new God. Onaiyekan concludes, therefore (1991, 22), that Jesus could be presented as "the Great and unique Orisha, superior to all others, to such an extent that faith in him makes attention to them redundant and useless." Onaiyekan observes that there are limits to all of the various images of Christ which have been presented: each one presents a part of the picture, but not all (1991, 22-23).

Julien Pénoukou (1991) offers us not so much a Christology as an approach to the development of Christology. He goes to his home village and listens to what local people, simple villagers, have to say about their own experience of Jesus. The result he calls "Christology in the Village". In a similar vein, Nicholas Mbogu offers a Christology with the particular focus of laying the groundwork of a theology of development (Mbogu 1991).

These offerings are, for the most part, so recent that there has not yet been enough time for feedback and response from other African theologians to be determined. In the case of the Ruler Christology which Pobee offered in 1979 there have been some criticisms (cf. Mercy Oduyoye) and few have picked up on the theme, though Kabasélé has recently made his own offering in this line. Pobee himself now says that he started with a "construct" in his 1979 work and that he would write it differently now (Pobee, personal communication 1991).

5: Christ the Liberator

The earliest African theologians to publish works in a liberationist mode were Jean-Marc Éla and Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga. The Tanzanian theologian, Laurenti Magesa, wrote on liberation and the church as early as 1976, and in 1989 has published "Christ as Liberator." In this, he is not far from the Liberationist theological paradigms of Éla and Eboussi-Boulaga. The above authors write from liberationist perspectives sometimes more and sometimes less familiar to readers of Latin American theology; for apart from the obvious Africanisation of their message, the themes of liberation from poverty and the emphasis on the role of the poor are very much reminiscent of "Liberation Theology". The biblical concept of shalom is recovered as meaning not only the

spiritual well being of the individual soul, but also the physical, emotional, and economic well being. The Exodus motif is to be lived out in the current social context, wherein liberation from bondage and oppression of colonial and neo-colonial servitude must be enacted physically. There is a stronger emphasis on the importance of critical thinking in the liberation process (Éla 1986, 39-53), an element which is not always emphasized by other African theologians.

There is, however, in addition to the emphasis on economic liberation, an increasing tendency on the part of African theologians to speak of liberation from all oppressive forces. Nlenanya Onwu in his 1985 survey article "Current State of Biblical Studies in Africa" cites Masamba ma Mpolo's (1983) article "Jesus Christ - Word of Life" in which Mpolo argues that Jesus committed specific acts of deliverance for the people, a deliverance from every sort of oppression: "In Jesus, the Word in all its dynamic force is present and his deed speaks of God as creator of the new life." (Onwu 1985, 38). Pobee (1987) has the same emphasis. Onwu concludes that in a number of studies increasing numbers of African theologians are speaking of Jesus as liberator from all oppressive forces, bringing deliverance from sin, sickness, poverty, and evil forces. (38). He cites the work of Mbiti (1975), Sawyerr (1972), and K. Enang (1979), and he could have added the 1976 contribution of Appiah-Kubi, as well as many others. His reference to Mbiti is all the more interesting because it is Mbiti who has been most explicitly critical of liberation theology per se, saying that it has insufficient biblical grounding (cf. Mbiti 1978b).

Onwu goes on to point out: "Africans do not understand healing as distinct from the more political acts of liberating prisoners and ending oppression. The juxtaposition of these ideas in Isaiah 61:1 is not seen as unique." (Onwu 1985, 39). Thus, African theologians are broadening the definition and scope of liberation. We also see that once again the African conception is closer to the biblical conception than either is to the modern west.

Onwu's survey corroborates my own findings in regard to the general tendency of the 1980s. A further development one may note is that Éla's theology is also developing the concept of liberation in a more all encompassing manner than previously. In his work published in the original French in 1980 Le cri de

l'homme africain,²⁶ Éla devoted one chapter to an African reading of Exodus. He demonstrated that the biblical account in Exodus shows God's liberating power effective in human history. He goes on to state:

Hence not only are liberation movements, mobilizing the collective aspirations, the locus where we are to read the history of the promise, but we must know, too, that God's revelation, in ongoing fashion, calls for the transformation of the world. Charged with a message of hope, God's revelation protests the present in order to actualize the future (Éla 1985, 35).

Such a clearly stated future orientation was rather unusual for African theology at that time. We shall recall that the central hypothesis of Mbiti's 1969 work was that Africans have an undeveloped conception of future time, a view which he had elaborated in his Ph.D. dissertation, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background (1971a). While not all African theologians have agreed with Mbiti on this point, and a few have written critiques of it (cf. Kato 1975), neither have any of them chosen to include a strongly developed future orientation in their theology. Kato had pointed out that in African evangelical and Independent churches one can find a very strong future orientation, expressed through hymns which dwell on the "Second Coming" of the Lord. But the type of future orientation which Éla describes is very different: it is directed towards the concrete transformation of this world in the here and now. He says:

Of necessity, the revelation of the God of the exodus enables us to renounce the temptation to short-circuit time and history. It enables us to rediscover the importance of the future and the depth of the present moment (1985, 35).

Éla's reading of Exodus is a stirring call to action.

Éla's 1980 (English translation 1985) work also contained a

²⁶ This work was translated into English in 1986 as African Cry. The translation, a one man effort, left much to be desired. For example, the term "négritude" was translated throughout as "blackness". While this is literally correct, it is idiomatically misleading because the English term "blackness" does not correspond to any particular school of thought or philosophy in the English speaking world, either in Africa or outside of it. "Négritude" refers specifically to the movement (described above) of leading francophone intellectuals started by Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire, having clearly discernible leaders and agenda, as well as to the philosophy of "African personality" they engendered. The term "blackness" in English directs people merely to skin colour, and does not have the resonances of a specific historical movement or philosophy. The problem was corrected in the far superior 1988 translation of Ma foi d'Africain, to which four people made substantial contributions.

strong critique of négritude philosophy and of the use of the ancestors by African ruling élites, particularly in the chapter entitled "Authenticity and Alienation". He stressed here the importance of critical thinking and pitted it against the way in which négritude philosophy had appropriated ATR. These devastating critiques, coupled with his future-positive eschatology, combined to produce a synthesis which could be interpreted to mean that he was, on balance, more critical of ATR than not, despite his affirmation of some aspects of it. His assertion of the need to have the eucharist in forms which are culturally familiar to Africans, such as millet cakes instead of wheat bread, could, after all, be taken as a rather timid form of aggiornamento or adaptation, if that is all there is to it. But if there were any questions about how Éla understood the ancestors, about healing and about African orality, these were answered in his 1985 work Ma foi d'Africain, translated into English in 1988 as My Faith as an African. Here, Éla draws out much more fully than in the previous work, the shape of his African faith. In the preface he states that the problem of "Africanizing" Christianity is complicated by the disinterest shown by much of the younger generation of Africans towards African cultural traditions:

Because the young people of today have emerged from school systems conveying alienating messages and few have experienced initiation rites, the totality of the African universe is not open to them, and they cannot draw on the knowledge transmitted by the great masters of oral tradition. As a result, the meaning of traditional ceremonies escapes them, and the use of oral style is barely discernible in their manner of speaking or living. (Éla 1988, xv).

This work starts by describing Éla's "itinerary": he travelled and lived amongst the poor of the mountains of northern Cameroon, the Kirdi people, to hear their story, and to try to encourage and help them to organize, to bring back hope of a better life.

Then he moves into the role of the ancestors and assesses them positively, devoting a significant chapter to this topic. In the third chapter, entitled "Telling the Story of God's Revelation", he speaks of the vitality of African symbolism and African oral modes of thought and action:

In Africa, religion is a system of signs and symbols that attributes primacy to the spoken word. Africa's symbolic system, which can lead to an understanding of the African "language," includes forms of oral expression, gestures, rituals, actions, and so on, embracing institutions, objects and beings." (1988, 35).

He mentions the kola nut, which represents all wisdom, as a good

example of this symbolism. No assembly or wedding can take place without it. He says (36): "Since African culture is overwhelmingly orality, speech between people is heavy with symbolism." He goes on to emphasize the importance of proverbs, stories and myths in the provision of a rich storehouse of symbols. These symbols are used in the naming of children, a vital African tradition, in initiation rituals, and in the other transition rites of African societies.

In a section laden with implications for hermeneutics, Éla tells us that African orality grounds reality in symbols and that this is the same manner of communication used by the biblical authors (1988, 43): "Indeed, basic symbols reveal God more concretely than clear and distinct ideas; the atmosphere of celebration arises more from poesis than from ratio." While the early church maintained this approach to language, scholasticism eliminated it (43). We might add that both the Catholic and Protestant varieties of scholasticism have had this effect. Using his symbolic approach to language, Éla gives us his conception of the meaning of the cross motif, which he sees in the words of Rev. 22:2-3: "In the middle of the street of the city, on one side of the river and on the other, is the tree of life bearing twelve fruits, one each month; and whose leaves can heal the nations." The tree of life is the cross, which is for the healing of the nations. For Éla there can be no retreat into a disengaged mysticism: "we cannot attain God by lifting ourselves out of the world...No. We find God concretely at the human level, there where we are most deeply ourselves." (43).

Éla entitles Part II "Faith at the Grassroots." Almost half of this section is an excellent chapter on "The Health of Those Without Dignity". This chapter develops themes we have mentioned above in our own chapter on health and wholeness. Éla goes on to do a survey of attitudes towards the relationship between sin and sickness in the bible, a much needed but curiously lacking element in the already vast literature on the subject by African theologians. He then assesses the situation in Africa today. Éla goes further than anyone else thus far in the development of a critique of the existing medical care systems in Africa and the confiscation of it by the rich, so that the poor are deprived of health. He points out that this is a legacy of the colonial system when colonial governments cared about the health of the masses only in so far as it was an issue of labour and manpower resources. Thus the workers were vaccinated without even being

told why, or what it was that was being done to them! As mentioned above, Kolié has picked up on this critique and confirms it from his own personal experience. This critique has expanded the framework of health discourse in African theology, bringing it to the questions of current social relations, of power and of exploitation.

Summary:

In the African churches, both Independent and mission churches gravitate towards the Christus Victor Christology of the early church. This is a strong Christology which emphasizes Christ as deliverer from all oppressive forces: spiritual forces, illness, disease. The appeal of a strong deliverer is evidenced in most of the multifarious church styles, whether AIC, urban student movements, or mainstream church. This is the theology of the grassroots. Our survey reveals that the fresh reading of the Christian scriptures in the light of African ideas is bringing about a new Christology of liberation in all spheres of life, an emphasis already found in the AICs and in the churches of the grassroots. What African theologians are adding to this is a more fully elaborated articulation.

6: Where From Here?

Concerning the welter of new Christological titles developing in the 1980s, Cécé Kolié expresses his frustration at the manner in which his fellow African theologians appropriate christological titles from ATR:

Since their communities cannot name Christ personally without going to the Bible or catechisms, they do just the opposite, and attribute to Christ the traditional titles of initiator, chief, great ancestor, and so on, that they would like to see him given in the communities. Once more we impose on our fellow Africans the way of seeing that we have learned from our Western masters. Shall we be followed by our communities, when we have finally gotten the prayers of the missal translated into these titles for Jesus whose real effectiveness has not really been tested in Africa? ... to give Christ the face of the healer in Africa (even though this was his principal activity in Israel) will not be feasible until the manifold gifts of healing possessed by all of our Christian communities have begun to manifest themselves. (Kolié 1991, 141).

To be fair, it is unlikely that most African theologians would consider their task to be accomplished if they got "the prayers of the missal translated into these titles". This is perhaps somewhat overstated, for many do express the desire for a grassroots

integration of practical healing. But the major thrust of Kolié's critique remains - that the current mode of discourse is not conducive to and is not oriented towards a grassroots level implementation, and hence remains a strictly academic level of discourse at the best, and is still resisted at the worst. Kolié's plea is remarkably similar to that of Mr. and Mrs. Imasogie, quoted in an earlier chapter, though the theological framework in which they work and live is quite different from that of Kolié.

Teresa Okure (personal communication 1992) states that one factor which all the new Christologies have in common is that "they start and end in the classroom"! She, and others, suggest that we should be listening to the movements which have grown so rapidly on African soil, the African charismatic churches and evangelical movements. They have strong Christologies, and African Christians in general seem to prefer a strong Jesus to a weak one.

Similar thoughts are expressed by Hannah Kinoti (1989) of Kenya in her article in Mugambi's (1989) Christology volume. She writes on the East African Revival. It is at this point that the integration of the African context in interaction with the theology classroom becomes dynamic and alive. Kolié's article on "Jesus as Healer?" has been discussed in the chapter above on healing. We mentioned the sense of frustration expressed by Kolié that any of the above Christologies are useless to Africans unless they are actually made tangible through praxis. Unless Jesus is actually seen to be physically healing people today, then it does no good to speak of him as "The Healer". Here, Kolié is pointing towards the sort of praxis found in the African charismatic churches and/or the AICs.

What remains clear is that there is a virtual explosion of new works on Christology in Africa since 1984. A glance at the bibliography confirms how many books and articles devoted to this theme have appeared in that period. What emerges is that it seems vital to say who Jesus is to Africans today.

Many African theologians say that they have gone through a period of severe questioning regarding Jesus. Pandang Yamsat, in a meeting of the Jos-Bukuru theological society in 1983 said that he had often wondered if it would be possible to have an African theology without any mention of Jesus. His eventual conclusion was no, it would not. But the seriousness with which the question was asked indicated that this was not a merely rhetorical question, not a question with an automatic or dogmatic response in African theological discourse, even though it may be so at the

congregational level in African churches.

Perhaps it is the eclectic emphasis of scholars such as Jesse Mugambi whose Christology will eventually become most prominent. He argues that the current rash of Christologies is "oppressive". He says (personal communication 1992):

The stereotyping - "Jesus as witchdoctor", "Jesus as ancestor", etc. is oppressive and reductionistic. We need to look at Christianity in Africa in its broadest dimension, not in any reductionistic fashion. There are many models of Jesus and we should be willing to accept that diversity. My task is to stretch the imagination so that people could accept more of that diversity.

This is the task Mugambi undertook in his collection of essays on African Christology published in 1989. Reductionism has been the bane of all discourse on religion in Africa since the inception of those discourses, as we have seen above. Mugambi's concern is to expand the scope of Christology and so contain all the emphases one finds in the diverse Christologies. This approach, coupled with the urgent cry of the necessity of praxis as opposed to disembodied theory, a cry which we have heard above in the works of Kolié, Bujo, Éla, and Eboussi-Boulaga contributes much to a vital and alive dynamic in African christological discourse today. For the move to insure that Christology is grounded in its social context and that it is praxis-oriented safeguards against approaches which turn theology into a merely academic exercise, and impels African theologians towards the grassroots level, where the suffering of the masses is to be heard. We have also seen that the praxis orientation is understood as essential to the liberative power of a Christ who is victor over all oppressive forces, an emphasis that is more pronounced, and more fully elaborated in the "third phase" of African theology.

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CHAPTER 6: PLURALISM AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Clearly, one of the greatest challenges to emerge in the decade of the 1980s has been that of how one may live in the midst of religious pluralism. Before proceeding we must define what we mean by "pluralism". In recent western scholarship the term "pluralism" has become a technical term referring, in Alasdair Macintyre's words, to a set of disparate paradigms whose concepts are so fragmented as to be "incommensurable". In the sense in which the term is most often used by African theologians this definition may not be applicable, for most would probably operate with an older definition wherein pluralism simply means tolerance of other religious points of view. For more specific definitions one would have to refer to each specific African theologian who deals with the issue, a task which space does not permit here. The operative concept for African theologians is, in any case, more concerned with grassroots level praxis and less concerned with abstract doctrine.

1: Social Context

In Africa the traditional religions formed the first religious structures, and for many people they still form a kind of substratum upon which Christian or Islamic beliefs are overlaid. The numbers of those who formally identify themselves as adherents of ATR is now quite low. For example, in Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria, in mid-1980, 49% identified themselves as Christian, 45% as Muslim, and 5.6% as ATR adherents (Barrett 1982, 527). The growth rate for Christianity in the decade between 1970 and 1980 was 3.65% per year, slightly higher than the growth rate of Islam, at 3.01% per year, while the rate of natural population increase was 2.78% per year. According to Barrett's statistics, Christians would have outnumbered Muslims in Nigeria by mid-1970, and following projected trends, Christianity would have become the religion of 50.1% of the population of Nigeria by 1990. A thorough and independent survey carried out by Dr. E.P.T. Crampton of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria effectively confirmed

these figures.²⁷ Crampton's survey, the most comprehensive ever carried out in Northern Nigeria, involved asking the pastor of each church, and the imam of each mosque how many people normally attend a Sunday service or Friday prayers, respectively. He concluded that the number of Christians would exceed the number of Muslims by approximately 1984, a few years later than Barrett's estimate. The studies of Barrett and Crampton are indicators of a new religious fact in Africa's most populous nation, one which certainly must be reckoned with by the nation's leaders. Statistics concerning religious affiliation are highly controversial in Nigeria, so much so that the census of 1992 made no attempt to record religious affiliation: it was known that any attempt to do so would result in grossly inflated numbers on all sides.

Though most Nigerians seem persuaded that their country is majority Muslim, there has been an increasing awareness on the part of educated Nigerian theologians in the 1980s that their country has a large and rapidly growing Christian population. The rapid statistical growth of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa is a phenomenon which only became well known by the end of the 1970s, for many observers had expected Christianity in Africa to collapse after independence came (in 1960) and/or the withdrawal of mission funding and support personnel and the rise of African nationalism. By 1980 it had become apparent that these factors had actually led to an increased growth rate for Christianity in Africa, rather than a decrease. The following table charts the statistical growth of Christianity and Islam as percentage of the total population for several African countries. Note that Barrett's statistics are controverted. The period of most intensive surveying was between 1970 and 1980 and the figures for subsequent years are extrapolations on the basis of continued steady growth rates. In reality growth rates will vary according to locally prevailing conditions. In Benin, for example, the end of single-party Marxist rule in 1990 is likely to lead to a greater rate of increase for Christianity there than Barrett could have projected. In many other countries, such as Gabon, the figures may seem high and continued high growth rates may not continue.

²⁷ Crampton reported his findings at the 1983 Conference of the Islam in Africa Project, held in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Table 2

COUNTRY	RELIGION	1900	1970	1980	2000
Benin (Barrett 1982, 175)	ATR	91.8	66.6	61.4	51.4
	Christianity	1.2	19.2	23.1	30.0
	Islam	7.0	14.9	15.2	18.0
Cameroon (pg. 208)	ATR	94.6	31.9	21.6	10.6
	Christianity	0.4	47.4	55.5	63.4
	Islam	5.0	20.0	22.0	24.0
Gabon (pg. 307)	ATR	92.5	3.4	2.9	2.0
	Christianity	7.5	95.7	96.2	97.0
	Islam	0.0	.8	.8	0.8
Ghana (pg. 323)	ATR	90.3	33.2	21.4	5.6
	Christianity	4.7	52.7	62.6	75.0
	Islam	5.0	13.9	15.7	18.0
Côte d' Ivoire (pg. 413)	ATR	94.9	49.0	43.8	33.5
	Christianity	.1	28.0	32.0	38.0
	Islam	5.0	22.8	24.0	28.0
Kenya (pg. 432)	ATR	95.8	28.1	18.9	10.5
	Christianity	0.2	63.5	73.0	81.9
	Islam	3.4	6.4	6.0	5.5
Nigeria (pg. 527)	ATR	73.0	10.8	5.6	3.0
	Christianity	1.1	44.9	49.0	51.2
	Islam	25.9	44.0	45.0	45.4
Togo (pg. 669)	ATR	95.1	56.2	45.8	25.2
	Christianity	.8	30.4	37.0	50.0
	Islam	4.0	13.2	17.0	24.0
Zaire (pg. 758)	ATR	98.1	7.7	3.4	0.7
	Christianity	1.4	90.3	94.5	97.0
	Islam	.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Zambia (pg. 765)	ATR	99.7	34.2	27.0	15.2
	Christianity	0.3	64.9	72.0	83.7
	Islam	0.0	.3	.3	0.3
Zimbabwe (pg. 768)	ATR	96.0	46.5	40.5	29.3
	Christianity	3.8	52.0	58.0	69.0
	Islam	0.2	.9	.9	.9

Source: Barrett 1982. Note that I have not included all of Barrett's categories, thus some boxes do not quite total 100%. Figures for the year 2000 are projected on the basis of growth rates during Barrett's intensive polling period: 1970-1980.

The table shows that in virtually every country except Benin, ATR had become the religion of the minority by 1980. Nevertheless, ATR is the base of religious activity in Africa, thus both Islam and Christianity find that belief patterns from ATR persist even amongst regular attenders at church or mosque.

North of approximately the 11th degree North latitude, Islam

has flourished in Africa. Islam came across the Sahara desert, having been carried there by traders. After establishing their presence in a given locality, Islamic traders brought in learned scholars who strove for the conversion of the local chief. By this method, many chiefs in the sub-Saharan Sudan belt of Africa had become Muslim by the turn of the nineteenth century. But they struggled with questions of how to accommodate the traditional ritual demands of their people, who remained ATR adherents, with the strictures of Islam. In most cases there was a relaxed form of accommodationism. But from the turn of the nineteenth century a new class of more purist Muslim clerics arose who began to demand strict obedience to all of the Qur'ān's dictates. When and where these demands were not met by the local emirs the clerics pressed for jihad or holy war.²⁸

One such was the jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio who, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, forged an Islamic empire which reached throughout Northern Nigeria, and into neighbouring Cameroon, Benin and Niger. The purity of Uthman Dan Fodio was not matched by his followers, and the empire lapsed into internal squabbling and corruption. But to this day the Sultan of Sokoto (the capital of the former empire) remains the spiritual leader of Nigerian Muslims and carries great authority in both religious and political matters in the nation, although he has no formal political office.

The British took control of Southern Nigeria in the 1890s and of Northern Nigeria in 1901. The compromise Lord Lugard made with the Muslim emirs of Northern Nigeria was as follows. The emirs were to cede authority to Britain in return for the guarantee of their own power on their emir's throne. There was to be "indirect rule" in Nigeria, unlike other colonies. British colonial policy was to be carried out entirely through the Nigerian emirs, rather than British administrators. The major change the emirs were required to adopt was the cessation of slave raiding. In return they were guaranteed non-interference in all matters of religion. No Christian missionary was to be permitted to enter an area in Northern Nigeria without the prior permission of the emir of that territory. British consuls were instructed to advise emirs who were considering the question of admitting

²⁸ The most common translation of Jihad is "holy war", but some Muslim scholars claim that a more accurate translation is "struggle".

missionaries not to do so. In any case, most of the emirs distrusted the Christian missionaries. They feared that any type of western education, whether Christian or secular, would undermine Islam. This meant that in practice missionaries were largely excluded from the North, except in such areas as Plateau State where there was no Muslim presence at that time.

One result of this policy was that the North became Islamized more rapidly than it had before. The Hausa people in 1900 were estimated to be only 50% Muslim and about 50% ATR (traditional Hausa religion).²⁹ By 1980 they were estimated to be 90% Muslim. Colonial rule brought plantation agriculture, which attracted some rural farmers, and brought them into contact with Muslim Qur'anic teachers in the towns for the first time. Most rural areas still had no Qur'anic teacher and thus the increased urbanization aided the spread of Islam.

Another side effect of Lugard's policy was that while Southern Nigeria rapidly acquired Christian missionary schools and hospitals, the North lagged far behind in development of the requisite skills for administering and governing an independent nation when independence came in 1960. The legacy of this was one of suspicion: the Northerners suspected that the Southerners intended to dominate them by means of the skills and the power which they had acquired through education. The Southerners feared that the uneducated Northerners would keep the country backwards and underdeveloped, while maintaining their power through their numeric majority.

The federal constitution of Nigeria of 1 Oct., 1963, chapter III, Section 24 provided for freedom of religious belief and practice, which included freedom to observe, teach and propagate one's beliefs and also to change one's religion. These constitutional guarantees had not been part of Nigeria's colonial experience, and the Nigerian people quickly came to expect these freedoms as their right.

However, suspicion between the North and the South came to a head in the Nigerian civil war of 1967 - 1970. While the religious clash between Christians and Muslims had been central in the

²⁹ Note that "the Hausa" are the people who speak Hausa as their mother tongue, rather than a tribe as such. They originally inhabited the seven city states of the "Hausa Bakwai", but the use of Hausa as a second language increased greatly as it was spread after the jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio in 1804 and also by colonial rule.

opening salvos of that conflict, it was somewhat diffused when Gen. Yakubu Gowon, a Northerner but a Christian, rose to power to lead the federal forces of Nigeria. This event had the effect of changing a religious war into a strictly ethnic conflict. Now the Ibos were pitted against all the other ethnic groups of Nigeria.

The end of the civil war in 1970 did not bring an end to inter-religious tension, though these seemed to subside through most of the 1970s. In the 1978 Constituent Assembly the delegates voted 190 to 60 against the imposition of Shari'ah law (Islamic law derived from the Qur'ān) on the nation in its new civilian Constitution. The country was plunged into rioting and chaos, and it took many days to restore the country to order. But when order was restored a general religious tolerance seemed to return. I often heard it said in Nigeria, up until approximately 1983: "It is good for a man to have a religion, but no one cares whether you worship Jesus, or Allah, or even a bottle of beer for that matter!" However, by the mid-1980s religious tensions were running high once again, and one did not hear that proverb any more.

One of the factors contributing to inter-religious strife since 1980 may be the action of the Maitatsine cult, a group which uses the Qur'ān, but is heterodox in its beliefs. They condemn all who do not belong to their order as "accursed". Thought to be an outgrowth of dashed hopes in the Nigerian cities of the 1980s where urban poverty is now the fate of the majority, (cf. Isichei 1987) the Maitatsine cult attracted large numbers to a charismatic figure named "Maitatsine", who called himself a new prophet, superseding even the prophet Muhammad. Because of this, he was considered an outcast by mainstream Islam. In December 1980 his followers rioted in Kano and one thousand people lost their lives, including Maitatsine himself. At least three times since 1980 his followers have risen up in riots which resulted each time in the death of hundreds of people. In each case the local police were powerless to stop them and the Nigerian army was called in. While the Maitatsine group was equally opposed by mainstream Islam and Christianity, the fact of their existence nevertheless exacerbates tensions between them, because each uprising brings a government crackdown in which open-air preaching is banned, and stricter controls are imposed on the freedom of religion, a freedom which Nigerians have come to expect as their right all the more since independence in 1960.

In this context, the use of inflammatory words such as "arne" (Hausa for "pagan") are prohibited in public speeches. But

the Maitatsine and many of the Islamic groups labelled "fundamentalist" do habitually use that term to describe all who are not a member of their own group. Christian fundamentalist groups often do the same.

A majority of Nigerian social scientists understand the Maitatsine uprisings as a revolt of the dispossessed (see Isichei 1987), though some social scientists disagree (see Hiskett 1987). Without going into detail on this discussion, we can say that Islamic-Christian tensions have grown in the decade of the 1980s, for reasons that have much to do with concrete social conditions, even if those conditions should not be seen as simply economic.

From March 6th-14th, 1987 one hundred and fifty churches in Northern Nigeria were burned by Muslims in riots which spread rapidly from their inception in Kaduna State. Twenty-two Christians were killed by Muslim rioters. According to most early reports, Christians did not retaliate at that time, though one account reports that three mosques were also burned (Ejizu 1988, 190).

By 1988, the death toll from religious rioting in Nigeria stood at over six thousand lives (Ejizu 1988, 191). Many incidents have been reported since that time, such as one in April 1990. The most recent event happened in Kaduna State on May 17-19th, 1992, when, according to unconfirmed reports, up to 300 people were killed.³⁰ This would be the most serious incident of inter-religious killing since the Maitatsine massacres of the early 1980s, and in its own way far more serious, for it now involves Muslims who are part of orthodox Islam, rather than an outcast sect. This suggests that violence is moving closer to the mainstream of orthodox Islamic society.

We have been describing the situation in Nigeria. Situations differ throughout Africa. In Sudan, the situation is worse than that in Nigeria - and this has led to civil war almost continuously since independence. The most recent round of intensified warfare started in the spring of 1992 when authorities in Khartoum decided to step up a new campaign to impose Shari'ah law in all parts of the country, including even the southern half of the country which is inhabited predominantly by Christians and ATR adherents. Previous attempts to mediate in this conflict had started from the assumption that any negotiated settlement would

³⁰ Facts on File May 28, 1992, p. 402. par.D.

leave at least the southern part of the country free from Shari'ah law. Recent reports indicate that Iran is training Islamic fundamentalist military units in Sudan.

In those countries where Islam has not made a large impact, the sorts of tensions we describe here have usually been minimal, at least until very recently. However, Iranian groups are reported to be behind riots in the spring of 1992 in Mombassa, the port city of Kenya, a country which has always until recently been quite free of tensions between Christians and Muslims.

In such a context, dialogue is extremely difficult. It is sometimes possible in a university setting to organize dialogue sessions. But in areas where lives hang in the balance, these meetings are particularly difficult to organize. Dr. Musa Gotom, former General Secretary of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria has pointed out, "Here in the North [of Nigeria] there is no dialogue" (personal communication 1984).

2: Theological Response

Interfaith dialogue and pluralism have been the subject of quite a number of works. The collection edited by John Pobee entitled Religion in a Pluralistic Society (1976) is an example of the type of treatment which has been most typical so far. Most of these works have focused upon the relationship between Christianity and ATR or the Independent churches. The topic of understanding and misunderstanding between Christianity and ATR has been covered extensively by African theologians and has also received attention in this dissertation. We have examined the successive Eurocentric definitions of ATR and the negative impact of these definitions.

In personal conversation with J.N.K. Mugambi, (Jan 19th, 1992) he expressed the view that Christian-Muslim dialogue would not become a major emphasis in African theology except perhaps in those countries, such as Nigeria, where the Muslim population either constitutes a majority or has a large enough minority that they exert considerable political power. He held that in countries such as Kenya, dialogue with those of other religions does not take place in the more abstract framework modelled by such scholars as John Hick, but rather it takes place at the ground level in terms of such questions as "how can we live together in one society on a day by day basis, how can we live in harmony with each other." In such a context, he argues, the more abstract doctrinal questions do not arise.

The first part of Mugambi's statements, however, is not necessarily shared by the other scholars under study here. We shall examine the works of a number of them below. Before turning to them I briefly note E. Mandivenga of Zimbabwe, who holds that Christian-Muslim dialogue will indeed be of increasing importance in all African countries (personal communication 1992). His statement is the more remarkable because Zimbabwe has, if anything, an even smaller Muslim population than that of Kenya.

Mercy Oduyoye opines that Christian-Muslim dialogue will certainly become increasingly important. In her contribution to the 1986 EATWOT conference at Oaxtepec, Mexico she said:

We cannot ignore the Islamic revival that is spreading in Africa; neither can we close our eyes to the inseparability of Africa's religion from African culture and its impact on Christianity and Islam alike. Theology in Africa has to be dialogical (Mercy Oduyoye 1990a, 101).

This statement is very similar to the conviction of Lamin Sanneh. Mercy Oduyoye informs me that her husband, Modupe, is currently working on a book addressing that topic (Mercy Oduyoye, personal communication 1992). In the 1980s and '90s changing social conditions have pressed upon Africans the need for dialogue between Christianity and Islam, as an increasingly urgent matter.

It is the thesis of J. O. Awolalu that the encounter between Christianity and ATR has evolved in three phases, the third of which has begun in the 1980s, a phase which is marked by increased intolerance towards ATR on the part of both Muslim and Christian militant "fundamentalists" (Awolalu, 1991). His conception of "three phases" is not exactly parallel to my own, but the concrete social conditions to which he points are the same, and many of the resultant phenomena are identical. When he refers to the growth of intolerance in the third phase I do not believe he is referring to the African theologians of this study, but to the groundswell of fundamentalism to which I referred in Chapter 2 above.

Dr. Yusufu Turaki of Jos in Northern Nigeria has written a Doctoral dissertation on Christian-Muslim relations, stressing the dominant role Islam has had over Christianity in Northern Nigeria. His work is helpful in so far as it clarifies, but it is unclear to what extent such works may be useful to dialogue between these two religions.

Nigerian theologian Victor Chukwulozi has written one of the most extensive treatments of Christian-Muslim dialogue to date (Chukwulozi 1986). Originally written during the civilian regime of Shehu Shagari in the early 1980s, the book exhibits much

optimism concerning the efficacy of planned dialogues and conferences. But Chukwulozi emphasizes:

the goodwill and integrity of people who engage in Christian-Muslim dialogue (especially, the leaders in formal dialogues) give us confidence that with time and patience most of our difficulties will be solved (Chukwulozi 1986, 81).

He is saying that personal involvement, goodwill, is more important than conference structures. Another, lesser-known scholar working on dialogue strategy is Dr. Christopher Ejizu (1988).

Lamin Sanneh is one of the few notable African scholars to tackle this problem from the point of view of inter-religious dialogue strategies. The point which Sanneh makes more clearly and consistently than other scholars is that we must strive to understand the African religious roots upon which both Islam and Christianity in Africa build. He says (1983, 249):

Far from allowing Christianity or Islam to siphon off those elements which constituted its own spiritual integrity, Africa has dissolved much of what came to it and reconstituted the resultant phenomenon as a reinforcement to pre-existing principles of the religious life.

Throughout his historical studies Sanneh has consistently demonstrated that African religious traditions have not been blotted out, no matter how thoroughly Christianity or Islam may appear to have triumphed at the numerical level. He holds that the dynamic is in the hands of Africans themselves:

Therefore, the most fundamental question that has faced the two missionary religions in Africa is whether and how they can reciprocate with African religions in a mutually recognisable idiom...the initiative lies with the African hosts (Sanneh 1983, 249).

Sanneh's strong historical works bring out, perhaps more clearly than those of most other scholars, the manner in which Africans themselves have been and are the actors, the initiators in the development of their own religious identity. A key to dialogue, then, for Sanneh, is the understanding of the African religious background upon which both Islam and Christianity rest.

For Sanneh, another important aspect of African agency is the "vernacular principle". He emphasizes that the importance of having the scriptures in the language understood by the people is a factor still undervalued today. In his 1989 work Translating the Message he develops this theme at length. In 1900 there were 113 vernacular translations of the bible in Africa, of which 14 were of the complete bible. By 1980 there were 526 vernacular translations, of which 99 were of the entire bible. In that year

work was in progress on 93 additional languages without scriptures.³¹ By 1980, a year we have said is pivotal for our hypothesis concerning the relationship between social change and a new (third) phase in African theology, the New Testament was available in the mother tongue of over 28% of Africa's 2,100 distinct languages and dialects. As the languages chosen for translation work have been, for the most part, the languages spoken by the larger population groups, the numbers of Africans with scriptures in their mother tongue was over 60% by 1980.

Orthodox Islam, by contrast, has traditionally not permitted vernacular translations of the Qur'ān. Apart from those unauthorized translations made by non-Muslims, the translations which have been made have been called "commentaries" rather than translations, for it is "the Qur'ān" only when it is in the original Arabic. This fact has left Islam at a relative disadvantage in its attempts to root itself in Africa, as the African vernaculars inevitably are made to appear inferior at one level or another.

The Islam in Africa Project Council, founded in 1959, is a joint undertaking of several churches. Its goal is to prepare Christians for their encounter and responsibility towards Muslims in Africa south of the Sahara. Towards this end they established the Study Centre for Islam in 1965 at Ibadan (Barrett 1982, 529). The Islam in Africa Project has work in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Burkina Fasso and Malawi.

Another body, the Community Development Group, is an interdenominational project open to people of all faiths. It is a mutual-help society for community development workers (Barrett 1982, 530). The focus of this type of group is upon bringing together people from different faiths to work on development projects of benefit to everyone. The levels of distrust between Muslims and Christians is so great, however, that even the prospect of bringing people from the two faiths together to discuss the possibility of such a project is often impossible. For example, in 1983 when I attended the conference of the Islam in Africa Project in Jos, there had been plans to discuss the possibility of starting a joint project with the Muslim community to help the many lepers in Northern Nigeria. But just two weeks

³¹ Mbiti 1986a, 23, citing United bible Societies World Annual Report 1981

before the conference another Christian-Muslim disturbance occurred, and as a result the Muslim delegation did not come to the conference.

It is noteworthy that Islam is a required course in the Christian seminaries associated with the Association of Theological Institutions in East Africa (LeMarquand, personal communication 1992) and the same is true of the theological schools associated with its sister organization in West Africa, WAATI. The Theological College of Northern Nigeria in Bukuru, Plateau State, run by the Churches of Christ in Nigeria, teaches the Qur'ān to its students. This instruction gives Christian ministers a more accurate understanding of what Islam actually teaches and aims at reducing misunderstandings between religions.

In the southern Nigeria, at such academic institutions as the University of Ibadan, Religious Studies Department, one does find inter-religious dialogue. There the Orita Journal was founded, the purpose of which was to foster dialogue and research into the three major religious traditions of the region: ATR, Islam, and Christianity. While a strong case can be made for the need for this type of dialogue, there is a tendency to see it as basically irrelevant as far as dialogue towards reconciliation of groups already at war is concerned. This stems from the fact that the religious presuppositions assumed by much of the type of dialogue promoted there seems to assume a religious relativism which most adherents of the major religious groups are not willing to accept. During the 1980s, Islamic "fundamentalism" funded by Iran has made great inroads amongst the younger generation, while at the same time Christian fundamentalism also grew in leaps and bounds.

It is now clear that the type of radical student youth disenchanted with what they see as overly compromised status quo leaders, the youth who would have been attracted to Marxism twenty years ago, are today attracted towards Islamic "fundamentalism". This has been the legacy of the Iranian revolution which swept Ayatollah Khomeini to power in 1979, an event which has sent shock waves through every country with a significant proportion of Muslims living in it. This then has presented the Christian churches in Africa with a new reality in the 1980s and 90s, one which was not anticipated in the 1970s.

The result of this new religious reality is a situation wherein "dialogue" is seen by most as already a highly suspect category. Each group tends to marginalize anyone who even begins

to engage in "dialogue" with the other. Under such circumstances, even the discussion of how we might live together in the same city, without war, is a "radical" concept. Even to consider dismantling one of the traditional pillars of the faith in the interests of "dialogue" would not only be unthinkable, it puts the one who does so in jeopardy with his or her own religious group and the resultant marginalization renders any further "dialogue" useless for the purpose of diffusing mass conflict.

These are the problems inherent in religious dialogue in many parts of Africa today. This is not to say that dialogue is impossible. Dialogue is absolutely essential if there is to be any progress towards a more peaceful, prosperous world. But I do not expect dialogue based upon extreme religious relativism to be very useful in diffusing mass conflict in Africa today, because this type of dialogue suffers from insufficient grounding in the life of the masses.

In light of the prominence of the African categories of orality, of friendship and the importance of hospitality, it would seem much more likely that dialogue through friendship is the most hopeful type. This is perhaps what one African theologian is getting at in his article entitled "Humanism, Bedrock of African Traditional Religion" (Onunwa 1991). It is also at the core of Udoh's (1988) "Guest Christology", which while it may not stand the test of time as a Christology proper, may serve us as yet another indicator that the African conception of hospitality is a rich treasure and an essential resource for African spirituality. The articulation of such a spirituality is the task of African theologians, and it is on this basis that we may expect to hear from them more of the implications of a rich spirituality of friendship in terms of dialogue with those of different faiths.

3: Summary

We have observed the social pressures resurgent in Nigeria, particularly since 1978, which have converged to make Christian-Muslim dialogue a matter of urgency. While the older set of questions surrounding the dialogue between ATR and Christianity in Africa have continued to receive attention, the statistical and concrete fact that since approximately 1980 Islam has replaced ATR as Christianity's chief numerical rival in Africa has the effect of pushing dialogue questions more towards the Islamic pole. This social fact has been given added stress by the recurrent religious riots and violence in areas of Africa where Christians and Muslims

form large percentages of the population.

The questions which emerge in Christian dialogue with Islam are inevitably quite different from those which arise in the dialogue with ATR, and approaches to the creation of dialogue-sensitive churches may differ according to which religion one is in dialogue with. As Islam comes to be Christianity's primary dialogue partner in the 1980s and '90s the questions surrounding this dialogue form an increasingly important facet of African theology in this period.

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CHAPTER 7: AFRICAN FAMILY IN TRANSITION

In this chapter we shall examine the strains acting upon the institution of the family in Africa today, changing conceptions of the role of women, and the changing situation of polygamy (the accurate term for which is "polygyny"). No institution could be considered more important to Africans than the family. Men consider that they must have children, in order to ensure continuity with the ancestors. In traditional thought, this meant that marrying a second wife might become necessary in order to ensure the birth of children, particularly if the first wife proved to be barren.

1: The Role of Women

It is clear that the role of women in Africa is one of the more controversial issues frequently discussed. While advocates of women's liberation seem few in number in comparison to Euro-America, nevertheless, their numbers are rising, particularly in the period since 1980. At the same time, general educational levels for women are rising and expectations are changing.

(i): Traditional Conceptions

Scholarly literature on the role of women in traditional African societies has increased greatly in the 1980s and '90s. In some quarters there has been a tendency to emphasize the strong roles women played in traditional African families. The African scholar who exemplifies this approach most strongly is Mercy Amba Oduyoye, who comes herself from the Akan people of Ghana, the only matrilineal people in West Africa. Most of the other literature by both women and men has tended to emphasize the largely supportive role of women in African traditional societies, stressing her role as wife, child-bearer and mother.

John Mbiti (1991, 63) reports that in traditional African thought, "the value of a woman begins when she is born, not when she gets married." He supports this assertion on the basis of the Lögbara proverb "A baby-girl means beautiful cows" (Mbiti, 64, citing Dalfovo, 214). However, he asserts also that the traditional roles of wife and mother were held in high esteem and conversely the barren woman goes through deep sorrows in African society (64). He cites the Gikuyu proverb "The woman who has children does not desert her home" (citing Barra 1960, 60) and

"The woman whose sons have died is richer than a barren woman" (citing Barra, 61). A Swahili proverb says: "A barren wife never gives thanks" (Kalugila, 20), by which Mbiti (64) concludes: "nothing else is as valuable as having children; they are the deepest cause for giving thanks. If a woman has everything else, except children, she would have no cause or joy to give thanks". A Ghanaian proverb says: "A serviceable wife is often blessed with the birth of a tenth child" (Mbiti, 64, citing Bannerman, 19).

The high value which African traditional thought gives to children stands in contrast to attitudes in the modern western world, where, according to one recent survey, 70 per cent of couples with children reported that if they could live life over again they would chose not to have children. While the validity of a single survey might be questionable to a certain degree, the fact that Africans visiting in Europe or North America are often shocked by the anti-child attitudes they encounter serves to underscore the differences which clearly exist.

Mbiti concludes his article on the role of women with the words "They are truly flowers in the garden. They give beauty, scent, and seed to life." (Mbiti 1991, 71). Mbiti's summary, while it seems to give a subordinate role to women, is meant to emphasize their importance, within a certain frame of reference. We might also point out that he makes reference to the importance of the olfactory dimension here, in saying "beauty and scent", a dimension which, as we have outlined above, is often repressed or undervalued in modern western thought.

Mbiti's methodology has been criticized for its tendency to overgeneralize on the basis of collections of proverbs and myths, thus leading him (too easily) to the conclusion that Africa has one basic religion with localized variations of a relatively minor nature. The 1991 volume on ATR edited by Olupona would have been strengthened by the inclusion of an article by an African woman on this topic.

(ii): Modern Context

In her landmark (1978) study of the changing role of women in Tanzania, Marja-Liisa Swantz concluded:

Christianity has had a significant role in opening up new roles for women, in giving them more freedom as individuals and considering them as equals to men. Both in individual life histories and in the history of the churches, the initial stages offered new social patterns of integration and assimilation (Swantz 1978, 149).

Swantz's study elaborates upon the processes operating in Tanzanian society during the missionary era, which established new possibilities for women, chiefly in the area of entrepreneurship. In the independence era, the advent of Ujamaa villages brought further gains, as women acquired the right to own land for the first time. Throughout Africa it was rare in traditional societies for women to have this right. The role of the church in promoting women's rights, however, has been an ambivalent one. Swantz reports that the church did participate vigorously in the formulation of Tanzania's Marriage Act of 1971 which created legal protection to women for the first time: a husband cannot take a second wife without the first wife's permission, Christian husbands may not take a second wife at all, divorce cannot be granted unless the matter has been before a conciliation board, a person cannot inflict bodily harm of any kind on his or her spouse, etc. (Swantz 1978, 149). But most people in the villages are unaware of these new rights, and the church seems unconcerned. Swantz reports (149): "the church has tended to look at the issue of marriage as a spiritual matter, not being aware that acute marital problems arise from the prevailing concept of inequality of man and woman." As a result a great deal of unnecessary suffering remains.

Swantz's study deals with Tanzania, and while no one study could represent the social conditions which exist in all sub-Saharan African countries, hers perhaps comes closer than most to being representative, in a generalizing manner, of the average conditions throughout the area under study.

The role played by Christian missionaries in bringing changes in the status and roles of women is now receiving more scholarly attention, and has become controversial. Amongst Nigerian societies it is the almost unanimous verdict of scholars and non-scholars that Christianity has brought increased freedom to women. In an essay collection on Women Missionaries and Cultural Change (Kulp 1987) Salamone writes of the role of Dominican sisters from the rural U.S. in transforming Nigerian attitudes towards women. The following quote draws together in one excerpt several of the themes we have been exploring in this dissertation: the role of the senses, Christian-Muslim dialogue, and the role of women:

In light of Germaine's work, it is easy to understand her deepening realization of the meaning of being a woman. "It is a man's world in Nigeria. We'd make the women feel important." In response to a Muslim who told Germaine that

"Women have but one sense. Men have seven," she retorted, "Some men don't have any sense at all," and added, "God made us all. Treat women as equals." Far from being alienated by her bluntness, the man later informed her that he had taken her advice and his marriage was now happier. Germaine uses this statement to support her belief that the presence of Dominican women in Nigeria has been a force in moving people to a deeper appreciation of women (Salamone 1987, 37).

Other essays in the same volume (Kulp 1987) speak of the pioneering efforts of women from other denominations, such as the indomitable Scottish Presbyterian, Mary Slessor, missionary in Southeastern Nigeria. Slessor broke with the traditional roles considered normal for women missionaries, and became a legend in her own time, eventually gaining the admiration of African traditionalists, chiefs, commoners, and colonial officials alike. She frequently intervened in disputes, prevented wars and confronted Ekpe chiefs over the inhumane treatment of women and slaves (Hackett 1987, 51). Her advocacy of independency for women went beyond what was considered correct in churches of the day. She wrote in the margin of one of her bibles, at the passage where St. Paul advocates the subjection of wives to husbands: "Na! Na! Paul, laddie! This will no do!" (Hackett 1987, 51 citing Buchan, The Expendable Mary Slessor, 138).

The other essays from women and men, missionaries and anthropologists in Kulp's 1987 volume confirm that women in Christian missions played a substantial part in changing traditional views of women and their work in Nigeria. The women missionaries are now seen by many as change agents in African history. They opened up a new space within the African lifeworld. It was often said that Euroamerican women, who were often unmarried, had, as unmarried women, no status at all in traditional Africa, no niche in traditional social structures. Yet these women missionaries ran schools and even taught men there. So though they had no official status their presence over several generations eventually carved out a new niche, and opened the way for future possibilities, to which African women might also attain. This is what African women began to do, with a new visibility and power in the 1980s. At the grassroots level, African Christian women in such groups as the Zumunta Mata (Hausa for "Women's Fellowship") in Northern Nigeria have continued to redefine women's roles and as a result they speak with a new voice today. These groups consider themselves custodians of the best of traditional culture, as they have been the prime actors in the movement to integrate traditional musical instruments, rhythms and

melodies in church. They work together to solve common problems such as health care in the rural areas. They often have increased power stemming from their independent economic activities. Though this does not usually issue in increased decision-making powers over the village as a whole, there is a certain leverage which comes from economic independence.

The picture in regard to practically every aspect of women's roles is controversial. In contrast to what I have reported above concerning economic development, Barrett (1971, 147-170) in attempting to discern causes for the development of independent churches, opined that women on the periphery of the mission churches became marginalized, for they had traditionally wielded religious and economic power in the family home: "At a certain point the limit of tolerance was reached; the break then came with the emergence of a charismatic leader, prophet or prophetess, often claiming an experience of wilderness, etc." While there is some evidence for Barrett's views in the case of the ethnic group he studied, one would be cautioned against applying it universally. In places such as coastal Tanzania and Northern Nigeria, both areas where Islam has had significant impact, women's economic roles outside the home are more severely curtailed than in the case of the mission churches to which Barrett refers. Yet it is in precisely those geographical areas that the independency phenomenon has not arisen. The role of women's economic and religious power, then, remains one upon which further study is required.

(iii): Theological Development

Going beyond the redefinition of roles found in Zumunta Mata groups, there is also a remarkable growth in numbers of women in leadership roles in the church. The rise in the numbers of African women doing Christian theology since 1980 is dramatic. Before 1980 there was only one African women publishing theological work on a regular basis: Mercy Amba Oduyoye. One other, Sister Ancilla Kupalo, a Kenyan nun, and staff member of the Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa from 1972-75 is the only other African woman theologian whose name appears as an author of a published work (Kupalo 1978) before 1980. By 1985 there were several more, and by 1992 there were over two hundred. Mercy Oduyoye now directs a task force set up by the World Council of Churches in Geneva to give encouragement to women to take up theology as a discipline. This has borne fruit in a greatly increased number of active women

theologians. Within EATWOT, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was formed in 1989 in Ghana. One hundred and fifty-three African women attended the first meeting in Accra - a significant step forward. Twenty-nine women attended the 1992 EATWOT General Assembly, roughly one third of the total number of participants. Many are Roman Catholic Sisters, teaching in universities and seminaries. Teresa Okure of Nigeria (Executive Secretary of EATWOT at the time) is notable among them. At the conference, notice was taken of the considerable progress made within EATWOT over the last ten years in regard to women's issues. Though it was clear that much ground still remains to be covered, it is now clear that women are prominent and their voices are heard and are taken seriously.

The Roman Catholic church has channelled large amounts of money into theological training in Africa in the past decade, and the results of this are now becoming evident in the numbers of new ordinands and in the numbers of African women and men now joining religious orders. This was exceedingly rare as recently as the 1970s, for in traditional thought, it was considered a grave misfortune to be celibate, and the failure to bear children disqualified one from becoming an ancestor. This, then evidences the development of a new "culture of acceptance of the new" in Africa, the acceptance of new categories and new ways of living life. The implications this has for Africa today are enormous, for those things which were said to be "unAfrican" or unappealing to Africans only a decade ago are finding increasing acceptance among the young, thus leading to new possibilities of living while yet retaining one's African identity.

In the field of biblical studies, the fight over which view of women the bible actually advocates will no doubt continue, but the new element is already to be found in the voices of articulate, theologically trained African women, such as Mercy Oduyoye, Teresa Okure, Ancilla Kupalo, Rosemary Edet, Louise Tappa, Elizabeth Amoah, Bette Ekeya, Hannah Kinoti, Anna Mghwira, Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, Dorothy Ramodibe, Thérèse Souga and Rose Zoé-Obianga, who promote interpretations of the Old Testament in which equality and mutuality are stressed as biblical ideals and as a result are challenging the notion that the Old Testament advocates polygyny. As a long term development, the rise in notions of equality and mutuality between the sexes seems bound to clash more and more with the traditionalist and neo-traditionalist views which advocate hierarchical structures and subservience. It

is out of these tensions that a new conception of the African family shall arise in the future, but it shall be shaped entirely by Africans themselves on their own terms.

2: Polygyny

In the colonial period the Euroamerican missionaries considered polygyny to be the greatest offence. In the words of Cameroonian theologian, Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga (1991, 19): «Mais la grande obsession, c'est la polygamie, qui requiert les efforts les plus passionnés.» The missionaries were obsessed with this question. For them, adherence to monogamy was the very litmus test of orthodoxy. In view of the missionary preoccupation with the sinfulness of all forms of polygyny, a major emphasis in African theology has been upon reassessing traditional African polygyny, so that ways may be found to integrate at least some polygynists into the church, while at the same time maintaining a Christian view of marriage. The church's strictures against polygyny are widely seen as the product of a western mindset, and as unbiblical.

(i): Traditional Social Context

In traditional Africa, the economy was almost entirely agrarian. In this context, polygyny was viewed as socially necessary in order to ensure continuation of the society, and to provide for the needs of the many women who might otherwise never enjoy the status and benefits which accompany becoming a mother, a bearer of children and are thus a vital link to the ancestors. Wars between groups often resulted in the reduction of the male population, thus females usually outnumbered males. Unmarried women risked social humiliation without a husband and children, thus the system sought to provide for the needs of everyone in the society.

The African polygynous man, it is usually argued, at least sought to shoulder extra social responsibilities as he progressed through life, in contrast to the version of polygyny currently found in western countries, wherein the modern serial polygynist divorces his wife and marries others in succession, all the while seeking to avoid his social responsibilities by shirking his alimony payments and striving to dodge child support payments whenever possible. This practice has become so ubiquitous that it presents a challenge to the western legal system which has become overburdened in its efforts to track down "deadbeat dads", and

must create new laws to cope with new societal acceptance of cohabitation sans marriage, such as "palimony" laws.³² In African tradition, the man who supports many children through his labours is generally regarded as a hero, but the person who consistently dodged responsibilities is regarded as an outcast or something approximating an outcast, and would not earn the right to be called an ancestor.

The Jerawa people, who live to the east of Jos in Plateau State of Nigeria, were reached by Islam just after the turn of the nineteenth century. Though they have long been exposed to Islam, to the present day only the chief and his immediate family are Muslims. This is attributed to the fact that in Jerawa belief it is considered proper that all the farming must be done by women. As a result, only the chief can afford to be a Muslim, as the chief is the only person who is rich enough to be able to afford to keep his wife in purdah (strict seclusion). The long term effect of the strict observance of this rule has been that today a significant percentage of the Jerawa have become Christians, because Christianity permitted women the freedom to go outside of their compound, thus no economic obstacle to conversion was presented. This development is all the more remarkable in the light of the normally observed pattern of conversion. In places where traditionalists have converted to Islam, they seldom convert to Christianity if Christianity arrives in that area later. This being the case, it would seem that in the case of the Jerawa, the free movement of women was a culturally non-negotiable custom, leaving Christianity in a better position to contextualize itself than Islam, a situation which seems to have been relatively rare in West Africa, though not as uniformly so as is often supposed.

(ii): Modern Social Context

Today in many parts of Africa polygyny seems to be waning, though the rate of change varies from one locality to another. The factors contributing to this variation seem not to be well understood, and statistical data is, again, not only unreliable, but difficult to interpret.

³² Some American states have passed laws requiring "Palimony" to be paid when the couple splitting up had not been married, but because the wife had contributed so much of her time, money and effort to the relationship, it was felt that she ought to be compensated. Analogous to "alimony", it is given even if the partners were only "pals".

The shift from an agrarian based economy to an urban-based cash economy creates a new situation wherein plural wives are not necessarily an economic asset any longer. It was held in traditional society that women could produce more food than they consume, but in a modern cash economy it is now widely believed that women do not usually produce more cash/goods than they can consume. Furthermore, the children of plural wives cost far more to educate than children in smaller numbers, and education is today a much more highly prized commodity than it was before 1945. Therefore most African men (and particularly those who are urban based) now feel that no matter how much they might like to take a second or third wife, and would like to keep that option open, they also freely admit that for strictly pragmatic reasons the days have probably passed when polygyny is feasible for them.

In most West African countries today, women of the younger generation, many of whom have themselves been raised in polygynous families, are increasingly speaking out against polygyny. While they generally agree that in the past there were economic reasons for the institution, they feel that those times are gone now. They frequently offer the most vigorous attacks on polygyny, saying that they themselves had grown up in such homes and witnessed first hand the jealousies, the manoeuvrings, the use of witchcraft and even poisonings due to jealousy which seemed, to them, inevitable in any situation where two or more women have to share the same man. They say that consequently they will have nothing to do with it. In my own experience, women under thirty in Nigeria usually argue strongly in this manner. The documentary film "Asante Market Women" produced in the early 1980s, interviews a number of college age women in Ghana, who unanimously express the same views. Our statistical surveys also confirm this throughout Africa. The role of education in bringing about changes of attitude in this regard has undoubtedly been profound.

Even modern architecture militates against polygyny: in traditional architecture, each wife would have her own hut with its own cooking area. But modern houses and apartments have only one kitchen, and often a very small one at that. Only the very rich, those who can afford to have a modern house built to their own specifications, can build accommodation to suit a polygynous family. While this fact on its own is probably not sufficient reason to induce young African men to abandon polygyny, it can be seen as one indicator of a general cultural direction.

In a work entitled Many Wives, Many Powers (1970) which

reveals the complexities involved in the transition of the institution of polygyny from the rural to the urban context, Remi Clignet discovered that in some cases polygyny can increase certain types of status for women, but that on the whole, the urban monogamous wife has a more egalitarian relationship with her husband than her sisters in polygynous marriages. This type of egalitarian structure seems to be more likely increasingly to become normal in African life as urbanization continues. Yet his study indicates that norms and behaviour patterns do not necessarily become entirely westernized in such households.

Furthermore, Clignet found that in the modern urban setting, just as in the traditional, the saying "Many Wives, Many Powers" still holds, though in a new way. All of this has a tendency to vindicate the claim of Eboussi-Boulaga, Bujo and others that the future of Africa is not to be found in Europe's past.

Although some studies indicate that in some areas polygyny is disappearing, other studies show a great deal of ambiguity. There is a difference between rural and urban areas, but the amount of that difference varies widely from one area to another. One study, in Western Nigeria, reported that the percentage of married women in polygynous marriages varied from 17 per cent in modern suburbs to 68 per cent in rural villages. If one takes this figure in isolation and conjoins it with the figures in our section above on rapid urbanization in Africa then one might come to the conclusion that polygyny will die out within two to three decades in Africa. If, on the other hand, one looks at figures from Senegal, where in 1978 49.7 % of rural women were in polygynous marriages while the percentage for urban areas was 45.7, then the differential seems so small as to preclude any significant decline in the rate of polygyny even if Senegal becomes completely urbanized, if urbanization is taken to be the primary factor. If this were so then polygyny would still remain a strong institution in Africa several centuries from now. Some scholars are more tentative than others in their statements regarding the disappearance of polygyny. To a certain extent, this may depend upon how much weight they give to the various factors which have proved to be determinants. Even more strongly than urbanization, education influences marriage choices. Studies very strongly and unambiguously show that young college educated women reject polygyny as an option for themselves. For young men of college age, however, the studies are much less clear. There is, however, a growing number of young men who reject polygyny as an

option, for whatever reasons, and these are a new factor in the social matrix of the emergent Africa.

A weakness of many studies on polygyny is that they do not deal seriously with the role of religious beliefs, which is a third factor. While many authors have made the claim that polygyny is less frequent in Muslim and Christian families than in ATR, the surveys do not bear this out. The surveys show that in many parts of West Africa, adherents of Islam report the highest percentages of polygynous marriages, followed by adherents of ATR, and then by Christians. One might deduce from this that those countries where Islam predominates would continue to have a high incidence of polygyny for a long time to come, whereas African countries where Islam is not a major player will see a gradual decline in the incidence of polygyny.

Another serious problem affecting attempts to chart the decline of polygyny is that there are few good longitudinal studies showing rise or decline in one given area over a long period of time. Ideally, one would need such a study covering a period of at least sixty years.

(iii): Modern Distortions of the Tradition

Several African theologians have pointed out that pressures partly associated with the tensions of modern life in African cities are now producing distortions of the traditional African beliefs concerning polygyny. Bujo (1992, 68) tells us:

In polygamous unions, each woman could lead a satisfying life, with her dignity recognized. Today this tradition has been stood on its head. The first wife is no longer consulted before the husband takes a second. Indeed she may well be left to cope with life's problems on her own, a state of affairs which could never come about in the traditional situation. There again the second wife is no more willing than the first to share her husband's love with a rival.

In addition to the distortion of traditional teachings of ATR on polygyny, there are now also revisionist understandings of the teaching of Islam on polygyny. In Islamic ethics there are five categories of actions: (i) actions which are obligatory, (ii) actions which are recommended but not obligatory, (iii) actions which are neither recommended nor discouraged, but neutral, (iv) actions which are discouraged but not prohibited, (v) actions which are absolutely prohibited.

Amongst these five categories of actions, orthodox Islam has always categorized polygyny in category (iii): action which is

neither recommended nor discouraged. However, in the revisionist understanding of Islamic ethics now being popularized through the columns devoted to Islamic teaching in the daily newspapers of Nigeria and other parts of West Africa, it is said that Islam "encourages" or even "requires" a man to marry as many wives as he is physically capable of. Meanwhile, in Egypt, long an Islamic stronghold, polygyny has for many years been disappearing as a social institution. Interpretations prevalent there stress that the intention of Islamic teaching is that a man should treat each of his wives equally, and that because it is virtually impossible, in practice, for a man to treat each of his wives exactly equally in all respects, therefore it is best to remain monogamous. However, this interpretation of Islamic thought, while widely accepted in Egypt, is virtually unheard of in West Africa.

Statistics suggest that West African Islam is promulgating a new advocacy of polygyny: in Côte d'Ivoire, of women adherents of ATR, 29.7 per cent were in polygynous marriages, while for Muslim women the percentage was 37.6 (in 1980-81). In Liberia only 31.5 per cent of women adherents of ATR were polygynous, as compared to 51.0 per cent among Muslim women in 1988. This is in stark contrast with the Arab countries of North Africa, where one finds a rate of polygyny of 1 per cent in the urban areas and 2 per cent in the rural areas.

In view of the distortions current at the popular level in Africa, an understanding of the social forces at work is necessary. Young African men under the age of thirty today see the forces producing an inexorable social movement towards the phasing out of polygyny in Africa. Polygyny is not illegal in many African countries, though in some only one wife is legally recognized. But the economic picture is such that many think this will be the last generation wherein polygyny will be economically and socially possible. If that is the case then any strictures of the church become irrelevant. Understood in this light, perhaps we may gain insight into the rather desperate nature of the outcry of young men on behalf of polygyny.

Further, it is important to see that polygyny is promoted by West African Muslims as not just a practice, but as very symbol or touchstone which reveals the Africanness of Islam, and by contrast, the Europeanness of Christianity. Islam then becomes the quintessential "African religion", and "the religion perfect for Africans". Regardless of the weaknesses inherent in this line of reasoning, it has gained so much currency at the popular level

that it is frequently accepted as the crowning and irrefutable argument, and many African Christians are cowed by it.

(iv): Theological Response

A few missionaries wrote sympathetic treatments of polygyny: Trobisch (1967) and Hillman (1975) are notable, but most of the work involved in finding a way for the church to accomodate believing polgynists has been done by African theologians. We note the works of Manas Buthelezi (1969), Mpolo (1975), Bujo (1985), Nkwoka (1990b) plus a large number of chapters and sections in monographs dealing with ATR. Again, as we have seen in the other areas under study, the shift in the 1980s has been away from description of the practices of ATR towards a pastoral orientation: the role of the church in regard to counselling members of polygynous families.

We noted above the decision of the Lutheran church of Liberia in the 1970s to admit believing polygynists to communion, and the 1988 decision of the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican church to admit believing polygynists under certain circumstances. The latter came about due to the insistence of Ugandan and Kenyan bishops. The past decade has seen growing pressure in the Roman Catholic church for similar accomodations, but the resistance from the upper levels of the hierarchy has been stronger.

3: Summary

In summary, the period since 1980 has seen a change in social conditions in Africa, a period in which the social factors favouring older patterns of family structure including polygyny are under serious stress in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time there is the rise of a new group of vocal women leaders within the African churches, a group which was small at the beginning, but has already grown large and will continue to grow and to shape church experience and life more fully in the twenty-first century. As such, their theology is now shaping the new mixture of voices and themes, contributing a new dynamic to African theology in the 1980s and '90s, giving it a new voice which had not been audible in its first two phases.

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CHAPTER 8: JUSTICE, PEACE, and the INTEGRITY OF CREATION

To continue with the exploration of challenges which have taken on a new level of urgency in the 1980s and '90s I present an overview of African theological responses to the World Council of Churches post Vancouver 1983 emphasis upon Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), taken within their sociological context.

1: Justice

Social justice concerns have been expressed by Jean-Marc Éla, Eboussi-Boulaga, Bénézet Bujo, Laurenti Magesa, David Gitari, J.S. Pobee, Mercy Oduyoye and many others. A recent article by Jacob Tesfai (1990) represents a typical African response to JPIC. The struggle for social justice has been expressed in terms of the struggle against colonialism, racism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, and more recently in terms of the struggle of women for recognition of their full humanity. Further, there have been frequent calls for the "transfer of technology" from the west on terms which Africans can afford.

We have explored the development of the "Christ the Liberator" Christology in the Christology chapter above. Little more need be said here or repeated, except to elaborate on some themes recently taken up in African theology in the social justice context. One is a questioning of the role of ATR, particularly the role of traditional proverbs in the acquisition of justice in Africa. Pobee now says that this role can be ambiguous, as proverbs can be quoted by dictators for their own purpose to justify continued exploitation and repression of dissent, and violence. This is a critique also taken up by Éla.

In his insightful article entitled "Toward a Usable African Past" (1976, 22) T.O. Ranger, quotes favourably William Ochieng, an African historian, as saying the question of poverty in Africa is not just one problem among many, but "the central problem of African historiography". By this, he does not infer that it is merely an academic problem, but rather that our conceptions about the African past are inextricably linked to our choice of solutions to the current fact of widespread poverty in Africa. No question could be more timely. Ochieng is critical of what he sees as the romanticizing trend in African historiography. African theological literature in recent years includes analysis of the

causes of poverty and suffering (cf. Waliggo's 1991 "African Christology in a Situation of Suffering").

(i) "The Poor" as Subject

More recent African theological discourse shows a growing tendency to address "the poor" as subject. J.N.K. Mugambi devotes a chapter to "Poverty and the Kingdom of God" in his 1989 work African Christian Theology. John Pobee in a recent article (1989) uses the term "preferential option for the poor", as does also Augustine Nebechukwu in his 1990 article. Gwinyai Muzorewa gives serious attention to this in his 1990 article entitled "A Definition of a Future African Theology". This emphasis on "the poor" as subject is rather new, even though there have been a number of articles and books on Black Theology, Liberation Theology, and the relationship between these two modes and African Theology. These works tended, in the 1970s, to concentrate upon the relevance or lack of relevance that these modes might have for theological discourse in sub-Saharan Africa outside of South Africa.

Mbiti, for example, was quite critical of Black Theology and Liberation Theology, saying: "even though there is much biblical basis for this theme, African discussion of liberation has so far continued without or with only a few scriptural references." (Mbiti 1978b, 81). What we see now is not only a growing interest in an African theology of "liberation", but also an interest in looking at the biblical sources on the poor towards the end of determining what the church's role in Africa should be, based on that biblical understanding. This can be understood as an independent attempt to treat the poor apart from previously imported ideological concepts. This development warrants attention in and of itself. Further, it may help to allay the fears of those who suspect that any talk of "social justice" or of "liberation" must necessarily mean that Africans have merely imported "Marxist theology" in toto. This most certainly has not happened.

The goal of meeting the needs of the poor at the level where they live has been expressed not only in words but in the praxis of African church leaders under study. We have mentioned above the life which Éla chose to live among the poverty-stricken Kirdi people of northern Cameroon. We should also mention that bishop Emmanuel Milingo, who is known in the popular press as a healer and exorcist, actually is far more complex than that. It was his dedication to work among the poor that propelled him into his

healing ministry, and he spoke out against rich rulers who claim to be Christian but are not (Gray 1990, 109-110). This illustrates once again the way in which liberation from economic oppression is interwoven with liberation from all oppressive forces.

2: Peace

John Mary Waliggo succinctly sums up the African situation vis à vis military conflict in the following words:

Since independence, Africa has greatly suffered under the yoke of its own political leaders, many of whom adopted dictatorial approaches to government. Africa has witnessed over seventy military coups, most of which have claimed many innocent lives. There have been numerous military conflicts either internally or between nations, giving rise to millions of refugees, widows, and orphans. Funds meant to develop Africa have been placed in personal accounts in Euro-American banks by selfish African leaders. Such leaders had neither the capacity nor the intention to propose an authentic development programme for their people (Waliggo 1991, 170).

Many African theologians understand peace as inherently connected with justice concerns. A few have decried the lavish sums spent by African governments on military hardware. Yet a fully pacifist stance is practically non-existent in the African churches and African theologians do not advocate pacifism. The main concern underlying discourse on "just war theory" in Africa has been the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Though the African theologians of our study live in a social context very different from that of South Africa and often disagree with "Black Theology" as it is conceived there, they do consider themselves to be in solidarity with the blacks of South Africa and part of the anti-apartheid struggle. It is felt generally that violence is necessary in this case to overthrow an unjust regime. Frank Chikane reported at the Jan. 1992 EATWOT Conference in Nairobi that when he joined the struggle to fight apartheid he and his friends never stopped to ask if there was a theological justification for doing so. They acted because they knew something must be done to stop apartheid. It was only later, he said, when people started asking them what their theological basis for the struggle was, that they began to hear about the "just war theory" and its use in Christian history. This type of struggle takes place at the grassroots level not necessarily connected to any disciplined theological reflection or discourse. Chikane says this is quite acceptable, in the circumstances.

From African theologians outside of South Africa, we may

regard the following statement of John Mary Waliggo to be typical:

When confronted with inhuman regimes, selfish dictators who deny people their fundamental rights, racist rulers (as in South Africa), the old classic christology of a pacifist Jesus can no longer be the answer...In such a model the theology of revolution occupies a central position. (Waliggo 1991, 167).

Waliggo holds that in at least some situations the theology of revolution is called for. Somewhat different and less typical is the response of Bujo who says in his Epilogue:

I have tried to show that African religion is essentially liberating, and that any modern African Christian theology must therefore also have as its goal the liberation of men and women.

I am not speaking of some sociopolitical liberation to be achieved through revolution, but of liberation in all its aspects, personal as well as social. People should enjoy fullness of life at every level. (Bujo 1992, 130).

Here, the theology of revolution is clearly rejected, though it is not clear from the rest of this work whether Bujo takes a uniformly pacifist stance or not. In any case, Bujo's approach is all the more significant because of his strong liberationist element and praxis orientation throughout.

Peace discourse in Africa has usually centred upon the disruption of peace both real and potential, which was fostered by the superpowers, and is fostered now primarily by the U.S.A. Though the use of force is generally agreed to in the anti-apartheid struggle, nevertheless there is a growing recognition of the debilitating effect of military spending on the economies of most African countries today.

3: Integrity of Creation

African theologians have stressed that the substratum upon which all future Christian theologizing in Africa must be built is African Traditional Religion. So the question of African conceptions of nature is certainly an appropriate one. By far the largest portion of African theological discourse relevant to ecology thus far has been on the conceptions of creation and/or "nature" found in ATR. As part of the quest of the 1970s, much was written on nature in ATR during this period. We shall discover that in the 1980s African theologians have paid more attention to explicitly Christian theological reflexion on Christian ecological responsibility. In the pages which follow we shall first present some of the salient aspects of some African conceptions of nature, then move to a survey of the more recent theological responses.

(i): Nature and Humanity in African Religions

At the outset, we must point out that when we attempt to ask what African conceptions of "nature" are or were, when we try to extract our modern notion of "nature" from African religions which have not followed the same line of historical and philosophical development, we are asking a question which the African traditions were never designed to answer. The English word "nature" or "environment" has no exact equivalent in African languages. For example, we find that for the Hausa of North-central Nigeria, the term garii is usually translated as town or sky, but signifies the total human and physical environment of the Hausa city state (Richards and Harris, eds, 1975, 106). Garii does not translate "nature", nor does duniya (meaning "the world,") nor any other term in the Hausa language, but there is a rich treasure to learn from in the study of words which one would use to approximate a similar idea.

A further problem for our study is that in the African context there is no single authoritative tradition to refer to as a guide. Each ethnic group (or "tribe") has its own distinct language, culture, and religion, and it is estimated that Nigeria alone has over four-hundred and fifty distinct ethnic groups and languages. It is not possible under these circumstances to make hard generalizations about ATRs. Indeed, the introductory chapters to all of the texts written on ATR all expound at length on the reasons why past definitions have been inadequate, usually stressing the fact that they were too overly-generalized. This leaves us with extreme difficulty in choosing a methodology to tackle our topic. One may attempt the method preferred in anthropology, whereby one focuses upon one ethnic group exclusively, covering it through ethnographic writings devoted exclusively to that group, the advantage being accuracy and depth. However, the uninitiated who reads such a work may come away imagining that he or she now knows how "Africans" view the world, and this would be grossly misleading. The approach I shall attempt here is multifocal: I shall begin with a synthesis of works dealing with ecological practices throughout Africa, examine some cosmogonic myths and give a comparative analysis of a few ethnic groups in West Africa, with special attention to the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, and to some other Nigerian groups.

Africa has suffered from a long history of misunderstanding and oppression at the hands of westerners. In addition to the physical and economic oppression of her peoples which we have

chronicled in previous chapters, she has also withstood a succession of differing mental pictures in regard to the environment, all of which distort or overgeneralize. A recent work on African environments and resources (Lewis and Berry 1988, 13ff.) chronicles some of these distortions. Africa in the early period of contact was often characterized as a place of "limitless" fertile tropical forest. Another, and sharply contrasting image was that of Africa as an endless desert. A third image is that of Africa as the home of exotic wildlife game preserves: many travel films and TV documentaries will show fifty minutes of superb wildlife photography and three minutes of the people in the area, yet today large areas are without any game animals. Another picture of Africa is as an area of insect and waterborne disease. Yet another and more recent picture of Africa is that of Africa as a devastated continent (see de Vos 1975 and Eckholm 1976). Those who espouse this view while recognizing some diversity, yet have portrayed an overall impression of total devastation, citing the Sahelian droughts, continent-wide deforestation, desertification, ubiquitous soil erosion, and the loss of many animal species all as evidence of generally deteriorating environments in Africa.

Throughout the various changes in approach and attitude, one tendency has remained: that of seeing Africa as uniform, and that is the idea which must be rooted out of one's thinking completely before any progress can be made in this area. The notion of uniformity has been applied just as much to the people who inhabit the land as to the land itself. The writings of early missionaries, anthropologists, and colonial officials alike are filled with erroneous generalized applications of one cultural or religious custom or habit from one ethnic group to all Africans. We have mentioned above that Western writers on Africa have labelled African religions in such terms as "primitive", "animism" (Tylor), "paganism", "polytheism", "fetishism", "ancestor worship", "totemism" (Freud), "naturism", and "nature worship" (Fraser, Willoughby). These terms have all been rejected by modern African scholars of religion as inaccurate and pejorative misconceptions invented by Westerners who did not understand Africans and their world view. It is only fair to point out, however, that modern anthropology has also rejected these terms, for the most part, and now uses such terms as "animism" only in a very carefully qualified manner, when used at all.

Finally, the intrusion of the West has already made it

difficult to know with certainty when we have identified a genuinely "traditional" concept. Traditions already have been modified, even completely changed in response to outside pressures, and have sometimes been completely obliterated (cf. Norris and Heine 1982, 118-137). Furthermore, there is often intense suspicion about foreigners who poke about in tribal affairs. It is said among the Tiv people that when a person who is not properly initiated into the tribal society inquires into the group's secrets it is mandatory to lie to the person in order to mislead them, even if the person is a member (uninitiated) of the ethnic group! Under these circumstances, only careful observations of what a group actually practices, taken over a long period of time, can yield even the most tentative of conclusions.

(ii): African Views of Creation

African views of creation are many and varied (see Mbiti 1969, 39-41). Many African myths assume the existence of the world at the beginning and start with the creation of humanity (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1956, 6). Most of the creation myths say that the creation of heaven preceded that of the earth but there is no normative order for the creation of other things (Mbiti 1969, 40). The idea of a creation *ex nihilo* is reported in at least three African societies, and there may possibly be others, but the idea seems to have been a rare one (Mbiti 1969, 30).

It is common in ATRs to find a high status given to the sun, and to the moon. The Galla people of Ethiopia say that the sun is God's eye, the Balese people of Congo consider the sun to be God's right eye, and the moon his left, while the Ila people of Zambia believe the sun signifies God's eternity (Mbiti 47, 52). For the Hahm people of Central Nigeria, there was an ambiguity about the sun: some would say that the sun is God, and others only that the sun manifests God (Kato 1975, 30-34). This ambiguity is noted among other peoples as well, such as the Ankore (Mbiti 1969, 41), the Ninzam, and others. Despite the ambiguity, modern African scholars reject the term "sun worship" as a generalized descriptive category.

All African societies depend on rain and value it highly. Mbiti reports a few societies which "associate God and rain so closely that the same word, or its cognate, is used for both" (Mbiti 1969, 53). Others personify rain as one of the divinities. Some groups saw rain as God's saliva (Mbiti 41), and others, such as several groups in Nigeria's Plateau State, saw rain as God's

urine. Mbiti concludes that in all cases rain is taken as a sign of God's care and providence for humanity and the world. Generally throughout Africa, bodies of water are thought to have major spirits or divinities in them (Mbiti 54).

The term "animism" cannot describe African religions because it implies that its practitioners believe all rocks or trees are inhabited by spirits or spirit, and this is not so. They believe that only certain rocks and trees are inhabited by spirits, and these have special significance for them. Some are believed to be the dwelling place of an ancestor, for example, and such sites must be respected. Animation also extends in some cases to physical objects, such as amulets. Not all African ethnic groups had even these beliefs.

Generally, there is a consensus among scholars of African religion that "pantheism" and "panentheism" are not appropriate terms to use as a description of African religions (Mbiti, 33). Although ATR sees God, or evidence of God in all things, there is, according to Mbiti, an ontological hierarchy in which some things are in a higher mode of being than others. Mbiti reports an ontological hierarchy of God/ spirits/ humans/ animals and plants/ phenomena and objects without biological life (Mbiti 16). So the "life" or "force" that resides in a stone is ontologically lower than that of a plant, and plants' than animals', and animals' than humans'. With this kind of hierarchy, blanket terms like "pantheism" or even "panentheism" are too simplistic in that they fail to take in the subtleties of the ontological hierarchy. Mbiti describes it this way:

...for African peoples, this is a religious universe. Nature in the broadest sense of the word is not an empty impersonal object or phenomenon: it is filled with religious significance ... God is seen in and behind these [natural] objects and phenomena: they are His creation, they manifest Him, they symbolize His being and presence... The invisible world presses hard upon the visible: one speaks to the other, and Africans "see" that invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world (Mbiti 1969, 56-57).

There is a sacral quality to the material universe in African thought. It is not "dead".³³ Mbiti adds that in addition to the five categories of beings, there is a:

³³ We may also note here the lack of importance given to literal sight, a point upon which I have elaborated in the chapter above on African Orality. The equation of visibility with empirical reality is not made in African cultures.

force, power or energy permeating the whole universe. God is the source and ultimate controller of this force; but the spirits have access to some of it. A few human beings have the knowledge and ability to tap, manipulate and use it, such as the medicine-men, witches, priests and rainmakers, some for the good and others for the ill of their communities (Mbiti, 16).

To be more precise, he adds that this "force" is "approximately what the anthropologists call mana but it has nothing to do with Placide Tempels' 'vital force' concept." (Mbiti 1969, 16 n1).

We should add that very important in the ontological hierarchy is the role of the ancestors, for they are believed to be frequently present in the houses of their children, overseeing their daily activities, for it is they who are most directly concerned about the welfare of their offspring. Their influence on ecological practices is seen in the fact that in some parts of Africa, initial attempts to expand the ancestral plot of farmland or to build houses in a different shape from that of the traditional had been opposed by the ancestors, because the new customs were a departure from the old. This is not the case everywhere, however (Raum 1965).

It is difficult to make any firm statement about the "goodness" of creation in ATRs. On the one hand, the literature often speaks of the African affirmation of the physical world, similar to the ancient Hebraic view, and certainly this is true if one is contrasting it with the contempt for the physical which has been attributed to certain brands of gnostic thought. While the general goodness of life on earth is affirmed in most African traditions, on the other hand, few African creation myths portray God as clearly affirming the goodness of the world in an explicit manner, for example, in direct statements by the creator God. One myth from the Fang people of Gabon does have a declaration of the goodness of creation. Nzame, Mebere and Nkwa form a trinity for the Fang. Beier relates it thus:

Nzame made everything: heaven, earth, sun, moon, stars, animals, plants; everything. When he had finished everything that we see today, he called Mebere and Nkwa and showed them his work. 'This is my work. Is it good?' They replied, 'Yes, you have done well.' (Beier 1966, 18).

Additionally, Ghanaian theologian Kofi Opoku tells us that the Akan of Ghana have a maxim on the goodness of creation, which they put into the mouth of the hawk (Osansa): "All that God created is good!" (Opoku 1978, 22). Just as often in African creation myths, however, the world is created as the result of an accident, lending impetus to a fatalistic flavour. Idowu (1962,

21ff.) notes that in the Yoruba story of creation:

The oral traditions say that heaven was very near to the earth, so near that one could stretch up one's hand and touch it...There was a kind of Golden Age, or a Garden-of-Eden period. Then something happened, and a giddy, frustrating extensive space occurred between heaven and earth...One story is that a greedy person helped himself to too much food from heaven; another that a woman with a dirty hand touched the unsoiled face of heaven...The privilege of free intercourse, of man taking the bounty of heaven as he liked, disappeared (Idowu 1962, 21ff.).

In the creation myth of the Angas people of Plateau State in central Nigeria, reproduced almost in full above in Chapter 2, we found that in the Golden Age, before the ruin of humanity, the hoe pulled itself through the furrows producing food for human beings. Then, one day the woman, seeing the hoe at rest in the hut, took it by the handle and worked with it in the furrows herself. At this the hoe was so offended that it refused ever to produce food for humans in the old way again, and since then humans have had to work for a living (Kangdim 1981, 3-8). We see here that the fall of humanity is due to a caprice, as there was no stated order on the part of God to the man or woman warning them not to use the hoe in this manner, the fallen state of humanity seems due to an oversight. One might deduce from this a fatalistic twist to the universe: one never knows whether it will snap back in one's face. Yet in other myths, one does find hints of moral order in the structure of the universe. Opoku relates a myth from the Akan of Ghana (1978, 23-24):

To the Akan, God and men once lived very close together, and men could reach, touch, and feel Him. Then an old woman began to pound her fufuu regularly, using a mortar and a long pestle. She hit God every time she pounded fufuu, so He moved further and further away from men and went into the skies.

This story is probably the most widespread myth in Africa, and it occurs in many differing versions throughout the continent. In some versions, it seems that God leaves at the first hint of noise coming from his floor; in others the woman is warned to desist, yet she continues. The difference may be an important one, as the omission of any warning could be taken as a more fatalistic interpretation of the universe and its proclivities than the version in which fair warning is given. Fatalism becomes especially evident in terms of ethics and perception of the world as a place of chaos and unpredictable misfortunes, from which one may nonetheless protect oneself by means of magic.

Other creation stories from West Africa provide more

promising material for an ecological ethic. The creation myth of the Ewe people of Ghana relates that it was the smoke from men's fires which got in God's eyes, that angered him and made him withdraw higher and higher into the sky as the fires grew more numerous with the increase of human beings on the earth (Donders 1985, 31). Donders has commented that this story could form an excellent basis for an ecological ethic (31).

Another example might lie in a Yoruba myth related by Idowu (1973, 159). He tells us that in a Yoruba myth, the divinities one time petitioned Olódùmarè to let them run the creation for a trial period of sixteen years. Olódùmarè replied to them: "you better make it sixteen days at first." The rivers began to choke up with mud and leaves and each day things got worse and worse. By the eighth day things were in such a state that the gods petitioned Olódùmarè to take back the running of the world, which he was glad to do as his nature was forgiving and compassionate. The story ends with all the divinities singing, dancing and praising the Creator. Similar to other stories which take aim at human pride, though perhaps more humorous, this account seems intended to illustrate that only the creator God has the wisdom to run creation: not even the gods know how to do it, much less human beings.

African creation stories generally do not state that man is made in the "image of God". Neither do they state that man has "dominion" over the material world in any explicit or clear sense, though a few do, such as the Fang of Gabon (Beier 1966, 19). What generally stands out with some clarity is that humans are at the mercy of a capricious and unpredictable reality, as we saw in the Angas myth above, or as embodied in the Yoruba myth of Eshu, the capricious trickster who is sometimes evil and malevolent, yet sometimes extremely generous and benevolent. Sometimes Eshu is male and sometimes female, but always unpredictable.

"Fatalism" is a word often used to describe African religion. It may be a fair one to use, in that the myths and general orientation of ATRs do seem to communicate a sense of tremendous uncertainty and futility about the human prospect since the end of the "Golden Age", or "the Fall" as Christians style it. Of course "fatalism" per se is found in every culture and it can be a serious impediment to social reforms also in the West, as everywhere. Mbiti has opined that the most serious "cul de sac" in African religion has been this absence of any solution to the human dilemma after the Fall. He says that this may be the

"greatest weakness" of ATR, which makes it vulnerable to the advance of the universal religions like Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism (Mbiti 1969, 99). The point Mbiti and others would make is that ATRs are relatively fatalistic and vulnerable, because of this lacuna.

The creation myth of the Yoruba does not give humanity any explicitly stated "dominion" over creation, such as one finds in Genesis 1. This is also generally true of most other African creation myths; however, it can be said that the position of humanity vis à vis the created world was generally considered one of ontological superiority. Mbiti tells us that animals, plants and inanimate things: "are in an ontological category inferior to that of man, and cannot, therefore, have the important role of functioning as intermediaries..." (Mbiti 1969, 71). The ethnographical literature from a vast number of African ethnic groups confirms this finding in each case.

The Yoruba, the Hausa, the Ibo, and the scores of ethnic groups of Plateau and Benue States of Nigeria with which I have been associated show a sharply negative reaction against all comparisons of any human to any type of animal, even in jest. To refer to any human as a "monkey" is considered the most serious insult one can make. This could be seen as a reaction stemming from the colonial past, when whites actually referred to Africans in these terms. But there is a great deal of evidence from a wide range of groups that the terms "monkey" and "wild animal" were used traditionally as an insult long before the coming of Western culture (Achebe 1959, 12). The Yoruba as well as many other groups engage in semi-ritualized verbal sparring matches which involve the use of names of animals and body parts of animals in one-upmanship contests which can go on all afternoon. Much has been written in the anthropological literature on the topic of "Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse" (cf. Leach 1964).

Anthropologists have noted that ethnic groups in Africa may organize their lifeworld in terms of polar opposites such as right and left, male and female, heaven and earth, town and "bush" (or wilderness). The literature on the Hausa people, for example, makes reference to the distinction in Hausa thought between those things which are thought to be of "the bush" (daji) or "the wild" and those things which are thought to be "civilized", containing long lists of Lévi-Straussian polarities (e.g. Darrah, 1985).

Some groups such as the Igbo pay homage to a "mother earth goddess", whereas other groups, such as the Yoruba, do not. Those

groups which pay her homage pour out libations to her or offer sacrifices. Certain practices are thought to particularly offend her, for example, having sexual intercourse on the bare ground (I noted this taboo amongst many ethnic groups of Plateau State, as well as the Igbo). In such cases special rites must be performed and fines must be paid to restore her favour. There seem to be a very few groups where the mother earth goddess is so prominent as to receive higher status than all the other divinities. It is interesting to observe that the matrilineal Akan of Ghana understand God as both male and female (Bartle 1983).

To many African peoples trees and forests had special significance. The Ngombe live in very dense forest and refer to God as: "The everlasting One of the forest", "the One who clears the forest", "the One who began the forest", while a number of peoples set aside sacred groves for sacrifices, offerings or prayers (Mbiti 1970, 109). A number of peoples feared the spirits of the forest and of the water (Mbiti 1970, 125). From several parts of Africa come accounts of trees which refused to be moved, even by modern machinery designed for the task. These trees are believed to have magical power.

In Gabon a number of secret societies are prominent, one of which, Mwiri, is a male group concerned for the protection of nature, the maintenance of public places, and the punishment of those who desecrate them (Barrett 1982, 307). There are also examples of traditional "nature preserves" in a number of ATRs, though the exact purpose of such "preserves" may not be precisely parallel to the modern conception. It seems that in the traditional African concept, a piece of land was set aside solely for the chief to use for his hunting expeditions. Here, the result of preservation of wild lands is only coincidental to the intention.

To the Yoruba, as well as to many other African groups, the concept of "buying and "selling" land was quite foreign, though it became commonplace after the beginning of the colonial period. Land was not thought to be "owned" by anyone, similar to the ideal of the Hebrew Bible (cf. Lev. 25), and in contradistinction to the Canaanite (and modern Western) conception of land as a saleable commodity.

It is in the examination of agricultural and hunting methods that one is particularly warned against the romanticized picture of the "primitive living in perfect harmony with his environment" approach. Archaeological evidence indicates that even as early as

50,000 B.C.E. Africa suffered an extinction of 30% of its wildlife species, primarily due to human technology: the fire-drive method of catching game animals seems the likeliest explanation (de Vos 1975, 102-103). The practice of burning off crop residue, and burning the bush to clear new land has prevailed in Africa from the time that cultivation first began there, up to the present (Yudelman 1964, 229ff.) It is known that the tropical rain forest formerly extended from Liberia in the west to Cameroon in the eastern part of West Africa. But in the area now contained by Benin Republic and Togo, savannah belt vegetation today extends right down to the Atlantic coast. Historical evidence dating back to the fifth century B.C.E. from the Carthaginian explorer Periplus of Hanno describes, probably in the area now called Sierra Leone, a vast expanse of bush fires during harvest celebrations (Schoffeleers 1971, 271). Sea travellers in 1588 remarked that the coast of what is modern day Togo and Benin had impenetrable dense forest along its entire length, but by 1722 travellers remarked that the area was lush and green with no trees. Gayibor's careful research concludes that the total deforestation of Benin resulted from a complex of climatic and human factors (1986, 36). Involved in this complex is the grazing of animals and other agricultural practices.

Traditional farming methods often included the cutting down and burning of trees, and use of the wood ash for fertilizer, with no use of manure. Under these conditions, the land was usually useless for agricultural purposes within four years at the very best, and the family would then move on to virgin fields (Yudelman 1964, 229ff.) In West Africa scientists have recently discovered that slash and burn agriculture is causing acid rain to fall on what remains of the rain forest (Morell 1990, 6).

In addition to initial forest clearing, the practice of bush burning is also employed as a method of clearing away crop residue after harvest. Amongst the Yoruba, the time of burning the bush in preparation for the coming planting season is in January. In Northern Nigeria the bush burning season is generally in November and December.

The religious significance of the yearly setting of bush fires has been explored by J.M. Schoffeleers (1971). Schoffeleers' study of bush burning in Malawi concludes that it has several major purposes: burning of residue in their gardens, hunting animals, calling the rains and ultimately for obtaining food. He says:

In two instances, viz. those of hunting and rain-calling, the participants explicitly affirmed its religious significance. The whirlwind originating towards the end of the burning was said to be the manifestation of some spirit showing its approval of the undertaking and ensuring its success, and the headmen of Bunda Hill said they expected rain after the burning through the mediation of their ancestral spirits (273).

Schoffeleers goes on to explain that the reason why the ancestral spirits manifest themselves in bush burning and why they are pleased with it is tied up with the other ritual contexts of Chewa society in which fire is used: notably transition rites, and he traces the conceptual matrix to its foundation in the myth of origin, in which fire played a key role (274-275).

We should not conclude that bush burning always has a destructive ecological impact. Some studies indicate that under certain conditions, where the average climate is relatively humid, and where overgrazing does not coincide with burning, then burning the bush actually stimulates and encourages new growth. Here, then, we would find that traditional ecological practices were beneficial. Unfortunately, the percentage of the African continent in which the land is on the borderline between the humidity level wherein bush burning is beneficial and that in which it is harmful is a very large one, and consequently the practice may be one of the major factors contributing to the galloping desertification and famine in the continent.

We have already noted the urbanized nature of Yorubaland. Here, human activity has meant the elimination of larger game animals from the region. Even in the much more sparsely populated regions of Nigeria larger game animals have disappeared. The only area of Nigeria in which elephants are still known to roam freely (apart from game parks) is in the Northeastern tip of the country, on the border with Northern Cameroon. Giraffes are now extinct in Nigeria, even in the game refuges, where protection from poachers has proved inadequate. The last giraffe sighting in Yankari Game Reserve, Bauchi state was in 1973.

Turning to East Africa, we find today an area noted for its wildlife refuges. But it may not always have been so: one reporter states:

There is strong evidence that East Africa in the nineteenth century was not the wildlife paradise which it is today with approximately one fourth of its land area set aside as national parks and game sanctuaries in Tanzania alone. The nineteenth century [precolonial -ed.] situation was quite different. Whenever man and animals came into conflict over the occupation of land, the animals were inevitably driven

out (Kjekshus 1977, 70).

According to Kjekshus, visitors to East Africa in this period reported seeing a large number of huge game pits and brush wood fences three to four miles long for organized game hunting (Kjekshus, 71-2). Contrary to the generally prevailing misconception then current in Europe, game in the nineteenth century was almost impossible to find in the coastal areas and was greatly reduced even in the areas now containing major game sanctuaries (Kjekshus, 72). In this case, the incursion of western culture may actually have brought about the possibility of a conservation ethic which seems to have been previously lacking (Kjekshus, 72).

One is rightly sceptical of the approach which emphasizes the idea that African religion strove for harmony with nature while so much of traditional lore was directed towards achieving mastery over it. Wendy James' excellent (1988) ethnography devotes an entire chapter to the "Mastery of Nature" amongst the Uduk people of Sudan. The mastery of nature was as important to the survival of Africans as to anyone, and one should not underestimate the value traditional societies gave to this type of knowledge.

Possession by certain spirits within nature should not be confused with harmony or unity with it, as the spirits which possess the devotees of these cults are personal in nature and do not represent nature as a whole, nor even usually one aspect of it (see Mbiti 1969, 187ff.) Nor should such practices as the use of totems be seen to indicate affinity with the whole of "nature" as such, as at best it expresses a relationship to only one rather small part of it. Furthermore, many ethnic groups in West Africa such as the Yoruba, seem to lack totemic animals completely.

There is an extensive anthropological literature focusing upon "totemism", much of it seeking to understand how it functions within symbol systems. In his noted work on the Nuer of Sudan, Evans-Pritchard (1956, 80) pointed out that Nuer totems are an "odd assortment" in that they are not the animals and objects which are most useful to the Nuer, and those that are valuable are absent from the list of totems. He hesitates to suggest any rationale behind the choosing of totems, but says that the totem animals are respected by all the Nuer: the Nuer are friendly to birds and will not harm them. He proposes that:

Nuer totems tend to be creatures and things which for one reason or other easily evoke the idea of Spirit in any Nuer

and are hence suitable symbols for Spirit in relation to lineages...(Evans-Pritchard 1956, 82).

The Yoruba and other groups often speak of "fear" and "awe" with regard to natural phenomena: one reads of the fear associated with sacred groves and the "evil forest". The plays of the Nobel prize winning Yoruba playwright Wole Soyinka and the novels of Chinua Achebe are replete with references to the fear associated with that part of the forest known as "the evil forest" or "the bad bush".

One may see the practice of magic in Africa as a response to a threatening environment, an attempt at mastery in a world so often unpredictable and devastating to humans (we should note that the only African group known to lack witchcraft are the !Kung of the Kalahari desert, formerly called "Bushmen"). In this, magic is not so very different from science, but its "way of seeing" is totally different, and therefore leads to a different methodology. The anthropological literature on magic is vast and we cannot begin to scratch the surface here. Much of it has sought to explain the function of magic practices in African groups as the attempt to attain "mastery over nature" (see James 1988, 41-67). In fact, some scholars, such as Robin Horton, have sought to emphasize the similarities between modern science and magic in African thinking, in so far as they both have a problem-solving rationale which moves from one possible cause of a given problem to another when the first hypothesis is proven false (Horton 1977). The debate which this thesis spawned has proved a rich mine for philosophers who examine the conception of "rationality", and challenges any western ethnocentric notions of the superiority of modern scientific technical rationality. At the same time it cautions us against understanding African groups as striving for "harmony with nature".

South African scholar Nomsa Daniels concludes that African farmers, who were and are famous for their farming success, notably the Hausa of Northern Nigeria in the 19th century and the Dogon of Mali, were successful precisely because they paid careful attention to conservation. But she concludes that their conservation practices were not motivated by religious or aesthetic considerations but by the need to survive on the land which supported them (Daniels 1991, 14). The delicate ecological balance needed to sustain life in a semi-desert environment was carefully worked out over a period of centuries.

In light of the above evidence, it would seem that within

the lifeworld of the Yoruba and the other groups under study, fatalistic tendencies and magical influences and forces made humanity's relationship to nature more conflictual than harmonious; though harmony by way of control was understood as a positive good, and harmony with nature because of the need to survive in a difficult environment was often achieved.

(iii): Summary

We have seen that the relationship between humanity and the material world is variegated and diverse in Africa. We shall have to resist the temptation to make generalized statements about that relationship, and approach carefully single groups to understand them in their social and ecological context. To the Yoruba, Hausa, and others, humanity stands in a superior relationship to animals, plants and natural phenomena, while natural forces such as thunder and rivers are understood as ministers of God. In ATR the proper role of humans is as a civilizing influence in contrast to the wildness of the bush. The creation myth of the Ewe people gives us a tantalizing starting point in the search for ecological wisdom, as our wilful creation of smoke from too many fires threatens our modern world with a tragic loss of intimacy with the source of life itself.

(iv): African Environment and Theological Ethics Today

As yet there has been little from African theologians on environmental ethics. Though some brief statements in the 1970s criticised the West's destruction of nature (see Idowu 1973), there was so much emphasis upon acquiring the West's technology that any environmentalist sentiment was greatly muted. This has begun to change only very recently.

B.C.E. Nwosu's 1972 article was typical of African responses at that time and still largely reflects African opinion today, as the recent (June 1992) United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the "Earth Summit") in Rio de Janeiro has demonstrated. Although not a theologian, Nwosu's work was selected for inclusion in a theological journal, the Ecumenical Review, produced by the WCC as part of a dialogue series on development and environment. Nwosu stressed the injustice in the unequal distribution of wealth worldwide, and called for the transfer of technology to Africa on terms Africans can afford. Some of his statements now seem almost prophetic in the light of recent developments. He said:

...unless the developed nations see their future as inextricably linked with that of the developing nations in a rather dramatic way - in a way they fear threatens their very existence - it is unlikely that any suitable form of cooperation which would be beneficial to the two parties will emerge (Nwosu 1972, 297).

This, twenty years later, has become exactly the case, as the desire for development in the third world has levelled rain forests which the industrialized North now recognizes as essential to the health of the planet, and as burgeoning third world demand for refrigeration, styrofoam and the other accoutrements of modern culture destroy the ozone layer with CFCs. It has emerged that the future of the "third world" is indeed inextricably linked to that of the "first world." It always was, but the ecological catastrophe now upon us brings it home in a more powerful way.

In the area of population control Nwosu put the case very much as it is still put today. He asked the question (1972, 298) "Who should make the first move to control population? Should it be a person from the Third World who consumes only one tenth as much as a person from one of the advanced nations?" Actually Nwosu understated his case, for one of the statistics proceeding from the aforementioned 1992 UNCED Conference tells us that an average North American couple with two children consumes more energy than an entire village in the Third World. Another way of expressing this statistically is as follows.

Table 3

Country	Calories per person per day	Energy consumption per capita in kg. of oil equivalent per year
Kenya	1,973	98.9
Nigeria	2,039	132.9
Côte D'Ivoire	2,365	172.0
Cameroon	2,161	143.6
Canada	3,447	9,155.0
Iceland	3,352	6,883.7

Source: United Nations.

The average Nigerian eats 2,039 calories per day, while consuming the energy equivalent of 132.9 kilograms of oil. The average Kenyan consumes the energy equivalent of 98.9 kg. of oil per year. The average Canadian eats 3,447 calories per day while

consuming the energy equivalent of 9,155 kilograms of oil per year. One can see that the average Kenyan, living in a country which has been often called one of Africa's "success stories" consumes one one-hundredth of the energy consumed by the average Canadian! While differences in climate can justifiably account for certain differences in energy consumption patterns, it hardly excuses such an enormous gap.

It is for this reason that Africans have felt justified in their insistence that calls from the North for better ecological practices and population control in the South should be accompanied by the means to pay for the needed technological changes. Also they believe that the same educational and health care improvements which were the essential precondition to a reduced birth rate in all of the developed countries of the North should be made available to the people of the South before talk of "population control" becomes meaningful.

The discussion of population guidelines proceeds in a vacuum unless it is matched to the discussion of infant mortality figures, as it is known that no society in history has ever voluntarily restricted its fertility rates before improved health facilities brought the infant mortality rate down to a level low enough that parents felt secure concerning the survival of enough of their children to carry on the family name. In Africa today, infant mortality rates have continued to come down gradually in most countries, though not yet to the low levels found in industrialized western countries. The reduced mortality rate, coupled with a sustained high fertility rate, has brought about the burgeoning population "boom" found in most parts of Africa. Social conditions still deny clean drinking water to a large fraction of the African population. The UNCED Conference of 1992 reported that 35,000 children die every day in the world, due to environmental causes. Most of these deaths are due to environmental contaminants in water and air supplies, and the increasing urbanization of the third world means that even there an increasing proportion of these deaths are related to industrial pollution, in addition to the more traditional water contaminants, human and animal waste.

Despite the general feeling that the North has no right to impose population strictures on Africa, family planning has nevertheless become much more accepted in Africa today than it was in 1972, for reasons not directly related to ecology. The reason for the new mood is primarily economic. Most Nigerians in the

middle class now wonder how they would be able to afford to educate all of their children if they continue to have the large families idealized by traditional Africa. The Nigerian government in 1988 submitted to the people the first set of population guidelines ever presented. They recommended five children per mother; lower than is considered ideal in traditional Nigeria, but higher than western analysts would have liked. Most commentators concluded that whatever else one might say, the guidelines were at least a start.

In spite of the greater concern for industrial development which has seemed to drown out environmental concerns, grassroots level ecological movements in Africa have been springing up increasingly in the last five years. We could cite as examples the "Green Belt Movement" started by Wangari Maathai of Nairobi, who was Kenya's first woman university professor. Also in Kenya, the informal sector of the economy has sparked the mass production of inexpensive solar ovens, which are built very simply from locally available materials and sold at prices the average peasant can afford. In the rural parts of Kenya now, these ovens are very common, as the price and difficulty of obtaining fire wood has increased enough to make solar ovens a viable option for the peasantry. For the same reason a new design of charcoal burning cooker which uses one third the amount of wood compared to the traditional type of iron pot has become very popular. The informal sector has also been key in promoting the popularity of inexpensive adaptors to photovoltaic solar panels to produce electricity for home use, particularly lighting and small fans. Key in all of these developments has been the role of the informal sector, the class of roadside mechanics and other self-employed workers such as taxi drivers. One such group is metal workers, who are called in Kenya the "jua kali". They work in the "jua kali", the "hot sun", with no roof over their heads and with only simple metal working tools, yet it is their ingenuity and inventiveness that has spurred the economy of African countries more than the formal sector with its massive, inefficient, and so often disastrous development projects.

In Nigeria, Gbadegesin writes of movements to re-introduce the use of the bicycle as basic transportation at the universities (Gbadegesin 1992). The ecological movements of Africa have one thing in common with each other which distinguishes them from ecological movements in the western world: they are driven by an urgency concerning immediate survival needs which one does not

find, for example, in such North American movements as that to protect the Spotted Owl. Nomsa Daniels says (1991, 15): "whereas affluence and waste spurred today's environmentalists in the West, poverty and underdevelopment are spurring environmentalists in Africa." The erosion of soil in Kenya had produced a life-threatening situation for the women of the country, who do most of the agricultural labour. So under the leadership of Wangari Maathai they banded together to plant trees to protect their precious heritage of the soil, upon which their very livelihood directly depends. Increasing poverty in the universities of Nigeria forces a return to the bicycle, which also happens to be a very ecological means of transport. The same has happened in Cuba, now forced by the cessation of Soviet aid and oil to rely on the bicycle.

While the current recession in the western world has also forced many people there to look to the bicycle as primary means of transport, the western environmental movements have been relatively slow to link the poverty issue with their ecological agenda. The fact that ecology movements in Africa are survival-driven is bound to shape development of these groups and as their voice becomes heard at the international level it may produce a change in some commonly held attitudes.

(v) Theological Treatments

In the first two phases of African theology most discussions of ecology were in the form of descriptions of beliefs concerning creation and nature in African religions. We have surveyed some of these discussions above. Typically in these discussions the idea of "animism" as definition of African religion was rejected, as it still is. In more recent writing we see some authors emphasizing the "fellow feeling that the African has with nature" in contradistinction to the west's dominance of nature (see Dickson 1984, 48). Dickson does allow that this "fellow-feeling is of course much less in evidence in the urban areas of Africa than in the rural." (Dickson 1984, 49). Dickson goes on to state that despite the pollution evident in African cities, Africans generally love and fear and sense something mysterious about the environment. (49).

While continuing the critique of anthropology's earlier categorizations of African religion as "animism", "fetishism", or "nature worship", Dickson brings the discussion of ATR beliefs about nature into the framework of African Christian theology in a

more explicit manner than had been the case in the 1960s and 70s.

Modupe Oduyoye, in his biblical study on Genesis 1-11 published in 1984, offers a new interpretation of the Fall narrative which has significance for eco-ethics. He says:

The first violence of human beings was ecological violence - unrestrained onslaught on the flora - which turned a gan (Hausa gona "farm"; Yoruba e-gàn "virgin forest, black loamy soil") into a soil that makes the farmer sweat: "Accursed is the ground because of you, In toil will you eat of it all the days..." (Oduyoye 1984, 13).

This interpretation is evidence of a sensitivity to ecological issues not usually shown by western exegetes up till that time: note that Oduyoye's study was completed prior to the WCC 1983 conference at which "Integrity of Creation" was added to the previous themes of "Justice and Peace". Oduyoye goes on to elaborate further in the epilogue to his commentary, extolling African belief in the intercommunion of life systems. He says: "We cannot have a comprehensive selem eloh-iyem by eliminating all the living things in whose presence we feel an unmistakable numen tremendum" (1984, 88-89). Oduyoye reacts to the view often advocated by western theologians, that the desacralization of nature in Hebrew religion and Christianity liberated humanity from the tyranny of nature spirits and superstition, thus preparing the way for all modern science. Oduyoye writes:

No wonder you can no longer catch fish in the river Rhine, and can no longer swim in it without danger to your life. The Hebrew belief without which "the rise of modern science and technology would have been impossible" has turned the Rhine into a sewage pipe of industrial poison...Theologians ought not to betray such ignorance. To read into Genesis 1:26 a doctrine that "man alone is made in God's image" is to open the way for human beings to play God in the ecological environment, to use (to "manipulate") nature instead of nurturing it (Modupe Oduyoye 1984, 90).

Oduyoye clearly advocates the dynamic universe of ATR, to which Mbiti had earlier referred. But he goes further, to elaborate on the ethical-theological implications within a Christian theological framework. He fears that the desacralization of nature found in western Christendom has led to the materialism and secularism with which the west is now plagued: "...intellectual human beings dominate nature and exploit it as mere material - creating, inevitably, ecological blight" (1984, 90). This theological exegesis from Oduyoye is one of the most striking pieces so far written by an African theologian. Further, we can see this work as part of the maturation of African theology as extended works by African scholars in the field of biblical

studies reach a wider audience: one of the developments characteristic of the period since 1980 in African theology.

Other works, such as that by Fr. John Mutiso-Mbinda (1988), stress the urgent need for an African Christian theology of the integrity of Creation by giving accounts of exploitation and devastating abuse of the land in Africa. He integrates the ecological struggle with the struggle for economic justice, a useful and much needed contribution. However, in this very brief article he does not suggest directions or develop trajectories that theological response might take.

By far the most significant treatment of the subject by an African theologian thus far is that of J.N.K. Mugambi of Kenya, who in 1987 authored a pamphlet for the WCC's Church and Society Documents series entitled God, Humanity and Nature in Relation to Justice and Peace. In this work, he provides us with an historical overview of thinking on JPIC in the history of the ecumenical movement, and then examines nature in the African setting. He points out (22) that words for "vital force" do not exist in African languages and therefore Placide Tempels' whole concept is faulty and based more upon European perceptions than upon what actually existed in African thought. While this type of critique had long been standard in books on ATR as a criticism of western overgeneralizations of ATR; its placement within the framework of a passage on African conceptions of nature gives it a somewhat different slant. Unfortunately, Mugambi does not elaborate positively on what ATR beliefs are in regard to "force", but instead moves on to a critique of Mbiti's thesis regarding the African concept of time. Mugambi does not respond to Mbiti's thesis that ATR has a conception of "force" similar to what the anthropologists call mana. However, his critiques of "vital force" and Mbiti's "time" are meant as foil to the category which Mugambi feels is most central in African thought: "relation" (Mugambi 1987, 24). He says:

All Africans in traditional life, believe that nothing can be well with them if good relationship is not maintained between them and all the powers which are perceived in the environment. These include God, fellow men, ancestors, established institutions, and ritual animals, plants, non-living objects and special places. If the relationship is broken, then it must be restored before the situation can return to normal (Mugambi 1987, 25).

Mugambi's approach is in marked contrast to that taken by Emmanuel Asante (1985), who wants to recover "vital force" and "pan-vitalism" as a resource for doing ecological theology in

Africa. These two scholars have written two of the most suggestive works so far on African eco-theology.

Another important though brief piece is offered by John Pobee, who credits the peoples of the South in general with having done somewhat better than those of the North in regard to ecology because they have conceptions of nature in which all creation "beams with spirits" (Pobee 1990a, 154). He says "The earth itself is not only mother but also consort of God and therefore divine and to be revered"(154). Pobee adds that some African ethnic groups link reverence for nature with the clan and the ancestors, therefore "to mistreat creation is to make an assault on the ancestors, who then may punish and ill treat those to be born"(155).

A similar approach is developed by Harvey J. Sindima, a theologian from Malawi. He develops the idea of moyo, life, and umunthu community, as intertwined in a web of justice and the "bondedness of life" (Sindima 1990, 146).

Other African theologians who have written distinctively African theological responses to the current ecological crisis are A. S. Oyalana (1991): "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation as Cultural Revolution: The Role of the Churches"; and Yacob Tesfai (1991): "Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation: The Seoul Convocation of the World Council of Churches."

The two differing approaches exemplified by Mugambi on one side and by Emmanuel Asante, Pobee, and Oduyoye on the other perhaps represent two different tracks in African eco-theology, and the approach stressing the community of life, advanced by Sindima may be a third, though none of these approaches are deeply developed yet. Neither are these approaches mutually exclusive, and we may find even greater diversity as these models are further researched. At present it seems that Mugambi's is more carefully thought through at one level, apart from the lacuna on the "vital force" question. Further interaction with others in the debate will bring greater development.

At the EATWOT Assembly of 1992, the African and other "third world" theologians present made many references to the hope of the future of the "third world" lying in the "people movements", such as the ecological movement and the women's movement, with a stress on the importance of the ecological movement which was, to a certain extent, surprising. Some even saw it as key to the future of the world and therefore as a key component of "third world" theology. This emphasis was in marked contrast to the image

portrayed by the popular news media coverage of the UNCED Conference held only five months later, which tended to stress the unwillingness of most third world national leaders to address ecological concerns. What emerges from this apparent contradiction is that the élites who live at the highest strata of society (national leaders) are those who are the most insulated from the demands of every-day living, the struggle for survival, and are thus the least likely to make the link between ecological concern and survival which has always functioned at the grassroots level in Africa. The African theologians have been careful to stress the primacy of listening to the people at the grassroots level, to hear their stories, and so they have come to hear the voices of the poor, and at the same time are able to articulate a discourse on the social relations which cause poverty and ecological destruction. This discourse is then put into the framework of christological elaboration in the African Christus Victor model, which as we have seen, is a pronounced feature of the new theological dynamic in African theology.

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CONCLUSION

We have discovered that African theology since 1980, rather than moving into a single new paradigm, has instead leapt forward into greater diversity, maturity, self-confidence and dynamism. Characteristics of this dynamic explosion (or "third phase") have been outlined in chapter one of this dissertation and in the following chapters. A single "catchword" such as "Adaptation" or "Incarnation" cannot serve as a title for this period. This may be just as well, for as Mugambi points out, single-word models in theology can be oppressive and tend to keep African theology boxed within western parameters, which are oppressive no matter how well-intentioned they may be. Ultimately it is not labels that matter, but the theology which is taking shape at the grassroots level, and there we find great diversity. Within that diversity there is a gravitational pull towards the strong Christology of the Christus Victor model transposed into various African keys. This model represents what we might call: "liberation inculturated by means of an African Christus Victor, the liberator from all oppressive forces, spiritual, economic, psychological and social." This type of Christology is now found very attractive by a large number of African theologians, as it seems to articulate the concern for a grassroots level praxis orientation, combines several models in one figure, and overcomes anthropological oppression. However, a Christus Victor Christology that omits the concept of a substitutionary atonement does not appeal to the evangelical scholars in Africa, such as Gitari, Bediako, Imasogie, and Adeyemo, as much as they might be happy with the other aspects of that model.

The economic situation since 1980 has worsened and all analysts expect it to be very grim indeed for Africa over the next ten to fifteen years. Increasing poverty has given rise to more reflexion on the causes of these problems and to calls for their solution. It seems fair to expect liberationist perspectives such as those of Éla and Bujo to achieve greater prominence. Jesse Mugambi (personal communication 1992) of Kenya feels that the "new world order" may well give a heightened relevance and immediacy to this mode of theology. It is not at all clear, however, that the economic situation must give rise necessarily to any given paradigm in its present shape. One notes that liberation theology even in its original Latin American form is now undergoing

significant shifts, and furthermore we should expect to see increasing interaction and intermixing of the liberation and incarnation paradigms. This process is already apparent in the works of Éla himself, of Bujo, Kolié and Pobee, although their approaches have significant differences.

Éla's paradigm, while it does pay brief attention to the ancestors in Africa, does not go much beyond the level of posing the question whether it might be possible to incorporate respect for the ancestors into an African theology. This aspect of Éla's theology, in 1992, can hardly be considered to be "cutting edge" thought, though it is still somewhat rare to find it within a liberationist model. Bujo goes much further in this regard. He goes into much more depth on the question of what an ancestral Christology should include, and lays out the outline of an African theology that integrates ancestral concerns with the modern need for liberation. In doing so, he has probably gone further than any African theologian so far. This type of development is one type of trend we may expect to continue as a major thread of the present phase.

And what of those still working in the Incarnation paradigm, such as Bimwenyi-Kweshi? His work (1980), which seemed at the time of its appearance to be one of the most impressive, voluminous studies yet published on the relationship between ATR and African theology now seems oddly dated. Bujo says: "Even the work of O. Bimwenyi-Kweshi is not yet a genuinely African Christian theology, but only a preparatory ethnological analysis." (Bujo 1992, 66). To be fair, there are elements of social critique in Bimwenyi-Kweshi's work; of particular interest is his section entitled «L'avènement d'un superculture technologique» (Bimwenyi-Kweshi 1981, 297-8) in which he warns of the rising world technosuperculture, devoid of spiritual values and in need of their revivifying power. But this section is less than two pages long and is only suggestive of how a social critique might proceed. The sum total of his work leaves us with still only a grounding in ATR with hints at possible connection points with Christian theology, and hints at modes of a social critique, but no developed body as such. Thus Bujo's critique is likely to ring true with many doing theology in Africa today, and this all the more because Bujo himself goes on to present precisely the sort of alternative he says is lacking in Bimwenyi-Kweshi. Additionally, several social factors conjoin in the 1990s to push African theologians in directions suggested by Bujo: (i) increasing poverty and

deteriorating health care systems throughout the continent are social facts which demand immediate attention; as a result, there can be a rising impatience with time-consuming projects that may seem to have little immediate social benefit. As a result African theologians who devote most of their time to ethnology may find themselves put on the defensive more than previously; (ii) the rise of revival groups in the cities since 1974 is a numeric fact. Though much work remains to be done on their actual turn-over rates and real staying power, at present it seems that these populist movements, which are uncompromisingly anti-African tradition, are gaining ground in urban areas.

In the light, then, of the social conditions found in the increasingly urbanized African environment of the 1990s, we may soon find the "inculturationist" mode of discourse in its pure form increasingly pressed for theological space: squeezed, as it were, between the Africanized liberationist critiques of Bujo and Éla on the one side, and the anti-traditionalist critiques of the rapidly growing revivalist organizations in the cities on the other. The former is a theological critique, the latter is an anti-intellectual populist movement, yet African theologians are not impervious to challenges at different levels, especially in cases such as this. Other players in this tension will be the more moderate evangelical theologians such as Imasogie, Kwame Bediako, and David Gitari, who do enter into the theological dialogue with the entire spectrum of African theologians, rather than shunning it. They are sympathetic to the revaluation of African tradition, though they do not affirm it in quite the same way as Idowu did. They are also mindful of the liberationist approach and integrate many of its insights.

What we are seeing in the 1980s and '90s is the convergence of the liberationist and inculturationist paradigms. At the same time, there is a recognition of the need to incorporate more than one model in theology - a "pluralism" of christological models, though probably not in the "postmodern" sense of "pluralism". The need for a thorough social analysis prior to any theologising is now much more widely accepted, even if the quality of that analysis is uneven at times. There is also a growing demand, even an outcry, for a praxis orientation, an orientation which goes to the grassroots and hears their cry and heals their wounds. This issues in an increasing impatience, at times, with overly antiquarianizing approaches. Here the concern is that the real life situation of Africans in the here and now requires an

immediate response, a response which takes priority over the detailed recovery of a past which in some cases cannot now be fully recovered.

Bujo says that Black Theology seems better integrated at the level of church life in South Africa than is African Theology in the rest of the continent. In fact, he goes so far as to say that the failure of the theology of Incarnation has been "almost complete" (Bujo 1992, 73). He poses his alternative in its place, feeling that it will be more easily integrated than previous attempts. Bujo says that African theology should help Africans to be both fully African and yet modern at the same time. This type of development is a challenge more pronounced in the period since 1980 and which evokes greater theological response in that period.

We have seen that several perhaps inherent tensions have been voiced with a new openness in the 1980s: the theory - praxis tension, perhaps most noticeable in the discussion of healing and health, but also in ancestor discourse. We have also seen the potential conflict in the area of feminist African theology and its inherent tension with an ancestral orientation. The locus of the resolution or explosion of these tensions is at the level of the grassroots and not in the theological classroom. But in so far as there is a discernible "trickle down" effect in theology, the discourse of theological seminaries does matter.

We have also seen more prominently in the 1980s the growing conflict between Islam and Christianity, marked by a basic change in social conditions. ATR had been edged out of its place as the majority religion in almost every African country by 1980, leaving Christianity and Islam the chief rivals vying for the allegiance of the people, with resulting tensions and hostilities. The trajectories followed by Islam and Christianity in their efforts to contextualize a universal faith on African soil have been very different from each other. The rising tensions between Islam and Christianity have given rise to a new theological scholarship addressing the problems of pluralism and giving substantial encouragement to groups that foster Christian-Muslim dialogue.

We have seen how the problems of ancestral relations and religious pluralism are intertwined with the role of women, and we have observed the new strength of African women theologians in the 1980s, exploding onto the theological scene with a new vigour. Their influence is already felt and they shall undoubtedly have a major role to play in the future.

In such cases as those of Christian-Muslim dialogue, the

growth of poverty, increasing urbanization and the rise of women theologians the new social conditions since 1980 have played a role in creating a theological dynamic with a net tendency towards an increasingly critical assessment of ATR. In other cases however, such as the growing African health crisis, the decline of orality and a balanced sensorium, the changing social conditions seem to have pushed African theologians toward a renewed appreciation of African traditional practices and beliefs, due to the modern western system's failure to meet the needs of the people at the grassroots level.

So while the various other aspects experience tension, diverse opinions, etc., healing must continue to be a matter of prime concern and seems destined to remain part of the character of African Christian identity. Orality, music and dance are strong, and will certainly remain part of that identity. But orality, while a subject of concern to almost all African theologians, is nevertheless under serious threat from the incursion of western modernity. African theological responses in this area play an increasingly vital role in the preservation of orality and the traditionally balanced African sensorium. Since 1978, the anglophone African theologians have devoted increased attention to theological responsibility in this area.

We have noted that African traditional approaches to Creation have always been survival-oriented. With the growing ecological disaster in Africa in the 1980s, African theologians turned from assessment of the place of nature in ATR to explicitly African theological reflexion on Christian responsibility in the midst of this crisis. Much of this work was built on the base of the work that had been done on ATR in the 1960s and '70s, but as we have seen, its fuller development in a specifically Christian extended theological discourse has been most pronounced in the 1980s and '90s. In this respect, the growth of discourse on Creation has paralleled the developments in all the other areas of African theological concern, reaching a new confidence, maturity and diversity in the 1980s and '90s.

We have seen that in the period since 1980 the explosion of paradigmatic diversity, models and concerns is best understood in terms of the link between specific social context and theological reflexion. In the period between 1960 and 1980 concrete social conditions in most African countries changed considerably. Ideas do not grow out of a vacuum: therefore, although we do not know what African life shall be like several decades from now, we may

expect further changes in social conditions, and concomittant
theological development, dynamism and diversity.

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FINIS

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Notes on the Bibliography

This bibliography strives to be the most complete bilingual bibliography of African theological writers produced up to the time of this writing, including a large sampling of works in both French and English, the two most commonly used languages for theological work in Africa today. Some works in German, Swahili, and Hausa are included, though we do not consider our work to be in any sense complete for those languages.

Of the authors listed here, 180+ are African, of which perhaps 15 are African scholars in disciplines other than theology or Religious Studies. For the leading African theologians, such as John Mbiti, John Pobee, Kwesi Dickson, Bolaji Idowu, Lamin Sanneh, Mercy and Modupe Oduyoye, Edward Fasholé-Luke, Osadolor Imasogie, Jesse Mugambi, Masamba ma Mpolo, Jean-Marc Éla, Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga, O. Bimwenyi-Kweshi, Anselme Titianma Sanon, Tshibangu, Tshiamalenga, Meinrad Hebga, and E. Mveng, we have tried to provide as complete a list as possible of their works, though some works published in Africa are not easily available to us, thus unavoidably leading to omissions.

Non-Africans, such as Aylward Shorter and Adrian Hastings who have lived and worked for a long time in Africa and identify with Africans are, for our purposes, termed "Africanists". They have written much, but because our work is primarily devoted to African theologians, in this bibliography Africanists are listed only where a specific work is frequently cited by African theologians, or has made a particularly important contribution to the discussions.

Bibliographic resources used in the search include journals such as the Africa Theological Journal, Bulletin de Théologie Africaine, Bulletin of African Theology, Journal of Religion in Africa, Revue du Clergé Africain, African Ecclesial Review, Cahiers des Religions Africaines, and Telema. Index publications, primarily Religion Index One and Theology in Context (published by the Institute of Missiology Missio in Aachen, Germany) were valuable research tools, as well as the online catalogues of Harvard University, and of Emory University, Atlanta, both accessed via modem connection.

Other sources include Raymond Facéline and Damien Rwegera. 1977. African Theology/ Théologie Africaine: International Bibliography 1968-1977 indexed by computer. RIC Supplement 30. Strasbourg: CERDIC Publications, and also the work of Joseph J. Lauer, Gregory Larkin and Alfred Kagan. comps. 1988. American and Canadian Doctoral Dissertations and Master's Theses on Africa, 1974-1987. Atlanta, Ga.: Crossroads Press, Emory University, which continues American & Canadian Doctoral Dissertations & Master's Theses on Africa, 1886-1974, compiled by Michael Sims and Alfred Kagan. Unpublished dissertations done in Europe are listed only where they have been cited in other works listed in the bibliography. Some of the dissertations listed as "unpublished" may in fact have been published since the preparation of this bibliography.

A greater portion of the books listed are published on presses with wide distribution networks worldwide, making them relatively easily available to students anywhere. A smaller number were purchased by the author in Nigeria and in Kenya. Some of the latter works may be difficult to obtain outside of those countries.

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