

**TOWARDS A HOLISTIC SOTERIOLOGY FOR
A LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AN AFRICAN
RELIGIOUS CONTEXT**

**Utilising Luther's theology and the Owambo traditions to overcome a spiritualised and
privatised concept of salvation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia [ELCIN]**

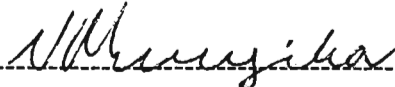
By

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DECLARATION

I, Veikko Munyika, hereby declare that, this whole thesis, unless otherwise indicated to the contrary in the text is my own original work. It has not been submitted for another degree to any other university before.



V. Munyika

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all members of ELCIN, my spiritual family, and to Lovisa, Akutu, Aveshe and Amena, my physical family.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contends that the individualisation, privatisation and spiritualisation of the concept of salvation in the church in general and in The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia [ELCIN] in particular, where salvation is confined to the soul and its escape from this evil world into a blessed heaven at some future date after death, with the result that church members are reluctant to strive for the quality of the present life as believers, must be overcome. This study must be seen against the background of increasing secularism in Namibia. This encroachment constitutes a serious challenge to the Namibian Lutheran Churches of which ELCIN is the largest. The secularisation of a community renowned for its Christianity seems to indicate deficiencies in the core message of the church.

The concept of salvation must be formulated in response to current deficiencies in the overall wellbeing of humanity and reality as a whole. Such a paradigm of salvation may be enriched by the holistic Pauline-Lutheran concept of salvation. The Lutheran message of salvation needs contextualisation and Africanisation in order to pick up valid concerns of the **Owambo** tradition for African Lutherans on this side of the grave. There is, therefore, an urgent need for theologians in ELCIN to revisit their concept of salvation and to redefine it in the light of the original Pauline-Lutheran concept of salvation on the one hand, and of the **Owambo** traditional concerns for human wellbeing on the other.

This study recommends that ELCIN must integrate her message of eschatological salvation with her practical services so that it becomes obvious to her members that the latter is, in fact, the consequence of the former and both are indispensable to **shalom**, that is comprehensive salvation. Such an integration will be her highest token of gratitude for the message of salvation which she received from the Finns albeit in the vessels of their own culture; the convincing sign of her theological maturity, and the best possible way to maintain her relevancy at all times.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Background and motivation

Until her independence in 1990, Namibia has been considered one of the most christianised countries in Africa. Lutherans are still in the majority. Except for the African Methodist Episcopal Church [AME]¹ and Oruano [=Unity] which broke away from the Rhenish mission in 1946 and 1955 respectively, African Independent Churches have virtually been unknown, not to speak of other world religions (Katjavivi 1989:6,8f). But now (1996) Namibia is an independent country with a secular state, one which allows religious freedom. Islam and other world religions have already made inroads into Namibia's one and half million population. In neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, African Traditional Religions are becoming popular and soon that spirit of Africanism will find its way into Namibia as well. We should not be caught unawares.

The church may still be growing numerically, but she might be declining in relevance, efficacy and popularity. That is one of the serious post independent challenges facing the churches in Namibia, particularly the Lutheran church of which ELCIN is the largest. During the struggle for liberation the church was the voice of the voiceless, the partner in the struggle for freedom and justice. It was a great honour for many to be associated with the church, particularly ELCIN. Things have changed since. It is not uncommon today to hear remarks that God does not exist. Some people feel the church is an ailing conscience of society, others say she is part of the gravy train. Young people and intellectuals in particular, are fast losing interest in the church and her programmes. They feel that the church is too other-worldly and unconcerned with concrete human problems. Many of these people are still registered and practising members of the church, but their participation is on the decline.

The problem seem to be two-fold. **Firstly**, the concept of salvation is too narrow, too other-worldly, too spiritual and too personal. The question as to what it is from which one is to be

1. Members of the Rhenish Mission who broke away because of "dissatisfaction with the close identification of the Lutheran Church with the colonial authorities" (Katjavivi 1989 1989:8) adopted AME as a name for their new church. They had connections with the leadership of the said church in SA and USA.

delivered has not found an adequate answer in mainline churches. Their response to this question directed their members upwards and offered them a free passport and ticket to heaven (Webb 1974:5). For them, the problem is that sin disturbs the relationship between an individual and his/her God. The solution is forgiveness of sins whereby reconciliation between the sinner and his/her God is guaranteed. The gospel is not proclaimed in such a way that it responds directly and adequately to the fundamental, immanent, and transcendent needs of reality, including humanity. These tendencies clearly contradict both the Pauline-Lutheran concept of salvation and the **Owambo** concern of wholeness of life. The **Owambo** traditional religion had a more comprehensive concept of wellbeing from which the church should learn.

Secondly, the manner in which first generation missionaries and Western theologians have treated the **Owambo** culture and religion, particularly their concepts of sin and salvation, may soon cost the church most dearly. Without properly studying them and attempting to learn from them what could be useful in the successful proclamation of the biblical faith, everything indigenous was dismissed as heathenism. Even the African sense of religion which reinforces the gospel has been lost. Today, it seems, the chickens are coming home to roost.

Ovawambo of the pre-Christian era saw a human being as a unity and life as one whole. There was no dichotomy between the profane and the sacred. Religion and life belonged together. **Ovawambo** worked religiously, walked religiously, hunted religiously, danced religiously, sang religiously, married religiously, mined religiously, farmed religiously, divined religiously, buried their dead religiously, mourned them religiously - you name it! Every single moment of their life was a religious moment. **Kalunga**, the Supreme Being of **Ovawambo**, was so central to their life that Aarni, son of a Finnish missionary, could not find a better concept than **Kalungatism** to describe **Owambo** culture and religions.

It is against this background that this thesis undertakes to address the two-fold problem stated above. We hope to develop a multidimensional paradigm for soteriology, one which is firmly based on the Pauline-Lutheran witness and focuses on comprehensive wellbeing of reality and wholeness of life. We aim at making the central message of the gospel of salvation appealing and relevant to the members of ELCIN, and the ELCIN attractive to all people, her members in

particular. After all, God's concern for the comprehensive wellbeing of creation, of which humans form an integral part, does not negate the **Owambo** motif of the fullness of life.

2. Problem formulation and analysis

The central motive of this thesis is to overcome the **spiritualisation and privatisation** of the concept of salvation in The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia [ELCIN]. The problem is the confinement of salvation to the eternal blessedness of believers, with the emphasis put on their reward of happiness and eternal life in heaven. This emphasis robs present life of its value and ranks it only as a preparatory stage for the real life after death. This study takes on the task of gaining a comprehensive soteriology in ELCIN and avoiding any intentional or unintentional alienation of prayer and social involvement, spirituality and social responsibility because there is no worse heresy than one which separates love for God from love for our neighbours. In the words of Kretzschmar:

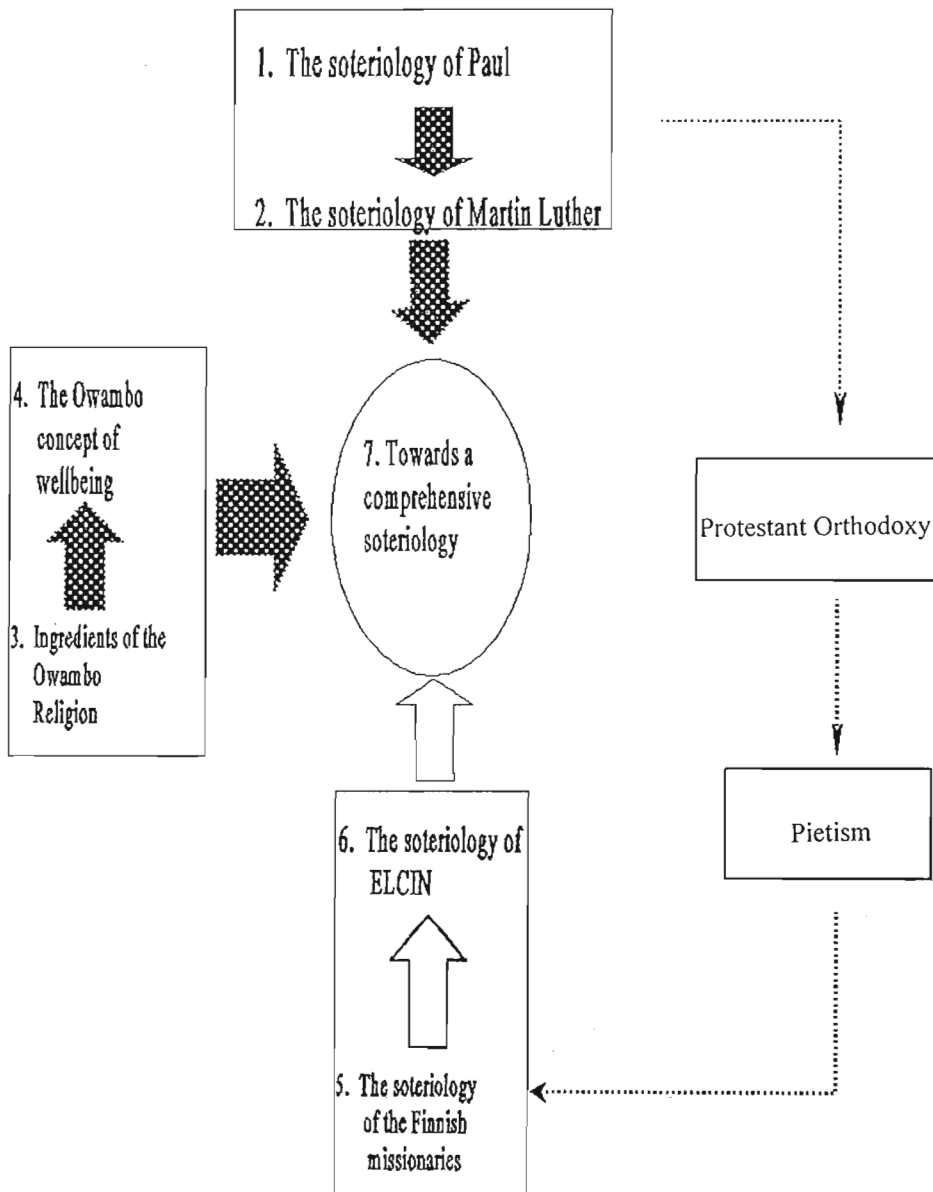
A privatised Gospel is inherently dualistic because it separates reality into different spheres: the physical and the spiritual; the secular and the sacred; the public and the private; the saving of the souls and social involvement (1996:69).

As evident from the scheme of this thesis, there are three completely independent factors which all have to contribute to such a holistic soteriology, namely: (a) the Pauline-Lutheran soteriological heritage [chapters one and two], (b) the Finnish-ELCIN concept of salvation [chapters five and six] and (c) the **Owambo** traditional concept of wellbeing [chapters three and four].

The central problem of this thesis may thus be formulated as follows: **How can the spiritualised and privatised concept of salvation found in ELCIN be overcome in the direction of a holistic soteriology?**

My hypothesis is that because of the spiritualisation and privatisation of the concept of salvation in ELCIN, the youth and the intellectuals are turning away from the church because she is not as concerned with their current wellbeing as she is concerned with their spiritual salvation. This spiritualisation and privatisation of the soteriology of ELCIN is due to the pietistic approach of the Finnish missionaries, which narrows down the Pauline-Lutheran tradition of salvation on the

A MAP OF THE THESIS



one hand and overlooks the holistic nature of the **Owambo** culture on the other. This pitfall must be overcome through a retrieval of the Pauline-Lutheran concept of salvation which is more comprehensive and the **Owambo** holistic concept of wellbeing.

The first sub-problem we have to deal with is, therefore: **Is the Pauline-Lutheran concept of salvation indeed holistic?** My hypothesis is that the genuine Pauline-Lutheran soteriological heritage is, in essence, holistic, although it has a powerful emphasis on our personal relationship with God. This may be authenticated by the study of the soteriology as found in the Pauline corpus (chapter one) and in Luther's notion of salvation which is derived from that of Paul (chapter two). Common to both Paul and Luther is the view that justification is the basis of sanctification and both are comprehensive. From the map of the thesis the Pauline-Lutheran heritage (chapters one and two) stand on top of the comprehensive soteriology (chapter seven), indicative of the fact that this is our primary criterion.

The Pauline-Lutheran concept of salvation was proclaimed by the Finnish Lutheran missionaries to **Ovawambo** whose concept of wellbeing is likewise holistic. Therefore, the second sub-problem which we have to tackle is: **Is there evidence that the Owambo concept of wellbeing is holistic?** To tackle this sub-problem, we first have to give an overview of the entire religious heritage after which we have to discuss the concept of wellbeing in greater detail. In the map of the thesis, the **Owambo** line (chapters three and four) feeds into the circle of the comprehensive soteriology (chapter seven) from the side to indicate that this is the context to which the holistic soteriology should respond.

My hypothesis is that the **Owambo** traditional concept of wellbeing is indeed holistic. It regarded a human being as **omudidi** [a unit] and addressed all dimensions of human existence (chapter three). It may be utilised to inform the ELCIN soteriology so that the latter meets the needs of her members in their African situation and so keep them in her fold (chapter four and seven).

Now we must consider the Finnish-ELCIN tradition of soteriology which is somewhat between the Pauline-Lutheran heritage and the African (**Owambo**) context. So our third sub-problem is:

Did the Finnish missionaries adhere to the Pauline-Lutheran soteriological tradition? My hypothesis is that they did so only partly. The reason for that is that the Finnish missionaries were strongly influenced by 16/17th century Protestant Orthodoxy and 18/19th century Pietism which lost the comprehensive nature of the Pauline-Lutheran soteriology.

Our fourth sub-problem concerns the soteriology of ELCIN and may be formulated as follows: **Does ELCIN have a holistic soteriology?** Although she derives her theology from the Pauline-Lutheran tradition and ministers in the African [**Owambo**] context, ELCIN does not have such a holistic concept of salvation (chapter five). My hypothesis is that ELCIN derived her theology from the Finnish missionaries who were moulded essentially by Pietism, which lost the holistic soteriology of Luther and the Bible (chapter six). In the map of the thesis, the Finnish-ELCIN line stands at the bottom of the circle of the envisaged comprehensive soteriology with different shading of arrows to show that this is what needs to be overcome at least partially. The dotted line which connects Protestant Orthodoxy between the Pauline-Lutheran heritage on the one hand and the Finnish-ELCIN tradition on the other have been added to indicate that the latter did not adhere to the heritage of the former. Also in line with the Finnish missionaries, ELCIN did not utilise the comprehensive concept of wellbeing found in the **Owambo** culture.

That brings us to the centre of our scheme (chapter seven) where we hope to formulate a comprehensive concept of soteriology. Our sub-problem number five may be formulated thus: **How can the deficient concept of salvation found in ELCIN be overcome?** My hypothesis is that the inadequate paradigm of salvation found in ELCIN can be overcome by utilising the more comprehensive traditions, which are the Pauline-Lutheran view of salvation and the **Owambo** concept of wellbeing, to inform the process by which the holistic concept of salvation is formulated.

Two two-fold questions will guide us during our investigation of the Pauline-Lutheran soteriological heritage, the Finnish-ELCIN concept of salvation and the **Owambo** concern for comprehensive wellbeing. The questions are: (a) **What is sin and what is its scope?** (b) **What is salvation and how inclusive is it?** These questions will help us to determine what similarities or differences there are between these three traditions. They will also help us to determine which

of the elements of the traditions concerned need to be retrieved and utilised in the process of formulating a paradigm of comprehensive soteriology.

3. Thesis structure

We shall attempt to respond to the questions posed in 1. above and to their derivative questions in the seven chapters into which this thesis is subdivided. **Chapter one** deals with the soteriology of Paul which is the foundation of the soteriology of Luther. It looks at the influence of late Jewish apocalyptic literature on the soteriology of St. Paul. For instance, what did Paul do with the apocalyptic idea that salvation is both material, spiritual, historical and comprehensive in terms of time and space? The chapter argues that while Paul has taken over many apocalyptic ideas, he gave them a new content. He proclaims that salvation has been ushered into the present by the Christ-event, that is, the death and resurrection of Christ. So for Paul, salvation begins now, though it will be completed in the eschatological future. It is a deposit and a foretaste of what is to come. Comprehensive salvation is reserved for the coming triumph of God. However, believers can already live in anticipation of what is coming, assured of God's willingness and his ability to bring it to pass. We are saved in hope and should live by it (Rom 8:18ff).

Chapter two investigates salvation according to Martin Luther. We believe that Luther continues the tradition of the Pauline soteriology. The theology of Luther forms one whole with intertwined components. For a proper comprehension of his soteriology, therefore, it is necessary to first consider the framework of his theology as a whole - particularly his concept of God, his anthropology, his hamartology, and, of course, his ethics. We hope to show that for Luther God is the Source and foundation of all existence, and wills its comprehensive wellbeing.

Chapter three explores the elements of **Owambo** traditional religion. Its objective is to isolate some religious elements of **Owambo** culture with their traditional concern for human wellbeing and which will then help us to overcome a spiritualised and privatised concept found in ELCIN. We shall first identify **Ovawambo**, and say something about their origin and migration to their present settlement. It shall be clear that although they form part of the larger family of the Bantus and share many African traits, **Ovawambo** have their unique cultural and religious identity. For

instance, they are matrilineal and their life forces flows through the lineage of the mother. Their culture knows no second deity.

Chapter four is an extension of chapter three and attempts a precise formulation of the **Owambo** concept of wellbeing. Its significance lies in that it establishes what it is in **Owambo** traditional religion which parallels the Christian concept of salvation and whether this can be used in the process of overcoming the dualistic elements in the ELCIN soteriology. So it looks at the **Owambo** concepts of sin, evil and salvation.

Those elements about human wellbeing which are common to Luther and **Ovawambo** will also be identified because it is precisely these points of agreement that we hope to use in our formulation of a comprehensive concept of salvation in order to overcome the other-worldly concept of salvation. The most important parallels are (a) that humanity needs salvation (b) that God is the Source of all existence and (c) that God is ambiguous. But there are also striking differences which suggest that not all **Owambo** religious elements can be accommodated by the Christian faith. This will serve as an important lesson that things can also go wrong with our process of enculturation and the effectiveness of the gospel might be impaired. This happened with the adoption of Hellenistic thought pattern. So it is important to know the differences as well.

Chapter five scrutinises the concept of salvation as proclaimed by the Finnish missionaries. This is important because it was they who brought Christianity to **Ovawambo**. When formulating a comprehensive concept of salvation, one must establish what kind of salvation was preached by the Finnish missionaries. Is it in line with the Pauline-Lutheran tradition? Was it not, for instance, due to the pietistic approach of the Finnish missionaries that the Pauline-Lutheran concept of salvation was narrowed down and as a result the holistic nature of **Owambo** culture was overlooked? If the answer to this question is yes, this chapter aims at exposing this fact in order to overcome the narrowness concerned. The history of The Finnish Missionary Society (FMS) will be traced back to 1857 when it was first inaugurated and forward to the commencement of missionary activities among **Ovawambo** in 1870.

Chapter six focuses on the perception and proclamation of salvation in ELCIN. It is significant to study the soteriology of ELCIN because we want to know how it agrees or differs with the Pauline-Lutheran and the Finnish concepts of salvation. We also want to establish the reason why ELCIN does not have a holistic soteriology although she derives her theology from the Pauline-Lutheran theology on the one hand and although she ministers to people in the African context. When this has been done we will know exactly which of its elements need to be overcome and how.

Chapter seven proposes a theory of salvation which is informed by the Pauline-Lutheran tradition, **Owambo** traditional concern for human wellbeing and current human needs so that at the end of the day, human situations of incompleteness are transformed into situations of wholeness and salvation. The need of such a theory is justified by the increasing tendencies among the youth and intellectuals to turn away from what they think is an irrelevant church with what they are and with what they have.

This chapter ends with a series of recommendations for ELCIN. I envisage coming up with the following recommendations: (a) that ELCIN shows her deepest appreciation for what the Finnish missionaries have done by demonstrating her theological and ethical maturity; (b) that ELCIN become a church with a vision again, by which she will direct her members and the whole of society, not only 'upward' to heaven but also 'forward' into the future; (c) that ELCIN keep the dialectic between 'not yet' and 'already' intact and to endure it; and (d) that ELCIN devote all her redemptive activities to the achievement of **shalom**, while constantly repeating: **Your kingdom come**, and living a godly life on earth by the power of the anticipation of a blessed eschatology.

4. Research methodology

The methods used in this research include the historical descriptive method, theological analysis, review of existing literature, interviews and participatory observation.

In the case of the theology of Paul, I will focus on the soteriology of Paul as found in the Pauline corpus. The study of the soteriology of Paul is of particular significance in view of our wish to understand the soteriology of Luther better because the latter is derived from the former. In the case of the theology of Luther, I will concentrate on those aspects which seem to have a direct

bearing on his concept of salvation. Such aspects include Luther's concept of God, his anthropology and his ethics. In the case of **Owambo** traditional religion, I will consider those aspects which will clearly show that the **Owambo** concept of wellbeing is holistic and can be utilised in the formulation of the comprehensive concept of salvation in the Lutheran Church serving the African community. In so doing, we shall utilise the theology of Luther on the one hand and the **Owambo** religious traditions on the other.

For the purpose of this thesis, we take the **Oshiwambo** concords **omu-**, **ova**, **oshi** etc. as a substitute for English articles. Finally I offer recommendations as to how ELCIN can make further progress towards theological maturity and relevance.

5. Limitations and delimitations

(a) I do not have skills in either the German or the Finnish languages, so the study is limited to English literature. (b) Although I am in search of a theory of salvation which is informed by the Lutheran concept of salvation, except for a few general references to various biblical texts, only the soteriology of Paul will be studied so as to understand Luther better because his concept of salvation is derived from that of Paul. For a better perception of Luther's view on salvation one would also have to study the Old Testament where God is seen as the source of reality as a whole, and salvation is seen in this -worldly terms. However, because of limits of time and space, we will only deal with the core documents on which Luther based his concept of salvation, that is the Pauline corpus. (c) Although general references to the African concepts of sin, evil and salvation will be made, the study focuses specifically on the **Owambo** perception of sin, evil, and salvation. (d) Even though what is going to be said in the thesis applies to the entire Lutheran community in Namibia, this study targets the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN).

After having set out the problem which this thesis will try to solve, and the procedure which we propose to follow, we are now ready to begin with the substantial analysis.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOTERIOLOGY OF PAUL

1.1 Introduction

In our search for an inclusive concept of salvation, we need to study the Pauline-Lutheran and the Finnish-ELCIN concepts of salvation and the **Owambo** concern for human wellbeing. This chapter considers only the Pauline concept of salvation because it is in line with the Old Testament concept of **shalom** and is the foundation of Luther's soteriology [chapter two]. We will briefly outline Paul's apocalyptic heritage, factors which moulded him into the great missionary he was, reasons for his missionary zeal, and his belief that God is concerned with a total wellbeing of all humanity.

We look into Paul's understanding that in the Christ-event God demonstrated his willingness and ability to save sinners by accepting them unconditionally. In this event the future has invaded the present and salvation is no longer a future event only. Believers can now protest against what ought not to be while anticipating a disclosure of their full salvation. In meantime they can share the new life of Christ to make salvation a reality in their concrete situations.

1.2 Paul's apocalyptic heritage

Jewish apocalyptic² literature, an offshoot of late Judaic writings, emerged between 200 BC and AD 100 and became popular. Its contents are visions about the termination of world history (Nürnberg 1986:37) or in Gottwald's words "... a revelation about end-time judgement and salvation" (1987:584). This "revelatory literature" (Gottwald 1987:584) consoles "those who were suffering persecutions" (Gaybba 1984:35)³

² Apocalyptic is a Greek concept which translates as "revelation", "disclosure" or "unveiling" and is used to "refer to **apocalyptic literature, apocalyptic thought, or apocalyptic movement**" (Gottwald 1987:582). Jewish apocalyptic may be seen as a world-view that originated during the Babylonian exile and developed in the absence of prophetism and wisdom literature.

³ König expresses the same idea saying that the idea of an "imminent end ... has a definite pastoral meaning: to comfort the persecuted faithful who believe that they will be saved or liberated by the coming crisis." But he adds that this upcoming judgement serves as a warning to the unfaithful (1990:27).

[1] That the struggle and suffering of the people of God is not in vain. It is a visible expression of a monstrous onslaught on God by the forces of evil (Gaybba 1984:34f).

[2] That God is in charge and He will send the Messiah; judge and condemn the oppressor and the godless; overcome Satan and banish his agents; end history, inaugurate the new age and make the faithful to share in the victory and rule of the Messiah over the world (Nürnberg 1974:108), enjoying "the fruit of victory" (Gaybba 1984:35).

[3] That the end of 'this world' is at hand.

This "most heroic" and "most tragic period of Israel's history" (Russell 1964:15) was marked by "a revival of Jewish nationalism" and the struggle under the leadership of the Maccabees and Hasmoneans. That this struggle was not only between the Jews and Gentiles, but also between Jews themselves and that there were "divided loyalties" (Russell 1964:15) among the Jews, is evident from the many parties and sects which existed within the Jewish nation. Hellenism⁴ was encroaching into Judaism. While pious Jews viewed it as a serious challenge of their faith, others, many of whom were in positions of authority in both divine and secular spheres, embraced its culture and willingly adopted its life style. So, "while pious Jews were holding the front door shut against foreign pressure, the back window was open enough to let mixing take place" (Ziesler 1983:8).

During this period, the Jewish nation experienced the Hellenization and secularisation of its High Priesthood. Corruption and bribes for promotion to high offices were rife. Secularised men and foreigners occupied divine offices and mismanaged affairs. The already critical situation was seriously aggravated. Finally, in AD 66 war broke out between the forces of light (Jews) and those of darkness.

(1990:27).

⁴ The concept **Hellenism** is commonly used to describe the Greek culture and civilization of the three centuries or so from the time of Alexander the Great (336-326 BC), which he and his successors in both the Greek and Roman periods sought to spread through the whole civilized world (Russell 1964:18).

Before they "realised their own smallness and helplessness" (Barclay 1965:160), the Jews believed that they were going "to acquire ... supreme status under human leadership ... (under) a great leader and commander ... from the stock of David," (Barclay 1965:160; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 22:4; 30:9; 23:5). However, Jerusalem was destroyed in AD. 70 and following a revolt led by Bar Kochba (A.D. 132-25) the Jews were excluded "from their sacred city of Jerusalem which was re-established as a Roman city" (Russell 1964:16). The forces of darkness seemed to have defeated those of light. "Faithfulness to the God of Israel was met by persecutions, death, and suffering; indeed empirical circumstances showed that God's enemies were in charge of the world" (König 1982:31).

Jewish apocalyptic literature emerged as a "response of faith which the nation was called to make" (Russell 1964:16) to the persecutions, political and economic pressures of the day (Russell 1964:17). Human resources had reached their limits (Russell 1964:17) but the faithful were in danger of being destroyed by the forces of evil, and enemies of faith (Dunn 1990:312). Apocalyptic hopes and fears echoed the nation's faith in God. The Book of Daniel, for instance, was a response to the oppressive hellenizing policies of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 BC), who was determined "to wipe out the Jewish religion altogether" (Russell 1964:16; cf Micah 1:54). It is an affirmation of the nation's faith in the divine purpose which could not be frustrated by the devices of evil persons, however powerful or tyrannical they might be.

One of the greatest lessons which apocalyptic literature teaches and which Paul inherited, is the difference between the infinite God and finite human beings. Human beings are enslaved by the forces of evil and are unable to liberate themselves politically, economically or spiritually (Russell 1964:18). After successive captivities the Jews became aware that "human powers would never raise them to greatness ..." and that "no human power could ever bring in the new age ... [only] the direct intervention of God in history could" (Barclay 1965:180). So, as Russell observes

They were compelled to look beyond history to the dramatic and miraculous intervention of God who could set to rights the injustices done to his people Israel. The very urgency of the situation emphasised the nearness of the hour (1964:18).

Here we find the passionate conviction that whatever God has promised will materialize. He will liberate and exalt his people. Thus, "the heart of apocalyptic thought is a radical summing up and evaluation of history as having run its course" (Gottwald 1987:585). The remaining time is meant for individual believers to prepare themselves for the new era which will replace this contaminated one. Therefore apocalyptic literature is not only "a literature of despair" but, and perhaps more so, "literature of hope" (Russell 1964:18). No faithful would suffer in vain, because "God could not let his people down" (Gaybba 1984:36). He will exonerate them and bring his plan and purpose to its consummation. There shall be a general resurrection from the dead, a final judgement, a punishment of all evil forces and the emergence of a glorious, unending future for the good and its agents (Nürberger 1986:37).

1.3 The Day of the Lord and the New Age

So it was the experience that ordinary human means could not effect the desired change that led to the conviction that God will intervene directly into world affairs (Barclay 1965:157) to restore the saints (Nürberger 1986:37). This divine intervention is known as the Day of the Lord (Gaybba 1984:32). All Jews, and Paul was no exception, looked forward to this redemptive moment in history. But why, how and when would this divine visitation take place? According to II Esd.7:50, "the Most High has made not one age but two". In accordance with the Hebrew world view, the apocalyptic saw history as a linear rather than a circular progression moving forward towards a definite goal rather than repeating itself (Dunn 1990:312). There are two opposing ages: the present and the future (Gaybba 1984:31). Although they are created by the same God (II Esd.7:50; Rom.1:20) tension exists between them. This age has fallen prey to "the powers of evil, misery and death" (Ridderbos 1977:91). It is ruled by the evil one (1 Cor.2:6,11; 2 Cor.4:4; Gal.4:3). It is alienated from God. It contradicts his intentions (Abijole 1988:122). Paul's soteriology is built on this world-view and life-view.

This world needs reunion with its Creator, to become what he wants it to be. So there is an urgent need for the present evil and sinful world to be replaced by a new and better world, void of evil, sin and death. But this is humanly impossible. Only God can bring it about by dethroning evil, sin and death and establishing his kingdom. But how and when will this take place?

The exact date was not established. Apocalyptics believed that it could neither be hastened nor delayed, because ultimately it depends on the fulfilment of the purpose of God (Dunn 1990:314). But the uncovering of what was concealed in prophecies was taken to be a convincing sign of the beginning of the end. The entire creation has come in the final period preceding the end. God's purpose is almost complete and consummation is at hand (1V Ezra.4:33-50; 8:61; 11:44).

For the youth of the world is past, and the strength of the creation is already long ago at an end, and the advance of the age is almost here. For the pitcher is near to the foundation, the ship at the harbour, the caravan to the city, and life to its conclusion (Baruk 85:10).

That brings us to the nature of that Day. Although most Jews looked forward to the Day of the Lord, they perceived it to be a terrifying Day. It will be "a day of concentrated dread (and of) the birth pangs of the new age" (Barclay 1965:161). It will be: (1) A day of terror and destruction. The "wrath" of God against all wickedness will be unleashed (Isa.13,Zeph.1; Joel.1:13-20;2:30 f). (2) It will be a day marked by cosmic destruction. This old age will make way for the new, good reality where everything and everyone lives according to the intentions of God (Joel.2:1ff). (3) It will be a day of judgement. The wicked will be identified to give their account and then be destroyed together with the prince of darkness (Isa. 13:11; cf.Barclay 1965:161).

The divine shaking of the present order into judgement (Isa.13:13; 34:4; 51:6; Hag.2:7) would "cause a new order to emerge" (Ladd 1982:64). Immediately following the supernatural intervention in history, God would establish his eternal kingdom (Dan.2:28,44) in which he will be exalted and reign over everything and everybody (Isa.2:11; Gay 1987:294). This will be the age of bliss "for the righteous remnant" (Dunn 1990:313). The righteous dead shall be restored to life and be given a share in the blessings of the new age, but the wicked will be raised to face judgement (Russell 1964:297ff).

There is an overlap between Old Testament prophecy and apocalyptic thoughts. The latter built on and radicalised the former. Isaiah hoped for the era of peace, during which nature would have been transformed and renewed, and peace would have made its home in the animal kingdom. No animal shall be a victim of another. The whole earth shall flow with the exaltation of Yahweh

(Isa.2:11). Ezekiel expresses the same sentiments. Especially during the post-exilic period, development towards these tendencies is clearly evident. The idea of "divine judgement on nations as well as the deliverance and vindication for the righteous remnant, leading to a new golden age of justice, peace, and infinite bliss" (Dunn 1990:415) is clearly evident. In apocalyptic eschatology, a different picture is painted. It goes beyond prophecy. There is a clear discontinuity between this and the age to come. The pessimism towards this age is radicalised. The suffering which is expected to accompany the end of the present age is more terrible. Judgement and salvation are final and the end is imminent. Perhaps the most basic difference between prophecy and apocalyptic eschatology has been pointed out by H. H. Rowley, quoted by Dunn: "generally, the prophets foretold the future that should arise out of the present, while the apocalyptic foretold the future that should break into the present" (1990:316). So the expected golden age will be:

(1) An age of plenty and no want. None would have too little (Amos 9:14; Isa.51:3; 32:15; Barclay 1965:157). (2) It would be an age of friendship and fellowship. All living things, even those that were enemies in the old age, would be united to their God and to each other (Hos.2:18; Isa 11:8-9).

(3) An age free of death. Infant mortality shall disappear, senior citizens shall fill out their days and weeping because of distress shall be foreign (Isa.65:19-20). The Lord God himself, will be so close, so united with all, that he will himself "wipe away tears from off all faces". He will swallow up death in victory, so that it shall be no more (Isa.25:8) This will be a pain-free, tear-free and death-free age. God will be all in all.

(4) It would be an age of shalom. There shall be no more wars and war equipment shall have been transformed into agricultural tools. (5) It would be cosmic, yet ethnocentric because some Jews thought it would favour them due to their missionary work among heathen nations (Isa.2:2-3; Micah.4:1-2; Barclay 1965:159), their political conquest and the subjection of world nations under them (Isa.45:14; Zech.14:17).

Two more things about apocalyptic soteriological thoughts need to be noted. Firstly, it has supernatural and cosmic dimensions. An apocalyptic vision is wide in scope. It is not confined to

Israel, but embraces the whole of reality: the whole world, heaven and the underworld, the whole of humanity (Dunn 1990:314). No single creature will escape the events of the end-time, for "resurrection, world judgement, and world dissolution ... are of a cosmic scale" (Dunn 1990:314). Everything and everybody, including angels and spirits would be affected.

Secondly, the significance of the apocalyptic faith lies in the conviction that God is in charge of history, directing it towards its goal (Dan.8:26; 12:4,9; Rev.5-8). Whatever is happening is foreknown by him. This means the expected age will neither grow out of the present nor come about through human achievement. For this reason, radical hope and optimism rise above radical pessimism. Apocalyptic eyes are fixed not on the present experienced reality, but on what is hoped for, beyond to God, and invite others to follow (Dunn 1990:415).

1.4 Paul: the necessary bridge

The Jews were pessimistic and optimistic people (Barclay 1965:156). They took pride in their divine election believing that they deserved "world respect, world power, and world dominion" (Barclay 1965:156f). They despised and hated other nations, regarding them as the rejected. They believed that Gentiles were created to fuel the fire of hell (Barclay 1965:9). But the Gentiles also hated the Jews. Cicero for instance, describes Judaism as "barbarous superstition" and Tacitus considered the Jews themselves as the "vilest people" (Barclay 1965:9). To these opposing nations, Christianity was to be proclaimed and Paul was probably the best qualified to take the challenge because he was a Roman citizen and a Jew, a person of two worlds.

Paul was a devout Jew (Montefiore 1981:17). Even his encounter with the Lord of the church did not convert him from Judaism, "but from what he came to regard as an outdated form of it, to what he believed was its true fulfilment" (Ziesler 1983:8). In spite of rejecting some aspects of Judaism (Phil.3:4-11), he insisted on his Jewishness. In 2 Cor 11:22 he introduced himself convinced that "there was nowhere in the world a purer Jew than he" (Barclay 1965:11). He was circumcised on the eighth day. He belonged to the stock of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, was born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and got the best of the Jewish education under the famous Rabbi, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) which included Jewish law, religion and culture (Filson 1977:200). In fact, he was "a convinced Pharisee" (Kümmel

1987:140) and a rabbi (Montefiore 1981:24; Kümmel 1987:138)). So it never escaped his mind that he was a pure Jew, one of the chosen people of God, a Jew par excellence.

Paul's Jewishness was apparent in both his words and deeds (Phil. 3:4-7). He had all the reasons in the world "for confidence in the flesh" (vv 4,5). The Old Testament was his Holy Scripture (Rom.1:2; 4:3). He worked tirelessly to uphold the Jewish law which eventually led him to persecute those who abandoned it and became followers of the Lord of the Church. He believed that relaxing the law would endanger the Jewish nation (Ziesler 1983:12). So, being "in the tradition of rabbinic Judaism" Paul "shared the Jewish belief in the centrality of the law" (Ladd 1982:363). But this was only his attitude before his conversion.

When he encountered Christ he became a different person altogether. He broke away from Jewish assumptions and did so more radically than any other apostle.

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse ... (Phil 3:8).

In order to appreciate Paul's psychology and theology, the fact that he was a staunch Jew should be kept in mind, and "the culture and the religious traditions in which he stood" (Ziesler 1983:8) must be understood. In many respects, therefore, "Paul was the man ideally fitted to understand Christianity with all its Jewish background, and bring it to the Jews" (Barclay 1965:16). Similarly, he was the ideal man to bring the gospel to gentiles (Rom.1:14; Gal.2:9) because he knew the fundamental differences between salvation by achievement (by law) and salvation as the gift of new life in Christ (the gospel).

But Paul was also a Roman citizen (Kümmel 1987:140). He grew up in Tarsus, the "great commercial city: a university town ... famous for philosophers, and especially for philosophers of the Stoic School" (Barclay 1965:20). One could not live, let alone grow up in such a city without experiencing and absorbing elements from different cultures and religions. "It was a city with such a desire for knowledge, such a respect for scholarship and such an intellectual ferment of thought that no thinking young man could entirely escape the contagion of the throng in ideas

which crowded the air" (Barclay 1965:21). If a man was destined to be a missionary to the entire world, there was no better place for him to grow into manhood than Tarsus (Barclay 1965:21).

"Christianity was cradled in Judaism" (Barclay 1965:9; cf.153). Ziesler's argument "that Paul's upbringing [might] have been in Jerusalem not Tarsus" (1983:13) deserves little attention in this context. By implication one of the first problems Christianity had to face was suspicion. Judaism was an exclusive religion, that is, for Jews only. Christianity was inclusive and for all.

But as the English proverb goes, "like father like son", the God of Jesus is the God of the Jewish patriarchs. Therefore, Christianity was viewed as an extension of Judaism. The Jews "were involved in a double hatred: the world hated them and they hated the world" (Barclay 1965:9). To overcome this awkward predicament, Christianity definitely needed a person of Paul's calibre: a Jew who was also a Roman citizen. To be accepted by both the Jews and Gentiles, someone unique and well versed in both Jewish culture and religion and in Gentile culture and religion was needed. Such a combination was found in Paul as we have shown above. Although any hellenistic Jew could serve as such a bridge, Paul emerged as a prominent representative of those who could. Barclay cannot be more right, therefore, when concluding that "life has been moulding Paul to be the bridge between the Jews and the Greeks, and the unique channel through whom Christianity went out to all the world" (1965:11).

Neither the Jews, nor the Gentiles could blame Paul for abandoning Judaism, either on the ground of not understanding it or fully realizing what it was, or only experiencing an imperfect vision of it. Surely with his background "Paul knew Judaism at its best, and at its highest: he knew it from inside; he had gone through all the experiences, both of height and of depth, that it could bring to any man" (Barclay 1965:16).

So we can safely conclude that Paul understood himself to be an apostle to the gentiles. "Paul was the man ideally fitted to understand Christianity with all its Jewish background, and to bring Christianity to the Jews" (Barclay 1965:16). But he was also the best person qualified to be the apostle to the Gentiles. He was "the man of two worlds" (Barclay 1965:25). If this is true, then, it is also true that "apocalyptic Judaism has exerted its influence in Paul's thought" (Furnish

1968:118). Little wonder then that Beker is convinced that Paul "was an apocalyptic during his Pharisaic career" who "lived his life in hope of the fulfilment of the Messianic promises" (1989:143). He was no doubt an apocalyptic Pharisee "missionary" before his conversion, if we trust Acts 9:1-2. However, it cannot be completely right to say that "the apocalyptic structure in his thought remains constant in his Pharisee and Christian life" (Beker 1989:144) because within the history of the writings of Paul his view developed and, to a certain measure, changed as is noticeable from the comparison of his early texts such as 1 Thess 4:18ff with a later text such as Phil 1:21ff. Baker is the right, however, when observing that a careful reading of Pauline letters from the earliest (1 Thessalonians) to the latest (Philippians) will show that "apocalyptic is not a peripheral curiosity for Paul but the central climate and process of his thought" (Beker 1982:144; cf Bosch 1995:394).

1.5 Paul's missionary initiatives

In line with apocalyptic authors, Paul was convinced that human beings in 'this world', are under seize by the forces of evil and principalities (2 Cor.4:4; Col.2:8). They are outside Christ (Gal 4:3-7), alienated from God and estranged from their destiny. They do not acknowledge God but boast in his presence (Rom.1:20-21,25, 1 Cor.1:27-29) and worship creatures instead of the Creator (Rom.1:25). They all need liberation for, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:9ff.23). Everybody faces divine judgement and this is so "unless God takes action on their behalf" (Martin 1989:34). Further, Paul believed that in the Christ-event, a new era of eschatological renewal and judgment during which God will vindicate and reward the faithful has come (Martin 1989:34). His proposed solution is the preaching of the gospel, the liberating and saving power of God, for the following reasons.

1.5.1 Paul was concerned with the Gentiles and the Jews

Paul did not want to privatise the gospel. It must be brought "to all nations" (Rom.1:5) including the Gentiles. But he also had a special concern for his fellow Jews. It has been his "heart's desire and prayer to God for them ... that they may be saved" (Rom.10:1f). They too were in need of liberation, particularly from the law. The liberation of as many Gentiles as possible was a co-requisite for the liberation of "his own race" (Rom.11:25; Montefiore 1981:24). For this reason,

Paul worked very hard among Gentiles hoping that God still wanted to save the Jews through faith in Christ (Rom.11:14; Montefiore 1981:24).

So the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles did not make him forget or neglect his responsibility to 'win the Jews' for Christ (Rom 9:20). He mourned for their unbelief and hardening (Rom.11:7,23,25). In Rom.11:13 we read: "Inasmuch then as I am a apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them". The Messiah came to save all nations through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom.3:6-9). This means God was not only concerned with the so-called remnant (Rom.11:5) but with "all who believe; ... drawn from Israel's true members (Rom.2:28-29) and equally include under Paul's ministry responding Gentiles" (Martin 1989:132).

Paul saw his ministry to the Gentiles as that of announcing a miracle (Rom.11:24) of grafting "wild olive shoots" into the stem (Rom.11:17). This miracle would serve as an incentive for the branches which have broken off from the olive tree (Rom.11:23). Paul hopes that "by the same miracle that grafted in wild shoots, God ... can return the natural branches to the parent tree ... with a clear proviso that 'they do not persist in unbelief'" (Martin 1989:133). For the Gentiles and the Jews, therefore, the requirement to salvation is one: faith. In Christ, God has acted to meet the needs of both: justification for the Jews and reconciliation for Gentiles (Martin 1989:135). The enmity of the Gentiles was exposed, judged and forgiven, the religion of the Jews has been tested, condemned and superseded by what God has done in Jesus Christ (Martin 1989:135).

1.5.2 Paul was concerned for enslaved humanity

Paul was convinced that reality in general, and humanity in particular, have fallen under the dominion of evil forces (Rom.8:38; Kümmel 1987:235). Such forces of evil enslaved reality "to their purpose, ... blinding [it] to the gospel of Christ and thus to the true God himself" (2 Cor.4:4; Gal.4:3; Furnish 1978:116). Such alienation means that creation, humanity in particular, is outside Christ, "removed from God" (Kümmel 1987:253), enslaved and controlled by dead idols (Bosch 1995:134). They are without freedom and salvation (Ridderbos 1977:91; Bosch 1995:134). This life-context outside Christ Paul calls 'the world'(cosmos) or 'this world'(Kümmel

1987:173). These terms represent and denote the totality of unredeemed life outside Christ, dominated, determined and qualified by sin (Ridderbos 1977:91,92).

Paul uses the same terms in other senses to denote the created world (Rom.1:20) and the human living space (Rom.4:13; 1 Cor.14:10). This use, however, does not concern us here. It is enough for now only to recognise it. It was for the deliverance of those who find themselves trapped in this life-context outside Christ that Christ came (Gal.1:4). 'This world' is "turned away from God, rebellious and hostile towards him (Rom.3:16,19), deprived mankind ... headed for judgement (Rom.3:6; 1 Cor.11:32" (Ridderbos 1977:92). It is hostile to and stands over against God and his intentions (Furnish 1978:116). It lacks God's Spirit and is determined by the spirit of 'this world' (Abijole 1988:122).

This aeon is evil (Gal.1:4) because Satan, assisted by elemental spirits and powers, is its god (2 Cor.4:4; Gal.4:3; Furnish 1978:116). It is full of "the forces of evil, misery, and death ..." (Ridderbos 1977:91). In Rom.5:14,21; 6:9,14; 8:2, Paul seems to include law, sin and death "among the principalities and powers" (Abijole 1988:121) which enslave humankind. A detailed treatment of the enslaving forces is done under 1.6 below. Obviously, the immediate need of this world is liberation, traditionally known as salvation, from these forces of evil (Käsemann 1980:234). It needs both transformation and transference from 'this world' to the Kingdom of Christ (Col.1:13) to be in communion with Christ (Kümmel 1987:236). For Paul, the task of announcing God's victory over the forces of evil and the promise for reconciliation (Patte 1984:55) as accomplished in the Chris-event cannot be more urgent.

A question arises: how was it possible for the created powers to turn against their Creator? To respond to this question, theology has to [a] affirm the mastery [b] the redemptive intentions of God. To do that, we have to investigate the encounter between the biblical faith and other faiths and the consequences thereof.

We read about the universalisation of the biblical God and faith in Pauline and in Deutero-Pauline letters. This universalisation is an end-product of a long process. Yahweh was initially known by the Old Testament witness as a personal deity of the nomadic Israelites. He took care of their

comprehensive wellbeing. They could directly relate and look to him in times of need. This personal relationship was expressed in the form of a covenant. Abraham and David are cases in point. The requirement of such a deep personal relationship was mutual trust. Its upshot was mutual care. Thus, Nürnberger could write

But on this foundation the covenant of Yahweh and Israel was built. And this involved not only devotion but the liberation and prosperity of the whole nation, a legal system, a state, an economy (1987:7).

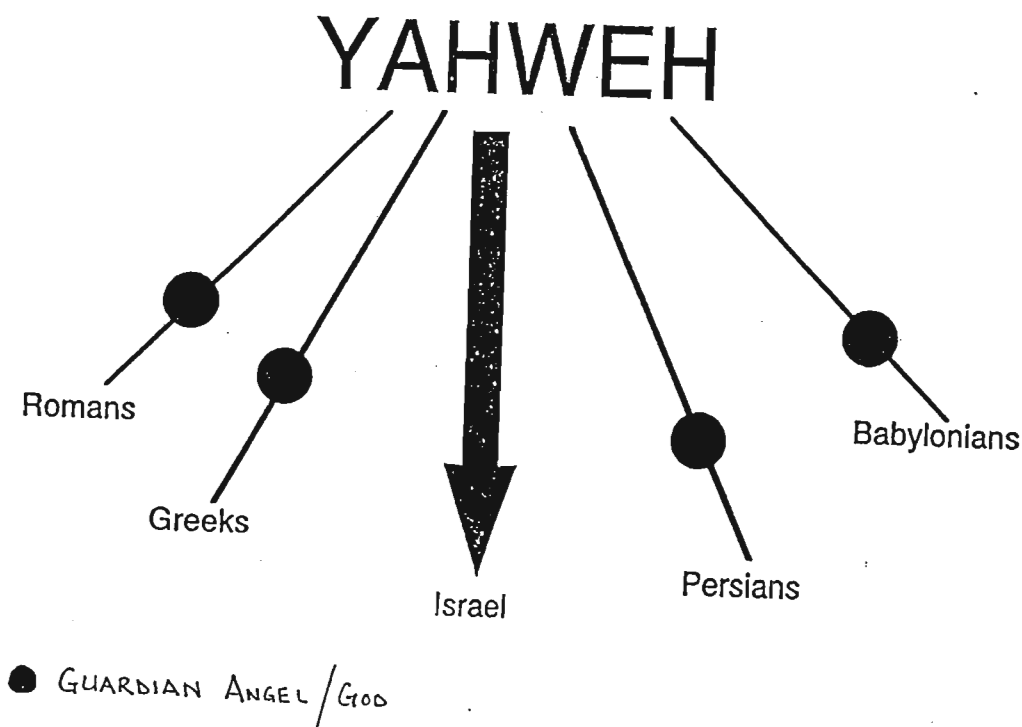
Soon, however, the personal relationship between Israel and Yahweh was challenged by the encounter between Israel and other nations; Judaism encountered other religions and Yahweh other gods. A threefold response on the part of Israel followed. **First**, it was **syncretism**, whereby Yahweh was identified with the Canaanite gods, e.g El or Baal. When prophets protested against the low moral standards of paganism, **syncretism** gave way to the **second** response, **suppression** (Caird 1956:1). Prophets called for a total suppression of pagan religion and worship and the existence of gods other than Yahweh was denied. However, the grip of other deities over their subjects remained intact (Caird 1956:2). The **third** response was **subordination**, whereby the existence of other deities was recognised and the superiority of Yahweh maintained. Such deities existed, but as inferiors, and messengers of Yahweh (Ps.104:4). They served as members of his heavenly council around his throne (Ps.82; 89:6-7). Their existence was recognised, but they "were not gods in their own right" but "angelic powers with a delegated power" (Caird 1956:4). This struggle ended with the perception that Yahweh was the Lord of nature, of history, of all nations, of lords and of gods.

Levenson follows Kaufmann in arguing that there was a sound relationship between Yahweh and other gods to the extent that Yahweh called them his sons. The idea here is that when God said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26), he was actually speaking to these "sons" of his. Levenson could therefore write:

it would appear that these `sons of God/gods' played an active role and made fresh proposals to God, who nonetheless retained the final say. In short, like the other gods at the close of the **Enuma elish**, they are thought of to be real and important, but also subordinate and not very individual (1988:5).

The **subordination** theory was developed further by the Deuteronomic school where it was believed that Yahweh had assigned a guardian, or angelic ruler over every nation (Deut. 32:8-9; Caird 1956:4) except over Israel who was directly under Yahweh. Yahweh ruled directly over Israel but via angelic rulers over other nations. This school was bothered neither by the existence of those powers nor if nations other than Israel worshipped their particular angelic rulers instead of Yahweh (Deut.4::19; cf 17:2-7). As long as Israel was not tempted to worship such rulers, Yahweh's intentions for human wellbeing were not interfered with. The main thing was the realisation that [i] those other gods form part of the reality of which Yahweh was in charge and its Source; [ii] they receive their right of existence from Yahweh; [iii] they only have delegated powers from Yahweh and [iv] they serve his purpose which is to rule over nations as representatives of Yahweh (Nürnberger 1987:8).

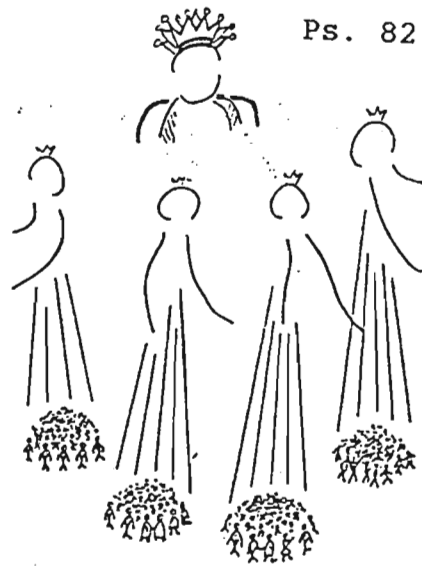
Diagram 1



Psalm 82 depicts a scene during which Yahweh had summoned his representatives to give account of their rule. Yahweh is disillusioned with their performance. He found them guilty of being unjust towards their subjects, particularly the weak, and the needy, the fatherless, the powerless, and the downtrodden (Nürnberger 1987:9). They have not been impartial judges and defenders of the powerless against the wicked (vv.2-4). So the representatives of Yahweh are demoted and executed (vv.6) because they failed "to keep order and to see to it that justice is done"

(Nürnberg 1987:11). So "judgement is a reaction to their injustice, their failure to favour the unfortunate of society" (Levenson 1988:6).

Diagram 2



Adopted from Nürnberg,
1987:9

Ancient Israel also believed that their being under the direct rule of Yahweh had a specific purpose to serve. She was to serve as a witness to other nations, and by implication to their rulers. She would do so by way of living out the "justice of Yahweh so that the other nations can see and learn and praise Yahweh, the source of justice" (Nürnberg 1987:11). Failing, Israel too frustrated Yahweh. Consequently, she too had to be punished. Under this punishment, she tried to appease Yahweh by fulfilling the law to the letter. As a result, the law assumed the status of the spiritual force in relation to Jews. While other nations were alienated from Yahweh by their different gods, Israel was separated from him by the law. In his ministry, Jesus introduced change to this situation by abolishing, not only the law but also the other spiritual forces which alienated other nations from Yahweh. He reconciled all to God. Paul is preaching this message of reconciliation.

Such powers were considered demonic as soon as they became "tyrannical, immoral and superstitious" (Caird 1956:8). This resulted when the ruled worshipped their angelic guardians instead of Yahweh in which case both the rulers and the ruled have rebelled against Yahweh. Paul borrowed a great deal from the Septuagint where such terms such as 'powers' 'authorities', 'principalities', 'rulers' and 'angelic beings' have their origin. They are 'idols' and 'lords' (1 Cor.2:6,8; 8:4-6) none of which is equal to God. They blind people and keep people from seeing

the light of the gospel (2 Cor.4:4). For Cullmann these are "invisible powers [who] stand behind what occurs in the world" (1951:195). They were behind the state and the religious leaders who crucified Christ (Macgregory 1954:23).

Satan, the great accuser, belongs to those powers which served Yahweh as members of his heavenly council. Before the Christ event he was answerable to God (Num.22:22, 32). It was his official duty to test human beings "so that anything they say or do can be used in evidence against them" (Caird 1956:32).

Paul's view is that such angelic powers do exist, but he denies their divinity (1 Cor.15:24; Macgregory 1954:22). Further, such powers serve their original purpose so long as they are under Christ: to participate in the history of redemption (Macgregory 1954:104). Apart from Christ such powers assume demonic characters. As such, they are created beings whose existence depends on God. It is also interesting to note the evolution which took place in the apocalyptic ideas of Paul from his genuine letters (1 Cor. and 1 Thess.) to the Deutero-Pauline letters (Eph). In the former he is in line with Jewish apocalyptic views that Christ "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor.15:25) and then hand the reign to his father. The defeat of such powers, according to this earlier view of Paul, lies in the future. As part of this age, they will pass away with it. Later on in the Deutero-Pauline letters, however, Christ is already enthroned "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the age to come" (Eph.1:21-22). The point is that Christ has already taken his seat, but this must still be manifested. Later on in his prison letters, he hopes that these powers may be accommodated within the scope of redemption (Caird 1956:27). They should be informed of the victory of Christ (Col.1:16;20) and worship him accordingly (Phil.2:10f). God has made peace and has reconciled to himself all things both in heaven and on earth, powers and principalities included. Diagram one in which God was replaced by the law now changes again so that the law is, in turn, replaced by Christ. Jews are again given "back a sense of immediacy and intimacy to God" (Nürnberg 1987:11).

That this reality is seized by those forces of evil and darkness does not mean that reality belongs to the forces of evil, certainly not according to Paul. On the contrary, Paul and the letters in his

tradition attribute to God everything in heaven and on earth, including thrones, dominions, principalities or authorities and powers. He is their source of origin through Christ (Col.1:16) in whom "all things hold together" (Col.1:17). Just as all things hold together in Christ from creation Paul argues that all things are going to be held together by Christ (Eph.1:10). For Paul, therefore, all things, including the forces of evil, belong to God's creation and are subjected to him. God is going to restore the reality to its original status. As Ridderbos has it

these powers have no original control over the world, but the whole of the groaning creation has been subjected to vanity by God himself (Rom.8:20). Nevertheless, it is the dominion of these powers that determines Paul's outlook on the present world (1977:92).

Paul feels "called" (Bosch 1995:126) and commissioned to proclaim liberation to those outside Christ (Bosch 1995:127). His urgent task was to claim this world from these enslaving and alienating powers (Rom.8:38) for the one "living and true" God (1 Thess.1:9) who revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ (Bosch 1995:134). Further, Paul was convinced that the judgement of 'this world' is imminent, therefore, "he allows himself no relaxation" (Bosch 1995:134, cf Patte 1984:61). On behalf of Christ, he must appeal to as many as he can, to "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor.5:20), by "turning to God from idols" (1 Thess.1:10). He is not proclaiming the wrath of God (law), but, "salvation through Christ and the imminent triumph of God", which is the gospel (Bosch 1995:134). Paul is well aware that "their being in bondage to idols is ... due not to ignorance (as the Stoics argue) but to wilfulness" (Bosch 1995:134). Therefore, they deserve the judgement of God (Rom.1:20,23,25, 2:1f,5-10; Bosch 1995:134). What he wants to get across is the good news that "God in his kindness is providing [them] an opportunity for repentance" (Rom.2:4; Bosch 1995:134) and as Grant observed, to be transferred "from the realm of death ... to the realm of the life ..." (Bosch 1995:134). Paul's concern is one: to lead to Christ those who are outside him and prepare 'this world' for the envisaged glory of the age to come (Bosch 1995:135).

Paul expected "the imminent consummation of salvation" (Kümmel 1987:144). In his preaching of the liberating and saving gospel, he announced the imminent cosmic transformation which will

be brought about by God's own initiative. The gospel will rob the forces of evil of their powers, because it is God's liberating power (Rom.1:16). God's saving power will finally put them out of commission. Then he will assume cosmic dominion (Kümmel 1987:235).

1.5.3 Paul feels inescapably obliged

Paul was always conscious of "his apostolic call" (Beker 1989:5; Montefiore 1981:35)) and "the commission to proclaim the gospel ... among the Gentiles" (Beker 1989:60). He is an apostle⁵. His personal encounter with the Lord of the church on the road to Damascus completely changed him into a new person who now sees things differently (Bosch 1995:127; Montefiore 1981:34). He now accepts the fact that the new age has dawned; salvation in Christ is now extended to the Gentile world and that he, the persecutor of the church is Christ's special ambassador, entrusted with the gospel and sent to the Gentiles (Gal.1:16; Bosch 1995:127).

Preaching the gospel in good time and to as many as possible, is for Paul therefore an **ananke** or "inescapable necessity" (Bosch 1995:135). He feels doomed if he does not preach it (1 Cor.9:16). He is debtor "both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish" (Rom.1:14) - to humanity though only via Christ. As Bosch puts it, "Paul is ... indebted to **Christ**, and this is transmuted into a debt to those whom Christ wishes to bring to salvation" (1995:135). That means, he owes 'this world' the good news of Jesus Christ. In that case, Bosch speaks of "a mutuality of indebtedness" (1995:135). He is indebted "to both Christ and the people to whom [he] is sent" (Bosch 1995:136) and would do almost anything including becoming "all things to all men ... for the sake of the gospel" to "save some", if not all for Christ (1 Cor.9:19ff).

Two very important facts about Paul's attitude towards the world now emerge: his **modus operandi** of proclaiming the gospel is, according to Beker quoted by Bosch, marked by "flexibility, sensitivity and empathy" (1995:137) and he did not see the **aim** of his mission as that

⁵ An apostle (Hebrew-shaliach and Greek-apostolos) is one who is sent. Paul was a different kind of an apostle in that he belonged neither to the original circle of the Twelve nor to the large group who received their commission shortly after the resurrection of Christ. He received his call and commission on the road to Damascus and regarded his status as an apostle as good as those who had been called to be apostles before him (Gal.2:9). Although he feels small among the rest of the apostles because he persecuted the church, he claimed to have worked harder than most, if not all of them (1 Cor.15:9f) (Montefiore 1981:34).

of "the Hellenization of Jews or the Judaization of Greeks" (1993:136). "It is not necessary for Christians from different backgrounds to become carbon copies of one another" (Bosch 1995:136); his **obedience** to the gospel, to the divine call and his commission is clarified. The gospel is meant for all equally and he is obliged to proclaim it to as many as possible at the right time (Bosch 1995:136). As Montefiore reminds us, "Jesus is raised from the dead so as to 'fill the universe'" (1981:38).

1.5.4 Paul responds to God's love and grace

The first encounter between Saul the zealous Jew and the Lord of the church was that of bitter opponents (Ziesler 1983:25). Saul was determined to eradicate the church completely (Gal. 1:13) for, "Christians were bad Jews, betraying their heritage and their God" (Ziesler 1983:24). Christianity undermined the validity of the law upon which the identity and the hope of salvation of Judaism was built. His encounter with the Lord of the church, changed him into a new being, and an apostle (1 Cor. 9:1; Ziesler 1983:25; cf. Stuhlmacher 1984:15). Montefiore speaks of the apostle's **rebirth** (1981:35).

What is meant by the metaphor new being is not a moral renewal or a metaphysical transformation of some kind. After his encounter with the risen Lord, Paul gained a completely new perception of God. Before his conversion, he believed that salvation was by fulfilling the demands of the law. It could not be the gift of a new life in Christ. After his encounter with Christ his view shifted from believing that salvation was by satisfying the law to believing that salvation is by faith in God through Jesus Christ. Hargreaves has summarised the experience of Paul very vividly by writing that the Christ-Paul encounter:

was a special time when he was turned from his old life to a new sort of life. The most important part of this experience was that he was turned **from** believing that he could be saved by keeping the Jewish **law** to accepting salvation by trusting that God through Christ had forgiven him (Gal 2:16). He was also turned **from** following human leaders to following Christ (Acts 9:1-5), **from** persecuting the church to being an Apostle in it (Tim. 1:15,16) (1978:51).

This complete turn-about was made possible by Paul's "overwhelming experience of the love of God he has received through Jesus Christ" (Bosch 1995:138). It is his response to this experience of love and unconditional acceptance by God which drove him to the end of the earth. "The Son

of God ... loved me and gave himself for me", he said (Gal.2:20) and adds that "God's love has been poured into our hearts" (Rom.5:5). By the powers gained through **unconditional acceptance** Paul was so motivated to "persuade men" to accept Christ, because, as he explains it, "the love of Christ controls us" (2 Cor.5:14). He wanted to tell everybody that in Christ God has come to rescue his enslaved humanity and the whole of reality (Käsemann 1980:236) and "that the living Christ is the answer to all existence; ... to national, corporate even cosmic problems ... [in fact] to live is Christ" (Montefiore 1981:23). This "was the reason for everything that he afterwards did and taught" (Hargreaves 1978:51).

It seems clear, therefore, that Paul's "concern for the lost" and his "sense of an obligation laid upon him" are key reasons for his missionary zeal. This concern was deeply rooted in his "sense of **privilege**" (Bosch 1995:138). The former persecutor of the church, felt graced to be commissioned by the Lord of the same church, he was trying to eradicate (Montefiore 1981:35). He appreciated his new status in Christ. In his own words: "through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations ..." (Rom.1:5). Paul has, therefore, translated his indebtedness into a sense of gratitude, his obligation into acts of thanksgiving and his experience of unconditional acceptance into missionary activities among Jews and Gentiles alike (Bosch 1995:138).

1.6 Paul's view of the enslaving forces

1.6.1 Sin

One of the forces which enslave humanity is **sin**. Paul seems to use the common Jewish concept of sin. The concept has many dimensions and there are various concepts with which sin can be expressed. Terms such as lawlessness, ungodliness, disobedience are only different concepts expressing the same reality. For our purpose, however, I will isolate some such concepts in an attempt to gain a better understanding of Paul's view on sin.

[a] Sin is a universal and external force

Paul sees sin as "an alien force lurking to pounce on a victim" (Martin 1989:57). This force is given life by the law in which it finds "opportunity". "If it had not been for the law", Paul writes, "I shall not have known sin". The opportunity which sin finds in the law is to awaken in a human

being the desire to achieve independence from God", the result of which is to "die" (Martin 1989:57; Rom.7:9-11).

So Paul pictures sin as a foreign force which invades a human being and attacks him/her (Martin 1989:58). This suggests, therefore, "sin is not inherent in the human make-up" (Martin 1989:58). So he distinguished between "I" and "the sin which dwells within me" (Rom.7:17). A human being is not, as Barclay teaches, an "inexplicable mixture" (Barclay 1973:161) of the "two selves" (Barclay 19673:162), the good and the evil, which throws a human "life in an uneasy tension" (Barclay 1973:161) and which results in a certain frustration and feeling of hopelessness. Evil and good do not and cannot co-exist in the same person. The fact is that there is a constant struggle between the flesh and the spirit in a human being. One is either in or outside Christ. When one is in the flesh, "there is nothing good [which] dwells within" him/her (Rom.7:18) and one is completely "wretched" (Rom. 7:25). In flesh, sin takes control (Rom.7:15).

When one is in the spirit, in Christ, Christ takes over. Paul is particularly optimistic about this 'in Christ'. There is "no condemnation" for them (Rom.8:1). Therefore, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us" (Rom.8:37). Nothing "will be able to separate" [them] from the love of God in Christ our Lord" (Rom 8:39).

Sin is a universal force. Thus "all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin" (Rom.3:9, Gal.3:22) as long as they live in the flesh, in solidarity with the first Adam (Rom.5:12-19; 1 Cor.15:21f). To be in the flesh is to be "under the power of sin" (Rom.3:9), to be a slave of sin (Rom.6:16, 7:23), to be "sold under sin" (Rom.7:14), to be in the service of sin (Rom.7:14-20). Martin is right, "the upshot is that sin is a universal matter, a demonic despot carrying off humanity as a prisoner-of-war (7:23) and asserting proprietary rights over God's creatures" (1989:58).

[b] Sin is missing the target

Paul describes sin with a Greek term **hamartia**, the most common concept for "sinning, whether ... by omission or commission, in thought and feeling or in speech and action" (Thayer 1987:30). It occurs 62 times in his letters: 48 times in his letter to the Romans and 14 in the rest of his letters

together. The letter to the Philippians does not use this concept (Barclay 1965:138). However, the problem of sin such as putting "confidence in the flesh" (3:3) and living "as enemies of the cross of Christ" is clearly evident (3:18). This intensive use of **hamartia** shows that Paul was most concerned for the liberation of humankind from the power of sin (Bloesch 1994:1012). He "saw with intensity the seriousness of sin ... " (Barclay 1965:138).

Hamartia "was not originally an ethical word ..." (Barclay 1965:141). It was used by shooters to mean **missing the target**. So it expresses the failure to hit the target, to do what one was expected to do and to be what one was expected to be. The idea that to sin is to fall "below one's own possibilities" (Barclay 1965:141) is problematic in terms of the theology of Paul. To exploit our own 'possibilities' is for Paul to be confident in the flesh, to sin. As Niebuhr reminds us:

since Augustine it has been the consistent view of Christian orthodoxy that the basic sin of man was pride ..., the general inclination of all men to overestimate their virtues, powers, and achievements. Augustine defined sin as the 'perverse desire of height,' or as man's regarding himself as his own end, instead of realising that he is but a part of a total scheme of means and ends (1964:350).

There is no hope for achieving salvation on one's own, but only in Christ. Sin is, for Paul, our failure to be where we ought to be and to be what we could be, in Christ where a sinner becomes a "new creation" (II Cor.5:17). That is the concern of God too for which Paul feels called and commissioned (II Cor.5:20-21). "God has an ideal for us, and we have failed to reach it" (Barclay 1973:164). So we missed the mark. To disobey too is to miss the target and this leads to disturbed relations between the parties involved. Humans are expected to obey God and so remain in a good relationship with him and with one another. That is their target. Lightner agrees that

... to sin is to miss the mark of God's standard, to fall aside from God's law, to rebel against God's requirements, to pervert that which is right, to trespass against God's law, to rebel against God, to betray a trust, to fail to meet obligations. However, sin is not only committed when one does that which is wrong; sin is also failing to do what is right. The former would be the sin of commission, the latter a sin of omission. Negligence can also be sin. Ignorance of an offence does not absolve one from guilt (Lev.4:13, 22, 27; 25:2-4,19; 6:4; cf James 4:17) (1994:798f).

Sin spreads like a wild fire as soon as it obtains a grip (Rom.5:20). It is like a cancer which, unless eradicated, develops, grows and spreads. Finally it leads to death. It has extraordinary deceiving and killing power. As soon as it is allowed to gain the smallest foothold, it sweeps through life like an epidemic (Barclay 1965:142). Therefore Paul writes that sin begets death. It deceived and killed him (Rom.7:11). It kills goodness, beauty, love, fellowship, conscience and character (Barclay 1965:142). To the mind of Paul, sin begets spiritual as well as moral death. Barclay agrees:

To fail to do one's best as workman, to fail to be a father, mother, son, daughter as one might have been, to fail to use and develop the gifts of hand and eye and mind and brain that God has given us, in any way to fall short of the best that we could be, is a sin. Disobedience to God means failure in life; and failure to hit the target is sin (1965:141).

But sin also causes physical death (Rom.5:12; 6:23). By implication this means that, if there were no sin, death would be unknown. Neither can exist without the other. Death entered the world through sin (Rom.5:12) and "sin reigned in death" (Rom.5:21). The Greek term for reign is **basileuein**, derived from **basileus** which means a king. Only the king reigns. Therefore, sin is like a king and reigns over the person on whom it has gained a grip. A sinner has become a subject and slave of sin. A human being has a choice: to live in sin and die, or in obedience and live (Rom.6:16). Because of sin, however, a sinner is unable to make a choice between life and death or to liberate him/herself. Paul himself was once "sold under sin" (Rom.7:14), became its **doulos** and acted according to its command against his own will. He testifies:

I do not understand my actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the every thing I hate ... it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me, that is, in my flesh (Rom.7:15-20).

Paul's experience is true for the whole of humanity. Sin is enslaving and its grip is unbearable. Many wish to rid themselves of it but are unable to on their own. They have become slaves, properties and subjects of sin (Barclay 1965:143).

[c] Sin is unrighteousness and ungodliness

Sin is **adikia**. The sinner is **adikos**. According to Greek ethics, the good person is a righteous person (**dikaio**), one who gives to the gods and humans what is their due. An unrighteous person is one who does the opposite, one who fails to give to God the love and obedience he deserves, and to his/her fellow humans the love, charity and service required of him/her (Rom. 1:18; 19:29; 3:5,6,13; 9:14; 1 Cor. 6:1,7,8). Sin is a total disregard of God and other humans, treating them as if they do not exist. Atheists do not believe in the existence of God, but the godless do. They know that God exists, but ignore him. Disregarding and ignoring God is worse than atheism. But sin is also **opheilema**, an unpaid debt. Human beings owe God love, loyalty and obedience. To withhold these from God is, for Paul, to sin. Sin is thus human failure to give to God and to others what is due to them (Barclay 1973:165).

[d] Sin is lawlessness

Sin is **anomia**, the sinner is **anomos**. For Paul, sin is lawlessness and the sinner is a lawless human being (2 Cor. 2:3, 1 Cor. 9:21). The sinner is the person who disobeys God's law in spite of his/her knowledge about it (Barclay 1965:144). So sin is not just breaking the law, but breaking the law of God by living according to the flesh. It is knowing what is right, but continuing to do what is wrong (Barclay 1973:164). Sin is stepping over the line. It is, in Greek, **parabasis**, "stepping across the line" drawn by God "... between right and wrong" (Barclay 1973:164).

[e] Sin is loss of self-control

Sin is also **paraptoma** (Rom. 4: 25; 5:15,16, 17,20; Eph. 1:7; 2:1,5), originally meaning a **slip, a blunder**. This concept has a sense of falling beside or near something. It means a deviation from truth and uprightness, a misdeed or a trespass (Thayer 1987:485). It describes a mistake committed by a person when s/he is not looking where s/he is going. This is not a deliberate stepping across the line. It results rather from a "lack of care" (Barclay 1973:164). In that case, the term suggests that such a person has removed his/her eyes off the target, and misses it. So, sin is a failure to concentrate on one's target, a losing of one's self control as a result of which one is swept away or slips into doing what he/she did not intend doing.

[f] Sin is disobedience

Sin is **parakoe** (Rom.5:19; 11:30-32; 2 Cor.10:6). The Greek concept for disobedience is **parakouein**, which originally meant **to fail to hear**. This term was used to refer to a person "who did not catch something which someone else said, either because it was indistinctly spoken, or the listener was deaf" (Barclay 1965:145). Later the term came to mean deliberately not to hear, i.e to close one's ears to what is being said. The essence of this concept is to "hear amiss, unwilling to hear; to hear aside, to hear carelessly, i.e on hearing to neglect, to pay no heed to" (Thayer 1987:484). It is characteristic of human beings to hear only what they want to hear. Sin thus means closing one's ears to God's message in order to listen to oneself.

[g] Sin is a state and a force

This brings us to "the duality of Paul's idea of sin ..." (Ziesler 1983:73). Paul sees sin under two aspects. Sin is both a human responsibility of what we choose to do or not to do, i.e our voluntary actions or lack of them. It is for Paul a state, but also a force or power whose grip we cannot escape even if we want to. On the one hand, sinners are fully responsible for what they are and for their actions. On the other they cannot help but be what they are and do what is wrong. So Paul sees sin as human responsibility on the one hand, and something beyond human capability on the other (Ziesler 1983:71f). It is slavery for the whole of humanity (Barclay 1965:143). Like alcohol, sin starts off with a sinner's consent. An alcoholic begins by opting to drink, but finally, s/he ends up drinking whether by consent or not (Ziesler 1983:73). Sin dwells (*oikein*) within them (Rom.7:20f), occupying them like an invading force occupies a conquered territory. It destroys spiritual, moral and physical life.

Sin is a human responsibility, a turning against God to something below him. It is "a debilitating ongoing state of enmity with God" Bloesch 1994:1012) manifested in treating something less than God as a god, something "as ultimate what is not ultimate Romans 1:21, 28" (Ziesler 1983:72). Human beings have enough knowledge about God to keep them in relation to him. But we choose to worship creatures and seek security in them. We "are without excuse ... " (Rom.1:20-23).

On the involuntary side, Paul teaches that sin is capable of self-multiplication. It increases "in a downward spiral of self-propelling wickedness ... " (Ziesler 1983:72). A sinner begins by making

"culpable wrong choices, but ends up being unable to escape from the bad [even] when [s/he knows] it" (Ziesler 1983:73). It is on the basis of this understanding of sin that Paul has argued that all human beings are sinners. All "are under the power of sin" (Rom. 3:9). Neither Jews nor Gentiles are free from sin. Even fulfilment of the law or repentance cannot free humans from the grip of sin as Jews seem to believe (O'Grady 1992:94). In that case, a superior force to liberate human beings from sin and save them from the process of petrification which results in a complete loss of all sensation and of all ability to feel guilty is needed. 'Sin petrifies the feelings', said Brunner (Barclay 1965:145). If a person continues sinning, his/her sense of decency, honour and goodness die and his/her regret, remorse and penitence die. Sin is the continuous hardening of the heart until it can no longer respond in obedience to God (Barclay 1965:145).

1.6.2 Flesh

Human beings are haunted and enslaved by sin and we are hopelessly unable to resist or liberate ourselves from it. That is because of our flesh which is closely connected to sin (Barclay 1973:165). The Greek term for flesh is **sarx**. In his letter to the Romans, Paul distinguishes between the **carnal self** and the **spiritual self**. It is in this context that **flesh** must be understood. Hopper writes:

In so far as the self was not faithfully related to God it became carnally minded.
... In so far as the self is related to God in faith it is spiritually minded (1964:360).

By **sarx**, therefore, Paul meant humanity in its sinful state. It "is the non-Godly, and therefore anti-Godly orientation of the self as a whole" (Hopper 1964:360). Therefore, the death of the **sarx** is the end of sin.

As a term, flesh occurs 91 times in Paul's writings with its "chameleon-like" meanings "and alters according to context" (Martin 1989:59). **Sarx** originally stood for flesh of humans and animals or fish. It later broadened to mean the whole human body. Its derivative **sarkikos** carries the nuance of 'corruptible'. Further, the Greeks took **sarx** to denote body, the second and perishable part of the two parts which forms a human being, the other being the spirit. The latter is not perishable. Epicurus believed that the **sarx** was the seat of evil desires (Schweizer 1990:1001). For the Old Testament, **sarx** is figurative and signifies external human life (Ps.16:9) or human

existence (Ps.5:11, 73:26). However, in Jewish thought it denotes a person. "The whole person can be flesh or soul. But it also denotes corruptibility and in this respect flesh and spirit are equal before the Creator (Schweizer 1990:1002). The contrast between flesh and spirit is not completely absent from Judaism, however. Flesh also denotes creatureliness. It is a battlefield of conflict between the spirit of evil and the Holy Spirit. So flesh does not belong in principle to the ungodly sphere and it is not a prison of the soul as the Greeks thought.

The different Pauline usage of *sarx* are evident from 2 Cor.10:3. The RSV translates the first 'flesh' of the AV, 'world' and the second, 'worldly'. In Greek both 'in the flesh' (AV) and 'in the world' (RSV) translates the same: **kata sarka** while 'after the flesh' (AV) and 'in worldly war' (RSV) translate the same: **en sarki**. Here, Paul uses this concept to express two different, though interrelated meanings. Human beings cannot avoid living in the flesh but each is expected to avoid waging 'war after the flesh' (AV) or 'carrying on a worldly war' (RSV) or to live according to the directions of the flesh. For a proper understanding of the Pauline usage, it is necessary to isolate various Pauline usages of the concept *sarx*:

[a] *Sarx* is a physical human body

Paul makes use of *sarx* in a quite natural and literal sense whereby he means the human physical body (Martin 1989:59). To the Galatians he writes: "you know that it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first" (4:14). His first visit and preaching there was due to his physical illness - "infirmity in the flesh" (AV), "bodily ailment" or simply "because I was ill" (Good News Bible). Paul also speaks of his concern for those in Laodicea and all who have not seen his face (Col.2:1), i.e. those who have not known him personally. He could also speak of himself as living and abiding in the flesh (Phil.1:22,24) referring to his bodily or physical life. The Good News Bible speaks of him "continuing to live" (Phil.1:22) and "to remain alive" (Phil.1:24). He disciplines his natural and physical body to bring it under control and complete subjection for the sake of his own salvation (1 Cor.9:27).

This proves that for Paul *sarx* is a human natural physical body. As Ziesler put it: "Paul can use it (i.e flesh) to mean the physical stuff of which we are made" (1983:74). Ladd agrees that with *sarx*, sometimes Paul simply means the human natural physical body. He writes:

Sarx is the body itself. ... in many places **sarx** is synonymous with the body as a whole ... Paul may thus speak of being absent in the body (1 Cor.5:3) or in the flesh (Col.2:5) (1982:467).

[b] Sarx is a human vantage point

Paul also uses this concept as a way of seeing things from a human vantage point as opposed to divine perspectives. In this fashion, Paul simply means: "humanly speaking" (Barclay 1965:148). Therefore, "Jesus descendant from David, according to the flesh" (Rom.1:3) simply means, humanly speaking, Jesus is descended of David. Confirming this perception, Ladd writes: "In this usage the word may refer particularly to man's human relationships, his physical origin and natural ties that bind him to other men" (1982:467). The phrase Abraham is "our forefather according to the flesh" (Rom.4:1) means that the Jews trace their physical descent to Abraham who was their common ancestor. The Jews are Paul's kinsmen 'according to the flesh' (Rom.9:3). They are, according to Paul, "my flesh" (Rom.11:14) whereby "flesh" serves "as a synonym for kinsmen, fellow-Jews" (Ladd 1982:467). Therefore, 'flesh' "does not designate merely the source of his [Jesus, even Paul's] **bodily** life but of his entire human existence including both his body and human spirit." (Ladd 1982:467).

[c] Sarx is a pre-christian state

Humans "were living in the flesh" (Rom.7:5). This "extension of **sarx** reaches beyond man in his bodily life to include other factors that are inseparable elements to human existence" (Ladd 1982:467). It includes every human existence outside Christ. Seen in its proper context, **sarx** refers to the state before one encounters Christ or, as the Good News Bible has it, "when we lived according to our human nature". This is a stage when human beings struggled for salvation in their own strength i.e before they found, not only peace but also power, in Jesus Christ (Barclay 1965:149).

For Paul, human life consists of two possibilities: life outside and life in Christ. When one is in the flesh, trying to deal with issues in his/her own strength, one is outside Christ and this struggle is bound to end up in frustration. Any attempt to liberate oneself is regarded by Paul as "confidence in the flesh" (Phil.3:3ff), "relying on something other than Christ alone ... something alternative to Christ ... anything other than God in Christ in which we put our final trust" (Ziesler 1983:75).

"The 'flesh', then," concludes Martin, "is anything that is placed in rivalry to Christ; to trust in the flesh is to place confidence outside of Christ ..." (1989:60). It refers to "the whole complex of outward realm of human existence ... [including] ... Paul's Jewish ancestry, his strict religious training, his zeal and his prominence in Jewish religious circles" (Ladd 1982:467). In this context, flesh is personified and viewed as "a demonic force that seeks to intrude into the place of Christ and coax man's allegiance away from him" (Martin 1989:60f).

d) *Sarx* is a sub-Christian state

Paul also suggests that *sarx* designates a human being in the state of a sub-christian (Barclay 1965:149). He told the Corinthians that he could as yet not address them "as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babies in Christ" (1 Cor.3:2,3). In fact he goes even further in the same verse to say to his readers: "you are still in the flesh" meaning that the Corinthians are living a sub-christian life (*sarkinos*). They are "children in the Christian faith" (Good New Bible 1 Cor.3:1) because their life is still marked by "jealousy and strife", a sign that they are below the mark of the life to be lived by those who are in Christ. They are living in two worlds: in Christ, but still belonging to this world, outside Christ.

[e] *Sarx* is unregenerate human nature

This use of *sarx* is probably the most common in the Pauline writings. Here, *sarx* "has lost its physical meaning and has acquired an ethical meaning" (Barclay 1965:150). Paul sees flesh and sin inseparably connected. Before meeting Christ, Paul was "carnal, sold to sin" (Rom.7:14). He was a mortal man, enslaved by sin. He was in a dilemma, because, on the one hand, it was his aim to serve the law of God. On the other, with his flesh he served the law of sin (Rom.7:23-25). To the same tune Ridderbos writes :

On the one hand, 'flesh' has for him [Paul] the significance of what is human in its weakness, dependence on God, and perishableness in itself; but on the other hand, 'flesh' is pregnant and a very specific description of man in his sin and the coinciding of being human and being a sinner is therefore expressed in it (1979:93).

Paul uses *sarx* to express a human being placed in an antithesis of "flesh and spirit" (Kümmel 1987:174). It is always implied. Because this antithesis sometimes appears to coincide with the

antithesis of "physical and spiritual man", Paul is at times accused of having been influenced by the Hellenistic antithesis of body and soul and that he understands 'flesh' in the sense of "fleshly substance" (Kümmel 1987:174). A careful reading however, reveals that this is not the case. To his mind, 'flesh' stands in contrast to spirit and then denotes the whole of a human being (1 Cor.3:3; Phil.3:3). The latter stands for authentic human nature, the former for unauthentic human nature. Humans can only be authentic when and if they participate in the new life of Christ in the power of the Spirit of God. As Ziesler says: "Behind this contrast there probably lies an opposition between spirit and flesh, with spirit representing the New Age, the Age of God, and flesh representing the Old Age, the Age of Belial and wickedness, so that the two terms stand for the two aeons, as in the Qumran Scrolls" (1983:74). A human being is flesh, as s/he stands over against God (Rom.8:3). What flesh means in this context is the connection between flesh and sin (Kümmel 1987:174).

The phrase "those who walk in the flesh" (2 Cor.10:3) seems to have a double meaning. On the one hand, it describes a human being in so far as s/he lives in the flesh (Gal.2:20), on the other, it describes "the state of being ruled by sin" (Kümmel 1987:174). It means that to live "in harmony with the flesh" is "to live in sin" (Kümmel 1987:175), hence Paul's pronouncement: "If you live according to the flesh, you will die" (Rom.8:13; cf 2 Cor. 10:2). Following the O.T. understanding (e.g. Isa.31:3; Jer.32:27; and Job.10:4), Paul uses the concept to denote flesh as a human being "as distinguished from, and in contrast to the divine" (Ridderbos 1979:94). It stands for human weakness and limitations as distinct from the divine. But the way Barclay expresses this idea is not Pauline. He says, for instance that by **sarx** Paul

meant that bit of us which gives bridgehead to sin, which responds to the invitations of sin, which makes us want to do wrong. There is a bit of us which knows what is right and which wants to do it ... our spirit. There is a bit of us which wants to do wrong and is often stronger ... the flesh. So, for Paul, flesh is a human part "where sin gets its chance (1973:165).

Martin has fallen in the same trap as Barclay. He thinks that for Paul **sarx** is "the vulnerable area at which sin's attack is made" (1989:59); further, that flesh is that human part which "responds to instinctual influences and is weak to resist, since it has no inherent strength" (1989:60). **Sarx** may be human tendencies "that entice men into sin" (Martin 1989:60), but it is for Paul not "that

bit of us" or "vulnerable area" or "part". The problem with this idea is that it suggests that a human being is basically fine, and only those hapless pieces are fragile. For Paul, however, the problem is serious. The two conditions cannot coexist. Humans are either in the flesh or in the spirit. As such, they are in the flesh or in the spirit as full persons. The transition from the flesh to the spirit is an ongoing process.

To be **en sarki** means not to be God. It denotes humanity as opposed to and different from God (1 Cor.1:29). Martin writes: "The basic sense of **sarx** when used on a broader canvas seems to be man's earthly existence as a human being opposed to the divine" (1989:59). Flesh is a human being in his/her sin and depravity (Rom.7:4,5; 8:6ff; Gal.5:19; Gal.6:). Therefore, "sin and flesh are identified with each other: to be 'in the flesh', to be 'carnal' is the same as 'to be in sin', 'under the power of sin'" (Ridderbos 1979:94). It is the description of all that a human being is (Ridderbos 1979:95) apart from Christ. 'Flesh' stands "for the helpless subjection to sin which dominates life before Christ enters it" (Barclay 1965:151) and "human weakness as opposed to divine strength" (Ziesler 1983:75).

Living either in the flesh or in the Spirit is living under powers and has serious consequences (Ziesler 1983:75). Humans are not supposed to live under both. Paul teaches that the right choice is to live under the Spirit. The consequence of this kind of life is: "a thoroughly godly and righteous life ... [which] produces fruits like love, joy, peace, patience, and the rest [Gal.5:22f]" (Ziesler 1983:75). In short, life in the spirit leads to social virtues. This is exactly the opposite of life in the flesh which "can ... take the form of libertism, of doing what pleases us, because in the satisfaction of our desires and in our self-interest we find the centre and sufficiency of our life" (Ziesler 1983:75, cf 76). So life in the flesh is "life perverted and misdirected by relying on something other than God" (Ziesler 1983:76). The fruits of this life are listed in Gal 5:22-23. They include sexual sins, religious sins and sins of excessive indulgence (drunkenness and carousing). A careful reading, however, shows "a solid block of what can be called social sins, sins of wrong relations to others" (Ziesler 1983:76). Therefore we agree with the conclusion of Ziesler, that:

In short, the **sarx** - spirit dualism in Paul is not a body-soul dualism, but a 'life under-God' - 'life under anything else' dualism. To live by the Spirit is to live by God, and to live by the **sarx** is to live by what is not God, whether in itself it is good (like the law) or bad (like self-gratification) (1983:76).

Although Paul uses *sarx* interchangeably to refer to both human's "earthly corporeality" (Kümmel 1987:175) which no human being can avoid and human possibility to live under the power of the flesh which is avoidable, he made a serious attempt in 2 Cor. 10:f to distinguish the two. He drew a useful distinction between living in the flesh, which is bodily life in this world and living according to the flesh, which is submitting to the standards and securities other than God. This distinction is not maintained in Rom. 8:5, 13.

1.6.3. The law

Paul's use of the concept 'law' is so ambiguous to the point of being misinterpreted. Recognising this fact, Martin writes: "To be sure, his many-faceted designations of the Jewish law, extending from adulation (Rom.7:12) to downright condemnation as a lethal weapon (2 Cor.3:6), are difficult to put together into a coherent pattern" (1989:61). Paul seems to attach too little a value onto law. But this is not necessarily the case. Paul "never calls it wicked nor denies it a place in the divine purpose" (Ziesler 1983:77; Gal.3). He ascribes "its origin to God" (Martin 1989:61). But it is inferior to faith, and "to the direct promise to Abraham" (Martin 1989:61) or to be more precise, to Christ. It was only "our custodian until Christ came" (Gal.3:24). On the one hand, the story of Hagar in Gal.4:21ff, implies that the law's guardianship was not God's original plan. On the other, the law is fundamentally holy (Rom.7:12). "To that extent", writes Ziesler, "Paul is inconsistent" (1983:77). His view on the law was influenced by various situations which he faced. Because the Galatians attempted to gain salvation through it, he played it down. Facing antinomianism among the Corinthians, he stressed law as well as morality. In Romans he balanced the style to impress upon his readers that he was not an antinomian (Martin 1990:155). But Paul has every reasons to see the law as an enslaving force, "a satanic agency" (Abijole 1988:120) and to include it "among the powers of the Old Age" (Ziesler 1983:142).

[a] Its days are over

The law was divinely appointed for the guardianship of Israel, to keep her "in line, preparing her for the coming freedom" (Ziesler 1983:77). One can thus argue that the law was not part of God's plan. It was necessitated by human inauthenticity and was only necessary in the absence of Christ (Gal.4:21-31). Now that Christ has come, it is a custodian whose day is now over so that to remain in its guardianship now that the freedom of Christ and of his Spirit has arrived is

anachronistic bondage ... To remain in its tutelage now is to reject the freedom of the sons of God (Gal.4:5) (Ziesler 1983:77).

With the analogy of the widow who is now free from her husband's rule in Rom.7:1ff, Paul teaches that the law is a force from which to be freed. To be in Christ means to be free from the law's tutelage (Rom.7:4-6). This means, the introduction of the law many centuries after the promise to Abraham does not negate the faith-promise nature of the covenant (v.17) (Ziesler 1983:104). Although there is a negative element which suggests that the law could be seen as a temporal stumbling block that needed removal, positively it is a means to prepare humankind for Christ and the fulfilment of the promise. It was "a necessary interlude" (Martin 1989:61) before faith in Christ (Gal.3:23f). It is like thirst which leads to water. It was meant to make human beings aware of sin and enslavement (Gal.3:19ff) and cultivates the need for liberation in them and makes them ready for the message of redemption which was to come as a fulfilment of a promise made to Abraham long before. So the law is not against the promise of God at all. But it was not meant to give life but to restrain humans until Christ comes. It was given because of our transgressions to define and focus on wrongdoing (Rom.4:15;Gal.3:10ff) "and so prepare the way for the gospel" (Martin 1989:61). It "is God's temporal dispensation not his final word" (Ziesler 1983:105). It is not bad intrinsically. The trouble is its misuse.

So the law is good and holy (Rom.7:7,12,14), although, as Ziesler puts it, it is "perverted by *sarx* (Rom.8:3) which exploited the commandment to bring about harm and death" (Rom.7:8,11; 1983:77f). But now that the 'seed' of Abraham has come (Gal.3:16), the promise rectified, the new order 'apart from the law' introduced (Rom.3:21), the 'legal demands' of the law are met and the people can live, not 'by law' but 'by faith.' The law is a **pedagogue** whose task is completed (Martin 1989:62).

[b] It cannot save

No doubt the law is good and holy (Rom.7:7,12,14), but it cannot save. Its inability to save is, however, not the only reason why Paul had a negative attitude towards it. He is against its contemporary use by the Jews to acquire acceptance with God, i.e justification by works. For Paul, attempts to gain the favour of God by fulfilling the law are futile. After all, God's favour is freely given and there was no time when faith was not a 'hand' to receive it. One does not buy a

gift! The law was given for a different reason as shown above. Therefore, the law is not essential for salvation and Paul could not imagine its fulfilment, even if it were possible to be a pre-requisite of salvation. Thus he rejects, not the law itself, but its misuse (Ziesler 1983:99ff).

At a much deeper level, Paul objected to the law primarily because it could stand in the place of Christ (Gal.5:4). Martin agrees, so he writes: "The law is now - whatever its purpose - our enemy since it was Christ's" (1989:62). But this seems to be an overstatement. For Paul, as already stated, the law was divinely appointed. In fact, it is a formulation of what ought to be according to the intentions of God. Its content is authentic life. So it contains sin and condemns transgressors, those who are outside Christ. But now that Christ has come, it cannot save because the Gift of salvation in Christ is fulfilled. Therefore, the law is no longer a requirement of acceptance. If it is upheld, then humanity is presented with two alternatives: obedience to it or to Christ.

[c] It exposes and concretises sin

Paul's mission was to assist people to acquire liberation, therefore life. His means of achieving this goal was the preaching of the gospel about the favour of God to humankind. This implies his objection to the law, because it does not give life. Instead, it makes people aware of their sins. Sin cannot, of course, be recognised until a particular obligation has been broken or an undesired attitude has been revealed and recognised (Rom.7:7). Further, the law enables people to recognise the true nature of sin: disobedience to God (Rom.7:13). Like a **poultice**, the law brings to the surface hidden poison to be recognised and be dealt with accordingly. For him, therefore, the law increases sins, thereby meaning that it increases the trespasses (Rom.7:13). What is increased is not sin itself, but transgression of sin (Ziesler 1983:103).

The law does not only expose sin, it causes it too. Human sinful urges are 'aroused by the law' (Rom.7.5,8). It is not easy to comprehend Paul on this matter. The effects of an existing concrete law include feelings of guilt, conscience and the surfacing of dormant rebelliousness which could result in apparent transgression. A person may be unconsciously covetous, but the making of the command not to covet reveals his/her state, covetous feelings and actions (Rom.7:13; 5:13; 20). So the law not only exposes sin, but like a **poultice**, it "makes concrete the inner and implicit sinfulness that marks the prisoner of sin" (Ziesler 1983:108). Exposing sin in itself is not

problematic as such. The trouble is when it acts "as an incentive or stimulus to sin" and creates "an awareness of human need that it could not handle" (Martin 1989:61).

Paul himself is a classical example in this regard. The law led him to victimise the church (1 Cor.15:9;Phil.3:6). It prevented him from recognising Jesus as the Messiah and led him to destroy his mission. So the law led to the rejection of the necessary liberator. Thus, "... it is the law's exclusiveness, taken out of context with the promise and therefore with the universal concern of God, that makes it something from which to be delivered" (Ziesler 1983:109). When the law is allowed to point to Christ, it is properly used, but used as an enemy of Christ, it becomes "a regime under which people live" (Ziesler 1983:109) as captives and they need to be liberated. As a regime, the law has control over its subjects. In that case, it is an alternative to Christ as King. It demands life, Christ grants it. Justification is also either by law or by grace. For Paul, the latter is the case. To remain under the law in the presence of Christ is to remove Christ from the centre, to dethrone him, therefore to sin (Rom.9:30-10:4; Phil.3:8-10).

[d] It is an enslaving power

As a regime, the law ranks amongst the most powerful forces from which humankind needs to be liberated (Galatians 2:19; 3:13;4:5,8-10,21-31:5:1,18). In the **pedagogue** pericope (Gal.3:23-25) its task is to keep sin in check until the solution to it is found. That solution is Christ as indicated above. This is the law's temporality. Without negating the fact that it has a divine origin, Paul believes that its primary purpose was to prepare people for the coming of the solution to their dilemma and show them their need for life (Gal.3:22). In the particular **custodia**⁶ pericope, Paul argues that to continue living under the enslaving law in the new dispensation of grace, faith and liberation is out of date as already stated above (Ziesler 1983:106).

⁶ 'Custodian' does not mean a slave who was 'a schoolmaster' as the King James Version has it. Pedagogue is a person deputed by a father to keep his child in order while very young, and then escort him/her to school at the right time. The custodian did not take part in the child's education, at least not directly. Although the pedagogue may stand for lack of freedom under the Law, so that Christ's coming enables people to escape from the custodia and emerge as sons and daughters, it could also represent the divine preservation until that coming (Gal 3; Ziesler 1983:107).

The question as to why Paul objected to the law is still haunting us though. We have already discovered that he was not against the law itself, but against its misuse to buy God's favour which is already freely given. Christ is the end of the law but not its termination. In fact, the opposite is the case. He brings it to fulfilment. Of course *telos* can mean both to fulfil and to terminate. But according to Paul, the law finds, not its termination, but fulfilment in Christ Jesus. It was not for justification, but as a provision for a pattern of life.

However, that is only at a shallow level of the matter. At the deeper level, Paul speaks neither of fulfilling the promises of the law nor about justification. His particular concern is how to be right before God, how to acquire new life and live accordingly before God (Ziesler 1983:107). Paul argues that because justification is by faith and not by law "Christ is in every sense the end of the law for those who believe in Him" (Ziesler 1983:107). The **end** once again does not mean termination of the law. The point is: the law's time is over in the sense that Christ, to whom it was pointing has come. That is the reason why even in dealing with important matters such as circumcision (Gal.5:6; 6:15), the sabbath (Rom.14:5) and food regulations (Rom.14:14-15, 1 Cor 8:10), about which the law speak unequivocally, he ignores it. Even in his dealing with ethical problems such as incest (1 Cor.5:1f) Paul did not appeal to the law for guidance. The reason may be found in that for Paul the law is good and its intention is life, i.e love, and not the fulfilment of certain conditions. Thus "this rejection of the Law is not a rejection of its diagnostic or prophetic roles, nor is it a rejection of everything in the Law" (Ziesler 1983:107). But no one can serve two masters, be under both the law and grace or be a slave and free at the same time. No one can be dead yet alive. We cannot be both ... and, but either ... or.

1.6.4 Divine wrath

Another force from which human beings need to be liberated is divine wrath, **orge** (Rom.5:9). Wrath here "does not denote a divine emotion like a loss of temper" (Ziesler 1983:78). Although Paul speaks of the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven (Rom.1:18), and is coming on account of "what is earthly" (Col.3:5,6), he does not have the anger of God in mind. The wrath of God should be understood as his negative response to our life style, living according to the flesh, "men of the old age" (Ladd 1982:407). Divine wrath rather signals "divine hostility to everything that is evil" (Ladd 1982:407). With the term 'wrath', Paul expresses "what God is

doing and what he will do with sin" (Ladd 1982:407). Humanity outside Christ is under hostile powers, and thus alienated from God. As such it cannot experience something other than the wrath of God and death. Divine wrath is the natural consequence of sin and alienation from God. Sin's consequences are painful, not because God is angry and wants to strike the sinner, "but because this is the world of causes and effects, physically and morally" (Ziesler 1983:78).

König refuses to confine divine wrath to the doctrine of God. For him, it fits more with hamartiology. The doctrine of God concerns His essential nature, i.e. "with what he would be had there never been creation, man or sin" (1982:140). God is a free, eternal and spontaneous love. His love flows from within him without any external coercion and eternal because it extends from eternity to eternity (König 1982:140). That is not true of divine wrath, because "God is not wrath in the same way he is love" (König 1982:140). God loves without any external motivation, but becomes wrathful due to external factors. Wrath is not part of his nature as love is. It is his historical reaction to the forces of evil and human response to them. Whereas we do not cause God's love we cause his wrath (König 1982:140). Further, König carefully distinguishes between divine and human wrath. There is a discrepancy between the two. In his own words:

Man's wrath is dark, irrational, opaque, incomprehensible (like all other sin), inexplicable, unnecessary, destructive. A person bursts out in anger, breaks into a tantrum, and then he unreasonably destroys everything ... But God's wrath is different. It is clear, transparent, restrained, calculated, manageable, understandable (1982:143).

The last quote suggests that humans are able to fathom God. König seem to have a superficial perception of the wrath of God, if not of God himself. He is right, however, to point out that human and divine wrath are in opposition to each another and should not be expressed by the same term, wrath, were it not for a lack of appropriate terms. There has always been a valid and comprehensible reason for God's wrath, i.e. his response to our sin, disobedience and imperiousness. The cardinal reason for divine wrath is human rejection of God's eternal grace and limitless love which offered us salvation (König 1982:143). Consequently, human wrath is also an object of divine wrath (Eph. 4:31; Col.3:8). The only way to escape divine wrath is to live, not by law, but by faith (Martin 1989:62; 1 Thess. 1:10; Col.3:5-6; Eph.5:6).

The painful consequences of sin can be experienced now or in the future. The gospel is the power of God to deliver us now, but Jesus will also deliver "us from the wrath [judgement] to come" (1 Thess. 1:10). No sinner can ridicule and disobey God's will without serious negative and painful consequences. There will be a Day of reckoning, in life now, or at the moment of judgement. God has surely not lost control of his emotions. But his will has not changed either. It still opposes evil now and will condemn it at the End (Ziesler 1983:78).

1.6.5 Death

Another evil force which enslaves sinners is death. Like sin, it has power over sinners (Rom.5:17) and is their "last enemy" (1 Cor.15:26). Accordingly death is the first-born of sin. It is penal. Our first ancestors, Adam and Eve, were warned not to eat from the tree "of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:16-17). That was the divine law. God gave them the reason why the law was necessary: "lest you die" (Gen.4:3). So a decision and action by the couple in question either to eat or just touch of the forbidden tree would be sinning. Its consequences would be their death. As O'Grady has it: "Sin takes control of people and they suffer the consequences" (1992:92) of "separation from God" (Martin 1989:66), broken human relationships, physical and spiritual death. These "consequences ... extend beyond this life to the next" (Rom.2:6-11) (Martin 1989:65).

In spite of their knowledge about the existence of the divine law, and of the consequences of breaking it, the first couple touched and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree and so broke the law. Note that they did not die a physical death. It seems, therefore, that the death which the author had in mind here was not a physical one. They were driven out of paradise to make sure that they did not eat from the tree of life (Gen.3:22-24). It seems to me that by death here is meant separation from God. So Paul is right: sin breeds death. "As soon as Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit spiritual death and separation from God set in" (Keane 1982:47). Thus, Paul could write: "death came into the world by sin" (Rom.5:12). That also means that sin, flesh and death are equivalent (Martin 1989:64) and universal (Rom.3:9-20; O'Grady 1992:95). It seems clear that spiritual death, or as Martin puts it, "inward and spiritual dis-grace" (1989:63), is a prelude to physical death.

Paul's understanding of death is in line with that of the Old Testament, where there is "an intimate, cause-and-effect connection between sin and death (Gen.3)" (Martin 1989:63). Being unnatural, death is unmitigated evil (Deut.30:15,19), bitter (1 Sam.15:32) and horrendous (Ps.55:4f). It is "the antithesis of God who is life ... an alien intruder no less than does sin" (Martin 1989:63,67). No wonder that "its effect is to oppose and deny all that God intended for his children" (Martin 1989:63). It is "a power that would oppose God" (Martin 1989:67), for it takes life, while God grants life. Death is "the sacrament of sin" (Denney quoted by Martin 1989:63).

Sin is like a regime whose goal is to kill. But in the obedience of Christ unto death (Phil.2:8), it received a "mortal blow" (Martin 1989:63). It suffered its decisive defeat when Christ rose from the dead. So it no longer has dominion over any one who is in Christ (Rom.6:9). But like sin, death continues even in the church, holding "the same ambivalent place as sin and the 'powers'..." (Martin 1989:64). It is true that death "has been conquered in principle" but its total elimination and "day of final triumph" (Martin 1989:64; 1 Cor.15:26) is still to come.

1.6.6 Other powers

The pauline tradition also speaks of deliverance from "every evil" (2 Tim.4:18) a further evidence of the inclusiveness of the pauline concept of salvation. Such evil includes illness (2 Cor.1:6-10), enemies (Rom. 15:31); and labours attached to childbearing (1 Tim.2:15; cf. Nelumbu 1994:255ff).

Keane remarks that Paul refers to these other things from which people need to be saved only occasionally and incidentally. That Paul saw salvation as "the deliverance of man" from "evil powers and spiritual foes" (1982:46) must be understood to include everything which causes deficiency in the comprehensive wellbeing of human life. Now these may differ from circumstance to circumstance or from context to context. Everything that hinders human wellbeing is an evil from which salvation need to be sought. Such 'other forces' are significant, because they help Paul's reader to realize the scope of salvation. Humanity needs to be liberated from the consequences of sin such as foolishness, disobedience, malice, evil desires, pleasures, envy, hatred, to mention but a few (Titus 3:1ff and Galatians:21-22). But equally important, humans need to be saved from those other forces to which Paul refers only incidentally.

1.7 Deliverance as a solution to human predicament

1.7.1 *What is Salvation?*

The analysis of the enslaving forces above (1.6.1 -1.6.6) was meant to bring to light what Paul has in mind when he speaks of the condition in which humans find themselves if they are without Christ. If they do not have Christ, their situation is 'hopeless' (Kümmel 1987:185). After carefully evaluating his own situation, Paul cried: "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom.7:24). The answer Paul gives to this eye opening question brings Christ into the picture. "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!", he said (Rom.7:25). He thanks God for the salvation he made possible in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. The hopeless situation has now been changed into a hopeful situation because of the Christ-event. In fact, the answer of Paul shows that this question was probably meant to call attention to the fact that there is salvation available for all in Jesus Christ (1 Thess.5:10). Kümmel expresses it thus:

The view of man does not arise out of any sort of reasoned pessimism or dualism, but is the consequence of the certainty that the Christians are freed from this situation by God and that every man can be freed. Thus the picture of man which Paul draws is only the other side of his message of the redemption of man by Christ (1987:185).

By pointing to the hopeless situation of humans, Paul hoped to teach his readers the differences between a human situation with and without Christ. In the situation without Christ, humans are hopeless. In the situation with Christ, there is hope for all. Since the coming of Christ in flesh, his death and resurrection, everything changed for the better (Rom 3:21,16; 5:9,11; 7:6; 1 Cor.15:20; II Cor.6:2). Paul and the pauline tradition use different concept for salvation, each describing "the same divine event from various sides" (Kümmel 1987:185). Among those terms are deliverance, redemption and liberation.

For Paul, salvation is deliverance and redemption. God saves in Jesus Christ by delivering humans from whatever keeps them captive. The idea that Christ 'redeemed' or 'bought back' enslaved humans by delivering them from enslaving powers such as law, sin and death permeates pauline soteriology (Rom.3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal.3:13; 4:5). God "has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9). Paul feels called and commissioned to proclaim this deliverance and reconciliation (II Cor.5:17-19). The means of God

to deliver is the gospel and the means of the enslaved to accept this salvation is faith (Rom.10:9). There will be more about this later in this chapter.

For salvation, Paul also uses the concept liberation. This term expresses what Paul thought was the solution to the hopeless situation of humans in the absence of Christ when they were enslaved to the forces of evil (Rom.6:6,14-15,20;7:5-7; Gal. 4:3,8). In Christ God liberated enslaved humanity from all evil masters (1 Cor.1:30). Now, "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (1 Cor.3:17). Jesus was able to achieve liberation for enslaved humanity by coming "in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin" (Rom.8:3). He emptied himself" and took "the form of a servant" (Phil.2:7). By his death on the cross, he was able to disarm "the principalities and powers" (Col.2:15) and "to deliver us from the present age" (Gal.1:4). It is right to conclude with Kümmel that Christ has liberated [saved] those who were under the curse of the law and other evil forces (1987:190). So Paul can write: "But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the spirit" (Rom.7:6).

To be liberated from enslaving powers is to become free for God. Paul sees it this way: "But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is satisfaction and its end, eternal life" (Rom 6:22). So Christ fulfilled the requirements of the law "for us" (Rom.8:3;5:8), "for our sin" (1 Cor.15:3), for the sins of all (1 Cor.5:14), "for the ungodly" (Rom.5:6,8). He paid the price for human sin with his blood even though he himself had no sin (1 Cor.5:21). He "died to sin, once for all" (Rom.6:10). None of the enslaving powers could hold him hostage as they did with sinful humanity although he was in the flesh like them. Similarly, believers who share in his death and life [victory] are liberated from such powers of evil.

For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God (Rom.6:9-10).

From this, Paul draws the logical conclusion that those for whom Christ died must consider themselves "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom.6:11). God has "condemned sin in the flesh" of Jesus Christ who died and rose (Rom.8:3). This means, "sin is no more lord over the flesh" (Kümmel 1987:192). Believers now have a possibility of walking in the spirit and not

according to the flesh (Rom.8:4). This is the salvation which Paul had in mind when he used concepts such as deliverance, redemption and liberation. Because Paul also speaks of the overlapping of this and the world to come, this liberation will not be completed until the second advent is realised.

Salvation is "the very heart of Pauline theology" (Keane 1982:46). To the mind of Paul, it "is the total work of God in Christ for man" (Keane 1989:46) and by this Paul understands the total liberation of believing sinners from all forces of evil which enslave them. God has effected this liberation in Christ. Briefly stated, Paul understands salvation as freedom from the powers as described above: sin, wrath, law and death (see Keane 1982:47). To be freed from these powers is to pass from flesh to spirit. It is to stop living for the self and start living for God and his intentions for reality (Rom.6:22, cf Col 1:13-14).

Salvation is the condition when the Kingdom of God will have come; when the elect will enjoy the Messianic Banquet; when there will be fellowship in the Spirit; when the Body of Christ will be whole and complete and so on. When this happens we will be like Christ; we will be transformed into his likeness 'from one degree to another' (2 Cor.3:18) ... [to be] with Christ in glory (Keane 1982:52).

"Salvation for Paul is the deliverance of man [human being] from all that alienates him [her] from God - from evil powers and spiritual foes" (Keane 1982:46). Because the concept 'salvation' is rather narrow and spiritualised and is understood to describe an other-worldly state, the use of the other concepts: redemption, deliverance and liberation are preferred today.

1.7.2 The scope of salvation

[a] In terms of time: Three misconceptions about the timing of salvation need correction: [1] the belief that salvation is a once-for-all event, which takes place in the life of a believer and can thus be said to be a past experience. It is wrong to restrict salvation to the past; [2] the belief that salvation is only a present event. Salvation cannot be restricted to the present, completely neglecting salvation as both a past and future events. [3] The restriction of salvation to the future. Salvation must not be confined to heaven. For Paul, in terms of time, the scope of salvation is wide enough to cover the past, the present and the future (Keane 1982:46). In the victorious death and resurrection of Christ, our salvation is guaranteed as long as we have a share in them

(Rom 6:5). In Christ, God "has delivered us (past) from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again" (future) (2 Cor. 1:10). Salvation becomes a present event if we consider the fact that it is a process. But we need to look carefully at these possibilities one by one.

[i] Salvation as a past event

Although Paul speaks of salvation as a past event only occasionally, such references however few, cannot just be sideline and ignored, if a proper understanding of pauline soteriology is to be achieved. According to Keane, for instance, "there are a number of places ... where Paul speaks of salvation in the past tense; once in Rom.8:24; twice in Ephesians 2:5 and 2:8; once in his second letter to Timothy (1:9); twice in Titus 3:5; 2:11 and once in his first letter to Timothy 2:6." (1982:46). In these verses, Paul employs "the aorist tense of the verb 'to be saved' to denote what has taken place in the hour of turning to God" (Martin 1989:38). Similarly, when Paul uses the perfect tense 'you have been saved' his intention is to stress the fact of the completed liberation. Christ is a redeemer who has already secured human liberation from whatever kept them in bondage (Martin 1989:39). Referring to terms such as salvation, deliverance, righteousness, reconciliation and life, Goppelt endorses the above argument:

Seen from the verbal structure of the Greek language, these terms were used aoristically in order to express what had already been accomplished in the present through the summons to faith reconciliation could be expressed, moreover, as already having occurred for the whole world as a direct consequence of the cross prior to the summons of faith (1982:136).

[ii] Salvation as a present reality

Every human being is in solidarity with the rest of humanity. Thus, every human being is in solidarity with Adam. This, unfortunately, also means that all share in the sin and death brought about by the behaviour of the first human ancestors-Adam and Eve. So sin equalises (O'Grady 1992:93) and is universal (O'Grady 1992:95). But humanity is also in solidarity with Christ, which fortunately makes it possible for it to share not only in his death but also in his life. Just as all humanity is implicated in all that the first Adam did, so it is potentially implicated in all that Christ has done (Rom.5 and 1 Cor.15). Christ is the body in which believers are members (1 Cor.12: 12-17). He is an olive tree, of which they are branches (Rom.1:16-21). He is the most

significant stone in the building (Eph.2:20-22). So, to the mind of Paul, there is no "solitary Christianity" (Keane 1982:49).

To be in Christ has far-reaching consequences. It means to share in his death, triumph and new life **now** (Rom.11:17). This is possible because his victory over evil forces becomes ours in the Christ-event (2 Cor.2:14). It also means we belong to the community of the reconciled, the church. In Christ the Spirit makes it possible for believers to live the new life of Christ right here and now (2 Cor.5:17).

The gift of the Spirit also serves as a sign of ownership of Christ. To have the Spirit is to belong to Christ, to live as the saved, to experience being "in the new realm ... standing as on a new platform of acceptance with God ... enjoying a new relationship with him" (Martin 1989:39). But this Spirit is only a first instalment of what is expected to come on the Day of the Lord. In short, Paul understands salvation in the present tense to mean living with Christ (Keane 1982:50). In the intimacy of this divine fellowship with the Lord of the church on the one hand, and with the members of the community of the reconciled on the other, the liberating power of God is experienced as salvation in the present.

Kümmel also recognizes the fact that to the mind of Paul, "the present is already the time of salvation" (1987:144). Käsemann makes the same point that "for Paul it is beyond dispute that salvation is present" (1980:231). Paul himself writes: "now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). The righteousness of God which we read about in the law and prophets, is revealed now and our reconciliation to God is in force now. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are 'in Christ' i.e for those to whom the secrets of God have been revealed (Rom.3:21;5:11;8:1; Col.1:26). So, for those who are in Christ, "the end of the ages have come" (1 Cor.10:11). "God's action in the past has already caused eschatological salvation to become effective, [for] with the sending of Christ, the time of salvation has dawned" (Kümmel 1987:144).

[iii] Salvation as a future event

Salvation is neither past nor present only. It is above all a future event. Now the age to come is no longer completely in the future. What is expected is partly here, having been inaugurated by Christ and kept continuously open for our participation by the active presence of the Spirit within the community of the reconciled (Keane 1982:46). For Paul, God "has delivered ... does deliver and ... we trust that he will deliver" (2 Cor.1:10). There is, therefore, a constant tension between salvation as a past and as a present event. "On the one hand, the 'already' was expressed: 'now is the day of salvation' (2 Cor.6:2); on the other it was said as in Rom.8:24, 'For in this hope we were saved'. Note the tension between past and future. To Timothy it is written that Christ " ... gave himself as a ransom for all" but, note the corollary, "... to be witnessed to at his proper time" (2 Tim.2:6). When Paul wrote to the Romans, he made the same point: "We are saved in hope of the resurrection of the body" (Rom.8:24). Also, "if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom.6:5).

So, while Christ has done everything concerning our salvation, and we already enjoy the results thereof, this is only "a first instalment of salvation [of which] the best is yet to come" (Keane 1982:46). Believers are already redeemed, yet, full redemption still awaits them in the future. The last days have been inaugurated, but have not yet been consummated. What Christ initiated has existential consequences, but it will be brought to completion in the future. Believers share in Christ's life and power, but the final victory over the forces of evil still has to be won. The ultimate eschatological

deliverance from the forces of evil is yet to come (1 Thess.5:9, 2:16). Of course, the forces which enslaved humans have received their death sentence, but they have not yet been executed (1 Cor.2:6;15:24). Thus, complete salvation awaits us in the future and empowers us in the present (Goppelt 1982:137). "We are", indeed "saved by hope" (Rom.8:24) and the "presence of salvation is provisional" (Kümmel 1987:144).

It seems also in order now to refer to the concept of the kingdom of God which Paul rarely uses (Kümmel 1987:142, 143). The Christian community received the first instalment of the Spirit. But each member groans for the redemption of his/her body (Rom.8:23). All live within the tension between the new and the old age, hoping for the final deliverance which "will soon come with the

appearance of Christ" (Kümmel 1987:145). The fullness of salvation Paul calls the "kingdom of God" (Gal.5:21; 1 Cor. 15:50; Eph.5:5; 1 Thess.2:12). Christ's death was meant to transfer "us from the present evil age" (Gal.1:4), from the power of darkness into his kingdom (Gal.1:13). It is for this reason that Paul challenges believers not to "be conformed to this age" (Rom.12:2, cf Col.2:20) because they belong to the kingdom of Christ.

The scope of the kingdom of God is also wide enough to cover the present and the future. Entrance to the kingdom is a future event which will coincide with final judgement, because doing certain things would bar a person from inheriting the kingdom of God (Gal 5:21). But the same kingdom is also a present event. It is, for instance, "not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy ..." ((Rom.14:17;1 Cor.4:"20).

[b] In terms of target: Salvation targets a sinner hoping to liberate him/her from all the forces of evil. It has been God's purpose to liberate all sinners and the entire creation from bondage (Rom.8:22; Gal.4:3ff; 2 Cor. 5:19). But the sinner is a multi-dimensional being, with many different needs. For Paul, Christ is the Lord of the new aeon and not only for individual souls. So every dimension of human reality must be under him. Thus "salvation ... suggests an omnibus term to embrace a wide range of human needs" (Martin 1989:42). It is an "experience of God bringing well-being and fulfilment and contentment" (O'Grady 1992:149). It is concerned with a comprehensive "well-being of persons" (Martin 1989:47). Its starting point, is, however, God's saving act in Jesus Christ. Bodily needs are for Paul also a target of salvation. Believers groan inwardly in wait for the redemption of their bodies (Rom.8:23). But because "the whole creation has been groaning in travail together" (Rom.8:22) until Christ gained victory, we can conclude that for Paul salvation targets the whole of creation.

1.8 The means of liberation

It has always been God's intention to be in community with his creation. But, as we have seen above, the forces of evil, sin in particular, brought about alienation, not only between God and creation, but also between the members of creation. That is why salvation should be understood as liberation and reconciliation. What are the means salvation and reconciliation?

1.8.1 The gospel: the power of God

God discloses himself and his will to us in his word: law and gospel. This word "calls us out of our previous life into a new life" us in the fellowship of God (Nürnberger 1992:4-3). We have already discussed the function of the law above. But in short, it reveals and rebukes our sin and evil and helps us to see what God expects us to be but are not and to know what we are supposed to do for God and for others but are not doing. So it shows that we do not qualify for the fellowship of God and demands that we do. (Nürnberger 1992:4-6f).

The gospel, "is the power of God" to liberate for salvation through faith (Rom.1:16). It is the "power that determines life and destiny" (Käsemann 1980:9). It is by this power that every enslaved sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, is liberated and set free from the consequences of his/her sins (Best 1967:15). "It is precisely this power that is needed", writes Ziesler "to transfer [humans] from the old sinister power-sphere to the new one of freedom and life" (1983:80). It is in this power that the righteousness of God is revealed when he declared "salvation to the world" (Käsemann 1980:22). This power is received not on the basis of "race or colour" (Best 1967:15) but by faith, and whoever does so, "shall live" (Rom.1:17). Because "where faith is, there is place for salvation" (Käsemann 1980:22). In this gospel, God responds to the world's basic need: deliverance.

By this power, God accepts sinners into his fellowship without a condition. That means, it is the gospel which assures sinners that they are forgiven and accepted unconditionally by God. This further means that God suffers our inability to be what we should. This unconditional acceptance leads to liberation, then to involvement in God's liberating activities and finally to assurance (Nürnberger 1992:4-9ff). So by this power, liberation is located both in the past, in the present and in the future. We were liberated at the initial moment of our call but this call is also continuous. We were accepted at the when we first accepted our acceptance, but being in flesh, acceptance is a continuous process. We were assured of final salvation but this needs to be repeated now and again.

Paul is not ashamed of the gospel, because Christ "is its decisive content" (Käsemann 1980:10). "It is the word of the Cross ... of Christ glorified and pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the

Church" (Baker 1940:119). So to be ashamed of this gospel is to lack faith. It is to lack a hand by which liberating power is received from God.

The gospel is God's "way of righting wrong", of **justifying** sinners (Best 1967:15), by removing "the barrier of guilt which has separated man from his Father" (Baker 1940:119). Paul was eager to transmit it, thereby "helping people to discover the liberating power of God for salvation" (Patte 1984:19). He felt "obliged" (Baker 1940:118) to proclaim the power that had liberated him. He proclaimed the liberating power of God which is at work now, liberating sinners from enslaving forces, achieving "deep and rich reconciliation ... and inward peace" (Baker 1940:119). This proclamation was, for him, an urgent and compelling vocation that he needed to carry out relentlessly before it was too late, before the wrath of God took its toll (Patte 1984:61).

This gospel is God's gift to humanity, because through it he offers himself and his life to humanity (Käsemann 1980:28;). It is his means to freely grant sinners forgiveness (Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 2:12) which is his "generous undeserved gift" (Baker 1940:121). By means of this power, God lifts "the sinner from the slough of despondency and gives him [her]" heart to try again, trusting that God will help him [her] (Baker 1940:123). It is the power by which God replaces the law by grace (Baker 1940:122) and offers new life to the dead in sin (Baker 1940:124). So it is "the source of the new life" (Baker 1940:127) for those who possess "faith which apprehends the Gospel" (Baker 1940:119).

Freedom from the law and reception of new life in Christ must be understood against what I have said already under 1.5.2 above, which is not necessary to repeat. It suffices only to put the issue in its proper context. While the Israelites believed that they were under the direct rule of Yahweh, they believed that the latter had representative gods ruling over other nations. When Israel did not reflect the justice of Yahweh as it was expected of them, they were eventually alienated from him by the law. Yahweh became remote and they tried very hard to reach him via the law. In his mercy, Yahweh replaced the law by Christ and so made it possible for them to be under the direct rule of Yahweh again. All this was by grace and the whole process is the gospel (Nürnberger 1987:8-18).

Luther saw this power in Rom. 1:16 as **potency** with divine origin. It is possibility. It is not to be understood as that power by which God empowers the powerful and strengthens the strong. It is enabling power (Acts 1:8; 4:23; Luke 1:35; 24:49).

For this latter power is the potency from which man derives his strength and health according to the flesh and by which he is enabled to do what is of the flesh. But God has completely annulled this power by the cross of Christ in order to give his own power by which the spirit strengthened and saved and by which one is enabled to do what is of the spirit (Ps.60:11f). This then is the meaning of the phrase "The gospel is the power of God". The gospel is the power of the spirit or the riches, arms, ornaments, and every good of this Spirit (all that it is able to do) and this comes from God (Luther 1980:16).

Not to be ashamed of the gospel is to accept it and be ready to live and share it. But that also means to let go of all other powers and to reject 'other gospels' and "former systems of convictions" as "a loss" or "curse" (Phil.3:7; Patte 1983:61). "For Paul, the Gospel establishes the true meaning and purpose of life, his true identity ... characterised by his relationship to God" (Patte 1983:60). Thus, the saving power is God's means of establishing the right relationship between the sinner and God. It is justification. To accept and live under the grip of this saving and enabling power makes the relationship of the sinner to God completely different. This sinner's whole life will be perceived in terms of this power. He/she will be given "true identity, meaning and purpose" (Patte 1983:61). Freed from the grip of evil forces, the sinner becomes a **doulos** of Christ, a free slave of righteousness (Rom.6:17), "who belongs to Christ" (Gal.5:24). Does the gospel enslave and if so, is it a better slavery? Just as the gospel liberated and gripped Paul, it has power over believers. But we "insist that it is a liberating power and not enslaving power" (Patte 1983:62). The sinner is freed for freedom. The gospel is the source of freedom from the law (Gal. 5:1), divine wrath, flesh, sin, and death and all other forces of evil. As Patte has it: "Freedom is the destiny and purpose of Christ's action for the believer" (1983:368) and "the central theological concept which sums up the Christian's situation before God as well as before the world" (Patte 1983:368f).

1.8.2 Grace: the divine offer

For the Pauline tradition God's grace which brought about salvation has now appeared (Titus 2:11-3:6) on account of the unmerited favour, love and kindness of God. Liberation and

reconciliation are God's doings to which a sinner has contributed virtually nothing. A sinner who is in bondage is hopeless in terms of his/her ability to liberate him/herself. A far superior force is needed to effect the desired liberation. This is the sinner's deepest need. Deliverance is humans' common need because all are under the power of sin. Therefore to the question: "what makes liberation and reconciliation possible", Paul has a simple but clear answer: "We are saved by God's grace alone." God has revealed his grace to enslaved sinners by sending Christ as Saviour. This Saviour is God incarnate so that in him the sinner comes face to face with God. In Christ, God himself is at work for our redemption. To meet God in Christ is, according to Keane, "one way of saying that we have been saved by grace" (1982:48). Nürnberger calls it unconditional acceptance as we saw above. This means that sinners are liberated and so reconciled to God by a power far superior to those which enslaved them. Keane writes: "We have been saved by God's gracious intervention and not by anything that we ourselves have done" (1982:48).

To say sinners are saved by God's grace means that they have contributed nothing to their salvation and reconciliation, especially not by fulfilling the requirements of divine law (Gal.3:8-14). In fact, the sinner's ability to keep the law is non-existent. Human beings have been proved incapable of fulfilling the law of God even if they want to. Any attempt on their part results in their breaking it. Paul is a good example of this. He testifies:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but do the very thing I hate ... For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want ... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me ... (Rom. 7:14ff).

Paul has discovered the human incapability of fulfilling the requirements of the law. He tried, but failed hopelessly! He realised that if he were to become a liberated person, somebody else would have to intervene. But Paul was fortunate to discover that God has responded to his question: "who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom.7:24). So he was able to write the statement of faith: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:25). It might be that the original version of this response was a straight answer to the question posed by Paul, namely "It is the grace of God through Christ Jesus." Christ liberated lawbreakers by taking their place before God and becoming what they are and so receiving their due. He became sin and received

the sinners' curse. This happened on the cross. He endured the consequences of human sin and law breaking, all these, on behalf of sinners. The aim was to exchange estates: to share in the sinners' estate so that the sinners are enabled to share in his. This is the same as saying, Christ shared the sinners' punishment or reward (death) and so enabled them to share his new life. It must be understood, however, that Christ did not die for us so that we do not have to test physical death again. What is actually meant here is that we identify with his death, thus anticipating our own death as punishment for our sin, and identify with his new life, thus anticipating our own new life. To say that he "became sin for us" means that he shared our being in the flesh. In turn we identify with the death of his flesh on the cross and with his resurrection into new life and therefore with his life (Nürnberg 1996:11-13). This is the background of justification. Christ, who in spite of being fully human like us, fulfilled what the law required, was "made sin" on our behalf for our benefit. Our benefit is that we are now reckoned righteous before God. Keane writes:

Without the two-fold exchange, the doctrine of justification would be useless. God justifies a sinner on the ground of Christ's obedience and death and when he does this, he acts justly. By setting forth Christ as the propitiation for sins, in whom human sin was actually judged and punished as it deserved to be, he revealed the just ground on which he was able to pardon and accept believing sinners (1982:48).

The doctrine of justification as propounded by Paul makes four things clear: [1] It corrects the misunderstanding about the fairness of God towards Christ. Some have expressed a feeling that God has unfairly punished the innocent Christ for the sin of others. [2] It shows us what kind of God we are dealing with. He is a God who is interested in personal relationships with sinners and their overall wellbeing. He "is willing to have dealings with sinners, to forgive them, to take upon himself the consequences of their sins, and to confer on them a new status of justification, of being accepted in the Beloved" (Keane 1982:48). [3] Justification is costly. In his teachings, Paul was careful not to imply that he was teaching cheap grace. Whoever reads him carefully, will soon recognize his repeated emphasis on the costliness of grace. Grace is costly because it costs the life of the mediator between the holy God and sinful humankind. He gave himself as a ransom. He allowed his precious blood to be shed. To that end, Paul writes to the Corinthians: "You were bought with a price" (1 Cor.6:20). Having been bought with the blood of Christ, humans have

now become slaves of Christ (Rom.6:22). It is better to be a slave of Christ than of the forces of evil, because, slavery to Christ means freedom. Keane writes: "The slave of Christ is at the same time the Lord's freeman (1 Cor.7:22)" (1982:49). It is in this close relationship between the sinner and the redeemer that freedom and reconciliation is made possible.

[4] Liberation and reconciliation are divine initiatives. Paul does not leave this point unclear because it is of cardinal importance for a proper understanding of justification. As Keane rightly emphasised, "it is never God who is reconciled to us" (1982:49). The reverse is the case. God took the initiative, both to liberate and "reconcile us to himself by Christ" (2 Cor.5:18). 'By Christ' means that whatever alienated us from God and from one another, whatever deprived us of the fullness of life, whatever kept us in bondage, has been abolished by the cross of Christ. That is the divine offer. But there is also a human side to it. Keane writes: "From man's side the barrier to friendship is broken down when man (humankind) the rebel becomes man (humankind) the penitent and commit himself (herself) in faith to the Saviour who died for his reconciliation" (1982:49). So there are always two sides to the completion of liberation and reconciliation: divine grace which is a divine offer and faith, which is a human response. These two together bring reconciliation to completion.

1.8.3 Faith: a human response

'Faith' [*pistis*] has various meanings in Paul. It could mean "a body of beliefs" (Gal.1:23; 6:10) or "faithfulness" (Rom.3:3) (Ziesler 1983:80). Neither of these meanings of faith concern us here, however. We are primarily concerned with faith as a Yes to God's gracious initiatives, "a response to grace" (Ziesler 1983:80). Faith is a total and personal response to God's total and personal initiative to liberate him/her. It is the step which a sinner takes in complete trust towards God after God has acted and moved towards the sinner. This is what Paul means when he writes: "By grace you have been saved, through faith" (Eph.2:8). So salvation is possible only when the means of salvation, i.e. the grace of God accepted by faith, is present (Ziesler 1983:81). The sinner is saved or liberated through faith and not because of faith. So the order is significant here. First God acts, and by so doing enables a sinner to respond. God offers and a sinner accepts and receives. The gracious God is not an equal partner with a responding sinner.

By its very nature, 'faith' contradicts the principle of working to earn God's salvation (Gal.2:16; Keane 1982:49). In essence, faith is complete trust, a complete surrender and a complete reliance on God's initiatives in Christ for a sinner. Ziesler is right, "there is a strong dash of humility in faith, for it requires willingness to admit inability to earn liberation" (1983:81). On his road to Damascus, Paul was called and commissioned to preach what God had done. Such preaching demands the listener's response. If that response is positive, it is faith.

Like salvation, which is both a past, present and future event, faith is, for Paul, "both an initial act (Rom.10:9) and a constant attitude (Gal.2:20)." (Keane 1982:49). Its presence is marked by consistent obedience to the Lord of the Church (Ziesler 1983:81). Law should transform itself into acts of love or good works. Genuine faith bears fruit. It is significant, therefore, for the proper understanding of Paul's theology to understand the relationship between faith and works, particularly the way they come about. He does not reject works, but tries to locate them in their rightful place. Faith concretises itself in works. This means, works are a sign that saving faith is present. But one cannot buy salvation through works.

1.9 The soteriology of Paul and its relevance in the African context

1.9.1 Paul took principalities and powers seriously

The idea of the spiritual powers has either been ignored, avoided or dismissed by some Western Christian theologians. In his doctrine of atonement, and in line with the apostle Paul however, Aulen concluded that the death of Christ is his triumph over evil powers (1969:146; 150; cf. Maimela 1987:88; Nicolson 1990:115ff). Here is a clear acknowledgement of the existence of evil powers and spirits. They may exist, but they are inferior to God and have been defeated by Christ on the cross (Abijole 1988:119).

Biblical witness to the existence of the forces of evil has been dealt with under section 1.5.2 above and need not be repeated here. The following *précis* in point form may suffice: there are [i] Satan who tried to frustrate the missionary activities of Paul; [ii] the powers behind the mysterious lawlessness which manifested itself in public rebellion against God; [iii] the elemental spirits which kept Jews as well as Gentiles captive; [iv] a god of 'this age' who prevents unbelievers from seeing the gospel by which God would liberate them; [v] a ruler of this aeon working in the sons of

disobedience who instigated those who crucified Christ, which led to their downfall; and [vi] the principalities which Christ has overcome through his death (1 Thess. 2:18; 11 Cor.12:7; Gal.4:3; 11 Cor.4:4; 1 Cor.2:6; Rom.8:20ff, 38ff).

One wonders how an important subject like this could so easily fall into disfavour. Perhaps scholars viewed the concept of world powers as mythological language and as a last thing to be taken seriously. They missed the point. Paul might be using mythological language, but "one that has rational content of thought and reality" (Abijole 1988:118) which was well understood and experienced by contemporary Christians and non-Christians. Africans too take such spiritual powers seriously. As we shall demonstrate in chapters three and four, the life of **Ovawambo** was seriously intimidated by **oulodi** [witchcraft], **onhiko** [sorcery], and **ovakwamhungu neemhepo dii** [ancestral and malicious spirits].

1.9.2. The relevance of Pauline soteriology for Ovawambo

The great lessons and implications of the Pauline theology of principalities and powers to Christianity must be understood against the background of **Owambo** views of supernaturalism. To the Western mind, supernaturalism is now a foreign concept. But to the African mind in general the same concept "is still very similar to the world of the first century AD to which Paul addressed his theology" (Abijole 1988:127). As in the case of other African communities of which Abjole writes, **Owambo** world and life view is still characterised "by supernatural thoughts of witches, ghosts, spirits, demons and powers which are strongly believed to be against the welfare of man" (1988:127). If Christ is the overall Lord over all powers and authorities - be they the state, a patriarchal order, witchcraft, demons, sorcerers, ancestral and malicious spirits etc. loyalty to Christ must result in the liberation of his followers from such forces. One cannot possibly be loyal to both.

If the above is true, then Paul's message cannot be more relevant to **Owambo** believers. The good news to them is: on the cross, Christ has overcome all evil spirits and powers which aim at depriving humanity of their wellbeing, dignity and Africanness. That should have been the starting point in the proclamation of the missionaries to the African people, rather than arguing such forces away as superstitions. The gospel should be related to these evil spirits as its target. The

priority should not have been to simply dismiss such powers as nonexistent, because to the minds of indigenous people, they are an experienced reality. Many even have deep personal relationship with and loyalty to them. So relevant soteriology for such people should encompass the defeat of such powers by Christ and the liberation of those loyal to them. Those who are now liberated became free by shifting their loyalty from the powers that be to Christ. For them now the point is not whether such evil powers do exist or not, but that their loyalty lies with Christ. Whether evil forces exist or not, is of little significance for believers. What matters is that they have no power over them any more as they did before.

Salvation should target the whole sphere of human life: i.e. the whole person, body, soul and spirit. The one-sided salvation of the soul which is unrelated to human physical welfare is foreign to an African mind. It is irrelevant. From Pauline soteriology, we learn that salvation should be understood as deliverance from whatever keeps humanity hostage now. Thus understood, salvation cannot only target morality and life here-after. It should be wide in scope and comprehensive in its target. Negatively put, salvation should not be selective, partial and unconcerned with the total wellbeing of a human person.

Ovawambo believe that misfortunes, illnesses and deaths are caused mainly by evil forces such as witchcraft (Hiltunen 1986:35) and angry or frustrated ancestors (Hiltunen 1993:36), sorcery (Hiltunen 1986:105 ff) and malicious spirits (Hiltunen 1986:57). We shall say more about this in chapters three and four. They therefore need to be delivered from these powers, by being empowered by the superior force - the Holy Spirit. To an African, a relevant Christ must be the all conquering and all sufficient liberator. If Christ is not presented thus, Africans will feel unredeemed and turn to other powers which promise comprehensive wellbeing which people feel the church and its Christ is incapable of offering. This tendency is not foreign in the history of the church. The African Independent Churches and secret night visitation by main line church members to diviners are cases in point. The reason is that the rest of human needs are addressed and taken care of elsewhere. So in addition to the one-sided salvation offered by the church, believers flock to diviners for fulfilment. So the church in Africa needs to preach the message of the cosmic triumph of Christ as preached by Paul. **Ovawambo** need total and comprehensive salvation from the Saviour who is able to address all human needs. If this is to be Christ, the

church should take the message of Paul more seriously. Christ is the Saviour, not only of souls, but of the whole human being, including the body and the human environment. **Ovawambo** need comprehensive salvation equal to **shalom** and made available by God through the Liberator Jesus Christ, nothing less.

1.10 Conclusion

Late Jewish apocalyptic literature appeared on the historical scene in the absence of prophetism and wisdom literature, mostly in times of national crises. They were primarily not meant to be records of historical events, but as "responses of faith which the nation was called to make" (Russell 1964:16) to current persecutions, political and economic pressure, in which the only option left was to look upon divine visitation for deliverance. They were affirming the nation's faith in God in spite of the impression that the forces of evil seemed to be in charge of reality. They acknowledged on the one hand, that humankind was finite and unable to liberate itself from the evil powers which had corrupted this world, and on the other, that God is infinite and is the only one capable of saving his people from enslaving powers. He will neither let his people down nor allow his enemies to go unpunished.

On the Day of the Lord God will catastrophically intervene in human history, cause general resurrection and end this world. This divine intervention will bring to an end this present and corrupt age and will introduce the new age of good and beauty. This particular message is meant both to warn the godless and comfort the persecuted faithful. The divine intervention will benefit both the Israelites and the world at large. Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt, but the entire earth will be renewed. Salvation is both spiritual, material and historical, bound to the physical body through resurrection and to this natural earth through its renewal. It is attributed to God and is wider in scope in terms of time and target.

In his theology, Paul is determined by the general framework of apocalyptic expectations. He inherited almost all the important aspects of late Jewish apocalyptic, but not without 'baptising' them. But he introduced significant changes and adjustments of which the major is the message Jesus's resurrection which inaugurated the general and end-time resurrection. This meant that the

end-time was no longer restricted to a distant future, but has invaded or has been inaugurated into the present. The invasion of the present by the future has narrowed the sharp contrast between diametrically opposed ages so that believers now live in anticipation of that which is hoped for. This anticipation is made effective by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. So the present is still evil, but is filled with the grace of God and the victory of the Lamb. This makes hope more hopeful and the delayed parousia more bearable. As Paul puts it: "in this hope we are saved" (Rom.8:24).

Paul hooks his soteriology on the late Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. His point of departure was the Christ-event and its implications. Jesus died but rose. That was the sign of the beginning of the end-time. So the actual end could not be far off. But if reality was still under the powers and evil spirits, somebody had to proclaim this victory and imminent end before it was too late. He felt obliged to proclaim the victory of God in Christ and the shortness of the remaining time to both the gentiles and the Jews, before the parousia. He headed this project also because he had tasted God's grace and love since his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.

It was important to become more specific about the forces which enslave human beings. We identified sin with its alienating effects; flesh the bridgehead of sins; the law which could be good if rightly used and evil when seen as an alternative to Christ; divine wrath which is God's response to sin; death which is a natural consequence of sin; and evil social powers which also enslave humanity.

The solution to human captivity is deliverance, redemption, liberation, traditionally known as salvation. The terms are used interchangeably. Humanity is incapable of self-liberation. Its only hope is God's intervention in Jesus Christ. We found that salvation, according to Paul is comprehensive and wide in scope. Its scope stretches well into the past, is real in the present and promising in the future. It is already now, but not yet. Its target is not only the souls of individuals. It concerns the comprehensive wellbeing not only of persons, but also of the whole of reality. God hates alienation between him and his creatures. He has provided the means of liberation. They are the gospel which is the liberating power of God, [grace, his way of acquitting

sinner and accepting them unconditionally], and faith which is the human response to the divine offer.

Paul took the existence of evil forces seriously. Theologians will do well not to simply dismiss such powers as nonexistent. The point is not whether they exist or not, but that they have power over certain people. Theologians should therefore, help people to shift their loyalty from such powers to Christ. This is the best way for them to make their defeat by Christ a reality.

CHAPTER TWO

LUTHER'S DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one analyzed part one of the Pauline-Lutheran soteriological heritage. This chapter tackles part two, which is Luther's soteriology. The reason for this order is that Luther's concept of salvation hooks onto that of Paul. For him, theology concerns the relationship between a just God, sinful humanity and the relationship between them. For a better understanding of Luther's soteriology, therefore, we have to study Luther's concepts of God and humanity.

In view of the aim of this thesis, to overcome a spiritualised and privatised salvation, we have to analyze the ethics of Luther where it becomes clear that his concept of salvation was, on the whole, comprehensive. For him, the love of God shown to sinners in Christ must be shared with other humans so much so that a saved becomes 'a Christ' for them. We call for a retrieval of Luther's original and more comprehensive soteriology to inform our formulation of the inclusive concept of salvation for which this thesis aspires.

Finally, we call for the rereading of the theology of Luther with an African eye in order to contextualise it. We argue that the tendencies of Lutherans to exclude even useful elements of the African culture must be overcome to make Lutheranism adaptable to all cultural contexts including that of **Ovawambo**. This is the best way to secure a theory of salvation capable of responding adequately to concrete human beings of different cultures and circumstances.

2.2 Luther's concept of God

2.2.1 *Luther's time of predicament*

A son of poor parents in Eisleben, Germany, Martin Luther lived in a religious culture and operated during a time of social crisis (1483-1546). He became a monk in the Augustinian monastery and a professor of biblical exegesis at the University of Wittenberg. His time saw "a theocratic, powerful church" dominating "every sphere of human life ... exceeding its divine mandate" (Maimela 1988:98). He questioned, challenged and attacked the established religious

authorities and the millenarian enthusiasts who planned to use the gospel as an instrument in the process of social change. He disagreed and condemned the entire system of gaining salvation by works of the law. He nailed his famous ninety-five theses onto the church door in Wittenberg, against the abuses of the system of indulgences which most of the laity misunderstood and some priests misused. He was excommunicated by Pope Leo X for his rebellious activities.

Luther was well aware of the connection between faith and tribulation. The old feudal structure of Europe was showing cracks and was shaken. A new class of merchant capitalists was beginning to undermine the authority of the aristocracy. The severely oppressed and exploited class of peasants and serfs became restive, ready to shake off their yoke by violent means if need be. The peasant population was crushed in a most cruel civil war by the princes. Europe as a whole, was under threat from the advancing Turkish armies, and Islam was threatening Christianity. The new scientific discoveries shook the certainty of the old world view. Copernicus discovered that the earth turns around the sun and not the other way around. "During this time of overall crisis ... Luther gained his basic theological insight from which countless Christians still draw today and without which the Lutheran Church would not exist" (Nürnberg 1993:19f).

Luther also had personal sufferings. "There are researchers who think that he discovered the gospel of justification by grace, accepted in faith while agonizing with the 'devil' in the form of chronic and extremely painful haemorrhoids and constipation on the lavatory in the 'tower'" (Nürnberg 1993:20). He experienced the pain of excommunication by his own church and interdiction by the government of the day.

In that context, life was perceived as holistic. Religious and secular activities were inseparably linked. In his Reformation activities, Luther struggled with all "issues of life and death" (Maimela 1988:35). "In no sense was he the type of person who seeks gratification in an exaggerated devotion, despising the world" (Ebeling 1983:35). Thus, his "development of the doctrine of justification by faith was an attempt to answer questions his generation raised as they tried to make sense of life and to discover its meaning" (Maimela 1988:35).

Current and burning questions of those days revolved around these: In this culture which is saturated with religious activities which cannot save, how does an individual gain salvation?

How can a sinner be justified before the most righteous God to live a better life now and hereafter? How does one get things which constitute a sound and blessed life? Responding to above questions made Luther's message a direct response to "the concerns and quest for a life that has a meaning and is fulfilling for individuals" (Maimela 1988:36). The sinner who is justified and forgiven enjoys a meaningful blessed life and all that constitutes a worthwhile life. No doubt, the church of Luther's days was also concerned with the quest for sound life. But the differences between her and Luther lies in their response to the question: How does a sinner obtain a blessed and fulfilled life within the sinful context ?

2.2.2 Human predicament as a fertile soil for faith in God

God is a concept used to describe a being or spirit believed to have power over nature and control over human affairs (Gritsch and Jenson 1976:154). This male Supreme being is believed to be the Creator and Ruler of the universe. But just what do we mean by the concept of God?

The concept of God has evolved in history. The Old Testament and the New Testament communities perceived God differently. Such differences are also present in religious circles, experience and convictions outside the biblical faith (Nürnberg 1995:10-1). The main reason for such differences is the fact that each community experiences this absolute or ultimate being differently.

Idealistic philosophers, dating back to Plato and Aristotle defined God in terms of his attributes which indicate his assumed supernatural nature, and ability to control reality (Gritsch and Jenson 1976:154). Luther rejected this definition as mere speculation saying it is detrimental to faith. It leads to God as he is in his absoluteness, infiniteness, nakedness and majesty whom sinners cannot deal with (Althaus 1975:21; Nürnberg 1996:16-2). For Luther, this is not theology, but theo-logic (Gritsch and Jenson 1976:154) where distinction between the naked and revealed God is not made. We could as well have entitled this section: theo-logic creates a terrifying God.

This means that philosophers defined God in ontological and not in historical terms, that is, in terms of what he is in himself since eternity and not in terms of what he does in time. So ancient Greek philosophers defined God in terms of the ideal i.e. what ought to be. Their attempts to get

away from time led them to this perfect, timeless and eternal God which humans do not experience. But if we do not experience him, then he is probably just an idea, a product of human reason and speculation. Consequently, he is not plausible to the modern mind. Theologians have unfortunately been misled by this logical conception of God.

Theology seem to have derived comfort from the fact that the existence of God made sense to human reason even apart from faith. For centuries it has utilised the speculative method, took the Greek philosophical concept of God as a point of departure and tried to modify it to fit the biblical revelation. But you cannot mix oil with water. The Bible speaks of God as the power of history, not as an eternal ideal beyond time (Nürnberger 1996:16-3).

As a result of the direction taken by traditional theology, a great gap opened up between faith and reason. God is defined ontologically and not historically and as a result its became difficult, illogical and impossible, for the people of faith to believe in God. For Luther faith in God is the foundation of our life. For a proper understanding of God and his will for us and of our relationship to him, it is absolutely necessary that this foundation is right, else everything built on it will be shaky. Theology needs to be saved from such speculative theo-logic by returning to the word. On this side of eternity, it is not safe for us to meet **Deus nudus** (a naked God) God as he is in himself.

We have to cling to a concept of God which is based on the biblical witness. There we learn that the biblical God is not just a god, but my God, the Source of my daily experience. There is no single entity in reality, not even an ant or amoeba which can exist without his creative activity directed towards it. It took Luther a long time of meditation and prayer before he could understand this truth. Finally it occurred to him that God was in charge of everything and he was the Source of both good and evil. For an example "when we are faced with injustices, violence, misery, or death we are faced with the same God" (Nürnberger 1993:21) who is the Source of all good things we enjoy in life. Luther's God is ambiguous, but it is this very ambiguity which leads to faith in him. It is this crisis which serves as a breeding soil for faith. This ambiguous God is my personal God.

For to believe in God does not mean to believe that there is a God but to believe that He is my God. This is the very simple difference between semblance and truth (Bornkamm 1965:66)... Everything hinges on our pulling together the two

widely separated ends of our question concerning God, so that the torch and this illuminating spark flashes across: The almighty God of heaven and earth is my God; He is favourably disposed towards me; I can rely on Him for every good thing and flee to him in every need ... (Bornkamm 1965:68).

2.2.3 *The knowledge of God is universal, but ...*

By using reason and scrutinising nature, human beings seem to have little choice but to conclude that there is a being who brought all that is about. In his interpretation of 1 Cor.15:12-15 Luther says:

if someone wants to say that God is not God, just let him go ... So they also teach in schools: **Contra negantem prima non est disputandum**, that is, he who dares deny what nature teaches and what is granted by reason and intellect of all men should not be disputed with but should be referred to a physician who should clean out his brain for him ... (Plass 1994:538 referring to W 36 526).

For Luther, it is actually foolish not to recognise that the natural order is being driven by a being that is called God. Natural order is enough to reveal God, at least in general terms to all who enquire about the origin of all that exists. "The heavens are telling the glory of God" (Ps.19:1) and "The greatness and beauty of created things give us a corresponding idea of their Creator" (Wisdom of Solomon 13:5; cf Ps 19:7-13). By means of common sense philosophers "drew from those sources what is in truth not an insignificant proof: that all things are done and guided, not [randomly] but by divine providence, in as much as the movements of the masses on high and of the heaven are so definite and unique" (Plass 1994:539 referring to W 42, 20). By merely looking at the heavens and the earth and the way heavenly bodies and earthly beings are ordered, Luther believes that "we should realize what sort of God we have, namely the almighty God, who made the wondrous heaven from an unformed heaven and did everything according to His will" (Plass 1994:539 referring to W 42, 20). In fact, Ps. 104:2 ascribes mighty powers to this God. He is able to unfold the heavens like a tent.

So God can be known after the facts [**a posteriori**] (Plass 1994:539). By using natural reason and wisdom, and by exercising their natural powers, human beings can arrive at a conclusion, even though it might be feeble, that there exists one eternal Essence, which has created, which sustains and governs all things. Looking at the created things, so beautiful and excellent, heaven and

earth, well regulated and moving each in its wonderful order and so systematically, humans have no choice but to admit that such things could not have come into being all on their own or, further, could operate accidentally, or by their own force of power. There must be a Creator and a Lord from whom they all owe their origin and existence and by whom they are being controlled.

This general knowledge of God is, for Luther not able to reveal the intentions of God for us for only the Holy Spirit can do so (1 Cor.2:11). It is like looking at a person doing something. Outwardly, we may know God, but his intentions remain hidden (Plass 1994:540 referring to W 21, 509). The general knowledge of God's existence is universal. Luther speaks of the **Deus absconditus**, the hidden God. Since all nations have reason, wisdom and power to observe nature, they must be able to recognise the existence of God "in the things that have been made" (Rom 1:20).

But some people will object again: If all men knew God, wherefore doth Paul say, that the Galatians knew not God, before the preaching of the gospel (?) I answer, there is a double knowledge of God: the general and particular. All men have the general knowledge of namely, that there is a God, that He created heaven and earth, that He is just, that He punishes the wicked. But what God thinketh of us, what His will towards us, what He will give, or what He will, do to the end we may be delivered from sin and death, and saved (which is the true knowledge of God indeed), this they know not. ... So men naturally know that there is a God: but what His will is, or what is not his will, they do not know (Luther 1983:258).

Luther implies that the heathen, as he calls them, do have natural knowledge of God but not the Holy Spirit who teaches specific knowledge of God particularly his intentions for reality. The only way to know God and his plans, according to Luther, is to know Christ, to have the Holy Spirit and to cling to the word, because he who sees the Son sees the Father and the Son does not speak what is of himself, but what is of the Father (John 12:45).

This can also be expressed in terms of law and gospel. Natural knowledge is knowledge by the law. Specific knowledge is by the gospel. The law is written in the heart of every person (Rom.2:15). It teaches what is right and what is not. Every rational human being knows very well that it is wrong to disobey parents, steal, murder, commit adultery, curse or bear false witness. Among heathens too, evils is punished. Their own consciences tell them what is wrong what is

right. They have this information from natural law which is written in their hearts by nature. However, Luther insists that natural knowledge of God is fragmentary and obscure.

The source of the specific knowledge of God is the gospel. This knowledge knows more than the fact that there is a mighty God. It also knows his intentions for reality. It knows very well that by nature, the world in general and humans in particular, are an abomination before God and stand eternally condemned under his divine wrath. It knows that this world lies under the power of the devil; that God is willing and able to deliver it from such bondage; that he has planned to do so through the death of his only Son who is an authentic human being; that in order to make it possible to communicate with him, God concealed his majesty in a particular place (temple), a particular person (Jesus) and in his living word. Luther calls the God who is accessible to humans **Deus revelatus**. For saving faith we are directed to the absolute God alone and directed to Christ.

Luther writes:

... I repeatedly give this advice: whoever wishes to think and speculate about God in a salutary manner should put away absolutely everything besides the humanity of Christ. Dwelling imaginatively on him nursing at the breast or in his sufferings, until his sweetness softens your heart. Then do not remain there, but penetrate more deeply and consider how he does these actions not by his own but by the Father's will. Then the Father's most sweet will begin to please you, as he displays it in Christ's humanity (Wicks 1983:123).

Worshipping an object does not make it a true God. For Luther, there are different kinds of gods. Everyone sets up his/her special god in whom to trust and whom to serve as a source of blessings, help, and comfort. Heathen put their trust in power and dominion, riches, happiness, or pleasure. But their trust and faith are misdirected, for they are not placed in the only God besides whom there is actually no God in heaven or on earth (Plass 1994:540 f referring to W 30, 1, 134 f). So while the general knowledge of God might be universal, special knowledge of God can only be acquired through Jesus Christ.

2.2.4 The true knowledge of God is vital for salvation

(a) The mastery and compassion of God

To understand the soteriology of Luther, we must first pin down his perception of God and his attitude to reality. Luther insists on the mastery and benevolence of God. These are assumptions of faith which biblical authors accentuated for a long time to such a degree that they became absolute statements. Examples of these is a statement of faith: God is ... and are completed by concepts describing the attributes of God. God is: almighty, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and love. These attributes of God summarise what believers think God is. Biblical authors were probably dissatisfied with the philosophical abstractness of these theological truths. They therefore chose rather to express them in the form of stories as events which transpired in time. Such theological truths were then projected back to the beginning or forward to the end of times (Nürnberg 1996:16-19). Consequently believers accepted the implied theological truths concerning the beginning and end of history. The implied truths were:

(i) Concerning the mastery of God: God is the Source of and Master over the whole of reality. Nothing could possibly be or occur without God. Projecting it back into the past, believers inferred that: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). According to Levenson, the story of creation (Gen 1) is placed at the beginning of the Hebrew Bible to make a point: the mastery of God, that Yahweh is "over all else" (1988:3). According to that story, God has no origin and everything is his subordinate (Levenson 1988:5). "There is nothing which could limit his absolute sovereignty" (Levenson 1988:3). Heaven and earth are inclusive of all that exist. It is the entire created reality. It is important to note here that the world is seen, understood and believed to have its origin in God its Creator.

[Which] means that the world as a whole owes its existence to the free will of God, who called it out of nothingness into being, who is its absolute master, and therefore can also allow it to fall back into nothingness (Girgensohn 1959:135).

God alone is the Author of creation. By implication this means, "everything which is part of the world loses the nimbus of the divine; it is the creature, not the Creator" (Girgensohn 1959:136).

Luther insisted that for God to be God, he must continually be creatively active. So God is God because he is the Author and Preserver of creation (Althaus 1975:105). He creates and safeguards

every single thing which he brings into being. Nothing, absolutely nothing comes into being or lasts for a single moment if God does not cause it to. If these creative activities cease, every single creature ceases to be. This means for Luther that the entire reality owes its existence to God and that creating is an on-going activity of God. These on-going creative and preserving activities of God are for Luther the foundation on which the entire reality rests. God creates everywhere, always even though it was not impossible for him to create everything only once (Althaus 1975:106).

In Luther's own words: I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers. He provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all I need from day to day. God also protects me in time of danger and guards me from every evil (Luther 1979:11).

For Luther, the compassionate God and master of reality is not only concerned about one particular part of the human being e.g the soul. His creative and sustaining activities target the whole person and aim at establishing his/her comprehensive well-being. In his explanation of the first article of the creed Luther writes:

I hold and believe that I am a creature of God; that is, that he has given and constantly sustains my body, soul and life, members great and small, all the faculties of my mind, my reason and understanding, and so forth; my food and drink, clothing, means of support, my wife and children, servants, house and home, etc. Beside, all creation help provide the comforts and necessities of life - sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, day and night, air, fire, water, the earth and all that it brings forth, birds and fish, beasts, grain and all kinds of produce. Moreover, he gives all physical and temporal blessings - good government, peace, security. Thus we learn from this article that none of us has life of himself, or anything else that has been mentioned here or can be mentioned, nor can he by himself preserve any of them ... (Tappert 1959:412).

Luther believed that apart from those concrete things - most of the means of survival which God provides - he also protects and defends his people against every evil and misfortune. He wards off dangers and disasters. He does all this on account of his love and goodness without considering the worthiness of those who enjoy protection. Luther testifies: "When we escape distress or danger, we should recognise that this is God's doing" (Tappert 1959:412).

The biblical witness asserts that when God brought reality about, it was very good, just as he wanted it to be (Gen 1:4,12, 25). Implied here is also the fact that if God is the Author and Master of all reality there is nothing can possibly frustrate his good intentions. Sin interfered with the good creation of God, but it did not have the final word. Projecting the absolute statement of the mastery of God forward into the future, believers asserted that God will establish a new heaven and new earth in the place of the old which he will make to pass away (Rev 21:1ff). This new reality will resemble the original one. God will destroy death for ever, and wipe away tears from all faces. He shall prove that he is indeed the God of salvation (Isa.25:8 ff).

(ii) Likewise, the compassion of God was expressed in story form. Throughout history, God has shown his benevolence towards those whose comprehensive well-being was under threat. His compassion is challenged by the presence of deficiencies in the life of his people. His benevolence caused him to intervene in the human predicament (Nürnberger 1996:16-19) to such a degree that they could say: "Lo, this is our God; we have been waiting for him, that he might save us ... let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa 25:9). God saved the family of Abraham from extinction (Gen 21:1 ff); he liberated the Israelites from Egypt where they were enslaved (Ex.3:1 ff); he raised Christ from the dead (Rom 6:4, 9; 1 Cor 15:4,12-28). Biblical witness dictates that God is concerned with the wellbeing of his people, so much so that he defends and saves them from their crisis situation which means he must be undeniably merciful (Nürnberger 1996:16-19). His intentions must be completely good.

The prologue to the Decalogue: "I am the Lord your God" is an expression of the compassion of God. Although it precedes the law, it is not law. In it, God intentionally turned to his people and declared himself their God. Rightly, Girgensohn calls it "the whole gospel in a nutshell" (1959:25). Following the prologue is a significant reference to the redemptive historical act of God. He is not only "the Lord your God" but is that Lord God "who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2).

Here, God is depicted as a God who cares and acts redemptively. Judging from his participation in the Exodus-event, it is evident that he is a God who wills the comprehensive wellbeing of his people. The prologue to the Ten Commandments is here authenticated by the reference to the

historical redemptive act of God whereby he liberated his people from a crisis situation (Girgensohn 1959:25). This agrees with what Nürnberger says that God is concerned with the comprehensive wellbeing of reality so much so that he directs his redemptive activities to specific people addressing a particular problem (1996:16-19). In the Exodus-event, the deficiency was the enslavement and oppression of the Israelites in Egypt.

To Moses God said: I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and so to bring them up out of the land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey ... I have seen their oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people ... (Ex. 3:7-10).

A God who uttered those words must be benevolent, a God whose intentions are good. He must be a God who is for and not against those whom he liberated. Thus, theology must make two theological statements about this: [i] that God is benevolent and [ii] that he is the Master of reality (Nürnberger 1996:16-19). It must have been his love and benevolence which caused him to see the afflictions and oppression of his people, hearing their cry, come down, and involve Moses into his action to liberate his people. Further, it must have been his mastery which enabled him to liberate them from the hands of mighty Egypt. From this kind of God one expects everything good. Reality under him should be characterised by **shalom**.

(b) [But] God is ambiguous

Humans distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, success and failure. When things go wrong, we know that they ought to go right. When we fail, we know that we were supposed to succeed. As Nürnberger writes: "When we suffer frustration, sickness, famine, conflict, injustice, oppression, or guilt, we can say that what we ought to experience is success, health, economic sufficiency, peace, justice, freedom, righteousness and so on" (Nürnberger 1996:16-4).

The kind of experience which we have in our daily life is ambiguous. We face wars, hunger, exploitation, oppression, injustice, poverty, droughts, diseases, natural disasters, death, divorces, unemployment, crime, lack of discipline, unfaithfulness and many other evils. This is the opposite of what we expect. There is an intensive tension between what is and what ought to be

(Nürnberg 1996:16-4). This contradiction suggests that reality is not in agreement with the intentions of God who is its Source, for he wills our wellbeing.

This persistence of evil is a challenge to our faith in an almighty deity. Where is he and what is he doing? Does he not care, or is he unable to help and save? Does God exist at all? This feeling, of course, is quite in line with the traditional understanding that God is 'up in heaven' far removed from our reality. If heaven is far above the earth, beyond human reach, and that is where God resides, then it is not too illogical to conclude that our existential experience seems to dictate that He "seems ... very remote, exalted in some sort of heaven, if he exists at all" (Nürnberg 1986:99).

The traditional location of God outside the human sphere is not a unique phenomenon of our age. It was known also during Luther's days. In his response to the "enthusiasts", who in their arguments about the presence or absence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, implied that Christ, and by implication God, is confined to heaven wherever that is, Luther addressed himself to this issue. Viewing their arguments as "childish", he denounced them for localising and confining God to one particular place in heaven. By implication they excluded him from any other place on earth.

I suppose they will dream up for us, as one does for children, an imaginary heaven in which a golden throne stands, and Christ sits besides the Father in a cowl and golden crown, the way artist paint it. ... From these childish ideas it must follow further that they also bind God himself to one place in heaven on the same golden throne ... (Luther 1961:55).

Can we make sense out of the contradictions we experience in life of which it is said he is in charge? What meaning is there in the unceasing alternation between ascent and descent, rise and decline? A young woman giving birth to a healthy child dies in labour. A young and intelligent medical doctor is gunned down by someone who found only R100-00 on him. Where is the mastery of God? Is this God not against us?

Luther had problems realizing that this God is the power in everything that lives; for all things, the sublime and the beautiful, the evil and the ugly, owe their existence to this power. God's

omnipotence preserves the good and the evil; by the mere bestowal of life he permits the one to grow better and purer, the other become viler. Both good and evil propagate themselves without end in this world. Even the ungodly owe their existence to God's power. Why does he not withhold life from them? Why does He not put an end to suffering, war, and death, which could not endure without His omnipotent hand? Why does he not force all men on the right path if they themselves are unable to find it? (Bornkamm 1965:63). To Luther, that is a hidden God

who dwells in everything that lives and who [is] behold there. He is a God to whom no path of our philosophical contemplation leads us. If we assume that we can comprehend him in a discordant and contradictory life, in which he is indeed hidden, then our reflection must carry us into indissoluble contradictions (Bornkamm 1965:63).

(c) [Yet] God is the source of all reality

Luther too experienced the discrepancy between the existential experience and the ideal situation. He knew that what is being experienced, both in the church and secular spheres, is not the ideal. But he never doubted that God was the Source of everything he experienced (Nürnberg 1986:100). Because he is the Creator and Preserver of everything, it is impossible to localize him at one specific location. He is the basis of the existence of the entire reality. He guarantees its existence, otherwise it would cease to exist. To say God is the Source of 'everything' is to insist that everything is under his power and authority. Everything depends on him for its existence. At least that is how Luther perceived this pronouncement. "All that exists and happens - great and small, good and evil - comes from his almighty hand" (Nürnberg 1986:100). Luther is in line with the Old Testament's perception of God. Everything, good or bad, has God as its Source. Now, because God is the mainspring of the reality now being experienced, nothing and nobody can escape his presence even for one single breath. He must be everywhere present, if He is to create, sustain and save.

The Scripture teaches us, however that the right hand of God is not a specific place in which a body must or must not be, such as on the golden throne, but is the almighty power of God which at one and the same time can be nowhere and yet everywhere. It cannot be at any one place, I say. For if it were at some specific place, it would have to be there in a circumscribed and determinate manner, as everything which is at one place must be at that place determinately and measurably, so that it cannot meanwhile be at any other place. But the power of

God cannot be so determined and measured, for it is uncircumscribed and immeasurable, beyond and above all that is or may be (Luther 1961:57).

(d) There is nothing more present and closer than God

In the Apostolic Creed, we confess that Christ sits on the right hand of God. However, Luther also teaches that he is present in the elements of the Lord's Supper, because he said 'This is my body' when he was instituting it. The "enthusiasts" argue that he cannot be both in the Supper [on earth] and in heaven at the same time. Against this background Luther sets out his personal understanding of God.

The question is, what is the right hand of God and what and where is heaven? Against the "enthusiasts" Luther taught that heaven is not a specific place. If that were the case, a logical deduction would be that God himself is confined to that one place and of course, "on the same 'golden throne', since apart from Christ there is no God, and where Christ is there is the Godhead in all its fullness" (Luther 1961:56). Jesus himself implied this fact when he said that "He who has seen me has seen the Father [for] ... I am in the Father and the Father in me" (John 14:9f). The same truth has been echoed by the Apostle Paul: "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col.2:9).

For Luther "the right hand of God is ... the almighty power of God, which at one and the same time can be nowhere and yet must be everywhere" (Luther 1961:56). If the right hand of God is his power, then it cannot be at any specific place alone, because then it is limitable and measurable and determinable. In that case then, it cannot be in heaven and at any other place at the same time.

Luther's perception is that the right hand of God is God himself who is everywhere, in everything always. He is in Christ, in human beings and indeed in all creatures at one and the same time. As Paul has it: "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). In that case, Luther is right to conclude that:

God must be essentially present at all places, even in the tiniest tree leaf. The reason is this: It is God who creates, effects, and preserves all things through his almighty power and right hand ... For he dispatches no officials or angels when

he creates or preserves something, but all this is the work of his divine power itself. If he is to create or preserve it, however, he must be present and must make and preserve his creation both in its innermost and outermost aspects (Luther 1961:58).

Common sense must prevail here. Because God creates and preserves every single creature then, he must and should be present at, in and with that which he is creating or preserving. To reinforce his argument, Luther mentioned some of the tiniest parts of reality which he created and sustains: the skin, the bones, the marrow, the hair, the kernel, the nut, the leaf and concluded that the hand that makes and preserves all these cannot be absent or far off.

Therefore, indeed, he [God] himself must be present in every single creature in its innermost and outermost being, on all sides, through and through, below and above, before and behind, so that nothing can be more truly present and within all creatures than God himself with his power" (Luther 1961:58).

Luther was using his reason, and made a serious appeal to the scriptures, particularly in his attempt to prove the omnipresence of God. The following are a few examples. In Isaiah 66:1,2, God claims both heaven earth to be the works of his hand. In Ps.139:7-10, Psalmist acknowledges that there is nowhere in the world where God is not present. In Jeremiah 23:23-24 God announces his omnipresence and closeness. In Acts 17:27-28 Paul says that "[God]" is not far from each of us, for in him we live and move and have our being".

The question "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" asked by God in (Jer.23:24), is far from being ambiguous. It implies that "God in his essence is present everywhere, in and through the whole creation in all its parts and in all places, and so the world is full of God and he fills it all, yet, he is not limited or circumscribed by it, but is at the same time beyond and above the whole creation" (Luther 1961:59). A careful look at scriptural evidence as pointed at by Luther and the use of human faculty leaves us with no doubt that this is possible. Of course, reason needs to be assisted by faith for a proper understanding of this matter, lest a conclusion is made that 'there is no God' (Psalm 14:1).

Natural reason might be incapable of grasping the fact that God is so small to be present in essence in, on, above, throughout, inside and outside every single kernel. Of course it is beyond

our capacity to imagine a God who is one and, is at the same time in every single thing of which there are countless in number. But if God is the creator and is keeping every particular kernel in all its parts, outside and inside, then it is self-evident that his power must be present where the process of making and preserving is in progress in every single kernel, nut, leaf, hair, skin, individual, creature wherever these are.

God's power is one. God himself is one. His majesty is one. To say he is in the kernel implies that he is there undivided. This shows how small God is. But because he is everywhere and beyond, he is greater than anything that human imagination can create (Luther 1961:59). This is possible because God is the spirit. That is why at one and the same time he can be "completely and entirely present in every single body, every creature and object everywhere ... and can be nowhere, beyond and above all creatures and objects ..." (Luther 1961:60). Luther refers to the presence of God in nature as the "hidden God".

Another way of explaining the divine omnipresence is that God is in his word which Luther defines as "the living message of the living God addressed to the living people, proclaimed by the living preacher" (Nürnberg 1986:101) It is the **viva vox Evangelii**, the living voice of the gospel. The presence of God in his word is known to Luther as the **Deus revelatus**.

This word functions as God's power, his arm and his hand which he used in defeating chaos at the beginning of creation. Therefore, Luther argues:

if before the creation of the universe there doubtless existed the power and the hand of God, God's nature itself, then it did not become something else after the creation of the universe. Indeed, he makes and does nothing except through his Word, Gen. 1:1f, John 1:1f, i.e. his power. And his power is not an axe, hatchet, saw, or file with which he works, but is himself" (1961:61).

2.2.5 Who is God and what does it mean to have a God?

The First Commandment is, for Luther, "the chief source and foundation from which all the others proceed ... to it they all return and upon it they depend, so that end and beginning are all linked and bound together" (Luther 1961:410). It "stands at the head of the list ... [as] the right head" (Luther 1961:408). It is particularly in his explanation of this commandment that Luther tells us who God is and what it means to have a God.

"You shall have no other gods". God commands the people of faith to regard him and him alone as their God. For Luther, "a god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need" (Luther 1961:365). To have a God is "to trust and believe him with our whole heart" (Luther 1961:365). Any thing in which we put our trust and faith is our God. So there are two kinds of gods: many false gods and one true God. The former are known as idols and the latter as the only one true God.

If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true God. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you have not the true God. For the two belong together, faith and God. That to which your heart clings and entrust itself is ... your God. (Luther 1961:365).

Both 'idols' and the one true God, require "true faith and confidence of the heart" (Luther 1961:365) from their subjects. The one true God requires his subjects to "cling to him alone" (Luther 1961:365). By implication this means to let him alone be our God and to seek no other whatsoever. It is worth it, because he is a God of promises.

Whatever good thing you lack, look to me for it and seek it from me, and whenever you suffer misfortune and stress, come and cling to me. I am the one who will satisfy you and help you out of every need. Only let your heart cling to no one else (Luther 1961:365).

This is a loaded quote from Luther. He himself too was aware of this fact, that by nature, every human being desires to have a god of his own to turn to in trust for blessings, help, consolation and comfort (Luther 1961:367). But, each of these things which replaces the one true God in the human heart and in which human beings put their complete trust, is only an "empty nothing" (Luther 1961:367). Luther gives us a couple of examples of these idols:

[1] Riches: Money and property, great learning, wisdom, power, prestige, family and honour belong to this category (Luther 1961:366). As a result, there is no room for God in their lives any more. They feel so secure, happy and fearless that they "care for no one" (Luther 1961:365). They become self-centred and fix their whole hearts on, and put their complete trust in these temporal things - gods - idols- for their salvation.

[2] Poverty: Those who have nothing have lost their trust in God, they doubt and despair as though they have "never heard of God" (Luther 1961:365). Such people are not cheerful, but constantly fretting and complaining in their desire for mammon and other temporary things.

[3] The departed: Luther probably had saints in mind, but by implication his stance may include ancestors. Those who fix their heart and trust to these, turn it away from God and "neither expect nor seek anything from him" (Luther 1961:366).

[4] Own works: Luther classifies 'own works' as "the greatest idolatry" and claims that "upon it all religious orders are founded" (Luther 1961:367). 'Own works' here has to do with all human attempts to "seek help, comfort and salvation in its own works and presumes to wrest heaven from God" (Luther 1961:367). It is keeping detailed records of one's good works such as fasting, participation in the holy Supper and the like. Own works in themselves are not wrong. The trouble, however, is when people rely on and boast about them, and become "unwilling to receive anything as a gift from God, but desiring by itself to earn or merit everything by works of supererogation, just as if God were in our service or debt and we were his liege lords" (Luther 1961:367).

According to Luther, God does not expect us to entrust ourselves and cling to him alone for no reason. God "wishes to turn us away from everything else, and to draw us to himself, because he is the one eternal good" (Luther 1961:366). The one true God is a living God of promises: "turn to me for all this, look upon me as the one who wishes to help you and to lavish all good upon you richly" (Luther 1961:366). This God calls upon us to risk ourselves into his hands in contempt of everything else on earth:

for it is he who gives us body, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace, and all temporal and eternal blessings. It is he who protects us from evil, he who saves and delivers us when any evil befalls. It is God alone ... from whom we receive all that is good and by whom we are delivered from all evil ... he is an eternal foundation which overflows with sheer goodness and pours forth all that is good in name and fact (Luther 1961:367f).

So Luther's perception of God is a challenge to human attitude towards God. It is a call for humans to "let God be God" (Girgenhohn 1959:30) and to let him occupy his rightful place in our

life which belongs to him alone. By implication Luther's stance may be taken as an advice for humankind not to allow the unique place of God in our life be occupied by any of the things which Luther classified as gods so that God remains unique to us. "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3). So the fact that God is in everything including idols which derive their powers from him should not tempt humans to see God in a restricted entity such as riches, poverty, or own works as if he is confined to this one particular aspect or dimension of reality alone. We should neither set our hearts upon such creatures nor put our trust in them. For this reason, Luther could say that "faith and God" are inseparable (Luther 1961:365).

2.2.6 God channels his gifts through humans

How does God bring blessings unto us if he is behind his mask and hidden? At first sight it seems we receive much of what is good from fellow humans. Luther acknowledges this fact but goes beyond it to suggest that human beings are only used by God as his channels through which he channels his gifts to us. Everything good we receive, whether from our parents or any other authority and from our neighbours, "we receive it all from God through his command and ordinance ... to do us all kinds of good" (Luther 1961:368).

So we receive our blessings not from them, but from God through them. Creatures are only the hands, channels, and means through which God bestows all blessings. ... he gives the mother breasts and milk for her infant, and he gives grains and all kinds of fruits from the earth for man's nourishment - things which no creature could produce by himself. No one, therefore, should presume to take or give anything except as God commanded it (Luther 1961:368).

Everything we receive even for our earthly survival is a divine gift for which we should thank God according to the prescription of the First Commandment. For this reason, what we receive from others must not be despised. We should also not be so arrogant to seek extra ways and means to gain more riches, than those prescribed by God himself. Although that would still be receiving them from God, it will be "seeking them from ourselves" (Luther 1961:368). The First Commandment requires that we "forsake all that is not God", flee to God "when things go wrong" expecting "from him nothing but good, especially in distress and want" (Luther 1961:368). This commandment wants us to know our special status as channels of God's good gifts to others. It calls upon us to become 'the Christ' for others, to love them to the extent of suffering evil while doing good for their comprehensive wellbeing. In Christ, God's intentions

which were hidden from us have been disclosed. Now that we know them, we are expected to channel that love of God to others and act redemptively towards them. By so doing, we participate in God's salvation project. As Luther advises:

You are to do your neighbour no harm, injury, or violence, nor in any way molest him, either in person, his wife, his property, his honour or rights ... On the contrary, you should do good to all men, help them and promote their interests ... out of love to God (Luther 1961:410).

2.3 The anthropology of Luther

2.3.1 Luther's basic approach to anthropology

For Luther, theology has to do with is the guilty sinner and the just God. It wants to find out how its two objects are related (Ebeling 1983:210; Althaus 1975:9). For Luther they are so inseparably linked that we can speak of them as two different sides of the same coin. A human being is a sinner and is understood properly in terms of his/her standing before God. Similarly, God understood properly only in terms of what he is and does for the sinner. In a nutshell, "man is a guilty and lost sinner ... God is the Justifier and Redeemer of precisely this kind of man" (Althaus 1975:9).

2.3.2 The origin of the human being

In his lecture on Gen 2:7, Luther asserts that humans have their origin in God. He "formed [it] out of the ground" (Plass 1994:873, referring to W 42, 63 f). Unlike the rest of creation which came about in response to the divine command, a human being is a product of serious thinking and planning. God did not just command the earth to bring forth human beings. He suggested: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26). It is this image of God which makes humankind so special to God. A human being was planned and made by God himself.

For God does not leave it to the earth to bring forth man as it brought forth the beasts and the trees. But God Himself forms man in his own image to be a participator (theilhaftig) of God and one designed to enjoy God's rest (Plass 1994:873 referring to W 42, 63f).

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth". About this confession Luther writes:

I believe that God has created me and all that exists; he has given and still preserves to me my body and soul with my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind together with my raiment [clothes], food, home and family, and all my property; that He daily provides me abundantly with all the necessities of life, protects me from all danger, and preserves me and guards me against all evil ; all which He does out of pure, paternal, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me, for all which I am in duty bound to thank, praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true (Girgensohn 1959:131).

God is the Father, the Almighty, and the Maker of reality. He is defined in terms of his relationship to the existence of life. He is the Father of Jesus Christ and our father through faith in Jesus Christ. But we also experience his fatherhood through his goodness and love in our earthly life. We owe our origin and continuous existence him (Girgensohn 1959:131ff). Luther does not understand God's omnipotence ontologically. He defines it rather as divine ability to bring life into existence and to preserve it.

Luther understands God's creatorship "not so much as an attribute of God as his action, his works of creation" (Girgensohn 1959:134). It is significant to note here that God is seen as the Source of creation, which owes its existence to the free will of God. He called it into being out of nothingness and can return it into nothingness again. This perception of God equals faith in God and further a fulfilment of the First Commandment. Here, God is allowed to be God.

We must go a step further with Luther, however, to speak about a personal relationship between this Creator and his believing creature. Luther speaks about this issue as if he was asked what he believes about this Father-Creator. "I believe that God has created me and all that exists". This is a vote of confidence in God. Luther views "his own personal life as created by God" (Girgensohn 1959:137). Luther's faith is here shown as a living vital force as opposed to intellectual speculation. It is evident that he defines God in terms of his historical work as opposed to his person, i.e. how he is in himself, his nature, his attributes. The fatherhood and creatorship of God are one and the same thing. In both, his love towards his creation and his children is manifested. And in our earthly life, the richness of his love, his creative power and goodness are concretised. Our existence, our very earthly life bear witness to God as its source. In Luther's words:

I myself, my body and my soul, together with all that is a part of me, am a creature of God, a work of God. He willed that I should be, that I should have my particular, unrepeatable individuality and uniqueness (Girgensohn 1959:138).

Humans are creatures along with all other creatures, and owe their existence to God. But they are beings of two spheres. So two things need to be said about them here. Firstly, they are at an intermediate position. They belong to two opposing spheres: a physical sphere which links them to the animal world, and a spiritual sphere which links them to the spiritual world. It was in his lecture on Gen. 2:16-17 that Luther paid attention to this double status of a human being. Secondly, although Luther believes that a human being "is a compound living being in whom the animal and the angelic nature are united" (Plass 1994:874, referring to W 42:85), this perception did not lead him to conclude that human beings are "glorified animals". On the contrary, he classified them in a class of their own (Plass 1994:874).

It follows, therefore, that it is not proper to compare a human being to animals, because these are in a different category below humanity. In a disputation of 1536, Luther clearly distinguished between a human being and an animal and rejects the philosophical stance that a human being is nothing more than a rational and corporeal animal. Human beings are only animals as far as "their mode of life, their sustenance and support" is concerned (Plass 1994:874).

To say that a human being is not comparable to what is below humanity is to suggest that it is rather appropriate to compare him/her to what is above it, i.e. to God. Humans differ from animals because of their capacity to reason, ability to love and be loved, to serve and be served and the possibility to be neighbour-oriented (Maimela 1982:146). Luther was fond of referring to a heathen poet who said:

A human being walks about erect and has a rational, wise and understanding nature ... other animals look downwards, [but] God gave man a face that looks upwards and ordered him to see heavens (Plass 1994:875, citing W. 34, II, 497f).

Theologically, however, humans differ from animals because of a special status afforded them before God. They are created in the likeness of God, originally without sin with a charge to rule

over all things and never die. To Luther's understanding, and in the light of Gen.1:26f, humans "were fashioned for a life far more excellent than this temporal and bodily life ..." (Plass 1994:874 citing W 42,42). When Luther speaks of human immortality, he does not necessarily share the Greek dualism which sees a human being in terms of two opposing compartments: evil, mortal body and good, immortal soul. For him, our first ancestors were only potentially immortal because there were trees and fruits, which were to serve the preservation of life available for them (Plass 1994:874, referring W 42:85). Luther was fully aware that this immortality was only a potentiality because it "was not made secure for him [them] not to fall into mortality" (Plass 1994:874, referring W 42:85).

It must however be mentioned that Luther's use of Greek categories such as soul and body suggests that he did not discover their problematic nature. Less confusion would have resulted if he had discovered and thrown them out of the window. Special attention will be paid to this problem in chapter seven. On Christmas eve 1532, in his sermon based on Isa. 9:1-7 delivered in the Wittenberg parish, Luther evaluated a human being in comparison with what is above him/her. While he accepts the philosophical description that **Homo est animal rationale**, meaning that a human being is a rational animal, Luther believes that there is more than just the reasoning capacity to being a human being. He sees humans with theological eyes.

We must compare man with God and say: God is eternal, just, holy, truthful; in short, God is everything good. Man on the other hand, is mortal, unjust, given to lie, full of immorality, sin and vice ... (Plass 1994:875 citing W 34 II,497f).

We can see that God and humans are different in all respects. The former is the Creator, the latter is a creature. Luther understands a human being as "a creature that has turned away from God, ... godless and wicked, subject to the power of the devil, guilty of the wrath of God and eternal death" (Plass 1994:875 citing W 34 II, 497f). Because of this situation, humans are guilty, lost and condemned sinners for whom Christ came. They are not what they were meant to be by the Creator. Made in the likeness of the Creator, humans were meant "to live with God for ever" (Plass 1994:877; W.42, 98) for the purpose of praising and thanking him in obedience to his word in patience. Human authenticity is only possible in Jesus Christ through faith. We can only acquire it as a gift from God. Humans cannot become authentic unless they are declared so by God.

2.3.3 Luther's view on the double "coram" - relationships

The subject matter of theology may be called **theo-anthropology**, because in theology God and humans are inseparably linked. God is understood in view of his relations, plans, attitude to, and independence from, humans. Humanity is understood in view of its attitude towards and dependence on God. A human being is a lost sinner who is incapable of self-deliverance. God is a Redeemer who is capable and willing to justify and deliver a sinner (Althaus 1975:9). For Luther, therefore, one can only understand oneself in view of one's source which is God (Althaus 1975:138). We can now consider what Luther calls the **coram - relationships**, i.e human existence before God and before the world.

Luther differentiates between two realms of divine activities, the two kingdoms of God. The thrust of this doctrine is to show how God rules his entire creation. Luther speaks of the inner and outward realms. The latter is "the human heart" where God guides through his word. The former is the realm of "social structures" where "God rules through institutions and offices" (Nürnberg 1993:23). The two kingdoms can only be distinguished as far as "their tasks and their means are concerned, otherwise "they overlap in time and space" (Altmann 1992:70f). Also, and very important, God is their collective basis and human wellbeing is their common end. Luther sees a human being as one and the same being who always exists in both kingdoms before the same God, because this God is the Lord in both kingdoms. This one and the same being is "a christian and ... one who belongs to the world" (Ebeling 1983:192).

For a clear perception of Luther's anthropology we need to find an expression which more or less permeates the basis of his mode of thought in relation to a human being. A concept which can be regarded as the key to Luther's perception of a human being is the preposition **coram (Latin)**, **vor (German)**, **before (English)**, **moipafi (Oshiwambo)**. Applied to the human person's relationships, this preposition implies a determination of space and time. A human person is a being who always exists "before the face of ..." or "in the sight of ..." (Ebeling 1983:193). The existing being in the presence of somebody or something occupies a space, and is there in time. In the light of the **coram - relationships**, a human person is defined, not by something in the being itself, but in terms of something outside it, i.e its outward relations with something or

somebody else. In other words, it is from the **coram - relationships** that one draws one's true humanity.

The **coram - relationship** is a permanent situation in which humans find themselves. It determines their existence and relationship to the rest of the existing reality. We may further ask: how do other existing beings relate to me: friendly, hostile, interesting, boring, recognised, ignored or even wished away? In other words, are other beings for or against me? Ebeling believes that these **coram - relationships** in which humans find themselves, are characteristic of a human situation. Without them I cannot encounter others, others cannot encounter me, and I cannot encounter myself. The **coram - relationships** are interwoven (Ebeling 1983:196).

The **coram - relationships** also imply that a human person is a being who is constantly under the judgement of somebody. This is so because to be present before somebody or something is to be exposed to a constant assessment or evaluation of somebody or something. One is always being judged. Therefore, the situation of a human person is that of a person who is constantly on trial. This means a human person's self-perception is largely determined by the verdict of those before whom he/she stands (Ebeling 1983:179). In the words of Ebeling:

The most important element in the situation that is implied by the preposition **coram** is not in the way in which someone else is present before me, in my sight, but that I myself am before someone else and exist in the sight of someone else, so that my existential life is affected (1983:196).

But who is this somebody or what is this something before whom a human person stands for judgement and challenge? Luther speaks of human existence before God. However, there are other relations which are the consequences of the divine-human relation. We turn to them one by one.

(a) **Coram Deo**

When Luther speaks of the **coram - relationship**, he has the human person's existence before God in mind. This means all humans are present before God and God is always present on the side of his people. This presence implies both judgement and blessings.

(b) **Coram me ipso, coram hominibus and coram mundo**

Humans also exist before other beings or things. Therefore, Luther also speaks of the other three **coram - relationships**, **coram me ipso**, one's existence before oneself, **coram hominibus**, one's existence before others and **coram mundo**, one's existence before the world (Ebeling 1983:199).

These **coram - relationships** are not mutually exclusive. It could even be argued that **coram hominibus** and **coram mundo** are identical, while **coram Deo** makes **coram me ipso** valuable and meaningful. Further, **coram Deo** and **coram hominibus** are not mutually exclusive existences or two separate realities. They are distinct relationships which are necessarily simultaneous. One who exists before God does not cease to exist before the world, and one who exists before the world cannot avoid being present before God.

Although the **coram - relationships** co-exist, their relations are not necessarily smooth. A tension exists, for instance, between **coram Deo** and **coram hominibus**. The existence before one of these courts of judgement is in itself a judgement

For what is at issue in the dispute between the two courts of judgement is the source from which man receives his being, the judgement which provides his understanding of himself and the countenance which ultimately turned, his back being turned towards the other (Ebeling 1983:201).

The point of contention here is about "what constitutes and determines his presence" (Ebeling 1983:201). Under the spell of the world, a human being is nothing before God, exactly because he/she supposes to be something before God "whether it is through the existence of religion, or through the revolt against God, or through forgetting God" (Ebeling 1983:201). At a different level, the existence of a person before God and the existence of the same person before the world are complementary. The **coram hominibus** draws its value and meaning from the **coram Deo**. This is true because one's existence before God gives one the right attitude, the attitude of love towards the world (Ebeling 1983:201). It is this positive attitude towards the world and its contents which leads one to become involved in God's redemptive mission. It involves us in service towards the world as good instruments in the hands of God and on his behalf (Ebeling 1983:203). One's existence before God transforms one into a free servant of God who could now serve as God's own ambassador here on earth (Ebeling 1983:204).

2.4 Luther's notion of Sin

2.4.1 Adam in Paradise and God in relationship

Luther viewed the creation account as a true historical fact and record of the true original state of humans as their Creator meant them to be. This stance was challenged by critical scholarship who "denied the historic trustworthiness" of the story of creation (Kramm 1947:34). Luther is criticised for his uncritical use of the creation narratives. Traditional Lutheran theologians are divided on this issue. Some are sceptical, others defend the stance of Luther (Kramm 1947:35). Current tendencies among modern theologians, however, view the Adam and Eve in Paradise story as mythological statements expressing the truth in a narrative form and projecting it to the beginning of time to indicate its continuous validity (Nürnbergger). The point is not that the creation story does not contain any truth, but that we should look for a much deeper meaning than the literal stories reveal. This deeper meaning does not depend on whether the creation stories are historically correct or not. The denial of the historical validity of creation stories does not suggest that humans are sinless. Quite the contrary!

Briefly stated, Adam in Paradise refers to humans without deficiencies, in line with the intentions God, acting in complete love and obedience, trust and confidence towards and not in revolt against him. It refers to humanity destined for permanent life (Kramm 1947:35).

In his sermon on Luke 11:27-28, dating back to the 1520's, Luther stressed that humans were created sinless both in body and soul (Plass 1994:87f citing W 42, 86). They held a deep personal relationship with God as he intended. They were authentic humans.

Authentic humanity is humanity in the bliss of innocence. It has no knowledge of good and evil, because it accepts God's ruling without question. It simply enjoys the fantastic garden and respects the limits set to its utilisation (Nürnbergger 1996:11-4).

2.4.2 The disruption of relationships

This blessed state was disturbed by the fall, the event which was responsible for sin and all human miseries (Nürnbergger 1996:11-4; Gen 2:15-17;3:6-7)). The seed of mistrust and unbelief in God was sown. Negative or wrong human attitudes towards God and his word ensued and

according to Augsburg Confession Article II, humans were left "without fear of God, without confidence in God and with evil lust".

In his lecture on Gen.3:6, Luther refers to a human rebellion against God which disturbed relationships between the sinner and God. Sin is for Luther human rebellion against the Creator (Plass 1994:878 citing W 42:121f). It is because of that rebellious act of one human being (Adam), or the fall as the Bible knows it, that the entire human race is subjected to the power of the devil, sin and death. Since then, humans are inclined to evil. They neglect the requirements of God, while doing what he forbids (Plass 1994:880 referring to W 28:255). This means that the law does not require one not to be a sinner, but not to sin, because one is already a sinner.

Humans are self-centred, godless and graceless, suffering from a fatal delusion that they can settle their own accounts with God. They suffer from the sin of self reliance. Their thought, words and works, in fact, their entire lives are directed, not to God but to their own interests (Plass 1994:882 referring to W 10,I,I,25). In his exposition of 1 Peter 1:3 in 1539, regarding the sin of self reliance, Luther writes:

Every human being, if he is rational, has these thoughts by nature: through his own powers, free will, good works, and merits, and especially through the Law of Moses, he wants to be and considers himself able, not only to atone his sin and appease God's wrath but also to earn God's grace, to attain eternal salvation and thus heal and remedy the deadly damage of sin (Plass 1994:882 citing E 52,10).

2.4.3 The scope and power of sin

Human beings are all infected by "a fatal disease" (Schramm 1946:72) of which we have only "a partial knowledge" about "its real nature and depth" or "where [it] comes from" (Althaus 1975:141). This disease called sin enslaves. It weakened and changed humans from immortal into mortal beings. After the fall the hearts, intellects, minds, and desires of Adam and Eve became completely corrupt. They have completely lost the true knowledge of God and their original authenticity. Instead of following God's directives, they follow their corrupt desires, aspiring for what is evil and forbidden by God (Plass 1994:1299).

Something went seriously wrong with their will and intellectual powers. Firstly, they desired what God forbade in such a way that they defied God's instructions but obeyed the devil. Secondly, they tried the impossible, fleeing from the omnipresent God. Thirdly, the fact that Adam and Eve did not die immediately after their disobedience, fooled them into believing that God's threat should not be taken too seriously and they would not die. Sin is deceiving! As Luther writes:

When faith and trust in God is lost, a horrible fear follows in the will; and when the finest gift of God, wisdom and intelligence are lost, the highest stupidity follows. The impossible things are attempted in a very foolish way (Plass 1994:1291 citing W 42, 128f).

Luther believed that sin separates men from God and from one another. The moment humans rebelled against God in disobedience, they have fallen from God's image. The knowledge of God is lost. Human responsibility for one another and for the rest of creation is neglected. God is feared, hated and regarded as an enemy (Plass 1994:1306 referring to W 16,140).

The serious consequence of sin is the introduction of death into the world (Rom. 5:12). If humans had not disobeyed God and therefore not sinned, if they had remained innocent, then shame, lustfulness and confusion would not have followed and the tension between God and humanity would be non-existent (Plass 1994:1292).

Sin must be taken seriously. This becomes particularly clear when considering the means and manner of salvation. In his comment on Gal. 1:4 in 1531, Luther argued that the redemption price points to, or reflects the deadliness of sin. Human sins are so great that the whole world did not contain anything to remedy them. Only God himself could intervene to save us. The power of sin was so great "that no creature, neither man nor angel, can deliver man out of the present evil world these works are only belonging to the Divine Majesty ... " (Luther 1983:15f).

By their sin, Adam and Eve made all their descendants guilty of the same sin even though they did not actually commit it themselves. This same principle and logic applies to the righteousness of Christ. All those who are born by God through Christ, share in His righteousness even though it is foreign to them. "Therefore", said Luther "as we are damned by a foreign sin (*alieno*

peccato), so we are redeemed by a foreign righteousness (**aliena iustitia**)" (Plass 1994:1295 citing W 2, 45).

Luther distinguishes between original and actual sins. The former is inherited and born within us. The latter is what we commit ourselves. Hereditary sin is the source of actual sin which we commit (Luther in Plass 1994:1296 referring to W 20, 337). In his explanation of the Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer, 1519, Luther argued that original sin is an inborn corruption called **the old Adam**. It is "principal sin", and "inherited sin" (Plass 1994:1296). Whatever the name, original sin is human propensity towards evil, for such inclinations and attributes have been transmitted to us as a heritage from Adam and are bred into our very nature. From these tendencies result what Luther called **concupiscentia** [desire] which is "our whole uncontrolled selfish life ruled by demons" (Kramm 1947:37)

This sin is not done. It is. It lives in us, and transforms itself into actual sin in the manner in which faith transform itself into love and love into service. It is not there for this or that time, but, as Luther has it, "wherever and as long as the person exists, this sin exists" (Plass 1994:1299 W 10 I,I, 508f). If this principal sin did not exist, no actual sin could possibly occur. It has blinded and corrupted the entire human race so that it no longer knows God, itself or the consequences of its sinfulness, disbelief and disobedience. God does not overcome this sin by law or punishment. Only his cleansing grace can sweep it away and renew human life. The best the law can do is to expose it and reveal it to the sinner, but it cannot remedy it. But for Luther, it does not mean that we do not have to struggle against it, rather, the struggle must and will go on to end only at the grave. He writes:

Original sin is in our nature at birth (**von Natur angeboren**). It may indeed be checked, but it cannot be entirely uprooted, except by the death of the body (Plass 1994:1303 citing W 6, 278). [And further] ... we should understand that as long as our flesh lives here it is by nature wicked and sinful. To correct this wickedness God has devised the plan of making it altogether new ... therefore, He thrusts us into the earth again by death and makes us over at the Last Day that then we may be perfect and without sin (Plass 1994:1320 citing LW.2,729).

The other type of sin is actual sin. It too has unbelief, distrust and rebellion against God as its source. Luther believed that unbelief alone causes us to sin, arouses the flesh, and produces

pleasure in the performance of evil external works (Plass 1994:1305). Actual sin manifests itself most clearly in human attempts for self-glorification which led to the evil actions of Adam and Eve in Paradise. They were neither satisfied with what they were nor with what God told them. It leads people to act like God, which for Luther, is the most supreme sin (Plass 1994:1303). Actual sin is a manifestation of what is going on in the person's heart and what the attitude of that person is to God and to his requirements. It is an expression of self-will.

Everyone wants to be free from sin. However, such freedom cannot be obtained by fleeing from God, even if one could. The Lord is the only physician who can help. A sinner should rather draw closer to God and cling to Him in trust (Plass 1994:1313). Forgiveness, and therefore salvation, is found only in his word, sacraments, sermon and absolution. So there is no greater sin than rejecting God's word. Consequently, no sin would be committed if we love, trust and obey it. Unfortunately, the whole world is drowned in the contempt of the word.

But in addition to being common, this sin is ... truly terrible, hellish, devilish in that it does not want to be recognised as other sins ... for if it remains unrecognised, no repentance, forgiveness, or improvement can follow (Plass 1994:1314 citing W-T 6, No 6656).

The sin of the world is, therefore, lack of faith in Jesus Christ and trust in God even if one is not able to accuse it of any other sin. It is human attempt to save oneself. Luther pleaded with believers of his time to allow Jesus alone to be their Saviour. To reject Christ is to commit suicide and to try to save oneself is one of the supreme sins. It is replacing Christ and trying to be God. We should, therefore, allow Christ to carry our sins. If we are to carry anything at all, it must be the needs of others. Through Christ, God took our sins away before they broke us down. We are now saved. Christ bears them for us. Because of them, he is despised, but we are glorified. As Christ came to rescue us, therefore, we must rescue others. We must allow ourselves to suffer, while they go free. In this way, we become a Christ for them (Plass 1994:1314f).

Luther distinguishes between sinning against faith and sinning against love and life. This distinction follows the division of the Ten Commandments into two distinct tables. Sinning against the first table is sinning against faith in God. Sinning against the second table of the law is sinning against others or against love and life. Sinning against faith is to have no trust in God

and to disobey him. Sinning against love is to have no concern for others, and therefore not to serve them (Plass 1994:1308).

Humans do not recognise sinning against faith easily. It is even defended with a particular intensity. This is so, because in the eyes of the world and according to human standards, these sins appear and are labelled as honesty and integrity. In other words, with reason, humans do not recognise them as sins. If they are not recognised, then, they cannot be confessed, and therefore not forgiven. Luther prayed God to let him rather fall in those sins which he can recognise as sins such as murder, theft, adultery, as opposed to the sins he cannot recognise (Plass 1994:1308). Luther regarded sinning against faith as more serious than sinning against life. This means, the first table of the law is superior to the second. We can also say, for Luther, sins against doctrine are worse than those against life. For him,

Sin against doctrine is in no wise to be tolerated, but we are to have patience with sin against love because by it we sin only against our neighbour, without violating doctrine and faith. However, if anything is undertaken against the Word, faith and the honour of God, we are in no wise to preserve silence, are to bear it far less patiently. Then we should offer stubborn resistance (Plass 1994:1308; quoted from SL 19, 1182).

In speaking of sin, Luther used the concept **concupiscentia** [desire]. This term includes "sinful attitudes in the secular sphere" (Kramm 1947:37). In using it, however, Luther covered all "sin of the flesh" whereby he meant wild sexual desires, evil lusts, lack of chastity, the low and small desires, as well as the high and evil desires. By 'high and evil desires' Luther means

the ambitions of human knowledge and reason, the corruption both of the body and soul, wrath and aggressive will, and the pride of human intellect. Concupiscentia means our whole uncontrolled selfish life ruled by demons (Kramm 1947:37).

For Luther, sin is wide in scope. It is not only a personal but a holistic concept. It corrupts the whole person, traditionally known as body and soul. In fact, sin affects and spoils all good things. Matrimony is a case in point. Luther taught that it is wrong to escape sinful things by running away from them. For that reason, he rejected celibacy and monasticism. As Kramm argues:

One cannot avoid the sin of the world by forsaking the world ... sin and sinful attitude cannot be avoided by denying a moral life. Sin will become much stronger and the consequences more disastrous when we try to flee from a normal life. Thus the monastery is not different from the 'world' and may be a form of extreme selfishness. Neither civil nor secular work nor marriage are bad and sinful in themselves, but we are bad and sinful (1947:37).

Sin is for Luther a serious evil which affects the entire human race and the whole human being. We may even refer to it in its opposition to comprehensive salvation as a comprehensive corruption of the entire human race and human being.

2.5 Luther's encounter with a righteous God

2.5.1 Luther's Tower experience

Luther was a "religiously inclined" monk with a troubled conscience (Ebeling 1983:35). He "was plagued by the fear of God's wrath. Since he could not accumulate enough 'good works' for his salvation, he feared that God willed his damnation" (Gritsch and Jenson 1976:153). "Against his natural inclination, he was driven by the experience of the imminence of death during a thunder storm in open country, on to a course which he had not sought" (Ebeling 1983:35). Prior to that experience, he was preoccupied by "the problem of the salvation of his soul" (Ebeling 1983:35). About his fear of death and judgement he said: "I wanted to escape hell by being a monk" (Ebeling 1983:35). After becoming a monk in Erfurt, he joined others in their attempts to win God's favour, forgiveness and salvation with their own works. This neither satisfied nor comforted his sick and terrified conscience. Towards the end of his life [1545], he wrote: "Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God, with an extremely disturbed conscience" (Luther 1960:336). Ebeling reports:

The holier his way of life was in outward appearance, the more he despaired within himself. Instead of finding peace of mind, he was increasingly tormented by the uncertainty of salvation. Neither the usual spiritual direction available in the monastery nor the intensive use of the sacramental means of grace were of any help to him (1983:38).

The church's understanding of grace "as a possession imparted to the believer ... drove him even into a despair which seemed to him to be a symptom of God's judgement on him and of his exclusion from salvation" (Ebeling 1983:38). He wondered whether God, being so righteous, was

not against him. He suffered such fear of punishment and uncertainty of salvation. Under such conditions, God appeared terrible in his anger. This sufferer did not find refuge and comfort anywhere but felt accused by everything. He felt like, and cried with, the psalmist: 'I am driven from thy sight' (Ps. 31:22). He had no hope of being saved, but feared for punishment which would continue with him right into eternity (Ebeling 1983:38-39).

Shortly before his death, [i.e.1545], and long after "his decisive conversion" (Ebeling 1983:39), Luther describes his experience in the tower between the 9th June and the 21st July, 1532. He hated Paul and the phrase: the righteousness of God. He was taught that it refers to the "formal or active righteousness by means of which God is righteous and punishes sinners and the unrighteous" as they deserve (Ebeling 1983:39). He silently rebelled against him. Finally, through the mercy of God, he made a discovery when he took the context in which the phrase appears into account.

The words righteous and righteousness of God struck my conscience like lightning. When I heard them, I was exceedingly terrified. If God is righteous (I thought), he must punish. But when, by grace I pondered in the tower and heated room of this building over the words: He who through faith is righteous shall live (Rom. 1:17), and the righteousness of God (Rom.3:21), I soon came to the conclusion that if we, as righteous men ought to live by faith and if the righteousness of God should contribute to the salvation of all who believe, then salvation won't be our merit but God's mercy. My spirit was thereby cheered. For it is by the righteousness of God that we're justified and saved through Christ. The word (which terrified me) now became pleasing to me. The Holy Spirit unveiled the Scriptures for me in the tower (Luther 1967:193).

At first, Luther found in the words of Paul about God a wrathful God. Because he was righteous, he was an avenging God. But then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Luther discovered the grace of God unto those who believe and the value of faith. "I was cheered", he wrote and continued: "When I learned that the righteousness of God is his mercy and that he makes us righteous through it, a remedy was offered to me in my affliction" (Luther 54:308f). He distinguished between the righteousness of the law and that of the gospel. As a result, he became free (Luther 1967:442f).

It was not Luther's perception of sin which changed, but his view of God. God is gracious who justifies sinners. To describe a justified sinner Luther used a phrase: **simul iusti et peccatores**.

... we who are already justified are still sinners, and so we believe and pray for forgiveness of sins in this life ... We are all sinners and live under the grace of the forgiveness of sins. In short, the article of justification by Christ solves everything. If Christ merits it, we merit nothing, in Christ there are gifts, not merits. Likewise, since capital and substantial righteousness is nothing, how much less will accidental righteousness count in God's sight? Substantial righteousness is the righteousness of faith, but accidental righteousness is gifts, not merits (Lull 1989:328f).

Explaining thus, Luther is in accord with Augustine who believed that **God crowns nothing but his own gifts**. Augustine argued that even the Blessed Virgin Mary did not merit the motherhood of the Son of God. It was not on account of her virginity that she was chosen to give birth to the Saviour. She was merely graciously favoured and chosen by the merciful God. Thus, the merit of what we do and what we are is nothing before God. The merit of our justification is God's grace, or Christ has died in vain. Luther believes that the danger here stems from confusing law and gospel. Unless each of the two assumes its rightful place and sphere, hell is confused with, and turned into, heaven and heaven is confused with and turned into, hell (Luther 1967:329).

There have always been people who desire to be perfectly righteous in themselves, but cannot. Luther believes that desire is a good sign, but warns:

... such a life would be a life of angels and it will not be ours except in the future. Meanwhile Christ deems us righteous on account of his blood and counts for righteousness of the fact that we desire to be righteous, abhor this uncleanness, and love his Word and trust in him ... Consequently, even if we are not perfectly holy, Christ will wash away our sins with his blood and, when we depart from this life, will make us altogether pure in the life to come. In the meantime we are content with that righteousness which exists in the hope through faith in Jesus Christ (Luther 1967:374f).

Once on the 16th June, 1539, Luther participated in the debate around the argument: faith justifies; faith is a work; therefore works justify. In his response, he argued that faith justifies neither as work nor as quality or knowledge. It justifies as trust in God, in the mercy of God. If faith were pure knowledge, then the devil would be saved for he knows and fears God too. Thus

faith must be perceived differently although "in part ... it is assent" (Luther 1967:359f). So for Luther, it is faith that justifies and not works. He writes:

That works don't merit life, grace, and salvation is clear from this, that works are not spiritual birth but are fruits of this birth. We are not made sons, heirs, righteous, saints, Christians by means of works, but we do good works once we have been made, born, created as such. So, it is necessary to have life, salvation, and grace before works, just as a tree doesn't deserve to become a tree on account of its fruit but a tree is by nature fitted to bear fruit. Because we are born, created, generated righteousness by the Word of grace, we're not fashioned, prepared, or put together as such by means of the law or works. Works merit nothing else than life, grace, or salvation - namely praise, glory, favour, and certain extraordinary things - just as a tree deserves to be loved, cultivated, praised, and honoured by others on account of its fruit. Urge the birth and substance of the Christian and you will at the same time extinguish the merits of works in so far as grace and salvation from sin, death, and the devil are concerned.

Infants who have no works are saved by faith alone, and therefore faith alone justifies. If the power of God can do this in one person it can do it in all, because it's not the power of the infant but the power of faith. Nor is it the weakness of the infant that does it, otherwise that weakness would in itself be a merit or be equivalent to one. We'd like to defy our Lord God with out works. We'd like to become righteous through them. But we won't allow it. My conscience tells me that I'm not justified by works, but nobody believes it (Luther 1967:456f).

2.5.2 The Passive and Active righteousness

(a) Passive righteousness

In a sermon on Phil.2:5ff dating back to 1518, Luther clearly spelt out his perception of the manner in which the righteousness of God is revealed in his Son Jesus Christ.

There are two types of righteousness. One is alien, external, active and serves as the source of the other. This first righteousness can never be produced from within a sinful human person. It has been freely imported into a repentant sinner as a gift from God in Jesus Christ (Luther 1983:xii). A sinner who accepts such an alien righteousness through faith alone, is declared just (1 Cor. 1:30). To have it is to have a ticket to claim all that Christ has achieved on the cross: his new life and victory over all the forces of evil including death. A justified sinner may henceforth not feel ashamed to rejoice in Christ and declare:

Mine are Christ's living, doing, and speaking, his suffering and dying, mine as much as I have lived, done, spoken, suffered and died as he did (Lull 1989:155).

This imported righteousness is the source, the basis of the second, own and actual righteousness (Lull 1989:156). No human being can acquire it by another way apart from the divine word and sacraments. As such, this righteousness comes to a sinner both decisively and repeatedly because it is not implanted once and for all. It commences, develops and consummates at the end through death. The possibility of freely acquiring this righteousness or unconditionally being accepted by God for the sake of Christ is, indeed, good news to a lost sinner. God established this type of righteousness in us, but without us and this is why it is called passive (Luther 1983:vii).

The acquisition of this righteousness by the sinner is of cardinal significance because it is given in the place of the one lost in Adam (Lull 1989:156f). It accomplishes what the original but now lost righteousness was to achieve. It also goes beyond it to achieve much. It was in this context that Luther understood and clung to the prayer in Ps.31:1 where he seeks refuge only in the Lord to whom he prays: "in thy righteousness deliver me!" Luther never got tired of pointing out the differences between "my" and "thy" which occur in the said Psalm. He declared that the Psalmist does not say "in my", but "in thy (i.e. God's) righteousness". By that, Luther understood that through faith in Christ, and by the grace and mercy of God the righteousness of Christ has become the believing sinner's.

Luther argued that in many Psalms, this passive righteousness or faith is taken as synonymous for "the work of the Lord", the "power of God", the "divine mercy", the "confessions", or the "truth" (Lull 1989:157). He believed that all these terms are different ways of expressing faith in Christ or the righteousness which is him. To have passive righteousness is to be saved, to allow Christ to live instead of the self (Gal.2:20, cf Eph.3:14-17). The consequence of such a unity between Christ and the sinner is that the heart of the latter becomes an operational area of God who "inwardly draws us to Christ" and "daily drives out the old Adam more and more in accordance with the extent to which faith and knowledge of Christ grow" (Lull 1989:157).

(b) Active righteousness

A second kind of righteousness thrives in the sinners with the first kind of righteousness. It is operative, responsive, active or consequential and has to do with **coram mundo**: our moral responsibilities towards reality. It is the fruit of the first. Luther called it "our proper

righteousness", but he was quick to qualify it by saying: "not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness" (Lull 1989:157). It is home made, the manner of life expressed in good works, the slaying and crucifying of flesh (Luther 1983:xvii; Gal 5:24). Luther pointed to the epistle to Titus (2:12) where the author summarises it briefly but beautifully by calling believers in the world to be sober, just, and live devoutly (Lull 1989:157). Whereas the first righteousness has to do with faith, the second has to do with love. There is no contradiction between the two. The second completes the first, because it strives to submerge the old Adam and destroy an unauthentic human being. As Luther has it:

Therefore, it hates itself and loves its neighbour; it does not seek its own good, but that of another, and in this, its whole life consists. For in that it hates itself, it does not seek its own, it crucifies the flesh. Because it seeks the good of another, it works love. Thus, in each sphere, it does God's will living soberly with itself, justly with neighbour, devoutly towards God (Lull 1989:158).

The responsive righteousness channels its bearers into the Christ-like life (1 Peter 2:21) and transforms them into his likeness (2 Cor.3:18). It is exactly this successful channelling and transformation which Christ requires of those who believe in him, because it leads one to live a Christ-like life, to be a Christ to others. In the same way in which he did things for others not seeking his own good and so obeyed his Father, he expects bearers of the active righteousness to behave likewise towards others, to live and act redemptively and set an example for them. Because it has Christ as its primary source, it "seeks only the welfare of others" (Lull 1989:158).

Luther took Philippians 2:5 as an example, where Paul expressed the same perception and held Christ to be an example which the justified sinner should emulate. To his mind, the justified should be inclined and disposed towards one another as Christ was inclined and disposed towards all sinners for their welfare. He "was not haughty in that form; he did not please himself (Rom.15:3); nor did he disdain and despise those who were enslaved and subjected to various evils" (Lull 1989:158f).

According to Luther, the lifestyle of Christ completely contradicted that of the Pharisee who publicly said in his prayer: "God I thank thee that I am not like other men" (Luke 18:11). This was a prayer of a person who was thrilled because others were poor and wretched. He had no

desire that they should acquire his status. Luther was concerned with humans whose lifestyles are similar to that of the Pharisee. They grab things for themselves, keep them all as theirs and do not ascribe a single of them to God. Worse yet, they do not serve others with what they have accumulated. Clearly such grabbers of fame wish to live like God "sufficient in themselves, pleasing themselves, glorying in themselves, under no obligation to any one, and so on" (Lull 1989:159).

That is not the mind of Christ. For others and in obedience and trust he abdicated his form to his Father and emptied himself. For the well-being of humans, their deliverance in particular, he joined, not our human essence, but our ranks, took the form of a servant and so subjected himself to whatever evil keeps humans under subjection. Even though he was free, of his own will he became a servant of all (Mark 9:35) and lived as though all evils which were ours were literally his own.

Although it was for others that he was conquering the forces of evil, he did so as if he were overcoming them for his own sake. Although he had all possibilities and powers to relate to us as our Lord, he did not. Instead, he suffered us. It is this life model which Paul refers to by saying: "We ought ... not to please ourselves ... For Christ did not please himself ..." (Rom 15:1,3). Paul is in line with Psalm 69:9 that "the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me" and it was right for Luther to think that these texts has been enacted in Jesus Christ.

By referring to these two texts Luther taught that every individual Christian should, like his Lord, become the servant of others. If there are people with wisdom, righteousness, power [economic, political, social etc] within which they surpass others and boast as if they were gods, may they surrender everything to God and start living as though they did not even possess such things as Paul recommended (2 Cor.6:9-10). They should live as if their neighbour's weakness, sin, and foolishness were their very own, neither despise nor triumph over them (Lull 1989:160).

Luther referred to Paul's use of the members of the body (Rom. 12:4-5, and 1 Cor.12:12-27), and advised that the strong, honourable, healthy members of the specific body need not glory over the weak, less honourable, and sick members as though they were their lords or gods. On the

contrary, and in accordance with the example set by Christ, they should serve them, forgetting their own honour, health, and power. This means on the one hand that no member of the specific body should serve itself, seek its own welfare, but that of the next. On the other it means that the weaker, the sicker and the less honourable the member is, the more the well-off members should serve that member to avoid "discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another" (1 Cor.12:25). This is the effect of the imported righteousness on the sinner hereby termed the consequential righteousness: how one must live outside one self for the next person under all circumstances (Lull 1989:160f).

Luther also pointed out the danger of upholding one's own righteousness, power, wisdom, health and their use for one's own sake and against the next person, particularly those below one's status. Christ will most definitely ignore the "form of God" in which the strong and powerful or rich and well-off boast, and humiliate such a person to the level of the servant (Luther 1989:161). He will honour the weak, sick, and the poor with the form of God which they did not attempt to grab, and their weakness will not be reckoned, but ignored. That is justification by faith or unconditional acceptance. We should avoid playing God, because we will most definitely be humbled. On the basis of our own righteousness, power, wisdom, health, we should not abuse those below us.

For when we act thus - and this is the perversion - righteousness works against righteousness, wisdom against wisdom, power against power. For you are powerful, not that you may make the weak weaker by oppression, but that you may make them powerful by raising them up and defending them. You are wise, not in order to laugh at the foolish and thereby make them foolish, but that you may undertake to teach them as you yourself would wish to be taught. You are righteous that you may vindicate and pardon the unrighteous, not that you may only condemn, disparage, judge, and punish. For this is Christ's example for us ... (Lull 1989:162).

Siding with the despised and disdained was the reason for the divine incarnation. In Christ, God became one of the sinners and lived among them, not to condemn, but to create the possibility of them to be saved through him (John.3:17). Indeed, the Son of Man came, not to destroy human lives, but to deliver them from whatever enslaves them (Luke 5 and 6).

To follow this example, is not humanly possible. It is part of the carnal nature to rebel, greatly delight in punishing others, boast of its own righteousness, rejoice over its neighbour's

embarrassment, shame and unrighteousness. Therefore, it strives for its own sake and case and rejoices because it is better than the next person. It even opposes the case of the other person and wishes it would appear mean. Of course, this perversity is completely evil and contradictory to love which does not seek its own good, but that of the other person (1 Cor.13:5; Phil.2:4). Humans ought to be sad and distressed if the condition of the next person is not better than their own, and wish that the situation of the other person was better and rejoiced no less than it does if its own is better. By so teaching, Luther does not suggest that maintenance of justice must be neglected and lawlessness allowed to take root.

2.6 The ethics of Luther

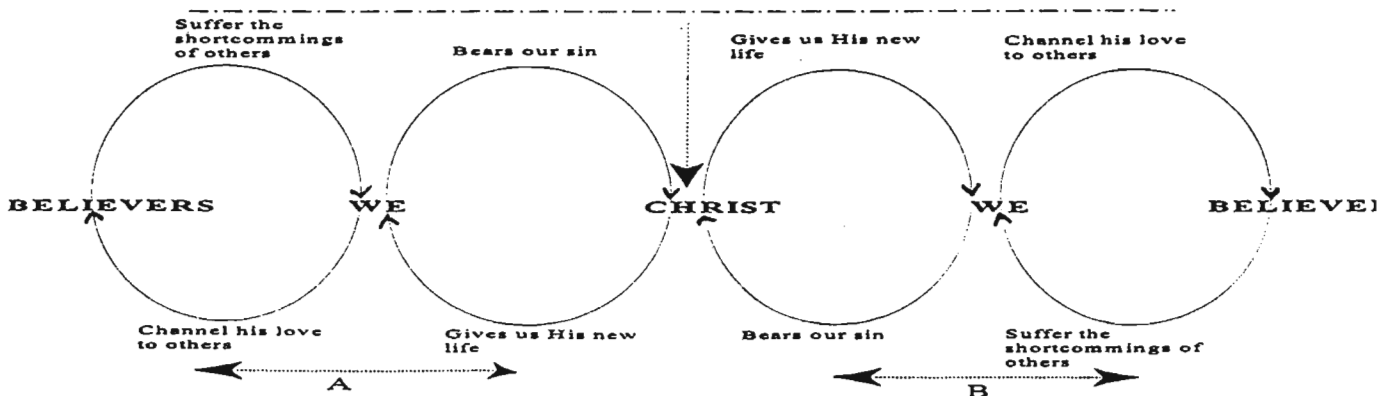
2.6.1 The basis of ethics is redemptive love

Following Paul, Luther taught that Christians do not live under the supervision of prefixed laws and stipulations. "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none" (Luther 1982:2). Believers are liberated from the law and in Christ they are given "a new existence" (Nürnbergger 1986:108). From the gospel they learn of the saving love of God which they share in Christ. It is this sharing which qualifies them as Christians and serves as the basis of Christian ethics (Nürnbergger 1986:108).

Every situation is new and unique. In a new situation, Luther expected believers to be guided, not by fixed laws but by love (Nürnbergger 1986:109). Being new beings in Christ, Christians approach every situation in two possible modes: making demands [law] or offering a gift of salvation [gospel]. To be a gift to others in their concrete situations calls for their unconditional acceptance by us, based and motivated by our own unconditional acceptance by God. It means that we become ready to suffer their unacceptability for their wellbeing as God in Christ has suffered for ours. It also means that our ultimate aim is the total wellbeing of our fellows. In this way, our faith in Christ transforms into love and love into redemptive actions. So a believer becomes 'a Christ' for other people (Nürnbergger 1984:109).

To become 'a Christ' for others means for us to walk the path of Christ. He suffered the fact that we are unacceptable, i.e. our sinfulness, and gave us new life. This means, like him, we become a channel through which God directs his love, power and life to others whereby they will be

changed into the beings God wishes them to be. Because this process involves forgiving the shortcomings of others and accepting them in spite of their unacceptability, it involves suffering on our part. Luther expressed this by saying "a Christian is a person who suffers evil and does good" (Nünberger 1984:110). Nünberger has expressed this process in a diagram. I suggest that we turn this diagram on its side so that an impression is not created that Christ is above us. He is with and for us in our situation. We also double it to show that the sharing takes place within the context of the community. **Diagram 3**



Adapted from Nünberger 1984:110)

The process whereby we accept others as they are because we ourselves are accepted by God as we are, is only possible on the basis of love which is the supreme virtue. Concerning the love of God Luther wrote:

For what He gives He does not give as a deserved and fair payment for services rendered but, as the words read, out of love. Therefore He is a giver who gives from the heart and out of unfathomable and divine love ... God is the supreme and greatest Giver and ... His giving flows out of love, that sublimest of virtues (Plass 1994:819).

2.6.2 Redemptive love is the universal criterion

Luther draws parallels between brotherly and Christian love. Natural brothers show love and faithfulness towards one another even if they disagree in some regards. When their wellbeing is threatened, they stand united against such a deficiency. Because Christians have one Father, they should display special love and faithfulness toward one another particularly in times of need (Plass 1994:826). So love loves for the sake of service and service aims at wellbeing. Luther follows the

Apostles John who said: "love one another" (15:12) and Paul who said: "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom 13:10). In his typical way of putting things paradoxically, Luther wrote:

So then, this commandment of love is a short and yet a long commandment; it is only one commandment and yet many commandments; it is no commandment and yet all commandments. In short, a unit in itself, and its meaning is readily grasped; but in practice it requires much time and many deeds, for it includes and regulates all commandments. It is no commandment at all if you look at the works, for no specific work is named as its own. And yet it is all the commandments, because the works of all the commandments are and should be its works. In this way the commandment of love suspends all commandments and yet establishes all (cited in Plass 1994:826).

In our daily life this means that as Christians we do not need the law as long as we are in the love of Christ. As Luther said: "When a person has love, no law is necessary [and] without love no law is adequate" (Plass 1994:826). We are motivated by love to "accept our neighbour as a person in his/her own right, as a sinner with all his/her shortcomings, but who is forgiven and accepted by God" (Nürnberger 1986:111). It is love which should prevent Christians from treating others on the basis of what they should be but are not, that is, what the law demands. It is love which should encourage Christians to remove all conditions put for the acceptance of others, because, if they insist on their fulfilment, they encounter others with demands of the law and not the gifts of the gospel. According to Nürnberger, that would mean that others are condemned (1986:111). Love should cause us to act redemptively toward one another.

Luther applied the principle of love to all spheres of human life, whether private or public. If we are true Christians, it must be evident in our daily lives. A good tree is known by its fruit. Whatever we do and wherever we are, love must permeate and shine in our life. Even if it means suffering evil we must insist on doing good because of love. Love must be the criterion for all, including politicians and economists and the purpose of all must be one, the promotion of the comprehensive salvation of all people. Concerning the Prince, Luther wrote:

For cursed and damned is any life lived or sought to one's own advantage and use, cursed are all actions which do not spring from love. Actions are performed from love (only) when they whole-heartedly promote the welfare, honour and redemption of others and are not directed towards one's own pleasure, advantages, honour, grace and salvation (cited in Nürnberger 1986:113).

For Luther, therefore, love is the criterion for all people everywhere, whether in private or in public life, for ordinary people and for public figures. Even where the application of the law is required it must be executed within the ambit of love. The ruler should know for instance that the Government is divinely instituted to perpetuate peace and prevent war. Referring to the prince of his time, Luther argued that in every situation, the priority should not be his own advantage as opposed to that of his subjects. So if war is the only alternative, or if the law is to be applied in a certain situation, the criterion must be the common good. A choice must be made in favour of a lesser evil and for the welfare of the majority: Luther advised:

A prince should punish the evildoer in such a way that he does not pick a spoon and crush a dish, that he does not reduce a land and its people to misery for the sake of a single scull, filling the land with widows and orphans. The rule is therefore: where evil cannot be punished without causing greater evil he must simply relinquish his right however reasonable it might be. For he must not be concerned about the harm to himself, but about the harm that others might suffer through his punishment (cited in Nürnberger 1986:114).

For Luther therefore, love is the principle that must be applied in politics, economics, the social arena, education, and morality (Kramm 1947:143). There might be situations where love may require the use of force. One such circumstance is when the wellbeing of the next person is threatened. The evil force which causes any deficiency in the comprehensive wellbeing of the next person, must, according to the ethics of Luther, be opposed by force if need be (Nürnberger 1986:115). A ruler who defends his subjects from foreign interventions acts redemptively according to the principle of love. It is love which causes him "to promote the salvation and wellbeing of one's neighbour under all circumstances" (Nürnberger 1986:116). In all these a Christian is bound to suffer evil and do good for the sake of another. It is to this status that Luther referred when he said: "A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to none" (1982:7). Because this is difficult for the natural human person, Luther suggests the empowerment of the believer by the new life of Christ, i.e. the Holy Spirit (Nürnberger 1986:114).

So the accusations against Luther that he taught a double morality and that he "failed to apply Christian principles to the world in general - to politics, economics, social questions, education, law and state morals" (Kramm 1947:143) could be as a result of a superficial reading of his writings. Luther only distinguishes between the private and public capacities of a person but

applies the same principle of love to both. It must be because of love that the ruler does not put his own interests above those of his subjects, and it must be because of the same principle that each private individual is concerned for the total wellbeing of the next person. So the principle of love is as valid for public as it is for private life. (Nürnberger 1986:116).

2.6.3 Redemptive love is valid for all human spheres

Luther distinguishes between two forms of the rule of God. This teaching is known as the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms [one on the right, the other on the left]. The Two Kingdoms are expressed as the inward and outward man. This doctrine has to do with the nature of the rule of God in the world. It may be understood against the view that this world, as we have discovered in the soteriology of Paul (chapter one) is a site of struggle between the forces of light and those of darkness. To rule it, God has to engage in warfare in which every sign of deficiency is challenged and overcome. "Sin and evil are attacked, overcome or constrained to make life and salvation possible" (Nürnberger 1986:118).

To say that the rule of God is a warfare against sin and evil is to speak of the negative function of the word of God inside and outside a human being. When the law fulfils its sin-exposing functions in human conscience (**usus elenticus legis**), it is God ruling the inner being. When the same law works outwardly in social structures of society such as families, the economy, the state and the church, it is God ruling the outward being (**usus politicus legis**). The former is the rule of God on the right, the latter is his rule on the left.

This brings us to the two functions of the word of God. The negative tasks of the word of God, as described above, have their two positive parallels also working in the inward and outward spheres. In the inward sphere, the gospel gives the new life of Christ. In the outward sphere the redemptive activities make life possible because they result in the availability of the means of survival such as fertility, rain and prosperity.

God rules over the Two Kingdoms with love and his intentions for both are good. But two dialectics in this rule must be stated here. Inwardly, God declares a sinner acceptable in spite of his/her unacceptability. When a sinner is accepted by God he/she is granted a new existence, a

new life. Luther called this process justification by faith. Faith is the key to justification. It does not mean that the sinner is changed into a righteous person, however. Rather, it means that God reckons the sinner as though not guilty on account of the works of Christ. He accepts the sinner as he/she is. God forgives the sinner all his/her sins and accepts him/her in his fellowship without putting any condition for the acceptance. In Christ, as sinner is **simul iustus et peccator**.

In practice it means when God accepts a sinner in Christ, he suffers his/her sins for the sake of his/her comprehensive wellbeing or salvation. The redemptive action of God of forgiving and accepting the sinner is in itself a confrontation of the deficiency in the overall wellbeing of the sinner. It is for the sake of the salvation of the sinner that God suffers.

Outwardly also, and for the sake of the wellbeing of all creatures, God constantly renews reality. In the Christ event, God has created a possibility of the renewal of reality. This is however not a once for all redemptive act, because though renewed, reality "remains caught up in evil" (Nünberger 1986:119). At this level too, God tolerates the evil condition of reality for the sake of the wellbeing of his creation. In a way he 'forgives' its inability to remain renewed, if we understand the act of forgiveness as the process whereby the forgiver suffers the deficiency of the forgiven. Nünberger calls this process the patience of God (1986:119).

2.6.4 Redemptive love aims at comprehensive wellbeing

The rule of God in the outward sphere contains evil and enhances life. Likewise in the inward realm it contains sin and enhances life. In both spheres, the intention of God is one, to foster the comprehensive wellbeing of all involved. The motive and criterion are also the same: the preserving and saving love of God.

Christians are called to share the intention and motive of God. This means we have to live according to the principle of love: to suffer evil and do good for the sake of the wellbeing of others. This calls for their maximum participation in social structures and institutions for the sake of the wellbeing of others. They do so in the understanding that they are rendering service to God because such parts form part of the rule of God albeit in the outward sphere. Christians should

therefore not hesitate to take part in government to help make their services effective. In this way they join these secular institutions and offices in their endeavour to contain evil, promote peace and common good and bring about the comprehensive wellbeing of all. So for Luther, the sequence is extremely significant: faith ==> love ==> service ==> life.

2.7 Rereading Luther with an African eye

2.7.1 *The predicament of Africans*

(a) They are simultaneously Africans and Lutherans

Africans, some of whom are Lutherans, have experienced oppression and exploitation. Justice and human liberation are their common concern. They face many concrete problems from which they need to be saved. They yearn for a time when theology will be grounded in the dynamic interaction between the revelation of God and their concrete situation of oppression and exploitation (Eschols 1990:10). For very long they have been victims of colonial rule and degradation by powerful nations. Even decades after political independence the colonial aftermath remains evident. Such forces of evil which trampled over their humanity and dignity had an enormously detrimental impact on the life of Africans and deserve to be condemned in no uncertain terms.

Hunger and poverty have, for a long time been persistent unwanted guests in the Third World. Hundreds of millions of people in this part of the world suffer hunger and poverty, disease and inadequate medical care and death. These and other problems, constitute the concrete human predicament in Africa.

... the African humankind is one which is characterised by socio-political and structural injustice and inequities resulting in a situation where so many families live in a circle of poverty, hunger, illness and are exposed to high early mortality rate; where so many millions are starving and cannot be decently fed and clothed; where so many women and men are steeped in ignorance, lack of proper schooling and medical care; and where so few exploit the powerless majority (Maimela 1987:112).

From these scourges, and many others, Africans need liberation. The root cause of this human predicament is colonialism and exploitation. But over-population, over-consumption, inhuman political and economic systems, modern technological developments also greatly contribute to

human misery in Africa. Obviously and undeniably, colonizers have contributed a great deal to the crisis of the Third World.

Moila is not enthusiastic about a definition of the human predicament as represented by the following Western theologians: (1) Barth, Thieliicke and Frei who see it as unbelief and separation from transcendence; (2) Pannenberg who sees it as hopelessness and a loss of historical faith; (3) Tillich and Gilkey who see it as isolation, estrangement and rebellion; and (4) Cobb, Knitter and Wingrew who see it as chaos, disorder and ecological stress. He embraces the views of liberation theologians [i] Sobrino, [ii] Fiorenza, [iii] Ruether and [iv] Menz, who equate the African predicament with oppression, inequality, and bondage (Moila 1990:107).

I believe however, that the theologians numbered 1-4 and those numbered i-v have a similar view of the human predicament, except that each stance is shaped by the situation of the particular theologians. Moila not necessarily disagrees with those theologians who see the human predicament in spiritual terms. His chosen perception is deliberate because he is speaking of God's kingship and political commitment. Important to him here is the liberation of the oppressed and the exploited Third World, where "oppression, inequality and bondage are the order of the day" (1990:108). He challenges African Lutheran theologians to theologise with the concrete human predicament in mind.

Colonialism brought about Third World dependence on the colonizers in a very systematic way. Moila categorizes three phases of this dependency: (1) The phase of colonial dependency (1400-1850). Colonizers grabbed "lands of local peasant farmers and extracted precious metals and stores as well as tropical produce, making the colonies into an invaluable source of wealth and power of the mother countries" (Moila 1990:109).

(2) The phase of financial and industrial dependency (1850-1940). The economic, political, and social systems of the conquered countries were virtually uprooted and restructured to meet the needs of the mother countries. Their agricultural systems were restructured to produce so-called marketable commodities. Indigenous capital was diverted into commerce or money lending. Rural artisans whose crafts were exposed to foreign competition suffered ruin. From the

nineteenth century on, these countries were integrated into the international market system. Their role in that system would be to provide resources for the economic expansion of the Northern Hemisphere as well as outlets for its surplus production. With their incorporation into the world market, the colonized countries became a mere appendage of the First World (Moila 1990:108-109).

(3) The phase of new dependency (1945-the present). The order of the day today is the dismantling of the colonial system and its replacement by multinational corporations. In certain regards, these multinational corporations are richer and more powerful than nation-states. For example, the relationship between independent Third World countries and their "former masters" have not changed for the better. Instead, it "assumed a subtle and rational form" (Moila 1990:109).

Facts are that industrialized nations still retain economic powers over, and benefit from, their former colonies. This they achieve "by structuring the international system of trade and aid to their own advantage" (Moila 1990:109). Instead of empowering the Third World, "the multinational corporations contribute further to the Third world recolonization" (Moila 1990:109). They still exploit the Third World countries' resources, labour and savings, "leaving the economies of these countries more dependant on foreign input than in the past" (Moila 1990:110). This is "a systematic subjugation of the Third World countries [who] in fact, still function as colonies" (Moila 1990:110).

Consequently, the poverty of the Third World countries is inextricably linked to the economic growth of the First World. The underdevelopment of these parts of the world is, therefore, "a by-product of development of the very process that produced wealth for the First World" (Moila 1990:110). Similar sentiments are shared by Pietrantonio. Luther's view that a human is a 'curved-in' being best characterises Western nations. These nations are so self-centred that they are constantly in search of their own self-satisfaction. The gap between developed and developing nations is growing at an alarming pace (Pietrantonio 1990:54). Rich Western nations are like a big tree in the north which sends its roots deep into poor countries but when it bears fruit, they always fall where the tree itself and the branches are.

Moila is right when concluding that our crisis can directly be linked to the technological development of the West.

What underlies the human predicament in Third World countries are political oppression, social dislocation, systematic injustice and economic alienation. At stake in these countries are the life and death of human beings. The poor in these countries exist as if they were not made in the image and likeness of God or as if they were not destined to be part of the kingdom of God (1990:110).

If, as scripture teaches, all humans, irrespective of who or where they are, are created in the image and likeness of God, and are meant to be part of God's kingdom, this kingdom must be perceived as "having to do with their liberation" (Moila 1990:110). This means that for us who form part of the oppressed millions of the African population, the kingdom of God has serious political, economic, social and spiritual implications (Moila 1990:110).

For the church in Africa, this means that she is the ambassador of Christ in this world. As a representative of the divine kingdom, she is duty bound to protect the interest of her Lord. In that process, she is bound to confront the enemies of the kingdom of God. That is why she has to commit everything she is or has in the struggle against any deficiency "in full continuity with the biblical testimony about concern for the poor" (Moila 1990:110). There is no way the church should tolerate any form of injustice within or without the community of believers. The Lutheran church in particular must become dynamic enough (Moila 1990:107) to "show how the salvation that is given in Christ opens up the possibility of a new African humanity, that will transform their condition in such a way that starvation, socio-political and economic injustices will become things of the past" (Maimela 1987:112).

The question posed by Moila cannot be more relevant: has the human predicament in the Third World any implication for the reinterpretation of Luther's idea of the Kingdom (1990:110)? We respond in the affirmative. We are aware that Luther's view of God's Kingdom is complex and should be analyzed carefully. He uses "a whole set of interconnected distinctions to bring out at various points the real tension between the divine kingdom and the forces of evil in human history and to encourage human beings to become 'fellow workers' with God whose will it is that the whole of creation should have life abundantly" (Moila 1990:110f).

For Luther, justification by faith [salvation] is the heart of the Christian experience, the kernel and focus of Christianity and the knot that ties all its aspects together. Justification by faith describes for Luther that specific point where God's redemptive activities coincide with its effect on the people of faith. Its message is clear: God gives new life freely, the sinner receives it without cost (Edwards & Tvard 1983:39). We do not deserve this new life, so God gives it to us on account of Christ, through whom we are declared righteous, holy and fit to receive it. This life is available for us by grace alone, in Christ alone, through faith alone (Edwards & Tvard 1983:40). We can now say that Christ is the hope of all sinners, all the people of faith and this must include Africans.

That Christ is the hope of the people of faith is easy to understand. It is the concise summary of scriptural teaching on the relevance of the Christ-event on humanity and on reality as a whole. It was indeed Christ's death which brought about the redemption of the entire world (John 3:16f). So in Christ, God reconciled the whole world to himself (2 Cor.5:18-19). No doubt, therefore, Jesus is the hope for humankind (Col. 1:27; 1 Tim. 1:1; Titus 2:13 f; Rom. 5:2;). But human beings are not simply general human beings living in the world in general. We exist concretely in definite communities, unique nations in concrete conditions. In these concrete situations, we experience what Maimela referred to as

certain limits, burdens, conflicts and impediments that stand on [our] way toward self-fulfilment as free human beings [We] experience life with all its deepest problems, struggles, defeats and partial victories, ... [and we] discover that life is problematic and ... cannot be taken for granted because it is replete with conflicts and potential threats (1987:109).

Maimela asks: what is wrong with African humanity? To this question, we have already responded when we said that the problem is the continuous existence of sin and evil in spite of the omnipotence of God and his love for us and the lordship of Christ which seem to be ineffective. The problem of the African predicament has particularly been exacerbated by the those sins which manifested themselves in the human refusal to love and be available to one's neighbour, to care for him/her and to have fellowship with her/him in a meaningful and enriching way (Maimela 1987:113). It is this refusal to be a Christ to one another which manifests itself in poverty, socio-political and economic injustices, political repression, hatred, racism, denial of

human freedom, and the like. So sin and evil are the problem. Christ is our hope, if our faith in him would bring about the healing of our broken relationships.

The experience of torment, uneasiness, vulnerability, and finitude which we experience on a daily basis, compel us to seriously reflect on this specific life situation and ask: is there meaning to life, a solution to our African problems, and hope for us now and hereafter? So the question can now be raised: in what sense is Christ our hope, within our specific context as described?

That Christ is our hope in our concrete situations should be shown in concrete terms. Theologians must avoid the temptation which swept some of them into providing general and spiritualistic solutions in concrete situations which call for concrete solutions. Such answers also focus only on the welfare of the individuals' souls and their probabilities in afterlife.

Our salvation must be concretised just as our problems are concrete. It is not enough to hope that in Christ our ultimate spiritual salvation from this bad social order and broken human relationship is guaranteed. We are not satisfied with the type of salvation whereby we are to be rescued from "this apparently irredeemable earthly existence but for a life beyond the grave" (Maimela 1987:110). Such kind of salvation we reject because it is one-sided and does not, on the whole, lead to "any fundamental transformation of the earthly conditions here and now ... [as though it is] the juice to be given to the dispirited souls in order to enable them to endure brutality and inhuman social existence while they wait for future heavenly salvation" (Maimela 1987:110)

With Maimela, we argue that spiritual salvation is not sufficient for the people of faith living in a concrete context like ours. It does not exhaust the significance of the Christ-event for us or for any other people of faith. This is particularly true for those of us who live in the Third World "where bodily salvation remains as much a priority as the spiritual salvation" (Maimela 1987:110). For us, salvation which God offers in Christ remains unauthentic, "unless it also affects changes in the socio-political sphere" (Maimela 1987:110). We can only embrace the kind of salvation that does not exclude any sphere of our experienced reality, be it social, economic, political or spiritual. We long for a comprehensive salvation which aims at rescuing us from evil forces of poverty, oppression, exploitation and dehumanisation. When salvation is wide enough

to cover our concrete existential problems now and here, then Christ can be our hope as a particular people of faith because he is the hope of all other people of faith.

(b) What kind of salvation model makes sense for African Lutherans?

As a term, salvation seems to be among the most inclusive terms the Bible uses to describe what God has accomplished for the created reality in Jesus Christ. Christians agree about this scriptural truth. Unfortunately, there seems to be no unanimity on what the concept of salvation means and how salvation is to be acquired. There seems to be no harmonised Soteriology in Christian theology unlike the Trinity, Christology, Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and others. Two reasons may have contributed to this lack of a particular Soteriology: [i] Salvation permeates the whole of theology. [ii] The meaning of salvation depends on the historical experience. Therefore, this same message of salvation is expressed and experienced differently by different people with different needs and concerns in particular time and places (Braaten 1983:63).

Africans live in a particular historical context. It is their conditions of living, needs and concerns which must determine the kind of salvation they need. If theology's representation of salvation fails to address their concrete needs and concerns, it becomes boring and irrelevant. Exactly because we are not humans in general and live at different times and different geographical places, our perceptions of salvation will remain different. This is so because our needs and concerns are bound to be different. So we are not worried that the variations in the human condition may lead to different perceptions of salvation. It does not perturb us that there seem to be various possibilities of appreciating salvation: there are, according to Braaten, salvation as a bliss beyond the current transitory existence; salvation as a protest against the current miseries and a striving for a better life here and now; salvation with a communal dimension where the self is never complete without the selves (1983:66).

Yet care must be taken that an impression is not created that there are different kinds of salvation as determined by a particular situation. The primary cause of human predicament is sin and evil and these lead to an interrelated network of factors which in turn lead to human crisis. It is this human dilemma which salvation in Christ must address as a whole. Alienation from God is spiritual, but it has physical, social and economic implications. Luther, as we have shown above,

believed that if the relationship with God is shaky, all other dimensions of life will be affected negatively. Further, social, economic, physical and ecological dilemmas have a detrimental impact on spiritual salvation. Biblical salvation, as we have shown in the soteriology of Paul, of Luther and as we shall see in chapter seven, is wide enough both in scope and target to be able to address all kinds of deficiencies in human wellbeing.

To properly understand salvation, we should start with the understanding of the law which demands our responsibility for our salvation, and the gospel which informs us that our salvation is already secured for us. The two should not be divorced from each other, so that there is a secular sphere of life void of sacral dimensions, therefore not in need of salvation. The danger here lies in that some will push salvation to the future (Volf 1989:457ff), others will restrict it to the present. Theologians have been torn apart between these possibilities. We suggest, however, that these different perceptions should be kept together to maintain a comprehensive view of salvation.

(c) A multidimensional model of salvation

A superficial reader of the Bible gets the impression that the Old Testament notion of salvation is radical and more relevant to the crisis situation in Africa. Many point to the exodus event as being most significant for retrieving political liberation as a valid ingredient of redemption. There is some truth in this stance, because, in that event, the immediate concern was the concrete political problem which was threatening the wellbeing of the Israelites. Generally speaking also, the religion of Israel did not tolerate the 'pie in the sky'. It should, therefore, not surprise us that liberation and African theologians easily identified with it and draw most of their images of salvation from the historical experience of events by the Israelites, such as the exodus and the exile.

Liberationists want to follow the Old Testament in being agnostic as far as eschatology is concerned. As in the Old Testament, the primary concern of the people of faith in the so-called Third World is for a this-worldly future and not so much the one to come. Not that the future life is of no importance, but that this life enjoys priority. It is important for a human person to lead

a good life right here on earth as a preparation for the one to come. We must, therefore join with Braaten and say:

the Old Testament provides a point of contact also for the soteriological shift to a social-ethical definition of religion. The prophet of Israel is a champion of the poor, the oppressed, and the weak. He is the advocate of social reform, the leader of the righteous opposition, attacking kings and priests, rich men and loose women ... a man of common people, interested solely in lifting up the masses (1983:70).

For the Israelites, salvation was primarily the wellbeing and prosperity of the people of Yahweh in the present. It was a concrete paradise here on earth for all living creatures, the whole of nature, appreciating the decency and glory of a unblemished world. Here salvation is deliverance, liberation, perfection, first of Israel, but later also to reach the end of the universe through her (Nelumbu 1994:254ff). "Through her" suggests that the new life which one receives through salvation should be a motivating factor towards righteousness and responsibility. This notion of salvation is appealing to Africans. Our theory of salvation, like that of process and liberation theology, should be based on a synthesis of faith and responsibility, justification and sanctification, faith and love. We adopt this view of salvation simply because it cares for many, if not all, human existential dimensions in this world, both individual and corporate as well as all human necessities and circumstances.

We do not advocate a silence on the soteriological themes found in classical theories of atonement, such as 'bought for a price', 'a ransom for many', 'sacrifice' etc, of which Braaten accuses liberationists (1983:70f). We first want to go back to the Old Testament model of salvation, return to Christ, assess our needs and formulate our theory of salvation which is relevant to our concrete situation. After all, as Braaten himself has acknowledged, "each epoch favours one particular set of metaphors that makes sense within the horizon of its own peculiar life situation" (1983:71f). The issue for us Africans is neither knowledge as it was during the time of Jesus, nor divine order as it was during medieval times, or the salvation of the soul for which Luther strived. Our greatest need is freedom and meaningful life.

Thus we need Jesus as liberator, not so much to take us home yet, but to help us overcome existing evils and live a blessed life now. We are not looking for a Jesus who has died instead

of, but for us. The core of the article of justification by faith is freedom, and justification and freedom are opposite sides of the same coin: God's redemptive act in Christ (Rom 5:1).

But in the final analysis a careful reader of the Bible discovers that on the whole, the history of the biblical faith has shown ever widening and more inclusive horizons. In contrast to Greek dualism, for instance, the apocalyptic concept of the Kingdom of God is universal and incredibly this-worldly albeit a portrayal of the world as it ought to be. This has also become evident in the soteriologies of Paul and Luther above.

(d) Is it necessary to rethink Luther?

Definitely! Such a need has been recognised by many 20th Lutheran theologians (Braaten 1988:114; Ludwig 1988:129; Maimela 1988:165). It is believed that "Lutherans have been rather slow" (Maimela 1988:160) and entered the theological debate with other religions only "after a long silence" (Ludwig 1988:129). This Lutheran sensitivity results from upholding the Reformation principle that there is no salvation apart from Christ or as Ludwig puts it, their "theology of the cross" (1988:154; cf. Maimela 1988:173). Lutherans are hereby blamed for not taking religions other than their own seriously.

Not taking other religions seriously means not taking some Lutherans, their contexts and problems seriously as if all Lutherans live in the same context at the same time. Lutherans who are living in the so-called Third World are proud of their Lutheran heritage. But the question has many a time been asked as to how accommodating Lutheranism is. Can Lutheranism, for instance, envelop more than one culture? For Paul, the church became Jewish with the Jews and Greek with the Greeks. But it seems the same cannot be said about the church in the Third World. As Pero and Moyo noticed, she has largely remained Euro-American. She "has not become Asian with Asians, Black with the Blacks, Native American with the Native Americans, Hispanic with the Hispanics" (1988:9). This raises a serious question, whether one first has to become a European or American if one is to be a Christian or a Lutheran for that matter. So what does it mean to be an African Lutheran? Another question which must be asked here is: who is to blame for this state of affairs, the missionaries who brought the gospel wrapped in their

cultures, or the indigenous people who received it? This is not the place to respond to this question [I will do so in chapter six]. It suffices only to say that the answer is both.

The same concern goes for the understanding of the article of justification by faith or simply salvation. We have enough reasons to sympathise with Luther in his interpretation of the **articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae**, the point of belief which determines whether the church stands or falls. He was a child of his time who lived more than four centuries ago. It is certainly unfair to criticise him if the questions he asked and the responses he gave are irrelevant for our African context. He was far from us both in terms of time, space and culture. Moreover, he merely knew of the existence of some areas which belong to the Third World. He "vaguely mentioned, e.g the recent discovery of 'many islands and countries' (WA 10/I/1, 21, 16, 1522), Persia (30/III, 366, 12 - 1531), Africa (47, 567 - 1539), India and the 'land of the blacks' (236,1 - 1537 to 1540" (Baeske 1990:35). In spite of all these limitations on the part of Luther, however, his concept of justification, if properly understood, is utterly fundamental for the solutions of our contemporary socio-cultural dilemmas if properly interpreted.

By pointing to such evidence, I am neither suggesting that we should not criticise Luther, particularly his soteriology which concerns us here, nor that we should not allow his theology to direct us. As a matter of fact, Brakemeier is right by telling the conferees of the Third World Lutheran Theological Educators Conference held in Sao Leopordo, Brazil, 1988, that "the task of rethinking Luther today, in the context of the Third World, is the common task of all of us ..." (1990:13). It is our task to reread Luther in search of clues which may "help us to overcome the serious problems and dangers we are facing in our society, in other words, if there is evidence that Luther guides us to the origins of the redeeming and liberating gospel" (Brakemeier 1990:13f). That is the only way to maintain the relevance of the Lutheran way of believing and living. In our rethinking of Luther, we should be at liberty to criticise him but we should also be open to be challenged by his theological formulations.

As African Lutherans we have no choice but to relate Luther's doctrine of salvation to the current challenges in our immediate context. Relevance is fragile. It is never stated once and for all. It is bound into the concrete situation and exists only under concrete circumstances. Consequently,

it must continuously be ascertained anew in each historical situation. As free beings, we are always free to evaluate and reevaluate Luther's theological thinking on any issue, to establish its limitations and weaknesses. Luther himself propagated the freedom of the Christian: "I neither am, nor want to be anyone's master, I hold together with the community, the one common teaching of Christ" (Baeske 1990:18, quoting WA 10:/I/1,135,16 f). He knew himself as an "unworthy evangelist of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Luther 1960:91). The consequences of this statement of Luther are enormous. He "binds us to Christ and frees us for our own time; he frees us even from himself" (Baeske 1990:18). As Brakemeier said, Luther is not an infallible authority to the Lutheran Churches. Rethinking him is, therefore natural and necessary (1990:14).

We need to revisit Lutheran theology to retrieve those Lutheran principles which may help us; to respond relevantly to the dilemma of African believers, to respond appropriately to the challenge of many religions around us; to reconstruct and shape a theology in dialogue with non-Christian theologies (Ludwig 1988:130ff,149); to recapture the Lutheran perception that the church has an incomplete knowledge of God which means that she cannot manipulate it; to look very carefully at what effects the upholding of the chief article by which the church stands or falls has on the dialogue between Christianity and other religions; to rediscover the biblical concept of salvation which is comprehensive enough to include eschatological salvation and salvation here and now (Maimela 1988:176); to take risks in order to change and grow and not stay stagnant and irrelevant; but to learn new insights, find new meanings, principles and to discover metaphors which we may have been neglected, forgotten or never known before (Ludwig 1988:155).

Such pivotal elements of the Lutheran heritage which need retrieval include: the essence of the mystery of God, which is Luther's concept of the **Deus Absconditus** and **Deus revelatus**, whereby we acknowledge the limitedness of human knowledge of God; Luther's recognition of general revelation; the **simul** theology whereby an affirmation is made that God can be spoken of dialectically; love as a basis of life and the implication of justification by faith for human relations. Moreover, as is evident from this paragraph, the responsibility for revisiting the soteriology of Luther lies firstly with us Africans.

(e) Taking issue with Luther and Lutheranism

We are African Lutherans. Our context is overdosed with "economic exploitation and hunger, racism and sexism" (Kirst 1990:135). Like Luther who was unhappy because "he did not experience wholeness and salvation through the prescribed method" (Pero and Moyo 1988:13), we are looking for the possibility of a contextualising and indigenization of Luther's theology in the African context (Kirst 1990:9). We believe that, to be relevant, theology must "be grounded in the dynamic interaction between God's revelation and the existential situation of human beings" (Kirst 1990:10). Luther's personal concern was guilt and forgiveness. While we experience the same problem, in our African context, this question may be reformulated for us today in terms of the emptiness and meaninglessness of our life (Altmann 1992:142). It follows, therefore, that we are interested in a particular model of salvation. This particular model should have its roots in the Bible in view of our needs. We take issue with Luther and Lutheranism.

Firstly, Luther's individualistic approach to salvation could be misunderstood and misappropriated. In most cases, when he spoke of salvation he used personal and possessive pronouns: **I, me, my and mine**. This sounds very individualistic and does not appeal to an African mind. For Luther this was probably sensible, because one starts with oneself. If all individuals are right, then society which is constituted of individuals is going to be alright. The African philosophy, however, would reverse this order, because it is not an individual who shapes society, but society shapes an individual. **Okulikalela okwa nyanga enongo** [No one can live alone]. **I am because we are**.

Secondly, Luther could be accused of overemphasising the salvation of the soul to such a degree that salvation appears to be a purely spiritual affair. The result of this tendency is that for conservative Lutherans, salvation does not have an effect on evil social structures and cannot be understood as "the comprehensive work of liberating human beings from all social misery" (Maimela 1983:84). It appears to be a **pie in the sky**, "an eschatological reality and a flight from this world ... a tranquillising instrument which oppressors [could] use to cover up social injustices so that the poor and the oppressed would not rise up to challenge the prevailing unjust material relationships" (Maimela 1983:84). As Eto pointed out, Africans are not overwhelmed with Luther's exclusive concentration on the idea of salvation as the joyful message of

forgiveness of sin (1990:46). After conversion, transformation must follow. Moltmann too criticises Luther's theology of the cross saying that it was not primarily formulated to protest against social injustices and to bring about social transformation (1974:71f). Such a model of salvation does not appeal to the African mind which sees a human being as one whole. Lutherans should return to Luther's concern for human wellbeing as expressed in his principle of love.

Thirdly, Luther's notion of **sin** could be misunderstood and misinterpreted. I agree that the source of all human sin is original sin which manifests itself in disbelief, mistrust and rebellion against God. It is understandable that Luther was concerned with the foundation, that is why he concluded that sinning against faith [in God] is worse than sinning against love [for humans]. Here is a source of misunderstanding of Luther which led to the distortion of his principles. Plass, for instance, advances this idea of Luther that sins against doctrines are worse than those against love (1994:1308 citing SL 19, 1182). The use of the term 'doctrine' is misleading, because it implies the right teaching while Luther most probably meant 'the Word of God'. I believe it is because of this attitude to sin that some Western theologies turned out to be more orthodoxies than orthopraxies. What matters is right teaching. The danger here as we have experienced, is the dichotomy between right doctrine and right attitude towards others. Teaching the right doctrine became more important than doing the right thing. In short, faith as trust in God did not transform into love for the creation of God in general and for the rest of humanity in particular. Faith did not lead to love and the end product was not life.

Fourthly, I am quite uncomfortable with the radical dichotomy between divine activities of justification and sanctification. No doubt the confession of Christ as our Lord and Saviour has penetrating significance for all humanity including Africans "in terms of God's love and unconditional acceptance of the repentant sinner in Christ and God's promise of eternal life" (Pero and Moyo 1988:266). But this should only serve as the point of departure, the base. This confession of Christ needs to extend to an understanding of the transformation of the person of faith into an instrument of God. As justified sinners, we must live as the justified and the accepted. This means that justification and justice must remain inseparably linked. God's will for humanity is nothing less than comprehensive wellbeing. Salvation comes from the forgiveness of sin. But it must show itself in "activities which bring about justice to those who are oppressed"

(Pero and Moyo 1988:267). It must restore broken relationships by reconciling God and alienated humanity, and human beings amongst themselves, and with the rest of creation. Justification must lead to sanctification, faith to love, love to action and both to life. In fact, for the African context Lutheran theologians should have sanctification as their point of departure to test justification. A good tree bears good fruit, but fruits qualify the tree. The foundation is important, but it is of no use if there are no walls and the roof is leaking. The epistle to the Romans is important, but that of James too is vital. Justification without sanctification is like a good tree without fruit.

Fifthly, Luther's formulation of the doctrine of the two kingdoms is misunderstood in Lutheran circles. If rightly understood, it should provide us with a reason to be involved in every sphere of human life and nature. It encourages us to claim the entire reality for God. Luther taught that God created and owns the entire reality. It owes its existence to him. He is its master. However, Lutheran theologians have misrepresented this teaching and misused it, so that today, Lutheranism is accused of quietism and conservatism in matters concerning socio-economic involvement. For this, they need to be challenged and be summoned to revisit Luther's formulation and act according to James 2:26. Faith must lead to love and love to service in all human spheres.

Sixthly, Lutheranism has turned out to be a monolithic cultural system which has little room for other cultures. Lutherans are known for conservatism in church circles as well. Their liturgy, order of service and method of preaching are rather rigid. In fact, they are taken to be eternal truth which must not be changed. Little contextualisation is known, for instance, in most Lutheran churches in Namibia. Church services have become routines with little emotion allowed to be exercised. A good Lutheran must be quiet in the holy service. Too little from the African way of worship has been allowed to enrich Lutheran services.

Finally, Luther could be accused of having laid the foundations for individualism. Our experience of the message of salvation proclaimed by the historical church is that it is very individualistic and geared to the salvation of the soul. The emphasis of the salvation of the soul could lead to the undermining of the believers' responsibility to the community. In following

Greek philosophy, the church in Europe emphasised the difference between the soul and the body, between spiritual and physical needs. The wholeness of a human being was not taken seriously, and so the African concept of a human being, which is closer to the scriptural concept than the European one, is not appreciated. If this was taken care of, the dichotomy between the soul and body, word and deeds, faith and love, doctrine and life, service and conversion could have been avoided and the tension maintained and endured. Our advice in this matter would be that we should avoid the danger of either dividing or disrupting the healthy relationship between faith and love, word and deeds, eternal salvation and earthly wellbeing at all cost. We should proclaim God as the creator of both heaven and earth and the author of comprehensive salvation to the total human being. If we are to remain Lutherans and Africans at the same time, we should maintain and endure the tension as Luther taught.

2.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to investigate Luther's basic approach to soteriology. Because his theology is inextricably interwoven, we delved into his notion of God, anthropology, hamartology and ethics. We observed that for Luther, special care must be taken to ensure that the foundation on which a particular theology and ethics are built is absolutely accurate, because then all other theological and ethical aspects built on it would be appropriate. Such a foundation is faith in the living God. In the process of building on that foundation one needs: [i] The living word through which God communicates with sinners [ii] the living people and [iii] love for serving others. In a nutshell, this chapter investigates how God and humanity relate and how humans relate to one another.

Luther lived far away from us both in terms of time and space. But the context, which informed his theology and ethics, was not much different from ours. He lived in a tempestuous epoch during a quest for economic, socio-political, moral and religious transformation. In the wake of the abuse of power, the exploitation of the poor and the oppression of the powerless, he could neither shut his mouth nor fold his arms. As a 'free being subject to none', but 'a servant of all', he spoke, wrote and acted in response to occurring historical challenges. Human self-centredness, selfishness, pride, greed, power abuse and self-deification, or simply human inauthenticity, on the one hand, and the holiness and righteousness of God on the other perturbed him.

Luther's primary concern was to find a gracious God and secure personal salvation. In vain he followed medieval established roots to achieve his goal. The harder he tried the more he realised the futility of his exercise. Finally, he feared and hated the righteous God and secretly rebelled against him. He felt that God was unfair and his requirements for fellowship were humanly impossible to fulfil. Fear of punishment by the just God and human incompetence to live up to the set standard drove Luther to try even harder. After an extended struggle with scriptures and with God as he is in himself, he discovered the concealed but considerate intentions of God and that in dealing with God, one has to maintain and endure the tension involved.

God is ambiguous. On the one hand, there is a tension between who he is in himself and daily human experience. He a compassionate Master of reality, this fact we expect to be reflected in our daily experience. We experience the opposite. Luther called this kind of divine existence the hidden God, hidden from us to such a degree that we doubt his commitment to us and begin to fear, hate and rebel against him. Luther believed that this kind of divine existence is also found in other religions. Known thus, God seems to be against us. On the other hand, there is the revealed God whose power and majesty are concealed in the contrary (the Christ-event), who masked and limited himself to specific objects - his word, a place and person - and whose intentions for us and for the rest of reality are clearly revealed and openly displayed in his word to make it possible for us to approach him without being crushed by his power and majesty. He advised sinful humanity to let the hidden God alone and always seek the revealed God.

Humans are saved sinners. On the one hand they are worthless, guilty and lost sinners who are completely incompetent in appeasing God, gaining favour with him and securing their seat in the kingdom of God. On the other hand, they are accepted unconditionally, saved and expected to do nothing except to know that what God was demanding of them is already fulfilled by Christ and that the command to do anything for their salvation has been transformed into the happy tidings that it is already done for them. These facts are communicated by God to the sinner through his word. On the one hand, there is the law which demands life from the sinner, on the other, there is the gospel which grants it.

Those are the basic tensions, which must simultaneously be maintained and endured. The rest, and there are many, are derivatives. For Luther, therefore, God must be allowed to be what he is. What he has disclosed about himself should satisfy us. We must cling to it for our own wellbeing.

Luther could not imagine the existence of another force besides God which could be the source of some of our experiences. On the one hand, everything we experience, good or bad, owes its existence to this one ambiguous God. On the other, he is the loving Father, the Creator, and Sustainer of all reality. He is a living God, closer to reality than anything or anybody else. He is for us and not against us, willing and able to rescue reality from whatever enslaves it. He is determined to have fellowship with us and this intention has been reactivated through Jesus Christ. He will see it through. Sinners are invited to participate in God's redemptive movement to save reality. We are to be a Christ to one another. That means, we must allow ourselves to be united with God in purpose and action as was Christ.

To say that God is the Source of all reality is to recognise that humanity together with the rest of creation have their origin in God. To say that God cares for his creation and is present in and around every creature however small or big, is to presuppose that humanity is constantly present in the sight of God and also before the world of which it forms a prominent part. Luther spoke of the **coram - relationships** in this regard. To be in the **coram - relationships, that is, coram Deo, coram me ipso** and **coram hominibus** is to be in fellowship with God on the one hand, and with oneself, others and the rest of creation on the other. That calls for human responsibility towards God's creation, and ties up with the invitation of the justified sinner to participate in the missionary activities of God on account of love.

God is almighty and benevolent although this is not self-evident. Christ has conquered the forces of evil. Yet evil and sin persist unabated. This is the central problem of theology and part of the tension which must be endured. But we also discussed the effect of sin on human life. Humanity has lost its authenticity and is enslaved by evil forces. Just as the general knowledge of God is universal, so is the need of salvation. Humanity is aware of its imprisonment and seeks ways and

means to secure salvation and freedom normally through works, but in vain hope. For Luther, salvation is available in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

Luther seems to have a limited understanding of the concept of the soul because he thought much of its salvation. In a way he has contributed to the spirit of individualism which permeates Western theology. Because of his emphasis on personal salvation, Luther's version of salvation becomes appealing to those who are comfortable on this side of the grave. For the African context, where the quest for a merciful God has been overtaken by the quest for a meaningful life, it becomes less attractive. Doubts have been expressed whether it is possible for one to remain African and truly Lutheran or whether one has first to forfeit his/her Africanness and become an European, in order to become a true Lutheran. Because of these doubts, we tried to outline who Africans are and what kind of salvation paradigm would respond to their existential situation to directly address their socio-economic, socio-political, socio-ethical and religious problems now haunting Africa.

Finally we called for a rereading of Luther's theology from the African vantage point suggesting that, while Luther seems to proceed from faith, to love, then to service, Africans would proceed from tasting the fruit to declaring the tree to be good or bad. Luther's stance is not wrong but it does not fit African philosophy, and does not help them to understand salvation. Therefore, we suggest that we have the fruit of faith as our point of departure in testing the effects of justification. We propose the shifting of emphasis from justification to sanctification, while hoping to remain within the Lutheran heritage and keeping the beams of the cross intact.

CHAPTER THREE

INGREDIENTS OF THE OWAMBO RELIGION



3.1 Introduction⁷

From chapters one and two we learned that the Pauline-Lutheran concept of salvation was, on the whole, holistic. It is this tradition which the Finnish missionaries were to communicate to **Ovawambo** within their cultural context which we believe was holistic in itself. The overall culture of **Ovawambo** forms the subject of this chapter.

We will give a detailed analysis of the **Owambo** culture identifying and describing those elements which point to its holistic nature, particularly its concern for human wellbeing. Attention will be paid to the **Owambo** world view and its religious significance. It shall be shown that in this culture human relationships are vertically arranged but the wellbeing of all enjoys priority.

In view of the central objective of this thesis, we have to consider the **Owambo** world of spirits of which the most important are **Kalunga** [God]. We will analyze different rites, rituals, sacrifices performed in search of wellbeing, as well as prayers and songs. Finally, we look at magic and **Owambo** culture. We shall see that not all of the elements of **Owambo** culture negate the gospel. Some of them can help us to find an inclusive concept of salvation.

⁷ I will not put articles before nouns in **Oshiwambo**. Instead of writing **the Ovawambo, the Oshiwambo, the eulu** etc, I will write **Ovawambo, Oshiwambo, eulu**, etc. It is my contention that the prefixes **o** and **e** represent an article **the** or **a**. To write **the onganga**, for instance does not make sense in **Oshiwambo** because it is like using an article twice. Further, I will not call **Owambo** tribal kings **chiefs**. In **Owambo** context, **ohamba**, though not of a country, cannot be a chief. The latter is **elenga**. To call **ohamba** chief will confuse my indigenous readers.

3.2 Defining Ovawambo⁸

3.2.1 *Their origin, identity and migration*

Scholars of African history do not agree about **Owambo** migrations (Williams 1991:51). This suggests that there are no more reliable sources about the exact origin of **Ovawambo**. Some theories seem to have gained momentum, however:

[i] It is said that **Ovawambo** are part of the Bantu groups which "migrated from the shores of a lake which is not identified, but lies somewhere to the east in the regions of Central Africa" (Bruwer 1967:15). Hahn, who is regarded as "an authority" on **Ovawambo**, suggested that they are 'the oldest settled people in Southern Africa' as compared to the Zulus whom he called 'their cousins' (Loeb 1962:10).

[ii] Loeb says there are signs of "early Mediterranean influence" (1962:10) on **Owambo** culture and concludes that they might have "crossed into Africa" (1962:11) from South Arabia. One of my informants, S. Amunyela⁹, related that when missionaries came to **Owambo**, they found indications of Jewish influence or at least cultural similarities. Firstly three Jewish names, Amanda, Noah, and Joseph have been found among **Ovawambo** before the advent of missionaries in 1870. It could be argued that since the European presence in Namibia dates back to 1484 (the Portuguese; Spart and Green 1992:7) and of the first missionaries (LMS) to 1807 (Nambala 1994:1), it could be that such names emerged from the contact of indigenous people with the explorers and/or missionaries. Secondly, Amunyela points to four things which **Ovawambo** and the Jews seem to share. [a] Both regard a corpse as something dirty which should not be tampered with to avoid defilement until the cleansing ritual is performed. But this is shared by a great many cultures. [b] Both the Jews and **Ovawambo** isolate murderers until they are cleansed. (c) Both believe in an invisible God who cannot be represented by an image and

⁸ See map one, appendix 1

⁹ Mr. Sakeus Amunyela is a retired teacher of about seventy years. The information which he furnished is most probably secondary. He claims that the affinities between Ovawambo and the Jews were identified by a certain professor who visited Ovambo a couple of decades ago. I could not verify this claim.

(d) both strive for the multiplication of wealth. The affinity between Jews and **Ovawambo** is taken to suggest that at some stage there was some contact between them. Egypt is mentioned as a possible contact spot between these two groups¹⁰.

[iii] Williams seems to have been persuaded by the theory of Greenberg that **Ovawambo** are part of the Bantu-speaking group who migrated from Cameroon and Nigeria, among them the **Tiv, Batu, Botare, Mambila and Jawara** who lived near central Buene Valley in West Africa (1991:51). Following Greenberg, Williams rejected the theory of Harry Johnston that **Ovawambo** originated from "the Great Lakes area of East Africa" (1991:51).

I am convinced by the conclusion of Williams that **Ovawambo** are part of the Bantu group which moved down from Nigeria, via Cameroon and Gabon. Later they split into two groups. The Eastern Bantus spread towards the 'Lubala tributaries'. The Southwestern Bantus moved down Africa "to the forest edge near the Congo and the Lower Kasai" (1991:53). To this group belong the strong Katanga kingdoms of the Luba and Lunda, the latter ending up in Angola as the 'Imbangala' about 1600 A.D. after absorbing other groups between the Kasai and the Atlantic. Finally, this group reached the Zambezi and **Okavango**.

This thesis cannot delve too deeply into the history of **Ovawambo**. That is left to historians to sort out. It suffices to observe from the few theories which emerged that **Ovawambo** "are a branch of the great Bantu family" (Hahn 1927:28).

Before the independence of Namibia in 1990, researchers of the history of **Ovawambo** referred to the geographical area they populated as either **Owamboland** (Bruwer 1967; Williams 1991); **Ovamboland** (Nambala 1994) or simply **Owambo** (Hishongwa). Further, they refer to the people residing in this area either as **Ovambos** (Hishongwa); **Ovambo people** (Knappert); **Owambo people** (Williams) or **Aawambo** (Nambala 1994). Both Williams (1991) and Nambala (1994) explained the etymology of the name **Owambo**. They agree that this name has somehow evolved through history and might have been given by their fellow citizens, the Hereros (Nambala

¹⁰ According to the migration story of **Ovawambo**, they came to Namibia from upper Africa. This makes their contact with the Egyptian culture possible.

1994:28) or the San (Williams 1991:56). Williams doubts whether this name could have been given its bearers by the San, because it is a typical Bantu name while its supposed givers belong to a different group (cf. Thorpe 1993:13). She suggests that perhaps it was **Ovawambo** who identified themselves thus to the San for wanting to acquire a new identity (1991:57).

Williams and Nambala mention several possible meanings of **owambo**, whatever form it takes. It could mean either that 'they belong to that place' (**ovambo**: Williams or **ovaampo**: Nambala); or it could mean 'there they are' (**ovombo**: Williams; **ovo mpo**: Nambala); or it could mean 'those good/nice people' (**ovawambo**: Williams / **ovawa mbo**: Nambala). Williams adds two other possible meanings: **ovawambu** [people of **Wambu / Huambu**] (a place in Angola) and **aayamba** [the rich people] (1991:56). In turn Nambala has pointed out the difficulty involved in establishing the correct plural of the name in question (1994:55). But it seems clear to me that we can only speak of **Ovambo** (singular) or **Ovambos** (plural) in European languages. Nambala is right that in **Oshiwambo**¹¹, we can speak of **Ovawambo** when we speak **Oshikwanyama** and **Oshimbadja**, and **Aawambo** when speaking **Oshindonga**, or other **Oshiwambo** dialects. Williams and Nambala are all **Oshindonga** speakers, so it is natural for them to speak of **Aawambo**. For our purpose, we will use **Omuwambo** for a singular person (common to all dialects) and **Ovawambo** for plural (common to **Oshimbadja** and **Oshikwanyama**) except when we quote **Oshindonga** texts in which case it will be **Aawambo** for singular and **Ovawambo** for plural.

Whatever the case may be, the concept **Ovawambo** "is a collective name for a numerous Bantu people of the northern South West Africa and southern Angola" (Tabler 1973:131). It is not true, as Knappert has it, that there is no unity between **Ovawambo** as their collective name suggests. It is also not true when he says "there is no **Ovambo** language" (1981:143). The unity between **Ovawambo** is borne out by the fact that one term **Ovawambo** collectively designates all seven different tribes, and the term **Oshiwambo** collectively designates their different dialects together (Nambala 1994:29). One of William's informants, Rev. Jason Amakutuwa (born 1917), says that

¹¹ The term **Oshiwambo** refers to a group of eight different dialects spoken by **Ovawambo**, e.g. **Oshikwanyama**, **Oshindonga**, **Oshimbalantu**, **Oshikwambi**, **Oshingandjera**, **Oshikwaluudhi**, **Oshikolungadhi**, and **Oshimbadja**. Therefore, it is not proper to speak of 'Oshiwambo languages' as Nambala did.

when the Europeans first started to use the name **Aawambo**, the **Owambo** people thought it was the name commonly used to designate any black person. But when the name **Aayamba** was used, then all **Owambo** communities knew that it referred to: **Aandonga, Aakwanyama, Aangandjera, Aakwambi, Aambalantu, Aakwaluudhi, Aakolonkandhi, Aambandja, Aandongwena, Aankwankwa, Aandobodhola, Aashinga, Aavale, and Aakathima** (1991:56).

This quote was said in the context of discussing whether the appropriate term is **Ovawambo** or **Ovayamba**. But it also shows that whatever the original term was, it was first used to designate more than seven or eight ethnic groups as it is currently used. In present Namibia, however, it is well known and accepted that the concept **Ovawambo** refers only to the first seven above listed ethnic groups. **Ovambadja** (number eight in the list) and perhaps **Aavale** also, are normally classified with **Ovakwanyama**, although they are different tribes. In this thesis, I will research the culture, particularly the religion of **Ovawambo**.

3.2.2 The geographical location

During the rule of South Africa, the native reserve inhabited by **Ovawambo** was known as **Ovamboland, Owamboland** or **Owambo**. Since Namibia's demarcation into regions in 1992, this name has fallen out of use. We now speak of the far north, which consists of various regions: Ohangwena, Oshikoto, Oshana and Omusati. Geographically, this area is situated in Northern Namibia which covers "more than one tenth of the country's total surface area (823,144 square km)" (Siiskonen 1990:35). The population of Namibia is about one and half million, 49.8 % of whom are concentrated in the former **Ovamboland** (Siiskonen 1990:35). Researchers agree that **Ovawambo** immigrated to **Owambo** via Angola over the Kunene and Okavango rivers.

So **Ovawambo** are part of the one and half million population of Namibia. This place lies "between 16 and 20 latitude and 14 and 18" longitude East (Williams 1991:ii). In the new dispensation, **Owambo** consists of Oshana, Omusati, Ohangwena and Oshikoto regions. As it will become clear later, there are quite a few similarities between **Owambo** and that of other Bantu groups.

3.3 Owambo world view

3.3.1 *Their concept of the cosmos*

According to **Ovawambo** stories, **Ovawambo** believed in the triple-floored world. **Kalunga** and the dead nobles live in the first upper world above the earth. This is called **eulu** [heaven]. There are no deficiencies in **eulu**. That rain does not stop falling so that "sowing and harvesting is unceasing" (Vedder 1966:74) implies that normal, in fact, ideal life is anticipated. No ordinary person hopes to get there. But after their death, the dignified of the human race join **Kalunga** and sit around him/her day and night. The status of the nobility in this legend confirms traditional tendencies among **Ovawambo** to despise the poor, the wicked and the morally weak members of society.

The **second world** is inhabited by the living whose relationships are, by definition, vertical. It is called **edu** [the earth] or **ounyuni** [the world]. To some extent, this world depends on the first for its survival. For example it receives its means of survival such as rain and sun from the first world above. It was believed that **Kalunga** allows drops of rain to get through the floor of **eulu**, just enough to give humans a chance of producing the means of existence in good years and afford grazing for their stock (Vedder 1966:75). The two are vertically related. In other words, all life in the second world, whether of humans, animals or plants, depend on the mercy of **Kalunga** and his/her company of the nobles who live in the first world. **Kalunga** is not restricted to the first world but is seen visiting the second world from time to time.

The **third world** lies under **ounyuni** [the world] and is known as **oshilongo shaantu yaa na omapaya** [the country of people without belts]¹². For **Ovawambo** this is the worst of all three worlds. Located under the earth (Vedder 1966:75), the third world depends on the second world for its existence because only the surplus rainfall of the second world percolates through to it

¹² It is not clear whether this particular expression is reserved for the third world alone. It is quite possible that it was applicable to both the first (**eulu**) and the third realms of the dead. The mentioning of belts expresses burial practices because the dead are buried naked, therefore, without belts. In fact, a belt signifies life. If a person dies in a far country, for instance, his/her belt must be brought to the relatives to bear witness to the event.

(Vedder 1966:75). "Members of this world are departed souls of the common people ... (who) live there in poverty and suffer hunger" (Vedder 1966:75). The worst thing that can happen to humans is to get to this third world where peace, joy, satisfaction and health are foreign. Nobody wishes to enter the third world.

Hunger and poverty leads to fierce fighting among those spirits. Their hunger is so great that they even catch flies for food (Vedder 1966:75).

Stories are told that members of this world welcome members because they will soon start feeding on his or her flesh. Unwritten stories also suggest that there is a continuous fire which does not burn out. I wonder whether this notion is not derived from ideas of hell borrowed from other religions such as Christianity or Judaism. This explains the reason why slave female girls were buried alive with the dead king (**Ovakwanyama**) with little or no objection at all. It was believed that a poor female slave, whose natural destiny was the third world, was favoured by accompanying the king to the upper world (Vedder 1966; 74). It also explains why in former **Oukwanyama**, the deceased's head-wife and counsellors were suffocated. Vedder summarizes it very well:

A female slave seated herself on the skin and the chief's corpse was placed on her lap; both were then covered up in the skin and the grave was filled with sand on the same day the deceased's wife and counsellors were strangled. This was done with the idea of affording him service and company in the hereafter (1966:74).

Estermann records the same practice but adds that the female slaves were two and their purpose was, one to take care of the holy fire and another of the pipe of the king (1966:97). This world view seems to be common among **Ovakwanyama**. **Aandongga** seem to hold a view that the headquarters of **Kalunga** are below the earth, in the third. Knappert records that among **Aandongga**, **Kalunga** lives in the world under the earth.

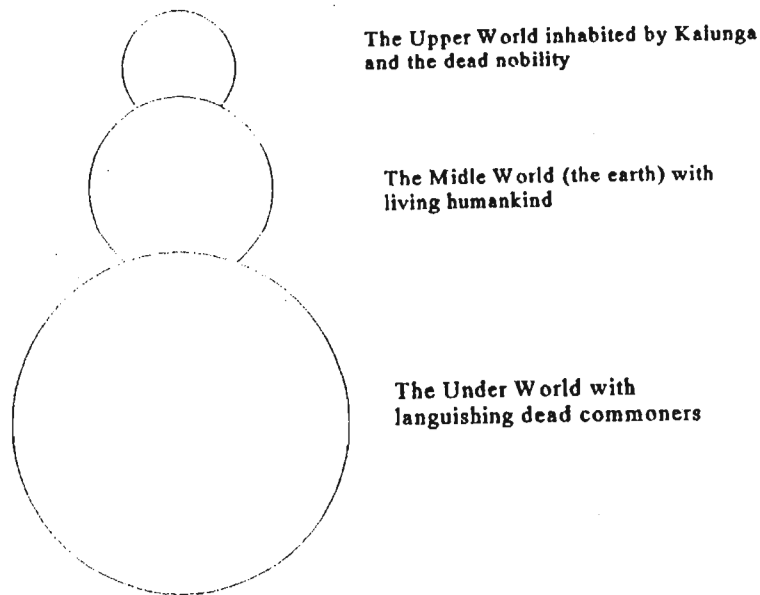
The **Ondonga** [**Aandongga**] believe that the sun is a servant of **Kalunga** [god], who lives under the earth. Once three men dug a very deep well. They dug and dug, but found no water. Suddenly, as one man pushed his spade very deep down there was a hole, and through the hole, deep down, they could see fields, people and animals. That was **Kalunga's** kingdom (1981:157).

It is to this vast empire, whether above or below, that "**Kalunga** calls a man or a woman" through death (Knappert 1981:157), whose soul will have to travel a long journey to come to the empire of **Kalunga**¹³. In spite of the difference about the location of **Kalunga**, there are similarities between **Aandong** and **Ovakwanyama**. Both show a belief in the existence of **Kalunga** and the knowledge about a life hereafter. To both, **Kalunga** lives in a different world, where humans go after death to be with **Kalunga**. There are rain and fields, the main source of life among **Ovawambo**. They also agree that "**Kalunga** calls" people to him/her through death and their spirits travels a long journey to come to him/her. Although only souls are perceived as going to **Kalunga**, they seem to receive some kind of bodies once they arrive there to enable them to continue their normal activities. The following quote bears witness to this world view:

The first is above us and it is pleasant to live there, for droughts and hunger are unknown. It rains quite frequently and sowing and harvesting are unceasing. It is there that **Kalunga**, the highest deity, dwells. The noble of the land gather round him. A man of the people has little prospect of reaching this upper world. The second world is that on which we live. It receives from above just a little of the surplus rain, only that which oozes through the upper world and falls downward to our earth. Only the surplus rain from our earth seeps through to that lower world. The departed souls of the common people dwell there. For the world below is only a shadow of our own. Because of their great need the souls of the dead return to the living world to demand sacrifices.(Loeb 1962:209; cf Loeb 1951:292).

¹³ It is **Kalunga** who calls both nobles and commoners. We are not given details by this quote about the different directions the dead take as they depart from the earth. We presume that the long journey to the kingdom of **Kalunga** is travelled by the dignified and their companions. Whether the souls of commoners also travel a long journey to their abode is not clear.

Schematically the world view of **Ovawambo** may be presented as follows: **Diagram 4**



3.3.2 *The religious significance of the Ovambo concept of the world*

The cosmology of **Ovawambo** is not without its significance for their notions of God, sin, punishment and salvation. Some examples may suffice.

(a) On the ideal world

The cosmology shows that traditionally, **Ovawambo** have been aware of the tension between the realms of the dead and of the living, although different ethnic groups have different perceptions about where **Kalunga** is. **Aambalantu** seem to believe that there is only one place for all the living-dead and **Kalunga**, but the former are at a different proximity to **Kalunga**. **Aambalantu** derived their conclusion from the two circular constellations in the North East. "The nearer circle of stars is 'the hearth of the king', and the further one is 'the fireplace of ordinary people'" (Loeb 1962:209).

To be noted here is the fact that **Kalunga** is far from the people whether alive or dead. The dead seem to be closer to **Kalunga** than the living. If they were well off on earth, they retain their status in the kingdom of **Kalunga** and they are closer to **Kalunga** than the commoners. Whatever differences there are, however, the fact is that **Ovawambo** knew and anticipated an ideal world. For **Ovakwanyama** and **Aambalantu**, it was above, for **Ovandong** below.

(b) On **Kalunga**

For **Ovawambo**, **Kalunga** is the Origin, Master and Creator of all that is. Nothing [good or evil] can exist without him/her. But if s/he is the Source and Master of all we experience, then evil too comes from him/her and is under him/her and this makes him/her extremely ambiguous. But this is the only way it would make sense to say that God is God, the Master of all that is. This mastery is the basis of human hope that God will effect what ought to be, that is comprehensive wellbeing or salvation. **Kalunga** is also benevolent. S/he "cares for her eggs"¹⁴ and is more benevolent than a mother. The benevolence of **Kalunga**, however, seems narrower than that of the biblical God, Immanuel.

There is a discrepancy in **Owambo** religion between the way **Kalunga** relates to the nobility on the one hand and to the commoners on the other. Although **Kalunga iha dipaelwa ovana** [God does not allow his/her children to be killed], our daily experience is different and contradictory. A critical analysis of **Owambo** world- and life views, reveals that **Kalunga** was closely associated with the nobility, the rich, the powerful, the old and the good. Here is a contradiction. Perhaps the expression that s/he owns and cares for everything and everyone should be understood as part of the ambivalence of **Kalunga**. The benevolence of God as perceived by Luther is very wide in scope, covering all people. But it is important to note that there is an agreement between Luther and **Ovawambo** on the question of the ambivalence and benevolence of **Kalunga**, even if it is only in principle.

For Luther, God is a person who directly relates to sinners. For **Ovawambo**, this is not possible, because, **Kalunga ke fi omunhu** [**Kalunga** is not a human being]. S/he relates to people only

¹⁴ By eggs is meant children or offsprings.

by proxy and indirectly, that is via representatives such as **eenganga** [diviners], **ovakulunhu** [elders], **oikwashiwana** [tradition and culture] and **ovakwamhungu** [ancestors]. There is no scripture in **Owambo** spirituality similar to the canonised Bible in Christianity. Where communication with **Kalunga** took place it did so via someone else. It is said for instance: **Eulu kali na eengudi, ngeno omapongo hatu londo** [There are no stairs to heaven, otherwise we, the poor and the unclaimed, would climb into it]. This seems to suggest that **omapongo** [the poor, the unclaimed, the marginalised] did not have access to **Kalunga**, at least not a direct one. Although **Kalunga** is personified as an uncle or mother [never father], s/he is, strictly speaking, not perceived as a person who is freely available for humans and who can relate to them horizontally, that is, who has fellowship with them. **Kalunga** is only invited into the drama of human life in times of need, particularly when human means to solve problems are exhausted without solution. It is said among **Aambalantu** that "**Kalunga** lives very far off where there are no people" (Loeb 1962:209). This remoteness marks **Kalunga's** otherness.

(c) On the structure of the world and of society¹⁵

There is a hierarchy of worlds with the inhabitants related vertically and unequally both in status, power and privileges. In the upper world, occupants are closer to Kalunga. They do not know any deficiency, but enjoy comprehensive wellbeing. Kalunga favours the elite and the good both on earth and in the upper world. S/he is in fellowship with them and is horizontally related to them. S/he is available to them at all times. Kalunga appears to be for, with and not against the nobility.

Both **Kalunga** and the nobility are vertically related to the commoners both the living and the dead. They are big bosses up there and not in fellowship with the underdog population. As a matter of fact, ancestors come from this world to punish or reward their living relatives. So social discrepancies exist between the elite and the rest of the people, even on the other side of the grave. The occupants of the top world lord it over the other two worlds. The underworld receives only, the surplus of rain and sun from the second world and the second from the first. The third world is described in hellish terms.

¹⁵ See diagram 4 and appendix II for tribal and family structures.

This world- and life view seems to be a replica of what the traditional **Ovawambo** experienced on this side of the grave. The elite led an easy and better life. They had most of their basic needs fulfilled. Their future was guaranteed. The richer, the more powerful and the older one was at death, the more powerful one was believed to become in the next life (upper world). In actual life, it was the poor who were sacrificed for **oulinawa aushe wa aveshe** [common comprehensive wellbeing].

3.3.3 Sacred directions

For **Ovakwanyama**, **Kalunga** is closely identified with the sun, not because the two are the same, but because they have similar qualities. Because of this association, the directions of **Ovakwanyama** are determined by the movements of the sun. There are only two directions with distinct names: **Oushilo** [the East], where the sun rises, and **Ouninginino** [the West], where it sets. The other directions are simply named after the immediate neighbours: **Evale**, after the tribe immediately to the north and **Ondonga** after the tribe immediately to the south of **Oukwanyama**. South is also referred to as **Oushimba**, the locative form of **Ovahimba/Ovashimba** [the Hereros], who are further south of **Owambo**. Loeb is, of course, mistaken in regarding the **Himbas** as "a branch of the **Ondonga** tribe" (1962:210).

Because of the association of the sun with **Kalunga**, the movement of the sun further determines the significance of the directions it takes. In the East, where it rises, live the good spirits associated with good fortune and life. In the West, where the sun sets, live the bad spirits associated with bad fortune and death. Good ancestors live in the East, while the bad ones live in the West. **Ovakwanyama** offer prayers to both depending on particular circumstances.

Consequently, **Ovakwanyama** attach a great deal of symbolic significance to these directions and to the sun. It symbolised **Kalunga**, because it bestowed life, enhanced and renewed it. It was for this reason that the house of traditional **Kwanyama** faced eastward. They believed that at night, death ruled, but during the day, life ruled. This means, when the sun set, it took life with it and when it rose, it brought life with it. For this reason, **Ovakwanyama** did not allow their sick to be lying down when the sun set, for that symbolised death and a corpse. In fact, no one was allowed to be asleep at that time because such a person shall be "liable to go down with the sun

to the underworld" (Loeb 1962:210). This suggests that the earth is in the middle of a circle. At sunset, all the sick were made to stand in order to avoid the position of a corpse. The sun set, it went under the earth Westward to reappear in the East the next day. Every morning when the sun comes up again in the East, the sick were brought out to lie or sit at the Eastern entrance of the house, or simply of their sleeping huts, to receive new life from the rising sun (Loeb 1962:210).

All those assumptions may be related to the actual experience of **Ovawambo**. The sun is the source of human wellbeing. Without it, humans really suffer under darkness. Nobody and nothing can see. Nobody can work and so, without it, there can be no food to eat and stay alive. It is also unsafe in darkness. So there is no security. For the health of humans, animals and plants, the sun is indispensable. So a conclusion may be made that it was natural for **Ovawambo** to attach such significance to the sun, to such an extent that they viewed it as a symbol of **Kalunga**.

3.3.4 The Ovambo concept of time

Measuring time was as important for the traditional **Ovawambo** as it is for us today. However, they did not measure it in seconds, minutes, hours as we do. They looked at the sun, the moon and the stars. They also counted days, months and years, though they did not count weeks. For them, time was closely connected to human welfare and survival. We now look at different known times in some detail.

(a) A day

In the absence of watches, **Ovakwanyama** marked their time by looking at the position of the sun. Time, which seems to form a circle, was divided into **efiku** [day], and **oufiku** [night]. But there were sub-terms under each of these major times. The following may be mentioned:

1. **Ongula** - morning - daybreak; 2. **Oshitumbetango** - around nine;
3. **Omutenya** - midday; 4. **komatango** - afternoon;
5. **Onguloshi** - evening; 6. **Oufiku** - night;
7. **keengula eexuxwa tadi lili** - early morning when roosters crow 8. **Eluwa tali tende** - the first grey morning.

There was no conception of weeks. Week-days were also not marked by specific names. There were no off-days such as Sunday, Christmas or New Year. But there were a few holidays. A holiday was called **ongodji** [day of rest] such as the mourning period of a king (Loeb 1962:61). On the day of the rain-making ceremony people stopped working. It was **ongodji** (Loeb 1962:65). It was not significant for them to know the exact birthday or age of a person. It sufficed to know that one was born during the reign of king so and so, or that somebody is younger or older than somebody else.

(b) A moon or month

The measurements of many activities and events were done in accordance with the position of the moon and the stars. Feasts for instance were held in accordance with the phases of **ohani** or **omwedi** [the moon or month]. There were only three phases (Loeb 1962:210). They are:

(1) **Okamwedjona** [small or new moon]: Only a few activities took place during this time probably because the new moon went down too early, leaving people in darkness. (2) **Omutootoo** [the white/bright moon]. It was packed with activities, e.g youth dances, initiation ceremonies and rituals. During this phase the adults trained the youth and kept them engaged. During the day, they worked; the greater part of the evening until midnight, they played; the rest of the night, they were tired and fast asleep; very early in the morning, they were up again to start the work of a new day. There was no free time when they could wander about. So the phase was used for the wellbeing of the youth, family, clan or community.

(3) **Etalambabi** [deer-attracting]: The name referred to the size of the physical moon. The moon was now full when it arose at night. The deer was attracted by the moon as the latter emerged on the horizon. So it was not, as Loeb suggests, "that the full moon is a great eye looking down on the people", derived from the big eye of a deer (1962:210). The fact is that when the full moon emerged from the East at night, it attracted the deer which looked at it with amazement and interest.

This way of marking time was their means of making life easy for themselves to be able to identify when something should, or has taken place. For example, they had established that

during the rainy season (summer), rain normally felt during **okamwedjona** and during **etalambabi**. Beginning with the first spring, **Ovakwanyama** identified the following twelve months:

1. **Kuungumene** - December. So named because intensive work started in the fields.
2. **Kwenyona** - January. Actually the full name is **Kwenyona kwongongo nombe ta i hola**. That means, the month when marula and **eembe** [**ombe** for singular] ripen. The month is also so named because of its dry weather.
3. **Kwenyekwakula** - February. It is named so because it was terribly dry but fruits were now completely ripe.
4. **Taula** - March : So named because rain has now come back in such quantities that cattle dung was flowing beyond cattle kraals. Its full name is **Taula yomalombo koinyongo** which simply means: overflowing of cattle dung.
5. **Kayoo-komahangu** - April. This name literally means survival of millet. Its full name is **Kayookomahangu a yooka okudala**. This means that **omahangu** [millet] has now survived the phase of **okudala** [sprouting].
6. **Kayoo-koilyavala** - May: Survival of Sorghum: Its full name is: **Kayookoilyavala ya yooka okudala**. This means the survival of **oilyavala** [sorghum] from the sprouting phase.
7. **Kayoo-koilya-poipale** - June: This name refers to the survival of all grain at a threshing floor. It is thus **Kayoo koilya ya yooka okuxuwa** [survival of millet during threshing].
8. **Epembalinini** - July : Trees and plants began to sprout i.e. small seedling of leaves.
9. **Epembalakula** - August: All leaves fallen off, i.e. a big and complete shedding of leaves.
10. **Etalalalinini** - September: A few small leaves had developed.
11. **Etalalalakula** - October: All trees developed leaves. It was very green.
12. **Shikukutu** - November: a very hot and dry month.

Ovakwanyama say: **Omutenya wa hambwa koilemo. Omifima da fulile, ndele paife oda kukuta vali. Oixwa imwe nomwiidi otai hovele vali okukukuta** [heat has been intensified by clouds. Wells were swollen, but they are drying up again. Some bushes and grass begin drying up]. The names of the months are directly related to survival and wellbeing.

(c) A year

Ovakwanyama marked the times of the year by looking at **eenyofi** [the stars] and at different seasons as they came and went. In **Shikukutu** [November], just before the first rain fell, the star

called **mawila**¹⁶ rose in the East, giving a sign for **eendima** [hoeing] and **ekuno** [planting]. When it rose in the East, it is about daybreak. **Mauvalelo** is yet another star, so called because it appears during **omauvalelo** [evening meals].

A year extended from one harvest to the next. Its length depended on the early or late ripening of **eengongo** [marula fruit]. Sometimes the beginning of the year was marked by the fall of the first rain. In the final analysis the beginning of the year was marked by **eexuluxulu** [spring], the falling of the first rain and the appearance of the first grass. Four different seasons were recognised:

Eexuluxulu [spring]: This is a time of the first light and, short rains. When this rain had fallen, it is said, "**odula oya temuna**" [the first rain has fallen]. The new grass sprung up, hoeing and planting commenced. This happened about the end of **Shikukutu** [November] and the beginning of **Kuungumene** [December].

Okulombo [summer]: This was a wet season. Field activities begun; planting and hoeing to pull up the weeds were daily activities for women. **Okulombo** extends from **Kuungumene** through **Kwenyona** [January] and **Kwenyekwakula** [February] to end in **Taula** [March].

Okufu [winter]: This is the best of all seasons. Its main activities are harvesting and gathering. It extended from **Kayookomahangu** [April] to the end of **Epembalakula** [August]. Many feasts and celebration were held during this season. There was enough food for all. **Ovawambo** say: "**Okufu okwa ondola embungu nomumati e he na ina** [winter fattened a hyena and a boy without a mother].

¹⁶ Loeb referred to this star as 'mwetakuasa' (sic) 1962:210), probably a misspelled version of **mutakushi**, which literally means a star which arises to mark daybreak. The official name of this star, however is **mawila**, derived from dating. **Ovakwanyama** (males) go for dating to female homes at night after everybody else has gone into bed. They spend the whole night there, only to return when the star in question rises. So it marks the time to return because day is about to break. The name is derived from the verb **okuwila** which means to date.

Okwenye [dry summer]: This is a hot and dry season, following immediately after harvesting and thrashing. During this time, women made pots and baskets while men repaired houses, went to **koukongo** [hunting], **koshimanya** [mining] and **keehambo** [cattle posts]. Commencing with **Okatalalona** [September] it included **Etalalalakula** [October] and ended the seasonal circle.

It might be inferred from the above information that **Ovawambo** in general, and **Ovakwanyama** in particular, identified twelve 'moons' with about 28 days each associated with the seasons referred to above. If a discrepancy was detected, a month was simply lengthened to last the length of our modern two months. There were, for instance, three periods around April. The **Owambo** name for April is **Kayoo**, meaning survival. First, millet survives the sprouting period, then sorghum, and finally the survival of both from thrashing. This latter part of April marked the successful storing of all that was produced. Therefore, there were three different period called **Kayoo**: **Kayookomahangu** [survival of millet], **Kayookoilyavala** [survival of sorghum] and **Kayoo koilya ya yooka poipale** [survival of millet and sorghum from thrashing places]. The name for every month is descriptive of the main activities associated with it.

3.4 Owambo religious beliefs

3.4.1 *Their concept of Kalunga*¹⁷ [God]

Missionary activities among **Ovawambo** first targeted **Aandong** when the work of Christianization was started in 1870 by the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran missionaries. 22 years later (1892), **Ovakwanyama** also became the object of missionary activities by German missionaries (Estermann 1966:181). **Ovawambo**, particularly **Ovakwanyama**, have been more profoundly influenced by the Protestants than by the Catholics. The reason for their impact is attributed to the method employed by the Protestants in their evangelization. Father Estermann writes:

The Lutherans have made the reading of the Bible in the native language a **conditio sine qua non** for admission to baptism. For that reason, the boys and

¹⁷ **Ovawambo** are a matrilineal society. Their life force is not communicated via the lineage of the father like many Bantus, but via the mother. Consequently, **Kalunga** is, in many cases compared to a mother. In the final analysis, however, **Kalunga** is regarded to be gender neutral.

girls reached by the missionaries began by reading and rereading the sacred texts, and eventually learned a great number of them by heart (1966:181).

Thus, the impact of Christianity on **Owambo** culture and spirituality was enormous. Even **Oshiwambo** [the language] became saturated with biblical ideas. Estermann is right, therefore, when he warns researchers to be extremely careful, critical, cautious and well informed about both traditional and overlaid religious elements, if a distinction is to be made between them.

(a) Its etymology

Kalunga

Most of the traditional **Owambo** cultural elements have been forgotten. However, there seems to be unanimous agreement among scholars that **Ovawambo** believed in one Supreme Being called **Kalunga** (Bruwer 1967:133f; Aarni 1982:92ff; Hiltunen 1993:34). **Ovawambo** call their God **Kalunga ka Nangombe** [God of Nangombe]. Nangombe was the son of Mangundu, their founding ancestor (Aarni 1982:31). This name is associated with **ongombe** [cattle] signifying a wealthy person with a great number of cattle. **Kalunga ka Nangombe** means God of our ancestors. We agree with Aarni that **Owambo** religion may best be described as **Kalungism** (1982:134-141). It is this **Kalunga** who is known as **Kalunga koimbaba** [the God of baskets]. **Ovakwanyama** have a riddle which says: **Oumbale va Nangobe** [or **Nangombe** in **Oshindonga**] **ve fike pamwe oshike?** [What are the two equal baskets of Nangobe]? The answer is: **eulu nedu** [heaven and earth]. **Nangobe** in this riddle is not God as Aarni suggests, but the first **Owambo** ancestor. But a legend is told that **Kalunga** was seen every year carrying two baskets. In one, he carries good luck, in the other he carries bad luck. Whichever is the heavier basket will determine the nature of the year in terms of prosperity. The lesson is that it is **Kalunga** who is in charge of life.

Estermann accepts **Kalunga** as the true God, for when missionaries first started with their missionary activities among **Ovawambo**, they did not find it necessary to coin a new concept for the expression of the Supreme Being: "it sufficed to make a slight semantic adjustment in existing words" (1966:181). This traditional name was found extremely useful for evangelisation although it does not mean that they found a complete identity with the content of the concept of **Kalunga** and the God they were preaching. God was henceforth designated **Kalunga**.

I do not suggest that the concept of **Kalunga** is identical with the concept of the God preached by the missionaries. That is perhaps made impossible by the fact that the existence of the God of the missionaries is defined by his fatherhood of Jesus Christ, who was unknown in **Owambo** religion. What I am uncomfortable with is the argument put forward by Aarni that **Kalunga** is not a true God and **Ovawambo** believed in more than one deity (Aarni 1982:92ff). I would argue that "the undefinable Something", that "Powerful Somebody" beyond humans, that "mysterious Power which cannot be seen, and is not fully understood, but which is at work in the world" (Aarni 1982:93) is **Kalunga** whose existence is similar to the existence of God known by Luther as the hidden God. This hiddenness of God seems to provide a useful link between Luther's perception of God and the **Owambo** notion of **Kalunga**. So as far as God is hidden in the contrary, there seems to be no quarrel between Luther and **Ovawambo**.

A linguistic study of the group comprising **Ovawambo**, the **Nyaneka-Nkumbi**, **Ovahereros**, the **Ngangela** bloc, **Ovimbundu** and the **Tjokwe** revealed that

the verbal root-**lunga** always expresses something related to the intelligence. In **Kwanyama** the single radical is rarely used in prose, being considered an archaic form. But both in prose and in poetry it has the meaning of the compound - **lunguka**, which signifies 'to be astute', 'to be expert'. In other languages the verb is **okulunga** signifies 'to be attentive,' 'vigilant'(Estermann 1966:181).

Further, all the languages classified under this linguistic group contain the noun **ndunge** with various prefixes. It has a common meaning of 'intelligence'. The prefix **ka** in **Kalunga** appears somewhat strange in some languages of this linguistic group, for it is supposed to indicate a diminutive form of the concept concerned. **Kalunga** would mean a small something or somebody with a lot of intelligence or expertise. But this prefix is not completely strange in **Oshikwanyama**. There are proper nouns which go with **ka** if a possessive preposition is used. **Kaluwa kaMushimba**, means **Kaluwa** of **Mushimba**, so do **Nakambale kaKativa**, **Nakadidile kaLambo**, etc. The **Tjokwe** language seems to affirm this explanation. The prefix **ka** is used as a personal prefix. A **Tjokwe** is **Katjokwe**. We may infer from this "that the **Tjokwe** language has preserved the older form of the prefix" (Estermann 1966:182). Etymologically, therefore, **Kalunga** could mean "the personal intelligent being" (Estermann 1966:182).

Kalunga "is the supreme Being, the Creator of Heaven and of the Earth". It is not true that **Kalunga** "is less concerned with the well-being or misery of mortals" (Estermann 1966:182). He provided means of survival and relief even though s/he does so indirectly via the agents of **oulinawa** [wellbeing].

In fact, the concept of **Kalunga** could derive from **lungama**, that is, 'to take care of', or **lungila** 'to mix something for some one'. If **Kalunga** is derived from **lungama**, then the concept describes a being or person who is so good, so righteous and so concerned that s/he is always available for others. If it derives from **lungila**, it suggests that **Kalunga** is that being who 'has done it all for others'. People bear a name **Ndemulungila**, meaning, I have done everything good for you all. Indeed, **Kalunga** has done all for us and **Ovawambo** knew that. S/he has created reality for us to live in with all necessities of life. **Kalunga** is not "merest chance" or "an inevitable fate" as Dymond suggests (1966:140,141).

(b) The other titles of **Kalunga**

Like other Bantu, **Ovawambo** did not concern themselves with metaphysical thinking. They did not find it important to ask questions about the origin and nature of **Kalunga**. It sufficed for them to know that **Kalunga** is the ultimate power and authority. It did not bother them that this deity is invisible and remote. The best they could do was to give **Kalunga** different titles, according to how they experienced him/her. That was how they responded to his/her manifestations. Apart from the name **Kalunga**, there are others, including **Pamba**, **Namhongo**, **Mbangu**, **Pambaelishita**¹⁸ and, **Muthithi** (Aarni 1982:109). They are, however, "archaic and are mostly used in proverbial and poetic expressions" (Estermann 1966:181). These names are old and have been known before the missionaries.

It is very interesting to note that the same term **Kalunga** is found also among other ethnic groups in Namibia and elsewhere in Africa such as the Herero (Namibia), Ovimbundu, the Lunda (Angola, Congo, Zambia). Baluba (Congo), Chokwe, Luimbe, Mbundu, Ngangela and Pende (Angola). Perhaps in ancient times these people were together and experienced the same

¹⁸ **Pambaelishita** is a myth of **Kalunga**. It will be considered separately shortly below.

Kalunga. Other meanings of the term, therefore, can be found by examining the usage among these other Bantu groups of Africa. But one point must be made here that **Kalunga** cannot possibly derive from the name of "a small bush tree" **okalunga** as Voipio is quoted to have concluded (Aarni 1982:115). My informants, Sakeus Amunyela actually confirmed the view of Voipio. But because the name **Kalunga** is found in many other language where this 'bush tree' might be unknown or has a different name, that this view cannot be correct. Since it is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into more detail in this matter, we now turn to other personal names of Kalunga.

Pamba

Kalunga is also known as **Pamba**, the term derived from the verb **okupamba** - 'to side with' or 'to relate to'. One is naturally concerned about, and in solidarity with, one's kin. **Pamba** signifies that **Kalunga** is a being in solidarity with, who cares for, and is concerned with, all humans. **Kalunga** is usually addressed as **Pamba** when the situation requires one to care for the weak, the lonely, the sick, the mourners, the sufferer, the stranger, the deprived, the poor, etc. In this way **Pamba** is identified with the weak and with the underprivileged. Accordingly, **Ovanhu ova Pamba**, **Munyembala okwe va pewa** [The people belong to **Pamba**, but are under the care of the king]. A stranger, a poor person and an abnormal person is "**Omunhu Pamba**". Therefore s/he deserves to be cared for. This is a title which entails doing good works to others.

If **Pamba** is derived from the noun **epamba**, which means a very wide area or scope, that would imply **Pamba's** omnipresence so that there is nothing happening without **Pamba** knowing it. As Dymond rightly puts it, "**Kalunga** ... is divine ... omnipresent and omniscient" (1966:143). A similar title of God is also found among the Chewa of Malawi (Mphambe), and the Nyanja of Zambia and Malawi. **Pamba-e-lishita** [self-created God] is a myth of Kalunga to which we shall turn later (Dymond 1966:148).

The study of **Owambo** proverbs and expressions reveal that the names **Kalunga** and **Pamba** refer to one and same being. Aarni points to proverb number 506 in Kuusi which shows that **Pamba** and **Kalunga** are in the same remote sphere. This particular proverb is poetic, and reveals that the two beings are actually one, and that these are above us. The proverb reads: **Kwa kala**

Pamba ku yi ko; kwa kala Kalunga kanaatsa naayamba, ku londo ko siku limwe [Where **Pamba** is, you cannot go, where **Kalunga** of the poor and the rich reside you will never climb]. **Tu yeni tu ke mu kongeni, Pamba oku li mombepo** [**Pamba** is up, let us go and fetch her/him]. This shows that **Pamba** lives in a different place than humans, and is invisible. But, in spite of the remoteness of **Pamba**, **Ovawambo** believe that s/he is concerned for them and would not allow, them to be harmed by the powerful of the world. When the owl which was believed to be a familiar of witches, hoots in darkness, it was said: **Inamu tu lya, fye ovanhu va Pamba** [Do not bewitch us, we are people of **Pamba**]. It is also possible, as Aarni argued, that **Pamba** is a shortened version of **Pambaelishita**, a name which shows that **Kalunga** is not created (Aarni 1982:111).

Namhongo

Kalunga is **Namhongo** in **Oshikwanyama** and **Nampongo** in **Oshindonga**. This name may have been derived from: **epongo** [the stranger or the orphan or the unclaimed]. **Epongo** is a person 'without a family'. Perhaps **Namhongo** means **Naapongo**, the one who is concerned with the lonely and the orphans, as Nambala claims (1992:6). It could also mean **ina yomapongo**, [the mother of the unclaimed]. This reinforces the idea that **Kalunga** is the mother of all people as it is expressed in the proverb quoted earlier. **Kalunga** is usually called **Namhongo** in the face of dangers or difficulties. When people, particularly the commoners, experience hardship and when such suffering is solved mysteriously, they would say **Shalongo ku na Nampongo, oondjendi ando twa hepa** [If there was no **Nampongo** (not 'in the country' as Kuusi translates but 'in existence'), we wanderers would suffer want].

Aarni cannot be right in claiming that this particular name was given to 'a patron saint' (1982:110). It was given to **Kalunga** and used in situations when s/he was experienced or needed to act as a mother. In fact, this expression must be seen as praise from those saved, rescued and claimed by the overall authority, **Kalunga**. **Namhongo** is God, as Kuusi realised when he translated proverb no. 718 in his **Owambo proverbs**. Again it must be underlined that (and here Aarni is right) **Namhongo** is "the name of an unseen power which we cannot reach" (1982:110). **Owambo** proverb no. 718 in the list of Kuusi bears witness to much of what is said above. **Nambongo openi a kala? Indeni mu ke mu tale ko**. [Where is **Nampongo**, go fetch her/him].

The translation given by Kuusi is incorrect, for **tale ko** in this proverb does not mean 'look where' but 'bring here'. So the context of the proverb is the situation of hardship. People have tried to remedy it, but in vain. Now, they ask: "Where is God?" The additional explanation of Kuusi is, therefore, right (Aarni 1982:110). This proverb is about the quest for an ultimate authority who alone has the capability to remedy the situation because all others have failed.

Rain is called **inakulu yomapongo** [the grandmother of the strangers and orphans]. This is so because rain comes from **Kalunga** who provides for all, including the poor. Further, **Onghuwo yepongo oKalunga he i tondoka** [It is **Kalunga** himself who responds to the cry of the family-less]. A similar term is found among the Abaluyia of Kenya (**Nabongo** - the Supreme Being).

Mbangu

Mbangu is another title for **Kalunga**. **Ovawambo** regard a bough or branch of the **ombango** bush as a lightning conductor. It is normally kept in the huts during thunderstorms. When it thunders and lightning seems dangerously near, people pull the leaves off the boughs and throw them on the fire burning in the hut. The frightened people will then rub their foreheads with its ashes and charcoal while saying: **Fye ovana/ovana va Mbangu** [We are the sons of Mbangu, or, We are the people of Mbangu], expressing their belief that **Kalunga** owns them and should not harm or destroy them (Dymond 1966:148; Aarni 1982:111). The name **Mbangu** is used to affirm the trust of the person uttering it in **Kalunga**, in the sense of Psalm 23. Thus, Aarni writes: "In the night when hearing 'inexplicable' noises or seeing omens, **Ovawambo** exclaim: **Itila mbudhi, ngaye [ngame] omuntu gwa Mbangu** [I fear no evil, I am a man of Mbangu]" (1982:111).

This title also expresses the human acknowledgement that **Kalunga** is the judge with final authority and supreme power. The word "**ombangi**" means "witness". "**Omhangu**" means "court". "**Omupanguli**" is "the judge", or the "prosecutor". "**Omhangu**" is also the whole process which involves the interaction between the judge, the witnesses and the accused. Therefore "**Mbangu**" could mean one who is in charge of the process, the executor. To call upon **Mbangu** is to appeal to the highest authority for intervention in one's threatening circumstances. It is to call for **Kalunga** for relief or salvation, **oulinawa**.

Muthithi

Muthithi is another title of **Kalunga**. Unfortunately, missionaries confused two different nouns: **ekishi** (**Oshikwanyama**) or **ethithi** (**Oshindonga**) and **Mufifi** and **Muthithi** in **Oshikwanyama** and **Oshindonga** respectively. They are not similar. Different spellings came during the development of **Oshindonga** orthography. At different stages in **Oshindonga**, the term **Muthithi** was spelled **Muzizi**, then **Musisi** [also **Aasisi**] or **Mushishi**. The final version is certainly **Muthithi**. All these terms refer to the same Supreme Being. The concept is not common in **Oshikwanyama**, but when used, as a term borrowed from **Oshindonga**, it is **Mufifi**. Aarni cannot be right to argue that the word **Muthithi** means albino (1982:112), because albino is **ethithi** for singular and **omathithi** for plural in **Oshindonga**, **ekishi** for singular or **omakishi** for plural in **Oshikwanyama**. Further, there is a difference between **ethithi/ekishi** (an albino) and **ekishi/ethithi** (the monster). Only the context would show the difference.

Muthithi is sometimes regarded as **Kalunga**, but sometimes also as the spirit of, or the son of, **Kalunga** (Aarni 1982:112; Nambala 1996:98). Folk tales about **omakishi** [monsters] are common among "the majority of Bantu tribes" as Aarni remarks. Turner and Jonson failed to note the difference between folk tales about **omathithi/omakishi** [monsters] and **omakishi**, the albinos. When a riddle says: **Ihamu te eengano inamu tumbula omakishi** [You do not tell riddles without mentioning **omakishi**], it refers to the monsters and not albinos as Aarni suggests. When a riddle about creation goes: **Okathima okaleelee ku uka mwi, oshike shi li mo** [What is in a very deep little well that reaches into the earth], it speaks about **Kalunga** and neither albinos nor monsters. Observe the response: **Oka kala Muthithi ta hondjo etupa, Kalunga ka Nangombe ta andeke omutse gwodha** [There dwells **Muthithi**, sewing testicles, **Kalunga** of **Nangombe** (first ancestor), stitching the tip of a penis]. This riddle tells us that **Muthithi** and **Kalunga** are synonymous and **Kalunga** is responsible for making human beings, because it refers to sexual organs which produce children. So, **Muthithi** (**Oshindonga**) and **Mufifi** (**Oshikwanyama**) is another title for **Kalunga**. Therefore, Estermann is right when he argues that **Pamba** is the synonym of **Kalunga** so that, when the word **Pamba** is replaced by **Muthithi/Mufifi** in some proverbs, the latter is a synonymous and poetic concept designating **Kalunga**.

(c) Human names derivative from events related to **Kalunga**

Kalunga lives **pombada** [up] **meulu** [in heaven] (Dymond 1966:141). This remoteness marks his/her uniqueness as a divinity. In spite of the distance, however, **Kalunga** is trusted as an ultimate power or king, protector and owner of the entire reality. This attitude of **Ovawambo** to **Kalunga** became evident from the study of the names of **Ovawambo** which are descriptive of their attitude to her/him following particular events. Delving into the histories of such names deserves a study of its own. May it suffice, therefore, to point to a few of them and make a few observations:

Kalunga a prayer-name. It is normally given to children born after several ones have died in infancy. **Kalunga kaShindjala** who now lives in Tsumeb is an 87 year old twin of a third pair of twins. Twice his parents, who lived at **Ofaitumbo, Ohaingu** were blessed with twins. Both the first and the second pairs died in their infancy. Of the third pair, only one child survived. It was given the name **Kalunga**, a prayer and in fact a sign of submission to **Kalunga**. The name indicates that all possible ways to find out what could have caused the deaths have been exhausted. They left everything to **Kalunga**.

Paendohamba [the king has passed by], **Nghiyalahamba** [I will not be angry with the king, i.e. **Kalunga**] and **Shatyohamba** [the king said/decided] are names given to children born either after miscarriage, death of an infant, or even of a close relative. They too express the readiness of the parents to accept their lot as from **Kalunga**.

Ndiwakalunga expresses belongingness. Somebody was in trouble with the king. He felt innocent, but the king was determined to discipline him. Having nowhere to flee to, he expressed his feeling in the name of his newly born son: **Ndiwakalunga** [I belong to **Kalunga**]. This name is a short version of the proverb: **Ovanhu ova Pamba, Munyembala okwe va pewa** [People belong to **Pamba** [**Kalunga**] but are given to the king] already referred to above.

Shatipamba [**Pamba** said/decided], **Shekutaamba** and **Shekupepamba** [Accept what **Pamba** gives] are names given to children to express their parents' readiness to accept the role of **Kalunga** in an unpleasant event which might have taken place.

(d) Proverbial expressions about Kalunga

The concept of **Kalunga** features prominently in the proverbs and riddles of **Ovawambo**. Some of the proverbs may have emerged with the evangelization of **Ovawambo** by European missionaries. However, it is also true, as our informants confirmed, that many date well before the advent of Christianity. These might be accepted as authentically traditional. The following may be taken as a confirmation of this fact:

Kalunga kange! [My God!]: The expression is a sign of admiration, fright or joy (Estermann 1966:182). It is said by a person who is in a situation which is beyond human comprehension.

Oshili sha Kalunga [The truth of God]: This is a traditional oath, a confirmation of truth. **Kalunga** is not invoked in vain. This expression parallels the second commandment. Dymond was unable to explain away the knowledge of God expressed here by **Ovawambo**. He did not know what to do with this expression. In his words:

Quite different, however, is the force of the everyday expression **oshili sha Kalunga** ... This is equivalent to saying: 'It's God's truth I'm telling you' or 'It's as true as God's above' (1966:182).

Oshali shaKalunga [A gift of God]: If **Omuwambo** acquires something freely, it is from **Kalunga**. **Kalunga a teleka!** [God has cooked] is said when one finds a wild animal killed by a lion, meaning **Kalunga** has given a gift.

Oufimba waKalunga [dropsy]: Dropsy is called **oufimba waKalunga** [the pregnancy from **Kalunga**]. The expression is unisex (Estermann 1966:183). Because dropsy is not caused by witchcraft or the ancestors, it is attributed to **Kalunga**. It is said of person who died of no known cause: **Okwa fya Kalunga** [s/he died due to God's own decision] (Dymond 1966:141).

Shalongo tuu Kalunga a li po [Luckily **Kalunga** was there]:

Ovawambo do not hesitate "to attribute to God the fact of having escaped from danger" (Estermann 1966:183). One says: **Shalongo tuu Kalunga a li po, ngeno nda fya** [I would have

died, were it not for the presence of **Kalunga**]. The person who says that believes that **Kalunga** saves.

oKalunga ashike a talwa [Now we only look to **Kalunga**]. After **Ovawambo** have exhausted all means both "natural and supernatural in treating a serious illness (Estermann 1966:183), they leave everything to **Kalunga** and say this expression. The case is now left to **Kalunga** for his/her verdict. **Kalunga** may do the unexpected. After all, **Kalunga ke fi munhu** [**Kalunga** is not a human being].

Ina yoitoo ondjibololo, ina yovanhu oKalunga [The mother of pots is the underground pot-hole, but the mother of people is **Kalunga**]. **Ovawambo** produce their pots in an underground hole, known as **ondjibololo**. It is their mother. **Kalunga** has created people and is their mother [i.e. their origin; not father].

Pamba iha yandje luvali [God does not give twice]. This is said about the ability of God to distribute his blessings and gifts evenly, fairly, and justly. A similar expression goes: **Kalunga onyoko** [**Kalunga** in not your mother to give you so much without giving to others as well].

Kalunga omukumbe [**Kalunga** is unfathomable]: This proverb shows that **Ovawambo** knew the ambiguity of God. **Kalunga** does things which human beings cannot comprehend. S/he can give to a person who already has a child or take the only child a couple have. **Kalunga** is the source of both good and evil. In terms of human relationship to **Kalunga**, s/he is far yet near, in heaven, yet on earth.

(e) **Pambaelishita**: The myth of **Kalunga**

Mythological stories of traditional societies are significant for the knowledge of their traditional religious ideas and practices. Because of this, we intend analyzing one particular **Owambo** myth through which the **Owambo** idea of God might be detected and established. The myth is known as **Pambiishita** in **Oshindonga**, and misspelled **Nambalishita** in **Oshikwanyama**. To avoid unnecessary details in this thesis, we restrict ourselves to a summary of the myth in question, stressing its religious elements.

There was a woman who used to lay eggs. Every time she destroyed them. One day she chopped into a stump. Suddenly a voice from the stump asked her not to destroy her egg, but keep it on the granary. When she laid her next egg, she did what she was told.

Sometimes later, the egg hatched a being who claimed to be self-created. He called himself **Nambalishita**. He declared that he was not born of any person and would not be ruled by anybody, nor by the ruler of this world for that matter. The ruler of this world learnt of the existence of this self-created being and invited him to his kingdom. **Nambalishita** who had now grown into an adult agreed and undertook a journey to meet the ruler. All creatures were at his disposal, ready not only to accompany, but also to assist him if he should encounter any problem on his way.

Meanwhile, the king, who wanted to test the power of the self-created being had organised different barriers in the way of **Nambalishita**. Of course, the ultimate aim was to destroy him. The latter was always assisted by animals to overcome the barriers. Finally he reached the palace. More tests and traps were set for him, but every time an appropriate animal or insect warned or rescued him. In one final trap, the ruler himself was lured into his own trap and died. This signalled final victory for **Nambalishita** who became the king of the world (see Loeb 1951:292ff and Estermann 1966:186).

This myth has confused many travellers and missionaries. Its most confusing part is the confrontation between the self-created hero and the power of the day. Missionaries such as Kuusi (1970), Liljeblad (1930-32) Hukka (1954) and Aarni (1982) tried to prove that **Pambaelishita** was an enemy of **Kalunga** and the two 'quarrelled and tested each other' (Hukka quoted by Aarni 1982:117). **Pambaelishita** and **Kalunga** are not rivals who try "to out-smart each other" (Aarni 1982:112). This is a distortion of facts.

This self-created figure **Pambaelishita** represents the good, order, life and human wellbeing. The ruler of the world represents evil, chaos and death. The self-created power represents **Kalunga** [God]. It is God. The power that is being fought symbolises the power of darkness, the evil power of this age. It represents **Omunandubo**, the jealous one. It is the devil in Christian terms.

Another confusion is caused by the differences in names applied to the self-created power, **Pambaiishita** in **Oshindonga** and **Nambalishita** in **Oshikwanyama**. The migration story of these nations teaches that they have a common origin and ancestry but, because of daily needs, **Ovakwanyama** moved away northwards in Namibia never to return to their common place with **Ovandong**a in the centre of **Owambo** (Williams 1991:66ff). It seems logical to conclude, therefore, that **Aandong**a have probably retained the original version of the name of this figure. **Ovakwanyama** lost the exact spelling, the letter **P**, pronouncing it **N** instead.

For our purpose, I use **Pambaelishita**, the name which makes more sense in the context of the myth in question and which agrees with the **Oshindonga** version except for the letters at the beginning of the names of the hero figure. The most important parts, **i ishita** and **e lishita** [self-creating], are in full agreement. We have here to do with some self-created being. **Ovandong**a and **Ovakwanyama** are neighbours. Thus cross-fertilization between their languages is most likely. As a matter of fact, they speak dialects of the same language, **Oshiwambo**. It should not surprise us if the two should have a common name for the deity they believe in or a common myth like this one.

As a name, **Pambaishita** carries with it religious significance. It has a sense of "one who has created him/herself" or "The God **Pamba** is self-created. When **Pambaelishita** confronted the power that existed (chaos), he employed nature, i.e animals, birds, insects, trees etc. We may also mention in passing that here is an indication of the usefulness of animals in overcoming the impediments of human life. But since they are not sacrificed but employed in the service of **Pambaelishita**, we are tempted to ask: who else can command nature and it obeys, if not God (cf Mark 4:35)?

This **Pambaelishita** was not created, even though he had a father and mother. He emerged from an egg, which cracked after having been in a storage basket for some days (Estermann 1966:186). He was an unnatural child. According to **Owambo** tradition, an unnatural child "arouses the anxiety of the ruling powers, who fear the overturn of their regime, then proceeds to deeds of valour, and finally does overturn the establishment" (Loeb 1951:292). The fact that **Pambaelishita** had a father and a mother and was born from an egg shows that he was derived

from something which existed before him and humans were involved. But, this is a myth communicating certain truths and should not be taken literally. The underlying argument remains: reality owes its existence to **Kalunga**. It is saturated by evil. However, **Kalunga** is good and good will always overcome evil.

Because **Pambaelishita** was an unnatural child, he was believed to be dangerous to the existing power. Consequently, the power of the day endeavoured to destroy it even before its first breath. In the myth of **Pambaelishita**, the power of the day, which was most feared, therefore obeyed by all, cannot be **Kalunga** as Loeb believes (1951:293). In fact, in the myth which Loeb himself records, the evil power that he referred to as **omupangeli**, was dethroned by **Pambaelishita** [=**Kalunga**]; which means that good is bound to overcome evil.

In his footnotes, Loeb explains that there are three versions of the **Pambaelishita** myths. In one of them, the name **Pamba**, which is another title for **Kalunga**, is given (1951:293). However, when the same Loeb records the story, he preferred the version in which the power that existed is called **omupangeli** and not **Pamba**. He is right, for the power in question should not be equated with **Kalunga**, the High God, the Creator of heaven and earth, but with the **Omunawii** [the Evil one], **omunandubo** [the Jealous one] the one who causes chaos. **Pambaelishita** was born speaking. His first words were of self-identification:

Aha! Nde litasha mo! Ame Pambaelishita!
Inandi shitwa, ndele itandi pangelwa nande
okomunhu, ile komupangeli wounyuni ou.
[Aha! I am out of here, all on my own!
I am **Pambaelishita**! I am not created.
No person will rule over me, not even
the ruler of this world] (Loeb 1951:298).

According to this declaration, **Pambaelishita** is [1] self-created; [2] no person will rule over him; [3] not even the ruler of this world; [4] he is not a human being. I have no quarrel with how Loeb perceives the first two points, but I take issue with him as far as the third and the last point are concerned. Firstly, it is not true that **ounyuni ou** [this world] signifies the land of **Ovakwanyama**. **Ounyuni** mean life, as evident in their proverbs. Two examples will suffice.

[1] **Ounyuni owa fa oukango vaHakawa, wa tondoka we u fii po, wa ende we u lindile.** [The world [life] is like the pans of Hakawa, if you run, you pass it by, if you slow down you will never reach it. If you go too fast in life, you find nothing; if you go too slow, you will miss everything].

[2] **Ounyuni owa Nanghali koshi Nangobe kombada.** [The world [life] is like **Nanghali** being under, and **Nangobe** being on top. This means, one may be comfortable today, the other not, but tomorrow, the reverse might be true. It can happen that the rich becomes poor and the poor becomes rich].

Secondly, I take issue with Loeb about his interpretation of "the ruler of this world". This phrase must be understood in view of **Owambo** traditional dualism. According to Hiltunen **Ovawambo** believe that:

There are good (pure) ... things, and bad or impure ... things in the natural world. God, sunrise, east and day are all good and pure, whereas sunset, west and night are bad and impure. Diviners work at daytime and use good daytime animals. Witches work at night time and use bad, impure animals such as owls and hyenas as their servants and dogs. Good spirits of ancestors live in the east, in the sunrise, while the bad ancestral spirits, into which the spirits of witches transform after death, dwell in the west (1986:59).

A traditional **Omuwambo** believes that every single person has two souls: a good and a bad one. With the good soul, an ancestor does good to his/her descendants, but with his/her bad soul s/he does bad to them. "The individual was tightly surrounded by good and evil spirits" (Hiltunen 1986:59). It is not clear whether these two should transform into two different ancestors, one good (in the east) and one bad (in the west), or whether a person actually becomes a bad as well as a good ancestor. In the final analysis, however, it seems that the evil and bad souls are meant only to express the ambiguity of all human beings. The same expression is found in the Christian faith where we speak of the old and the new Adam in us (Rom.7). Here there are not two distinct people but one in whom resides both evil and good at the same time. So, as in the case of **Kalunga**, there is ambiguity in the existence of ancestors. They are good and bad at the same time. Just as there are not two different deities - one good, another evil, there are no different souls of one person - one good, the other evil.

Ovawambo perceive the cosmos dualistically. There is, according to Aarni, the visible and an invisible world (1982:28). Aarni cannot be right, however, by claiming that "**oonganga** in the 'upper ground-half [are] balancing the lower ground-half of the universe" (1982:28). The truth is that both the upper and the lower part of reality, as he schematised them, are saturated by both the evil and the good. There are two contradictory sides in both the visible and the invisible reality. **Aalodhi** are visible human beings, but do their business invisibly at night, riding on their familiars such as owls. So they belong to both realities (Hiltunen 1986:67).

Hiltunen confirms that evil aims at ruling the world that is . It manifests itself in **oulodi** [witchcraft] and **onhiko** [sorcery]. Since "the main feature of tribal life in ancient **Owambo** society was one of stability and harmony of life" (Aarni 1982:26), it was the aim of **omulodi** [a witch] and **onhiko** [sorcerer] to cause instability and disharmony in society. Envy, jealousy, hatred and revenge are identified as causes of witchcraft (Aarni 1982:33-35).

To counter these evils, the service of **onganga** [diviner] is employed. First, the diviner tries to establish the cause of the problem being experienced: poor health, loss of property, death, impaired relationships etc. Through divination, **onganga** establishes whether the illness (or whatever problem) is of **Kalunga** and requires only medicine or whether it is caused by witchcraft, in which case the witch who is responsible must be found through divination (Hiltunen 1986:70-72). Thus,

An **onganga** who divines is in the minds of many people a benefactor, since he reveals the one who has brought misfortune in order to punish the guilty. Some, on the other hand, do not want to have anything to do with such an **onganga**, claiming that he [or she] himself has caused misfortune (Hiltunen 1986:73).

From the way **Ovawambo** encounter evil it becomes clear that they believed that there are basically two sources of evil: **Kalunga** and some **humans**. In this case both **Kalunga** and humans are ambivalent. The difference however lies in that **Kalunga** has no evil intentions, unlike humans. But because **Kalunga** is the ultimate authority, in the final analysis, he is responsible for the existence of evil including that which is caused by humans.

Onganga is an important friend of society. In fact, Loeb tells us that **Ovakwanyama** "recognize but two professions [whose] members are highly regarded ... the doctor [**onganga**] and the blacksmith" [**omuhambwidi**] (1962:122,123). It is said: **Ngee ito hambula, panga** [If you are not blacksmith, divine]. In essence this means, do not be idle, be doing something. The doctor of the highest rank is called **omupuliki, oshimbada** [diviner trainer]. It is this **omupuliki** who trains **eenganga** of the first three low ranks, supervises their initiations and makes the amulets [**oiketi**] into which they put power (Hiltunen 1986:68). It is from **oshimbada** that generals were selected. Further, they were "supreme authorities on matters of native religion, medicine, and ceremony" (Loeb 1962:123).

We conclude that witches and sorcerers are sources of evil who go about causing disharmony, instability and death. They are both **feared** and **hated**. In contrast, **onganga** is a guardian of common **well-being**, and is, therefore, loved and respected. The two groups are diametrically opposed and work against each other. **Omulodi** hurts, **onganga** protects.

To return to our **Pambaelishita myth**, the phrase **omupangeli wounyuni ou** is not referring to **Kalunga** but to the evil powers of this world e.g. **oulodi** [witchcraft] and **onhiko** (sorcery) which aim at destabilising society, disturbing human relationships and ending life. Whatever is most feared may be called **Kalunga**, not because it is viewed as another **Kalunga**, but simply because it has power over people and can rule their lives. A most cruel ruler, in fact anything which enslaves people, may be called **Kalunga**. Many people are misled by this natural practice and conclude that **Ovawambo** believed in more than one deity. Far from it! What we have to accept and learn to live with is the fact that **Kalunga** is ambiguous.

About the fear of witchcraft, Hiltunen writes: "Witchcraft shadowed human life from the cradle to the grave" (1986:68). Serious precautionary measures were taken to guard people, including newly born babies from the destruction of **omulodi**. Amulets were, therefore, hung around the neck, the arms, the waist and ankles of a newly born baby, to protect it against witchcraft. The name of the baby is even kept secret from strangers out of fear of witchcraft, because it was believed that:

If the baby's name had been revealed beforehand, his soul would be revealed to other persons among whom there might be a witch or a person who would ask someone else to bewitch the baby. If the name was not revealed, the baby could not be bewitched (Hiltunen 1986:68).

It is believed that the business of the witch is to change him/herself into an evil spirit and go around at night doing evil. For detailed information about how witches were punished, one needs only to read Hiltunen's **Witchcraft and Sorcery in Owambo**, pp.88-102. It will become evident that witchcraft or forces of evil could easily be personified and called "the ruler of this world" [Loeb 1951:298]. The ruler in the myth must thus be understood as the power of evil, which disturbs, destabilises and disharmonises the world.

If this argument is accepted, we can now make sense of the fact that this **Pambaelishita** was fighting the 'ruler of this world' who, in Christian language could be called the devil. The war was between order and disorder, harmony and disharmony, stability and instability, good and evil, life and death. In this story, the war started even before the birth of the hero-figure when the first eggs were all destroyed, that is from the beginning of reality. Victory is, however, guaranteed. The ruler of this world was plotting to kill **Pambaelishita**, to end his good services of preservation and its consequences. He failed and was finally overthrown.

This reminds us of the stories of creation where God defeated chaos; and of Herod, who set out to kill the child Jesus but failed to do so. These two stories and the **Pambaelishita** myth are comparable. After many encounters, the ruler of this world was defeated and overthrown, destroyed and replaced by **Pambaelishita** as **Kalunga** over this world. Evil has been defeated by good, death by life (Loeb 1962:292).

3.4.2 Owambo belief in spirits and its religious relevance

Pre-Christian **Ovawambo** believed in the existence of four different classes of spirits which play an active role in human affairs. They distinguished between [1] **oipumbu** [s. **oshipumbu**, no English equivalent], [2] **oilulu** [s. **oshilulu**; ghost], [3] **ounhikifa** [s. **okanhikifa**; tokolosie], and [4] **ovakwamhungu** [s. **omukwamhungu**; ancestors]. These shades or spirits have their origin from human beings. They are the spirits of the dead. Some were respected, others are feared. Bruwer writes:

According to **Kwanyama** belief, the life or soul [**omwenyo**] of an individual resides in the heart [**omutima**]. When a man [a human being] dies, his [or her] soul becomes **omhepo** [**omhepo**; wind] or **omukuamhungu** which is in fact an ancestral spirit. But these ancestral spirits appear to have doubles or shades that sometimes appear on earth. The shades are denoted by three names, **oipumbu**, **oilulu**, and **ounikifa** (1967:134).

(a) **Ounhikifa**: They are believed to be the spirits of the deceased who possess magical power. They roam around at night through the tribal area to victimise whoever happens to go away from the house at night. Estermann writes about their appearance:

The upper part is like a man and the lower part is like a dog. To prevent these spirits of such evil character from multiplying ... the following stratagem was resorted to: After the death of a man who had lived under the protection of a special magic, the **Kwanyama** made it a practice to separate the legs and arms from the trunk and cut out the tongue. Thus mutilated, the man's spirit could not change into an **okanhikifa**, but would continue to exist as a simple **omukwamhungu** (Estermann 1966:190).

This practice shows to what degree fear ruled **Ovawambo**. **Okanhikifa** is "the spirit of a sorcerer ..." believed "to be half human, half dog" (Bruwer 1967:134). "Their spoors are canine ... human on one side and claws on the other" (Bruwer 1967:134). They live in the bush and are recognised by the small fires they build there at night. Many people fear walking at night because of their knowledge of **ounhikifa**.

(b) **Oipumbu**: These shades are believed to be able to alter themselves into human shapes when they intend visiting the living. It is believed that during their visits, they bring omens or messages, normally warnings, to their host. "Tönjes (1910) relates the story about such **oshipumbu** that appeared to chief Haimbili before he hanged himself" (Bruwer 1967:134).

(c) **Oilulu**

Tradition has it that **oilulu** are the spirits of the dead who were buried too soon or not properly. This belief presupposes that at death, body and spirit separate; the former is buried and the latter flies away to the world of the dead. If the spirit is sent back and finds the body already buried, it becomes **oshilulu**. Some people believe that **oshilulu** is a shade of an important adult: **onganga** [a diviner], **omhule** [a magician, a person believed to possess super-knowledge] or **omulodi** [a

witch]. It was believed that **oilulu** "have their abode in sacred groves ... where the chiefs were buried" (Bruwer 1967:134). These shades too are feared because they are capable of harming people by beating them with switches [lashes]. However, there seems to be no concrete evidence of harmed people. Loeb recorded that "**oilulu** had to inform the people of the country of what was going to happen in future" (Bruwer 1967:134). This is most unlikely for these spirits are known for chasing people, beating them up without communicating with them. They do not serve as messengers as far as can be learned from tradition.

(d) **Ovakwamhungu**

Ovakwamhungu [ancestors] are the most common disembodied spirits of the dead. They live in close relationship with their living relatives "sometimes to assist them, sometimes to chastise them for negligence with regard to the cult" (Estermann 1966:190). Their functions include making "life more harmonious in the family group (maternal) as well as in society as a whole (if it is the ancestor of the king)" (Aarni 1982:60). For **Ovawambo** who are matrilineal, maternal ancestors command more respect than paternal (Bruwer 1967:134).

The idea of ancestral veneration among **Ovawambo** must be seen against the philosophy of respect and its consequences which is so fundamental to their lives. In practice, this philosophy translates into the hierarchy in each family according to seniority, starting with the youth at the bottom and ending with **Kalunga** on top [see family structure]. **Oulinawa** (=salvation) from **Kalunga** is channelled and communicated via this hierarchy.

The higher a person [dead or alive] is in this hierarchy, the more powerful and wiser s/he is. This power and wisdom is acquired during the life time of that specific person. Further, because they are dead, and death, it was believed, did not annihilate but only separated them (Aarni 1982:62), they were believed "to have access to the spirit world and to non-human powers" (Aarni 1982:61). Death was for **Ovawambo** a 'rite-de-passage' leading to 'the last-platform' of life (Aarni 1982:62). Consequently, it made sense for **Ovawambo** to maintain sound relationships with those who were believed to be ahead of them in terms of wisdom and power. They were

believed to be helpers, protectors, guides. In short, they were a source of human empowerment. This dependency made ancestors appear even more powerful over the living.

As it turned out, the living tried to keep their living-dead in their status which they acquired before they died. Just as they watched over their junior family members during their earthly life and did many good things for them, they must be able to do it even better, now that they are closer to **Kalunga**. So it was believed that the ancestors are watching over their living families and this contact must be maintained at all costs. If it was disturbed, society would be destroyed through sickness or death (Hiltunen 1986:57). This contact was maintained through giving the **ovakwamhungu** [ancestors] all the attention they needed, including remembering them, feeding them, and consulting them for advice and support in life. If a particular ancestor did not receive the recognition, respect or service s/he deserved, s/he becomes angry and punished those family members for the sin of negligence. If they were remembered and received their due, they blessed. Such blessings were believed to come from **Kalunga** (Hiltunen 1986:57). This makes it easier for us to realise the significance of contacting **ovakwamhungu** during all major festivals in the life of a pre-missionary **ekumwe** of **Ovawambo** [the community of **Ovawambo**].

Of course it makes sense to conclude that for their survival, the ancestors depend on the living relatives. It is further true to say that they have power over the living so long as the latter look to them for life power, long life, children, prosperity, health, and vitality (Aarni 1982:64). It is for this reason that **Ovakwanyama** emphasise the significance of knowing how to maintain a healthy relationship with the good ancestors "and to render propitious those who through any neglect or offense - conscious or unconscious - have been angered" (Estermann 1966:190). It is this conviction which determines various activities which, in European categories are called 'worship' or 'veneration', 'showing honour'(cf Möller 1974:133; Aarni 1982:61).

European and African scholars have, for a long time, struggled to find common ground about whether ancestors are worshipped or not. Different words such as worship, veneration, cult, emerged to describe what Africans do to their ancestors. I do not think that an agreement can be reached on this matter, because Europeans interpret African actions in European categories. In that case, they are right to call what Africans do to their ancestors as worship. This is so because,

what Africans do to the ancestors, Europeans do to God and that is called worship. Now, what Westerners do to God and what we as Christians practice in our faith, pre-Christian **ovawambo** did not have. There is, therefore, no proper concept to describe it. So Africans are also right when they feel offended when what they do to the ancestors is labelled worship. The problem with using this concept 'worship' lies in that, by applying it to **Owambo** actions both towards **ancestors** and towards **Kalunga**, for instance, it equalises them. But, in their thoughts, this equality is unthinkable. Ancestors are departed humans, who might be closer to **Kalunga** than the living, but they are certainly not revered as **Kalunga**.

Perhaps we should consider looking not at the categories, but at the status of **Kalunga** and **ovakwamhungu** in **Owambo** spirituality. For what the pre-Christian **Ovawambo** used to do to their ancestors following the **do-ut-des** principle (Aarni 1982:62), I would settle for the concept veneration¹⁹ until a better term is found. It is true that to the Western mind what Africans do to their ancestors fits Western concepts such as worship, but because that concept is reserved for God, and because **Ovawambo** do not recognise the divinity of ancestors, worship remains an inappropriate term to describe what they do for their ancestors [see my critique of veneration in 4.5 below].

3.5 Owambo rituals and sacrifices

3.5.1 Seasonal festivals and rituals

(a) **Omaongo**: [A New Year Ceremony]

When they were under the rule of a king, **Ovakwanyama** celebrated a New Year feast during **Kwenyona** [February] after the actual beginning of the year. New year began at the end of **Shikukutu** [November] or at the beginning of **Kuungumene** [December]. New Year celebration was delayed until **Kwenyona** [January] or **Kwenyekwakula** [February] to coincide with **omaongo** [the ripening of marula fruits] for use in these celebrations. Further, during **Shikukutu** and **Kuungumene** people were busy with field work. **Kwenyona** and **Kwenyekwakula** are months when most field work was completed.

¹⁹ If you venerate someone or something, you value them or feel great respect for them.

The New Year ceremony was first held in **ouhamba** [palace] and a little later also in the houses of **ovafyoona** [commoners]. In **Ouhamba**, the feast was called **omaongo**, but in the houses of ordinary people, it was called **omwai**. This celebration ended the restriction of the consumption of new millet, except those of **oilyavala** [sorghum] and **omyenge** [the stalks of sweet sorghum] which remained in force until the ceremony of **oshipe** was held.

'**Omaongo**' are highly alcoholic and this time was marked by conflicts. To prevent violence, it was strictly forbidden for anyone to carry weapons during the one or two months of the festive season. As Tonjes puts it: "people are considered bereft of their reason when they are drinking amarula" (Loeb 1962:213). Further, no **oihokolola** [court hearings] were held. The special day of starting the festive season was announced by the spokesman of the King (Loeb 1962:214).

(b) **Omwai** [New year ceremony for commoners]

After **omaongo** festival, every household may celebrate **omwai**, its New Year. This **omwai** is also known as **efifino leengongo**, because after its proceedings it was lawful for anyone to suck out marula fruit. At this level, it was the head of the family who set the date of the celebration. The aim of this festival was (1) to welcome the New Year and (2) to see the old year off, (3) to end restrictions on new millet, and (4) to open the drinking of **omaongo** in the specific household. During the proceedings, it was **Mweneweumbo** [the head of the household] and **Munyalombe** [the principal wife], who acted as hosts for the rest of the members of the household, including other wives.

Before the actual date of **Omwai**, the husband slept in the hut of **Munyalombe**, and officially informed her of the oncoming feast. Plentiful of **omaongo** [marula juice] was prepared. **Munyalombe** took a basket to collect cabbage, that is bean plant leaves, and cooked it. To this, she added marula fruit juice. She allowed this product to remain overnight. The next morning it would have transformed into some thickened mush. **Munyalombe** then stirred it properly and poured it into **etiti** [a traditional dish]. She put the cooked **omaongo** and a piece of **omhia** [chalk] into a second dish and carried it to **olupale**, [the central courtyard] where the husband and his other wives were awaiting her [note that it was morning].

Upon arrival, the husband took an uncooked **ongongo** [marula fruit], peeled it halfway, sprinkled it with finely shaved chalk, smeared it with that cooked mush and gave it to her with the following prayer: **Ptuh! Mudo mukulu djamo, fye twa fika momudo mupe!** [Pthuh! Get out, old year, we have now entered a New Year] (Loeb 1962:214). The husband then marked **Munyalombe** on her cheeks and the bridge of her nose with chalk. While doing so he wished her a prosperous future, saying:

May you always remain happy, and may life bless you with many children; may your field always be fruitful (Loeb 1962:214).

In response, **Munyalombe** applied the same procedure to her husband wishing him well in her prayer:

May you gain the land you desire from the king (or your **elenga**); may he give you a share of his cattle to graze; may your own cattle also increase; and may you never have misfortune (Loeb 1962:215).

After this short ceremony, the husband exchanged blessings and prayer with each of his wives in the same manner. Thereafter, **Munyalombe** brought to the whole company a pot of **omaongo** to drink.

The evening of the same day formed part of the feast. So, as on all major festive occasions, the husband dined with **Munyalombe** and all his other wives [normally each wife dines with girls in her quarter]. For this meal a large **evanda** [cabbage cake] was dried for two days and then boiled and browned in **omaadi eengobe** [the butter]. Porridge was prepared from old millet and served only with **evanda** and **mashini** [milk]. It was not allowed to drink beer or **omoango** [marula juice] at this meal. No meat was to be served here because "milk and meat may not be used together in preparing any meal and may not be served at the same meal" (Loeb 1962:215). If milk and meat were to be served at the same meal, milk must always be served last because meat symbolises death, but milk symbolises life. This dinner concluded the ceremony of **omwai**. After that, people of this household may squeeze the marula fruit and eat new millet as well as sweet stalks of sorghum.

(c) **Oshipe**: [The harvest ceremony]

The harvesting season began in **Kayoo** [May] and ended in **Epemba** [July]. Traditionally, harvesting was a three-phased ceremony: the king's **oshipe** in May; the one for millet and another for sorghum in June.

Oshipe shohamba [the king's harvest festival]

It took place in May or June, depending on the ripening of sorghum. It further marked the departure of the king for his annual hunt. On a designated day, the king sat on his throne in **olupale** [sitting place] with all his wives present. Porridge made from the sorghum and cabbage of **omhungu** was brought in by a servant. Thereafter, the king offered a prayer:

Nomoudwaali eloolo. Fye ohatu li oshipe shetu.

[May we have a good harvest next year too. Let us now eat our **oshipe**] (Loeb 1962:217).

After the prayer of the king, the priest of the palace dipped a piece of porridge into **evanda** and gave it to the king. The king threw one ball of it to the East and another to the West saying:

To the East: **Vakwamhungu vaushilo, fye ohatu li oshipe shohamba** [Ancestors of the East, we are eating the king's harvesting feast]. To the West: **Eemhwengu dautekelo, fye ohatu li oshipe shohamba** [Mad ancestors of the West, we are eating the king's harvesting feast].

After these utterances, everybody present partook of **oshifima** [porridge] and **evanda** [cabbage] and drunk beer. The following day, the king left to hunt game in the deep forest (Loeb 1962:218). Different houses were now free to celebrate their private harvesting feasts, uttering the same liturgy and saying prayers after the manner of the king.

Oshipe shomahangu

After the king's harvesting ceremony had been celebrated, every house owner could have his own harvest ceremony at any time of his choice. The only restriction about the timing of this feast was that such ceremonies must be ended before **Epena**, held in August. This **oshipe** is "a simple celebration of the millet harvest" (Loeb 1962:218).

Oshipe shomalodu

This feast lasted for four days: (1) for the husband; (2) for the wives; (3) for the cattle and (4) for merrymaking. Part of the new sorghum grain is prepared for **oshipe** beer. After partaking in this bear the rest of new sorghum may be used by anybody. Preparations for **oshipe** began about ten days before the actual feasting. This ten day period was meant to allow **ongava i fike** [sorghum to be ready for brewing].

From the time the sorghum is first buried under [the] earth until the end of the **oshipe** ceremony, the kraal owner sleeps in his first wife's hut. It is, in fact, considered essential for him to sleep with his first wife during the **oshipe**, for it is believed that if she commits adultery after drinking the **oshipe** beer she will contract a disease called **keemiakani** (sic) (rather: **eemhiakani**) which causes sores, sore knees, and diarrhoea (Loeb 1962:218).

Again, it was the first wife who hosted this festival. During the first morning of the ceremony, **Munyalombe** cooked a large quantity of porridge and **oshingali** [boiled and threshed beans mush] into which cattle butter or **odjove** [marula oil] were stirred to be served with the porridge at the feast. When porridge was ready and offered by **Munyalombe** to her husband, the latter did his part of the ceremony. Taking a small ball of this cooked porridge, he dipped it into the beans and threw it, first to the ancestors of the East and then to the mad ones of the West, saying the usual words of **oshipe**, but now the ancestors of the East are informed: "we are eating our millet" and those mad ones of the West "go down with the sun" which means, do not trouble us.

The second day was for the wives to do their part of the ceremony. That morning, people ate the breakfast of beans and the porridge left-overs from the previous evening meal. Each wife would then pound millet and cook **oshingali** [beans mush]. In the evening, each wife threw a party in her own quarters. Both during the first and the second day of **oshipe**, the youth kept on dancing in **oluvanda** [the cattle corridor]. Before dawn on the third day, each wife began to prepare breakfast to be served in **oluvanda** [cattle corridor]. In the meantime, the head of the family "takes four stalks [**oihati**] of grain, two of millet and two of sorghum to the cattle kraal and gives them to four of his cattle [**eendjahati**], three cows and a bull" (Loeb 1962:219). **Eendjahati** form the head of the family's original herd. They are the sacred cattle. Then the four sacred cattle are driven out apart from the rest, into the bush to feed.

At sunrise, the porridge made by the wives that morning was brought to **epata lakula** [the boys' court]. From there, boys and girls brought it to the main entrance, where **ovanahambo** [cattle heeders] would be singing cattle songs. On this third day, the chief wife, **Munyalombe**, brewed beer in **olupale** for the fourth day, the merry-making and celebration day. Other wives too made their beer in their own cooking places. That afternoon, each wife went to the graves in the field to pour **oshixupaela** [malt] on them praying to the ancestors that it may go well [flow through well] with their **eemhako** [sieves]. Here is their short prayer:

Tambula oshixupaela, omalodu etu a ende nawa.

[Receive this malt that it may go well with our sieves] (Loeb 1962:220).

The fourth day was a day of celebration, beer drinking and merrymaking. Before dawn, **okatoo kounona** [children's beer pot], was brought into **olupale** with beer. Children, however, did not drink from it, "since children under fifteen do not drink beer" (Loeb 1962:220). This **okatoo** served only as a symbol of the children's share in the good fortune which the new harvest brought about to the household. The head of the house was the first to take his early drink, after which he blessed his sons and daughters. Marking their faces with chalk, he prayed to Kalunga:

[Tu pa] oilya ihapu, neengobe dihapu, noludalo lihapu.

[Give us more crops, cattle and children].

After this prayer, the husband and father and his wives took their seat while beer was brought to them. Blessings were then exchanged between different inmates:

First the husband and his head wife and then the husband and each of the other wives in turn mark each other with chalk and exchange blessings (**elao**). He also blesses his older son and daughters ... his sons with a wish that they may have many cattle, and his daughters with a wish that when they would marry they will marry rich men. In earlier times, his wish was that they would marry noblemen [**omalenga**] (Loeb 1962:220).

Oshipe ends on the evening of the fourth day. The head of the family "pours water in front of **Munyalombe's** hut so that any intruder would leave footprints. The special time when he was obliged to sleep in the hut of his principal wife has now ended officially. He then moves on to the hut of his second wife, where he sleeps for two nights. Then he continues with the rest of the

wives according to their turns" (Loeb 1962:221). This shows that the wives of one husband are not necessarily equal.

(d) **Epena** [The last ceremony of the year]

Epena was celebrated by **Ovakwanyama** after harvesting and before the planting season (Loeb 1962:217). It marked the beginning of the work of the hot dry season and served as an announcing time for **efundula** [the initiation ceremony] and **etanda** [circumcision]. The four day **epena** could only be held in **ouhamba** [the palace] of the circumcised king. King Haimbili was the last king to be circumcised. With the ending of his reign, therefore, **epena** ended for [1] his successors were all uncircumcised; [2] they could, therefore, not enter **ouhamba**. **Epena** did not take place in June as Tonjes is quoted to have suggested, but in August when people had completed harvesting and threshing. It introduced the work that could only be done during the hot and dry season (Loeb 1962:221).

Big drums were brought into the cattle kraal and beaten to call people together. People responded to their beating by assembling quickly, singing loudly and dancing wildly. This celebration continued throughout that night and the next day. The next evening, **elenga**-in charge appeared in the door-way of **ouhamba** and called: '**Epena ola pena!**' This means, **Epena** has now commenced. After this opening sign, the leader of the feast pronounced the end of the restrictions of the season:

... listen all of you, this is the law: You may now move your kraals; fetch grass to make roofs for your huts; allow your cattle into the gardens to eat the stubble; and make the **oiyuo** [bundling ceremony] for the boys and girls before the **efundula** [the wedding]. The iron smith may now go to **shimanyo** (sic, **oshimanya** rather) in Angola for their iron ore (Loeb 1962:222).

Transgressing **epena** laws was punishable by death. **Epena** ended on the fourth night. The master of ceremony again appeared in the entrance of **ouhamba** and announced: **Epena ola pen nee**, meaning, **epena** has now ended (Loeb 1962:222). This feast completed the time-circle as calculated by **Ovawambo**. It leaves us with the understanding that, for this particular African community, time was cyclic.

3.5.2 *The significance of seasonal festivals for salvation*

These seasonal festivals and their proceedings authenticate my central thesis that **Ovawambo** were primarily concerned for **oulinawa wa aveshe** [common wellbeing]. Their central concern was **elao** [fortune] and **epuniko** [blessing]. A careful analysis of the above mentioned festivals reveals the following points:

(a) The centrality of **Kalunga**

During **omaongo** and **omwai** [New Year], **Kalunga** was given his due recognition. In fact, he is worshipped. It is clearly acknowledged that he provided protection during the passing year and has brought the new about. The version of a new year prayer from Pettinen cited by Nambala is most revealing: "**Pthuhh! Omumvo omukulu za mo, mupe ngu tu fale kuKalunga kuuwa**" [Ptuh! come out of us, old year that the new year may bring us to God in his palace] (1996:96). This prayer shows that **Kalunga** is acknowledged as a being in charge of time and that he is both behind and ahead of us. God is here given a big thank you. During **oshipe** revealing prayer as recorded by Pettinen is offered. **Kalunga** is acknowledged as a Saviour from hunger and the Sustainer during the previous seasons who brought 'us' to the new year. It is said that it was **Kalunga** who provided the harvest. We note that in **Owambo** prayers, including the one below, people speak in plural form, again accentuating the sense of community and a concern for the larger humanity in their thought. However, sometimes individual phrases do feature as in the prayer below.

Kalunga ketu, ongoye tuu we tu yoolola mo mondjala, nowe tu eta ishewe momvo. Iilya iipelela tandi li; ongoye tuu we yi pe ndje. Pthuhh! Kalunga kandje, ngele nda si ihe, nda lya iilya iipe [My God, it is you who saved us from hunger, and brought us again in this year. The new millet which I am eating was offered me by you. Ptuh! My God, it does not matter if I die now, I have tasted new millet] (Nambala 1996:96).

Some prayers during the above mentioned may have been addressed to **Ovakwamhungu**. But, even in those cases, **Kalunga** was so central that Aarni is justified to refer to **Owambo** spirituality as **Kalungatism** as we said before.

(b) The principle of **ekumwe** [community]

All the festivals are typified by togetherness, sharing and mutuality. Under the guidance of the king people act together. They start each season more or less jointly as commanded by their king. This is true also at family levels, the beginning of the new year is marked together. The consumption of the new fruit is marked together. No one was allowed to be so individualistic as to go it alone. They acted together as **ekumwe limwe** [one community].

Under normal circumstances, each wife brought food for supper to the husband who would share it with the boys and the dogs. During these festivals, however, all inmates gathered together to share. This act may be understood as a recommitment of each member to each other and to the larger family, including ancestors. They share from a common porridge and a common drink. Even children have their symbolic share of the drink. Everyone also shared blessings, right from the head of the household to the children. They prayed for each other and wished that each may have that which is most essential for sound life: millet, cattle, good marriage, children and status in the community and long life. The sleeping of the husband in the hut of his first wife at such occasions signify a wish for fertility for the land, animals and people. But it may also be a rededication of the couple to each other in their marriage and as the heads of the household. Eternal life is not mentioned. Becoming an ancestor is implied by the wish to have offspring who would remember you later.

(c) The priority of safety and security

During **oshipe**, the king announced his departure for hunting. **Kalunga** is informed and asked for protection, sometimes directly, but sometimes indirectly via the ancestors. The following prayer was said just before the departure of the king of **Ondonga** for hunting: **Pthuhh! Kalunga kaNangombe, otu uka mokuti. Oshikukutu nashi kale moluha, oshinenguni momupolo** [Ptuh! God of Nangombe, we are going into the forest. May hardship that might be in front of us give way to what is easy [good] (Nambala 1996:97).

During the whole duration of festivals such as **omaongo**, **oshipe**, and **epena**, no meat was served because it was associated with death. Therefore, people ate porridge with either **omashini** [milk], **oshingali** [bean soup] or **evanda** [dried cabbage] which were associated with wellbeing and life.

It was believed, as it is now, that **evanda** symbolises permanency, fortune and oneness. The wish here is that those eating it be as flat²⁰ as **evanda** itself is flat, that dangers cannot find them. **Evanda** is also a true representation of an ancient tradition, so eating it is an expression of the true **Owambo** culture. Further it symbolises permanency. When fiances meet their parents in-law, it is the custom that they eat **evanda** which symbolises a permanency of their relationship. **Evanda** also signifies oneness or belonging. Normally, a visitor is not served with **evanda**. A chicken or goat is slaughtered for that purpose. When a visitor is served with **evanda**, it is a sign that s/he is no more a visitor but, **omuneumbo** [inmate].

Attempts were made for community peace during those days. It was for this reason that people were prohibited from carrying weapons. Peace must prevail and bloodshed through excessive use of alcohol avoided. Further, hearings were closed and no court set during this time. These were attempts to let justice be done.

(d) The significance of work

For **Ovawambo**, work comes before feasting. **Ou ita longo ina lya** and **Sha nakulya osha nakulonga** [Whoever does not work should not eat and whoever eats must work as well]. The priority of work over enjoyment is corroborated by the fact that festivals such as those which lasted for more than one day were held during less busy seasons. **Efundula** [initiation of girls into womanhood] lasted for four days (Loeb 1962:244ff), the coronation of the king lasted for two days (Loeb 1962:53), **oshipe** and **epena** lasted for four days (Loeb 1962:220-222). If people would continue feasting for all those days, a lot of time would be wasted and evil may result. To avoid this, the feasts were held during seasons other than spring, summer and winter when people were busy with field work. Once again the central concern was **oulinawa wa aveshe** [common wellbeing].

²⁰ **Evanda** is made of cooked cabbage. After the cabbage has been cooked, it is threshed and its mush moulded into a flat cake which is then dried. Its shape is thin so that it can occupy a small space. **Ovawambo** imagined that to eat **evanda** would help a person to be able to hide from danger even in a small space. The name **evanda** is probably derived from the verb **okuvandalala** which means 'hiding'.

3.5.3 *Epasha and oupili: twins and feet-first birth*

Epasha and **oupili** were regarded as unnatural children. Their birth was considered to be a misfortune, a crisis event, something that was not supposed to happen. Vedder (1966:70) and Hahn (1966:26) report that both twins were stifled by closing their mouths and noses with clay or earth as soon as they were delivered. Royal twins were buried in a black ox skin in the calves kraal. The whole occurrence was not only regarded as a shame, unholy and unclean, it was also regarded as a political affair. "If they are allowed to live, their advancement in later life may cause very serious tribal complications in connection with succession to the chieftainship" (Hahn 1966:27). The twins of common people could survive though their birth was also regarded as unclean and unholy. In both cases, a cleansing ritual was performed (Hiltunen 1993:201).

As soon as the mother of the twins was able to move, a purification rite known as **ouhaku wepasha** [healing ceremony of twins/**oupili**] was held for her to "be purified by means of a special ceremony before she could be permitted to see other people" (Vedder 1966:70). She was led outside the house for this secret healing. A hole was dug and filled with water prepared by **omudalifi** [midwife] or **onganga**. She was ordered to sit in the hole to be washed "to rid her of the bad blood within her body, which is regarded as **oshidila**" [taboo]. Her "whole skin surface was scraped with **oshimbi** [a native metal razor] ... to cause abrasions and the flow of blood" (Hahn 1966:26).

After the ritual the mother of twins was again led to her hut. On her way, **omushi** [a wooden pestle, generally used to stamp corn] was placed across her path in such a manner that she would trip over it, upsetting a pot of water lightly balanced over a small grass fire. She would then intentionally stumble over this **omushi**, then the water would be spilt over the small fire to cause a cloud of smoke to rise, through which she had to pass. This smoke completed the cleansing and healing process. It was believed to take with it the last bit of the evil spirit which possessed the woman, causing her to give birth to unnatural children.

Her husband also had to undergo a similar cleansing ceremony. The same razor was used and incisions were made on his thighs, wrists, forearms and tongue "to rid him of **oshidila** blood which, unless removed, might bring about a recurrence of the shameful event". (Hahn 1966:26).

Later, a quiet feast for the extended family and close friends was held. If this ceremony was not conducted, it was believed that members of that family and their close friends **otava dindi ndele tava fi** [would swell and die]. So, ignoring **epasha** ritual was a sin of omission.

Hiltunen tried to see where **epasha** would fit into what she calls magic practices. She classified it as [1] **oshidila** [taboo] simply because it was something which people avoided even speaking about as something which could not have happened. "It posed the danger of illness and death both to the family in question and for the whole community" (1993:201). She classified it as [2] **oshivilo** [a feast] because, as a ritual it included a dance and feasting which lasted several days with plenty of eating. It involved the whole village and beyond. **Epasha** may also be classified as [3] **ouhaku** [healing]. When they refer to this ritual, **Ovawambo** speak of **ouhaku** [healing] or **ekosho** [cleansing]. It is a curing-cleansing ritual. Because relatives involved were not necessarily sick, and the primary aim was to prevent them from **okudinda** [swelling] and **okufya** [dying], it is "a preventive measure" (1993:201). It is meant to prevent sickness and death.

For **onganga**, however, **epasha** was [4] a means to make ends meet. If the father of the twins was poor, he had to go begging corn and hoes to pay **onganga**. Late bishop Auala recalled the payment for **epasha**. He added "ostrich egg shell" to the list which was very expensive in those days. He remembered that "the host has to pay what the diviner asked, otherwise they will swell" (Hiltunen 1993:204). Many diviners enriched themselves through **epasha**. It was a business. Hiltunen quotes Martti Rautanen:

The payment for an **onganga** is big. He gets an ox, a big basket full of corn and fruits and iron beads. The ox will be slaughtered. The diviner sprinkles with its blood the doorposts and passages of the house. The ox meat, corn and beads he takes home (1993:201).

For **onganga**, **epasha** was also for [5] enjoyment and sexual pleasure. It was a fertility rite. The mother of the twins was not completely cured until her first menstruation. Before that period, she was not allowed to sleep with her husband. During her first menstruation after the birth of twins, **onganga** would take part of her blood and bury it where s/he had buried the placenta before. According to late bishop Auala:

an appreciated old man is invited to have sexual intercourse with the mother. The women who has given birth to the twins is not allowed to sleep with her own husband before an old appreciated man has slept with her. After the unknown man comes out, the husband of the wife enters the sleeping room. This ends the cure for **epasha** (Hiltunen 1993:204).

This 'old appreciated unknown man' was **onganga** himself, for according to Uukunde:

An important task of the male diviner at the end of the cure is to have the first sexual contact with the cured wife so that she can resume marital life with her husband. If the male diviner does not do this, the husband will get a swelling sickness, which spreads both to the children and to the wife (Hiltunen 1993:206).

Sometimes two diviners [**eenganga**] of opposite sexes were involved in this **epasha** drama. These two also had sexual intercourse during the healing process. "The woman is single, either a widow or a deserted, or she has rejected her husband" (Hiltunen 1993:205). The two diviners agreed on the date on which they would have sexual intercourse "to put power in the herbs that they will use while curing **epasha**" (Hiltunen 1993:205f).

In the light of the sexual intercourse involved, **epasha** could also be regarded as a fertility rite. This was also the case with **efundula**, i.e. the initiation rite of girls into womanhood. In both cases, the diviners had sexual intercourse, either between themselves or between them and their subjects, or both. In the case of **epasha** and **oupili** [feet-first-birth], this was meant to clean the mother of twins from filth and so make her harmless to her husband and family.

The aim of the **epasha** ritual was "to remove filth and to hinder death" (Hiltunen 1993:206). It was meant to prevent the mother of the twins, the twins themselves, the husband and all relatives of both husband and wife from getting "a swelling sickness" and die (Hiltunen 1993:206). Where the twins were killed, as in the case of the royal, the aim was to protect the peace of the ruling king or his brothers. This is also true in the case of **oupili**, [feet-first-birth] which too was believed to "cause people to swell" (Hiltunen 1993:215). So, as Hiltunen concludes, "in all cases the ultimate threat was death to an individual or the family" (1993:216). So the ritual aims at achieving **oulinawa** [wellbeing]. Most unfortunately, this exercise led to immorality and more deaths. This ritual is still common today.

3.5.4 *Sacrifices during illness*

There was mutual dependence between **ovakwamhungu** [ancestors] and their living relatives. It was in line with the **do-ut-des** paradigm. The living offer sacrifices for ancestors so that in return they are blessed and not "cause any trouble" (Aarni 1982:62). Apart from the **routine** and bloodless sacrifices, already discussed above under 3.3.5 and 3.3.6 which need not be repeated here, there are two other sacrifices offered to **ovakwamhungu** by **Ovawambo** for attaining wellbeing and salvation among the living relatives.

For **Ovakwanyama** there are three sources of trouble in life: **omulodi** [the witch], **omukwamhungu** [the ancestor] and **Kalunga** (Möller 1974:133). The first two are most feared, while **Kalunga** is believed to be the supreme and ultimate authority/power. When a person is seriously sick, **onganga's** service is employed to determine the cause of illness. The possible diagnoses are three: either the illness is caused by witchcraft in which case the service of **onganga** is required to identify the witch, or it is caused by the spirit of the ancestor in which case an offering has to be performed to pacify it, or **Kalunga** himself is held responsible, in which case nothing can be done at all. Möller writes:

Serious cases of diseases are studied by the **onganga** and if he finds that the disease is caused by witchcraft, it must also be driven away by witchcraft; ... if the ill person is possessed by **asisi** [ancestors in archaic **Oshindonga**], then this must either be frightened away or, better still, pacified by a sacrifice (1974:133).

A sacrifice is called **oxula** [**ohula** in **Oshindonga**] and varies according to the kind of disease, the victim's age and the social status of the patient. The rich person will most probably eat from the sacrifice of an ox, the poor of chicken, beans or a dog. The domestic animal offered here is called **oxula**, and the corresponding rite or ritual, **okulya oxula** or **okufiyawila** [to sacrifice]; (Estermann 1966:191). In all the rituals, the chalk, **omia**, was used. **Ovakwanyama** recognised only four animals which could be used in **efiyawilo/oxula**: the cock, the goat, the dog, and the ox. To this might be added **oxula** of beans. **Aandonga**, according to Rautanen, know of **oxula** of the sheep (Möller 1974:134). In all these rituals, the service of **onganga** is employed. This person is regarded to be "the intermediary between the spirits and ordinary mortals" (Estermann 1966:192). Sometimes, he/she performs the sacrifice in person, but sometimes this task is left to the maternal uncle of the sick to carry out. Tradition dictates that in the blood sacrifices for

sickness "a part of the meat is generally reserved for the spirits, this part being thrown to the East and to the West as in the oblation of the first mush" (Estermann 1966:192, see 3.3.5 above). Möller classified the offerings under only three categories. The dog-bean and the actual dog sacrifices he classified together as one, since one actually represents the other. We briefly look at these offerings one by one:

(a) The dog-bean sacrifice

This is the sacrifice for sickness. The bean represents the dog or its flesh. Two main actors are **onganga** [the diviner] and **omunaudu** [the sick]. An ordinary man or women may also act in the place of **onganga**. The dog-bean **oxula** is eaten if the patient is declared possessed by **omukwamhungu**. The following procedure is followed: Beans are boiled and a thick porridge is cooked. **Onganga** then takes some of the porridge, dips it into the bean soup and throws it, first to the East and then to the West with the following words in each case: "take your beans" (Möller 1974:134).

After this performance, **onganga** turns to the sick person and declares: "My child, get well". Thereafter, **onganga** "takes a lump of porridge, makes a hole in it, inserts a bean into it, and leaves it for the ill person to eat" (Möller 1976:134). The order of partaking in the meal is as follows: First the ancestors are given their share, then the patient, and finally all those present. According to Möller "nobody dares to leave the place before s/he has eaten of **ohula**" (1974:134) [**'ohula'** here is the **oshindonga** version of **oxula** in **Oshikwanyama**]. If the patient is cured, that would be proof that the illness was caused by the possession of **omukwamhungu** and that s/he has now departed. If the illness worsens, however, the dog sacrifice is applied.

(b) The dog sacrifice

The dog is killed by crushing its head with a kyrie. Then, as Möller informs:

A small stick wrapped with palm fibres is dipped in the blood running from the crushed head and it is stroked on the ill person's forehead, chest, arms and legs. After this, the liver, heart and kidney are roasted on the fire and porridge is made. ... A piece of the roasted parts is put into the porridge for the ill person and after having sacrificed to **aasisi** [**Oshindonga** version for ancestors] again, the sick person must eat of the meat that he may not touch with his hands, but must bite off a piece sticking in the porridge (1974:134).

The dog-offering for sickness is done the same way as the one for the routine described above [3.3.5]. The words said however, are different. While parts of the food are thrown, first to the East and then to the West, the following words are uttered: "Eat your **oxula**, it is killed for you". After this, the rest of the heart of the dog is now cooked and served to all those who happen to be present.

(c) The cattle sacrifice

The cattle offering is used for both the young and the old. When made for the child, "the child must be bathed in the blood" (Möller 1974:135). The domestic animal killed here might either be an ox or a cow. It is killed in the customary way by stabbing it with a spear. After it has died, it is skinned. A big hole is opened in the skinned animal's side, very close to its heart. The patient is made to creep through this hole. **Onganga** assists the patient and finally pulls him/her through. This process is called 'bathing in the blood' or 'through blood'.

During this ritual, **onganga** shouts the following words: "Go, go, you have **aasisi**" (Möller 1974:135). Thereafter, the sacrifice proceeds in the customary way. If all the meat is not finished the same day, it is kept for the next day. Guests are allowed to take some of the raw meat to their homes, but not the cooked meat.

The fowl sacrifices are mainly for the poor. The bird is first held by the head and feet in front of the face of the patient so that it hits him/her with its wings and thereby frightens **ovakwamhungu** away. Goats and sheep are not common, the former because many people are prejudiced against the former, and the latter because there were no sheep among **Ovawambo** until **Ovawambo** came into contact with their southern neighbours. Further, Möller claims that **Ovawambo** did not eat "goats' and sheep's hearts which constitute the sacrificial parts of these animals" (1974:136).

3.5.5 *The sacred fire*

The holy fire was common to all **Ovawambo**. According to belief it was handed down by **Kalunga** (Loeb 1962:48) as a source of "protection, happiness and blessings" (Vedder 1966:77).

Both Vedder and Hahn (1966:17) agree that this fire had to burn ceaselessly in **ouhamba** (palace), symbolising the life of the king who in turn symbolised the life of **ekumwe** [community]. It was, therefore, **ashidila** [taboo], in fact a sin, for this fire to burn out because that could result in disaster for **ekumwe** [community], e.g. the death of the king (Loeb 1962:47).

The holy fire was thus guarded and carefully tended by specially appointed people: either by **Omumbada** [the king's principal wife] (Vedder 1966:77), or two old circumcised men known as **ovapashukili vomundilo**, [the keepers of the holy tribal fire] or by a virgin girl from the clan called **Ekwanekamba**. This girl was killed and "buried alive" with the dead king (Loeb 1962:47) "to light his fire in the next world" (Bruwer 1967:146).

The safe keeping of the sacred fire ensured health, abundance and fertility of the people" (Bruwer 1967:147). Properly tended, "it would keep all misfortune from the kraal; no snake would bite the cattle, no hyena would steal them" (Loeb 1962:48). With it burning, **oulinawa** [wellbeing] was guaranteed. According to a certain Shigwedha Alweendo of **Ombalantu**, this "fire of the nation gives the chief his power" (Hiltunen 1981:85). Its extinction meant a loss of the power or life of the king by witchcraft and the decay of the nation. Thus, **onganga** [diviner] must be found to establish the witch who caused such a crisis (Hiltunen 1981:86). Once s/he was identified, s/he was killed, and the crisis experience was reversed and **oulinawa** insured again.

It was taboo, even sin for anyone to refer to this fire, sit around it, cook over it or warm her/himself on it. Only food for the warriors was allowed to be cooked on it to give them fortune during battle (Green 1952:241). The whole tribe received its fire from this holy fire, first the chiefs who then distributed it to their juniors. The latter in turn distributed it to their subjects. This distribution was seen as some kind of distribution of life. Hence, even in the houses of the rank and file it had to be kept alive.

When the king died, his fire was left unattended to die out or, as Bruwer says, it "was put out and a new one lit in its place by means of fire sticks" (1967:146). However, this did not happen until the new king was installed to rule the tribe. Some of my informants believe that the new fire was provided by **oshimbada**, **onganga** [diviner] of the highest rank.

The importance of the holy tribal fire was demonstrated in an event involving King **Nangolo** and missionary Hahn. From **Otjimbingwe**, Hahn visited Nangolo, king of the **Ondonga** tribe. He was neither received well nor allowed to proceed with his journey to the Kunene River. There were two reasons why King Nangolo was hostile to Hahn : [1] Hahn refused to join the king in the attack against a neighbouring tribe; [2] upon his arrival in **Ondonga**, Hahn made his own fire which meant that there were then two different sources of power and life in **Ondonga**. After learning of the existence of that fire, King **Nangolo** instructed Hahn to "kill" his fire and replace it with one from the palace. Hahn reluctantly accepted the procedure, but sent a message to Nangolo that he should begin to refrain from such heathen practices and ceremonies, because these were against the gospel. Hahn also made it clear that the king should not expect a missionary to take part in heathen rites. Of course, Nangolo interpreted this message as an insult by a white stranger in Nangolo's own country and home. Moreover, that was a transgression of a vital tribal code which could endanger the king's own life and the whole of **ekumwe** (Knappert 1971:28). This holy fire was important for **oulinawa** of the individuals and of the entire **ekumwe**.

3.6 Owambo prayers and spiritual songs

In view of available evidence, it is extremely difficult to dismiss the trust which **Ovawambo** invested in **Kalunga**. This is most clear in the prayers they offer to **Kalunga** during critical moments and the songs in which **Kalunga** is recognised. **Ovawambo** are **Kalungaists**. They have what may be regarded as a general prayer meant for all situations of danger. **Kalunga** is called to help and protect the people. A mother prays for her son who is far from home, asking **Kalunga** to protect him as he protects the eggs of turtle doves (Knappert 1981:158). Among any known prayers, we cite the following and give a free English translation of each.

3.6.1 *Owambo Prayers*

(a) A prayer for rain

In times of drought, **Ovawambo** make sacrifices and offer prayers. Sacrifices are made to ancestors but prayers are offered to **Kalunga kaNangobe**. **Nangobe** was one of the first ancestors still remembered. **Kalunga** is invoked: "**Kalunga, tu pa odula!**" [God, give us rain]. Knappert records a long prayer for rain known among **Aandongas**:

O Kalunga, God of Nangombe,
 Give us heavy rain today!
 May the frogs be heard in the river,
 May the corn start sprouting in the field,
 May the dry bed fill its banks,
 May the streams roll and roar,
 May the drops begin to fall,
 May the lightning flash and shine,
 We are weakened by thirst and hunger,
 May the rain be heavy as iron,
 May the drops be round as beads,
 Glassy beads and milky pearls,
 May we be ever honest,
 May we welcome wandering strangers,
 Kalunga of Nangombe, water the cattle,
 [May it] Rain! Rain! [and] Rain! (1981:158).

This prayer is addressed to **Kalunga** by an individual, but for the common good. It covers human as well as animal welfare. The concerns raised are very interesting. The rainmaker prays for "us ... today" who "are weak with thirst and hunger". He prays for **oulinawa** [welfare] of animals, to be rescued and saved. He recognises the need for humans to be 'honest' and so be merciful to welcome "strangers". This is a prayer for survival.

(b) Prayer of one accused of witchcraft

Many innocent people, especially women, have been killed for witchcraft. Nobody feels pity for such an accused. Because the accused has nobody to cry to for help, this accused prays loudly:

Kalunga kootate! Kalunga kange! Kwafenge!
 [God, of my fathers! My God! Help me!] (Hiltunen 1982:94).

We note with interest the politeness of the person who is praying here and in the prayer for rain above. It is an indication of one's trust in **Kalunga**. Just as **Kalunga** is the source of all, **Kalunga** controls and keeps it. Every creature depends on **Kalunga**, the omnipresent. **Kalunga** is omnipresent, hence the request to protect the child "wherever he goes". It is said: **Kalunga ihe ku efa nganyoko** [**Kalunga** does not desert you like your mother can]. Human mothers can be separated from their children by time and space. It is not so with **Kalunga**.

(c) Praise after healing

A mother or uncle whose sick person has been healed feels very relieved from misfortunes and death. Kalunga is praised and thanked and acknowledged as superior to **ovakwamhungu** [ancestors]:

Kalunga a pange elao;
Omudu wange a veluka;
Kalunga e dule ovakwamhungu,
Oye e va ta mo.
[God gave me a fortune;
My patient has recovered;
Kalunga is superior to ancestors;
who s/he chased out] (Dymond 1966:146).

3.6.2 Owambo Religious songs [Oyiimbo]

The concept of **Kalunga** also appears in various songs of Ovakwanyama. Estermann selected only, as he put it, "those which seem oldest and are most expressive" (1966:184). In these songs, the purposeful presence of **Kalunga** is acknowledged. S/he is praised and acknowledged as the protector, provider, companion and redeemer.

(a) **Oshiiimbo shomunahambo** [herdsman's song]

The herdsman was a person of very low rank in society. Here he is either on his way to, or from the cattle post. During that journey, he sings about who he is and about his **Kalunga** whom he believes to be his companion in spite of his insignificance. The message of the song is that **Pamba** is always close by. S/he is all over, everywhere and with everybody (cf. Dymond 1966:145). The same **Kalunga** is also with a more significant person.

[Ame] Nanghombo hadi ombo omuti umwe naPamba. Nangobe hadi ombo omuti umwe naKalunga. Pamba li u li meenhai, Kalunga meendjatelo, meenhai dalo. Pamba li u li noposhi.

[I am Whose cattle rest under the same tree with **Pamba**, whose cattle rest in the same shade with **Kalunga**. **Pamba** being in the branches, **Kalunga** sitting in the dense crown of the tree].

(b) **Oshiiimbo shomukwaita** [a warrior's song]

Namhongo tali pepele,
Kalunga letu ama momunghulo!

**Kalunga Tukulul'omhepo.
Pamba nonhaili li kwete,
Nongalo tali pepele,
Kalunga tali ti:
Vafi vange itu yeni!**

[**Namhongo** is guiding us, being on all sides.
May God raise the wind. **Kalunga** has a guiding rod.
He is saying: Let us go forward, my mortals!].

(c) **Ombwii: oshimbo shouhaku** [a song for healing]

A seriously sick person is treated by **onganga** [a diviner]. The latter may prescribe a certain **oxula** [sacrifice] to **ovakwamungu** [ancestors]. **Onganga** also performs a magico-religious rite called **omakola**. During this rite, a woman beats calabashes with sticks making a drumming noise. To this rhythm, friends and relatives of the patient dance and sing. In this song, called **ombwii**, the power and right to take or keep are attributed to **Kalunga**. It goes like this:

**Ombwibwi tai mbwabwila, yokeulu,
Hatu shakene napamba, yokeulu,
Hatu wana naKalunga, yokeulu,
Ta (not nda) pula fiku handi fi yokeulu,
Ame nda ti omongula, yokeulu,
Ye ta ti kala po mangha, yokeulu,
U ning~ombila ya kula, yokeulu,
Kala manga u nomwenyo'
Uninge' elambo lomakololo, yokeulu,
Nambila ya pita egege, yokeulu,
Nawii wa pita oukola yokeulu.**

[The rain is bubbling in the sky. I met with **Pamba** of heaven. He asked me when I would die. Then I said it might be tomorrow. But then he said: Wait for a moment. Stay alive for a while, to have a large tomb, a hole well-scooped out, on which a mushroom and a fungus will grow] (Loeb 1951:320).

We note that "while the patient is seriously ill ... there is still hope for recovery" (Loeb 1951:321). However, the power to take or spare are attributed to **Kalunga** (Dymond 1966:147). That is why in crying for their dead, **Ovakwanyama** comfort each other saying: **Kalunga a ila po omunhu waye** [God has fetched his person]. There are exceptions, however, when death is attributed to the malpractice of witches.

3.7 Religion and Magic in Owambo culture

3.7.1 Definition

The Collin English Dictionary defines [i] 'religion' as "a particular system of belief in a god or gods and the activities that are connected with this system". Further, it defines [ii] 'magic' as "the power to use [manipulate] supernatural forces to make impossible things happen, such as making people disappear or controlling events in nature".

3.7.2 *The inseparability of religion and magic*

In the light of the above definition, it is clear that in **Owambo** traditional religion, religion and magic are inseparably linked. Scholars of **Owambo** culture, among them Dymond (1966), Aarni (1982), (Bruwer 1967) and Hiltunen (1986, 1993) are at one that as in the case of the rest of the Bantus, religion permeates all **Owambo** life. By implications also, magic permeates every sphere of **Owambo** culture and religion. It is characterised by the manipulation of supernatural forces "in either a social or asocial way" (Bruwer 1967:127). Both religion and magic feature prominently in **Owambo** "agriculture, stock training, hunting, politics, the life stages of individuals" (Hiltunen 1993:34).

All humans are believed to have the possibility of manipulating the invisible magical powers for good or bad purposes as long as they are authorised to do so. Sorcerers and witches manipulate magic power to do evil. Their use of magical powers is asocial and has evil effects on individuals or families against whom the power was directed. Diviners, kings and elders manipulate magical powers to do good and benefit of individuals or **ekumwe** (Bruwer 1967:127).

3.7.3 *Two pillars of Owambo religion*

Owambo religion is marked by two distinct concerns: [i] the concern for keeping the chain of the lineage intact, and [ii] the regulation of daily activities aimed at securing present life (Hiltunen 1993:34). The former has been discussed during our discussion of ancestors in 3.4.2 above. What concerns us here is the concept of magical power, its acquisition and its manipulation for good or bad intentions. Magic is evident in all pre-Christian **Owambo** rituals and rites. A diviner must be involved, if it is social magic. This type of magic is discussed in 3.5 above. Our discussion is, therefore, confined to an anti-social use of magic powers.

3.7.4 The antisocial magic

Anti-social magic is called **owanga** [witchcraft]. A person who is believed to possess this secret power is believed to be able to "cause illness and death to whoever he likes" (Estermann 1966:201). A person who possesses such powers and use them to harm others is known as **omulodi** [pl. **ovalodi**, witches] and his/her business called **okulowa** [bewitching]. This person must be distinguished from **omhule**, a person who is believed to possess extraordinary powers to do things which others cannot do. The latter is not antisocial. It is said of a person who has been bewitched: **okwa liwa** [s/he has been eaten]. **Ovalodi** "have only conceptual existence until they are 'smelled' out" by **onganga** [diviner] and "accused of witchcraft" (Bruwer 1967:131). Most of the accused were women.

3.7.5 The acquisition of Owanga

The acquisition of **owanga** must be understood in view of the **Owambo** concept of power. For them, **Kalunga** alone possesses the power of life, or vital force. As long as this power is in the possession of **Kalunga**, it is good (Hiltunen 1993:35). But, **Kalunga** grants this power to creation, particularly to humans, spirits and plants. So these powers flow from **Kalunga** via the spirits of kings, national heroes, higher ranked diviners called **oimbada** (s. **oshimbada**), to lower grade diviners and witches. It is believed that this power with its origin in **Kalunga** is good, but it can be used for evil purposes by witches and sorcerers.

According to Bruwer, **owanga** "is an inherited trait running in the lineage of the mother" (1967:130). Estermann had heard of this belief but found no convincing evidence to back it up. According to him, among **Ovakwanyama**, **owanga** is acquired by choice and through association. Desiring to be **omulodi**, a person gets into the company of a witch and is effectively initiated by swallowing something. Then such a person is ordered to bewitch a relative as a test of the powers newly acquired. The motives for the acquisition of **owanga** include the feeling of an inferiority complex. Normally a person who feels thus approaches an established **omulodi** (in theory) who then makes him/her to drink or eat something through which **owanga** is transferred. It is for this reason that the acquisition of **Owanga** is called **okulya owanga** [literary to eat witchcraft] (Estermann 1966:201).

3.7.6 The seat of Owanga

Once acquired, it is believed that **owanga** is located in the throats of **omulodi**. Estermann refers to events whereby both a certain Kanime and his cousin King Mandume (d.1917) ordered the throat of some witches cut to establish its seat. "Nothing abnormal was found" (1966:202).

3.7.7 The role of omulodi

After the success of the 'eating' of a relative, s/he "will go on ... causing terrible distraction", causing people to get sick and die (Bruwer 1967:131). "According to popular belief, witches practice their craft through soul abstraction or injecting malicious objects into their victim's body, thus causing illness and death" (1967:131). **Omulodi** is believed to put some poisonous objects called **oikupa** in the bodies of people at night to make them sick and eventually die (Hasheela 1995:8). Their general end is to bring misfortune to their victims, to harm, or to destroy them (Hiltunen 1986:21). To reach their destinations, witches are believed to use owls, hyenas, and jackals as means of transport. They do their business at night.

3.7.8 The attitude of the society towards owanga

Witchcraft is considered as a terrible sin. Therefore, individuals suspected of possessing it were simply killed (Bruwer 1967:132). Sometimes they survived if their families were able to pay heavy fines for them, normally in the form of cattle. Otherwise, the accused witch is simply dragged into the bush, shot or speared and left there unburied. A witch was never warned properly (Bruwer 1967:132). Some of the accused escaped into neighbouring ethnic groupings. In many cases, therefore, the natural death of one person was followed by the violent death of the witch.

The attitude of **Ovawambo** towards witches and witchcraft was one of extreme fear. They feared both to be bewitched or to be accused of being witches themselves. For that reason, **Omuwambo** in the pre-missionary era was extremely careful of what s/he spoke or did.

3.7.9 Is oulodi a reality?

Neither pre -, nor post - Christian informants could prove beyond reasonable doubt the existence of witchcraft. The witch may not necessarily be conscious of his/her ability to bewitch people.

Hiltunen concluded that it is an "involuntary action" (1986:23). Further, she says that **omulodi** "is not always aware himself of his inner capacity until accused of witchcraft and shown by divination to possess it" (1986:25). Nghifikwa concurs, (1995:11).

After studying the discussion between Tobias Reijonen and a certain **onganga**, Hiltunen concluded, and I agree, that witch detection is deception (1986:87). The conversation of Reijonen and **onganga** is reproduced below:

Reijonen: Why do you put innocent people to death through your eanelo and accuse this or that person of being the transgressor when you yourself know very well that all of your magic is merely a lie?

Onganga: You have understood the matter; ... but, what should I do? I know that my eanelo is a pure lie, but since all people, especially all dignitaries force me to do so, I must deceive them, for otherwise they will say I do not want to reveal transgressors, but I am allied with them. To their satisfaction I must accuse this or that person of being a transgressor, even though I know myself that he is innocent. Otherwise, especially those dignitaries will kill me, because I have a reputation of being able to divine ... and know all the secrets, for Kalunga has given me the scent of an ox, with which I know even all secret matters" (1986:87).

This quote contradicts the view that **oulodi** was acquired voluntarily. I doubt whether an average person can risk his/her own life in the business of 'eating soul' which ends him/her in a situation as described above. Witchcraft cannot possibly be voluntary. Its source must have been jealousy (Estermann 1966:204).

Owambo fear of witchcraft must be understood against their view and fear of death. They believed that "human life cannot be subjected to dissolution by natural death". If that would be the case, it would mean "the attribution of the fatality to God, which would mean attributing a crime to the Supreme Being, who is infinitely good" (Estermann 1966:205). In their thoughts, therefore, death cannot simply be attributed to **Kalunga**. It must have a secondary source, a malevolent agent, a spirit or a person as its origin. This belief, however, does not seem to contradict their belief that **Kalunga** is an overall authority even for those who are accused of **owanga**.

Their intention of eradicating witchcraft might have been good, namely, to prevent any further loss of life (Hiltunen 1986:86). Unfortunately the results were more killings. This reminds us of what Buthelezi says about the power of fear. It forces a person to do whatever possible to create a distance of security between the person and what is feared. According to Buthelezi, there are two possible ways to do so: [1] One either runs away from what one fears to increase the distance between them, or one accumulates all inner resources of power either to destroy or neutralise what is a threat to him/her (1983:17). It was, and is, common knowledge that most of the people accused of witchcraft were either rich, clever, hard working or beautiful. So it makes sense to conclude that envy, jealousy, hatred etc. were and are the main reason for witchcraft. It is why witchcraft accusations and counter accusations were, and are, common between people who were, or are, related, such as mothers-, daughters-, and sons-in-law as well as co-wives. In this case, witchcraft was deadly destructive (Hiltunen 1986:48).

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter was aimed at identifying the many features of **Owambo** religion. **Ovawambo** form part of the great Bantu family from the north of Africa who finally settled in the extreme north of Namibia formally known as **Owambo**. **Ovawambo** perceive reality as being triple-floored with **Kalunga** and the well-to-do on the third floor called **eulu** [heaven], the living on the second, called **edu** or **ounyuni** and the dead commoners on the first under the earth. I have shown that these three different worlds are vertically related, so are their inhabitants. The lower ranked world depends on its immediate superior for its survival and wellbeing.

According to the structure of reality, **Kalunga**, who is gender neutral, has her/his dwelling in **eulu** [heaven], above the earth which indicates his/her remoteness. Ancestors are believed to be closer to **Kalunga** who operates through them as he does through **eenganga** [diviners]. It became evident that **Ovawambo** regard **Kalunga** as an ultimate authority by whom all things found existence, who controls and keeps them. S/he is conceived to be generally **good**, but also **ambivalent**. In spite of the incomprehensiveness of **Kalunga**, s/he is trusted by **Ovawambo** to such a degree that in events where all human possibilities have failed, s/he is still invoked. There are innumerable **Owambo** proverbs and expressions which serve as evidence for this fact. **Pambaelishita**, a myth of **Kalunga** has been discussed in detail to contradict those who taught

that this hero figure was a rival of Kalunga. I argued that, on the contrary, the hero figure was **Kalunga** him/herself. The myth teaches among other things, the existence of evil alongside good, but the latter will prevail.

Ovawambo attach great significance to the sun. It does not only determine their direction but it is believed to have inherent power to bestow or take life. So the East from where it emerges is good and the West where it retires is bad. Time is, for **Ovawambo** cyclic. A day begins with daybreak and ends with sundown. There are no weeks. There are twelve months in a year determined by seasonal activities.

For **Ovawambo**, the world is full of good and bad spirits most of whom originate from human souls. The most important of these spirits are **ovakwamhungu** [ancestors] who are believed to be closer to **Kalunga** than their living relatives on the one hand, yet still part of their extended families on the other. **Ovakwamhungu** are believed to have power over their relatives, although they are not believed to be divine. When remembered and given their due, they bless, but when ignored or forgotten, they cause misfortune. Consequently, many **Ovawambo** rituals and sacrifices were performed for their acknowledgement and appeasement. Apart from the centrality of **Kalunga**, the rituals and sacrifices, the principle of **ekumwe** [community], the priority of safety and security for all, and the significance of work are upheld. The ultimate end seems to have been present wellbeing rather than life on the other side of the grave.

Rituals were performed as measures of preventing evil. Sometimes, however, they were exploited for personal gain or enjoyment.

My discussion of the rituals of **epasha** [twin-birth] and **oupili** [feet-first birth] revealed that these rituals turned out to be business and fun for **eenganga** [diviners]. They did not only enjoy themselves, they also provided them with an income.

The sacred fire was regarded as a national source of life. It was perceived as a means by which **Kalunga** bestowed life to **ekumwe** via the king. It had to be kept alive as a sign that the king was alive, or allowed to extinguish when the king died. Alive, this fire symbolised **oulinawa aushewa aveshe** [total common wellbeing] and extinguished it symbolised disaster for **ekumwe**.

Prayers and religious songs formed an integral part of **Owambo** religion. All major events such as festivals and rituals were characterised by prayers. Some of the prayers were directed to the ancestors, but others were directed to **Kalunga** as petitions or praises. That revealed that **Kalunga** was not inaccessible after all. So **Kalunga** was not only invoked but also praised after beneficial events have been experienced. In their songs, **Owambo** recognised **Kalunga** and acknowledged his/her continuous guidance and protective presence with people of every status. That revealed that **Kalunga** was not believed to be confined to heaven or only to the side of the nobles. S/he was perceived to be omnipresent and available to all humans.

The chapter concluded with the realisation that magic and **Owambo** religion are inseparably linked. **Owambo** know **owanga** [witchcraft] which they use for anti-social purposes and **oupule** [super-knowledge] which they used for social benefits such as protection. **Owanga** was and is feared and **omulodi** [the witch], who practises it, is hated as an enemy of peace and harmony in **ekumwe**. **Oupule** was approved and **omhule**, who practises it, is loved as a friend of **ekumwe** [community]. Both **owanga** and **oupule** were acquired.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE OWAMBO CONCEPT OF WELLBEING

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three paid attention to the identification of different components of the **Owambo** culture and religion. This chapter narrows the scope of this tradition to specific definitions of sin and salvation. It looks at the **Owambo** logic of causation and the scopes of both sin and salvation. Section 4.2 defines sin and looks at its effects on individuals and on **ekumwe** [community], including the world of spirits. Section 4.3 defines salvation and looks at its scope. It shall be shown that for the pre-Christian **Owambo** community, salvation was mainly this-worldly and covered all means of present survival and prosperity. Life after death was not a major problem for them. Different efforts by **Ovawambo** to fight sin and obtain wellbeing will be discussed. In addition, some taboos will also be discussed in relation to what they are meant to achieve. In section 4.3 we shall respond to the question of the saviour and his/her **modus operandi** in Owambo religion.

After a brief reference to the encounter between Lutheranism and other religions, section 4.4 shall tackle the similarities and dissimilarities between the soteriologies of **Ovawambo** and of Luther. This comparison will help us to isolate those elements of the **Owambo** tradition which can be utilised in the formation of a concept of salvation which can take care of **Owambo** concerns and those which are contradictory to Christianity and must be dumped.

The problem of ancestral veneration shall be dealt with in section 4.5. Four possible theories of how the tradition could have started and developed will be suggested. A conclusion is made that ancestral veneration is most probably a human device to achieve certain goals which may be good or bad. On the whole, however, this practice is irreconcilable with the Pauline-Lutheran tradition.

4.2 The Owambo idea of sin and evil

The **Owambo** concept of sin cannot be restricted to a single definition. There is no clear distinction between sin and evil as they are understood in the Christian tradition. One cannot even

be sure whether by speaking of sin we are not imposing a concept on the vocabulary of **Owambo** religion. What is clear and can be spoken of without a problem is **owii** [evil], that which ought not to be. By evil is meant the absence of some good which ought to be evident, or the presence of a **threat to life** which ought not to be experienced. **Owii** results from sin. Before attempting to define sin, a word about **Owambo** logic of causation is in order.

4.2.1 The Owambo logic of causation

Like other African groups, pre-scientific **Ovawambo** did not believe that events happen by chance, especially if such events resulted in **omupya** [misfortune]. For every crisis a serious investigation was launched to establish its source. The questions for which answers were sought were [i] who caused **omupya** and [ii] why? Common belief was, and to some degree still is, that some supernatural forces are responsible for **omupya**. These forces may be those which were activated by human error and negligence, e.g. negligence against ancestors, or those that were inherently evil and malicious, e.g. **outikili** [sorcery] and **oulodi** [witchcraft]. In both cases, it seems, the origin of sin was located in human action.

4.2.2 Towards defining sin

Ovawambo did not have a concept of the fall, or of original sin. Sin was any action or behaviour of which **ekumwe** disapproved or which was considered morally wrong. It was primarily a disturbance of human relationships at different levels: first with individual members, then within the family, including ancestors, with **ekumwe** (the community) and ultimately nature as a whole. It was taken for granted that sinning against elders, ancestors, **ekumwe** and nature was sinning against **Kalunga** who was believed to own everybody and everything. If one did evil to **omapongo** [the unclaimed], that is, the weak, the poor, the widows, the orphans, the sick, the abnormal and the outcast, one did evil to **Kalunga** albeit indirectly. It was said with regard to these kinds of people: **Onghuwo yepongo oKalunga he i tondoka** [the cry of **epongo** is responded to by **Kalunga**]. To a person who mistreated the vulnerable, **Ovawambo** posed a question: **Oho tila tuu Kalunga** [Don't you fear God]? (Sheyavali & Kaulinge 1970:10f). **Ovawambo** believe that sinful actions lead to evil, that which is not supposed to be, for instance, anything which threatens life.

The **Owambo** concepts for sin are **oulunde**, **etimba** (pl. **omatimba**) and **onyanga** in **Oshikwanyama** and **ondjo** (pl. **oondjo**) in **Oshindonga**. According to their philosophy, if one did something which disturbed the established peaceful relationship within the family, or the harmony in the entire **ekumwe**, one has sinned. So **Ovawambo** defined sin as horizontal, that is **from below**, in terms of its consequences in human life. Briefly stated: whereas Christians define sin in terms of what humans are in themselves, **Ovawambo** defined it in terms of human relationships, i.e. what humans do or do not do for others.

4.2.3 Sinful actions and behaviour

(a) The sin of omission and negligence

Chapter three referred to keeping the lineage intact as one of the two pillars of **Ovawambo** religion (3.7.3). The aim of that tradition was, and still is, to secure **oulinawa aushe wa aveshe** [the total and common wellbeing] or simply **elao** [good fortune]. Life, wellbeing and moral order were believed to flow from **Kalunga** through the female lineage via **ovakwamhungu** [ancestors], then via the living elders to the subsequent generations. Blessings of all kinds resulted from the performance of the rituals and sacrifices which were discussed in chapter three (3.5).

It was sin to show irreverence towards elders, because, whether dead or alive, they deserved to be respected for their contribution to **oulinawa wa aveshe** [common wellbeing] during their lifetime. No one should undermine their status (Maimela 1988:168). It was sin if a young person made decisions without seeking the opinions and advice of the elders, parents or grandparents. It was a sin of negligence if young members of families did not take care of elders, children or needy members of their families. **Ovawambo** express this in a proverb which says very much the same as the Fourth Commandment: **Kaxuxwena hadela nyoko, nyoko onale e ku hadele** [Young people, it is your turn now to bring your part, elders have done theirs] (Hasheela 1986:11). If this did not happen, **Ovawambo**, like other Africans, believed that "the anger of the founder of one's extended family or clan" (Maimela 1985:69), or any other **meeekulu** or **tatekulu** [maternal grandparents] (Bruwer 1981:135) who was still remembered and was believed to work together with **Kalunga**, is unleashed. If this happened, it was believed that a situation occurred

whereby blessings and support enjoyed from elders and ancestors were suspended and misfortunes would follow.

This crisis would also arise if rituals and rites such as **oshipe** [New Year feast] were conducted without involving the ancestors. It was sin to celebrate **oshipe** without first giving the ancestors their due and share. The same was true with other big feasts such as **efundula** [the initiation of girls into womanhood].

The understanding was that respect for elders resulted in fortune and blessings for individuals, families, clan and **ekumwe** [community] as a whole. Parents, grandparents, senior citizens, tribal leaders and religious leaders were all believed to be channels of blessings from **Kalunga**. A young person who was known for his/her respect for those above him/her was expected to live longer and become a prominent figure in society. S/he would soon become rich, become **elenga** [a noble] or a wife of a highly respected member of **ekumwe** [community]. A disrespectful youth would soon get into trouble and die. If s/he lived longer, s/he might become poor or crippled (Sheyavali & Kaulinge 1970:18). A conclusion may be drawn that disrespect of seniors, whoever they might be, was regarded as **sin** among **Owambo**. This kind of sin leads to misfortunes such as not getting married, poverty, ill health, mental disturbance, the death of the individual concerned, or natural disasters.

(b) Sin of commission

[i] Contravention of traditional and social norms

According to Sheyavali and Kaulinge, **Owambo** traditional society was regulated by strict laws, rules and unwritten commandments. When individuals fulfilled such stipulations, they themselves as individuals and together as **ekumwe** [the community], flourished. **Oya eta outeku, eputuko, elungi nenhukepo** [obedience brought about a balanced growth of children, proper education, and vigilance] (1970:9). Conformity brought about a great measure of security and protection for **omapongo** [the marginalised, widows, the poor, the despised, the outcast the orphans and the like]. The whole of **ekumwe** enjoyed security and protection when traditional laws and norms were not contravened. Those who defied them brought judgement upon

themselves and upon **ekumwe**, unless they were either chased out of that particular family or **ekumwe** as a whole or simply eliminated (Sheyavali & Kaulinge 1970:9).

It was, therefore, sin to contravene traditional customary laws, rules and regulations because such an act of disobedience was believed to endanger the wellbeing of the individual concerned, his/her family, clan and eventually **ekumwe alishe** [the whole community]. There were many such traditional laws and social norms of which Williams listed only twenty five, including: it was unlawful: [1] to harvest sorghum before the king allowed it; [2] to fetch salt from the pans before the appointed time and before all grain was harvested; [3] to beat drums during the rainy season; and [4] for anyone to touch sacred things such as the country stone (1991:187f). Sheyavali and Kaulinge also refer to the parallels between the third commandment and specific days on which no one was allowed to work in the **Owambo** community. It was unlawful to work on a **ongodji** [rest day]. This was a day on which **Ovawambo** recognised the intervention of **Kalunga** in human affairs. Two events led to a specific day designated **ongodji**: [1] the first rain after a terrible draught when people thanked **Kalunga** for coming to their rescue; [2] the mourning period for the king, when the nation mourned the loss of their father figure (1970:15).

It was sin to work on **ongodji** and the culprits were severely punished. It was believed that disregarding this rule would lead to more deaths or natural disasters such as droughts. One should rather sit quietly on **ongodji** for one or a few days, than be forced by circumstances beyond human control to do so for more days.

[ii] Bearing false witness and swearing falsely

In connection with the second and the eighth commandments, Sheyavali and Kaulinge drew parallels between mentioning the name of God in vain and bearing false witness. Bearing false witness and swearing were common among **Ovawambo**. Swearing by something or somebody was used to affirm the truth of what one was saying. However, it was sin to swear by **Kalunga**. Instead, they swore by things such as: lightning, the lion, and the throne of the king. They believed that if they swore falsely by these powerful things, these would cause harm or destruction. Swearing by **Kalunga** was discouraged.

Lying was closely connected with accusing falsely, which was abhorred. A false accuser had no associates. People avoided him/her for fear of being accused falsely. S/he was known for his/her disturbance of the common peace, harmony and wellbeing. Thus, such a person was hated and avoided because [o]sha **dulika a dipaife omunhu moinima yongaho. ... a dipawe ile a teyife po epata lavo** [It is possible for him/her to bring about the killing of people for no apparent reason, ... for himself to be killed or to destroy his family] (Sheyavali and Kaulinge 1970:26). That means, a liar was a danger both to him/herself, to his/her own family, clan and to **ekumwe** as a whole. Witnessing falsely and swearing by **Kalunga** was regarded as sin which could result in the destruction of the person concerned, either by lightning, by the lion or by the king.

[iii] Greed and theft

Like lying, theft was abhorred among **Ovawambo**. A thief was not only feared, s/he was also despised. It was even said that **omulodi** did less harm than a thief. So it was said: **Idilila omulodi, ino idilila ombudi** [Rather accommodate a witch than a thief]. This was, and still is, an advisory expression meaning that a witch was less harmful than a thief (Sheyavali & Kaulinge 1970:24). As punishment, the hands of the thief were burned; **eengodo** [heavy stones] were tied onto their legs to prevent them from moving about to steal. Their ears were cut as signs of identification for all to see. If a thief was killed, this was not regarded as murder. It was simply said: **omufingo wa wil' ombwa** [literally: the door has fallen on a stealing dog. The dog/thief itself/himself is to blame] (Sheyavali & Kaulinge 1970:24). A thief was an ill-fated person. Misfortune always tracked him/her down and death would for ever be close to him/her (Sheyavali & Kaulinge 1970:24).

So the sin of stealing had serious consequences which affected the present and the future of the individual, his/her family, clan and the tribe involved. Like the false accuser, a thief had no associates because as the saying goes: **kaume kombudi naye ombudi** [a friend of a thief is a thief too].

Covetousness and greed were not unfamiliar in **Owambo** society. These two were associated with theft and murder. A greedy person was feared because he/she harboured evil thoughts in his/her heart. Because such a person was never satisfied with what he/she had, he/she was

suspected of constantly planning to enrich him/herself with the belongings of other people. To get what s/he desired, s/he had to steal, rob or kill the owners. Greedy kings robbed the livestock of commoners during their **omakumbu** [crusades]. It was believed that a greedy person did not even care whether a victim was a relative. A thief and a greedy person was suspected of stealing, robbing and killing even a close relative such as a mother or brother. It was said of them: **Wokatili [ke na] nande onyoko, omunhu wokahalu [ke na] nande omumwanyoko.** [A greedy person stole, robbed or killed even his/her mother or brother] (Sheyavali & Kaulinge 1970:26). This disapproving attitude of **Ovawambo** towards covetousness and selfishness corresponds squarely with the Ninth and Tenth Christian commandments.

[iv] Sexual immorality

Concerning the sixth commandment, Sheyavali and Kaulinge drew parallels between scriptural and **Owambo** perceptions of morality. **Ovawambo** regarded premarital sex as dangerous. A youth who indulged in sexual immorality, whether hetero- or homosexual, was believed to be heading for a very low status in society when s/he grew up. S/he would be poor and most probably weak, if s/he was fortunate to reach an old age. Such a youth was not allowed to participate in war because he was seen as a source of misfortune. His presence and involvement would bring misfortune to the army. In fact sexual activities, even those of married soldiers, were regarded with some measure of reserve. They were associated with misfortune. The **Owambo** expression **oita ovamati ...** [war is for the unmarried] expresses the fact that people should abstain from sex if they were about to participate in a battle to avoid misfortune.

Pre- and extra-marital sex was sin and the imagination of its consequences was terrifying. A man who had sex with a woman other than his wife could not close the grave of a dead person. The same man could contaminate sorghum so that beer made from it would upset people who drank it. This happened when he walked over **elambo longava** [the hole where sorghum is covered for germination]. Moreover, this man could not enter the bedroom of his pregnant wife. She had to come out to meet and greet him outside the bedroom. If a girl became pregnant, she was simply burned to death. To avoid this ordeal, she had to escape to other tribal areas and stay there until she delivered the child. Such a child was illegitimate and was treated with disrespect, particularly if it was a boy. There were many rights which an illegitimate child could simply not enjoy. A boy

could not accompany cattle to their post, because his presence would lead to the cattle being attacked by wild animals. He could not participate in war for he could endanger his own life or the lives of other warriors. In short, such a boy was prevented from developing into a **man** capable of becoming rich and strong, all because of the sin of his parents. A girl was not allowed to cook for people going to war or to the cattle post because it was believed that they would die in the war or be devoured by wild animals.

So fornication, adultery, premarital sex and homosexuality, were **sinful** acts. They had far-reaching and bad consequences. Such acts were discouraged by making the culprits pay if they were males. Females who become pregnant before going through an initiation ceremony had to secretly leave their clans and tribes, to avoid being killed. Sexual immorality was also closely connected with the sin of stealing. A married person who slept with a woman other than his/her married partner was guilty of the sin of stealing.

[v] Witchcraft and murder

A careful analysis of **Owambo** proverbs, riddles, prayers, names, and folk tales reveals that all people, together with other creatures, were viewed as creatures of **Kalunga**. Life, whether of humans or of animals, was believed to have its origin in **Kalunga**. It was the highest gift humanity and the other creatures received from **Kalunga**. It was precious and everything possible was done to preserve it. Consequently, taking life was regarded as the highest crime. It was sin to kill. Even soldiers who had killed during attacks or war were regarded as having been contaminated and had to undergo cleansing rituals (Bruwer 1967:143). A murderer was hated and avoided by all who happened to know him/her. An act of human slaughter alienated a person from the rest of **ekumwe** to which s/he belonged and through which **Kalunga** channelled blessings to him/her. Normally murderers were punished by death, or they escaped to other tribal areas. So, taking the life of another was sin in **Owambo** religion just as it is in the Christian tradition.

Traditional Africans, and **Ovawambo** are no exception, lived in constant terror of spirits and malicious characters, especially witches and sorcerers. The remark of Hiltunen that **Omundonga** "fears nothing more than witchcraft and witches" (1986:36) was true for all **Ovawambo**. They

did not fear losing eternal life as such. They feared physical premature death. Since witchcraft aimed at disturbing "human health and life" and affected their relationships, everything possible was done to uproot those responsible for it, wherever they might be (Hiltunen 1986:36). It was sin to bewitch. What Maimela says about Africans in general was also true for **Ovawambo**:

Most Africans express an intense revulsion against all forms of diabolic evil embodied in witchcraft, because not only does it prostitute the law of nature by a deliberate manipulation of the vital forces for destructive purposes, but also cynically poisons all human relationships, thereby threatening the corporate nature of society. It is against the background of appalling terror and deep revulsion against witchcraft that the traditional African is apt to call every premeditated enmity, hatred, evil speaking or any act directed towards the destruction of the life of others witchcraft and therefore evil and sinful in the highest degree in the sight of God. Evil spirits and witchcraft are therefore the greatest injustice imaginable towards community - a sin against which traditional Africans spend their greatest energies, trying to procure relief or salvation from it, because, in biblical terms, it violates the second commandment that we should love our fellows as ourselves. ... evil spirits and witches undermine that which makes human life possible and fulfilling for everyone in society.(1985:68)

Ovawambo believed that **Kalunga** has given them the right over the lives of animals. An animal may be killed for human consumption. However, the taking of human life was sin against God on whom life depended except if a person has taken another life such as a witch. In most cases, therefore, sin and evil were measured in terms of human life and **oulinawa aushe wa aveshe** [total common wellbeing]. Suffering, sickness, loss of property or children and, above all, death were attributed to some wrongdoing e.g. breach of taboos by some members of the family, clan, tribe or **ekumwe**. Such a breach of an interdict was a sin most likely to lead to a crisis experience; to directly and immediately activate spiritual forces which would apply spiritual sanctions (Finnegan 1977:35).

Dymond understood the **Owambo** perception of sin correctly as predominantly horizontally oriented.

Again, the pagan idea of sin is quite different from the Christian idea of sin. In the first place, the pagan idea of wrong is not against God but of wrong against society - and society includes disembodied members of one's tribe who, by causing sickness and death, can punish for transgressions of the tribal code of which one's contemporaries on earth are unaware. Secondly, if society -which

includes the ancestral spirits - does not discover a man's fault the man is without fault. Thirdly, the pagan sense of sin is juristic: either you receive a free pardon which does away with the necessity for punishment of wrongdoing, or else you are punished and the punishment wipes out the offence.(1966:155)

In his interpretation of the Christian traditional definition of sin, however, Dymond exposed himself as a dualist who separated God from society and human character from human conduct. He pursued a deceptive theory whereby he held the horizontal relationship over against the vertical relationship, claiming that it was a Christian paradigm per se. As we shall later see in chapter seven, this is not the case. Suffice to say that the fact that God became Immanuel (Matt.1:23), means that he horizontalized our relationship to him. He is God with us, not God above or on top of us. I do not agree that the **Owambo** concept of sin differs fundamentally from that of the Christian faith. Both teach that God communicates with us through other humans. So to both, individuals and society are central for our communication with God. So there is no dichotomy between sinning against God as the Christian tradition emphasises and sinning against individuals or society as **Ovawambo** stress it.

It is also not true that "if society - which includes the ancestral spirits - does not discover a man's fault, the man is without fault" (Dymond 1966:155). My informants agree that there had been a feeling like guilt among **Ovawambo** even before the advent of Christianity. There was also the confession of sins. A person who committed a sinful act went to a bush and spoke about what was troubling him/her. That was his/her confession. Confession was also made by digging a hole in the earth into which a person, who feels guilty, would unpack his/her heart of all what was troubling him/her. That was his/her confession. But confession was also made to senior members of society who were expected to give that person some advice (Mbwalu 1.2.1996). So it is not true, as Dymond implies, that there was no sense of guilt among **Ovawambo**.

There is some truth in the statement of Dymond that the **Owambo** "sense of sin is juristic". **Ovawambo** strongly believed that a person sinned against others and that sinning immediately affected the sinner's relationship with the rest of reality - spirits, nature and most important of all, **Kalunga**. It follows, therefore, that forgiveness is granted by other humans. When one is forgiven at this level, all other perturbed relations are healed. If one was punished for a crime, that sin was

atoned for and forgiven at all levels. The forgiveness by other people was believed to be forgiveness by the spirit, including **Kalunga**. So the difference between the Christian views of salvation does not lie in the absence or presence of guilt feelings in the sinner but in the way in which sin affects God, or the forgiveness is received by the sinner. For Christians as Dymond sees it, forgiveness comes from God to the guilty while for **Ovawambo** it proceeds from the community. The point of contact lies in that in both cases and at a practical level, God uses humans to declare a person guilty or forgiven.

Further it is not true as Dymond argues that human character and human conduct had nothing to do with each other. It is not true that "among the Ambo [**Ovawambo**], morality [was] viewed as being concerned less with character than with conduct". The theory held by Dymond that "Christian religion is concerned with something more than conduct, namely the transformation of human character by means of [the] knowledge of God" is challengeable (1966:155). It was this distinction between character and conduct which led to the spiritualisation and individualisation of the Christian faith and its concepts of sin and salvation. Many did not care what they or other people did because God was more concerned with character than conduct, so they argued. Judgement or salvation was determined by character and not by conduct. What other people say or feel was not as important as the inner character. Salvation came later after earthly life, so this earthly life was less significant than the life to come.

The Christian religion has emphasised the transformation of the inner person and the imparting of the knowledge of God which would lead 'the pagans' to "eternal life" (1966:155). It is exactly the weakness of Luther's position that he believed that a good tree is bound to yield good fruit. But how do we know that the fruit is good before we taste it? Sometimes what was supposed to be a good tree yielded bitter fruit. In spite of their knowledge of God, Christians have taken part in crimes against humanity such as apartheid. So it is not completely wrong for **Ovawambo** to argue that one must first taste the fruit before deciding whether the tree is good or not, even if the theory so said. There seems to be no guarantee that each good tree yields good fruit. For this reason mutual testing between theory and practice should be a never-ending process.

4.3 The Owambo perception of salvation

The central concern for each religion is salvation for its adherents (Mbiti 1986:1340). Salvation is necessitated by the existence of evil which different religions attribute to different sources, for example the devil, sin, witchcraft, sorcery and the weakness of human nature. For Ovawambo, people need to be saved from **omupya** [misfortune] which presents itself in different forms "such as natural calamities, social injustices, war, hatred, tyranny, oppression, famine, poverty, exploitation, immorality, physical ills and death" (Kasenene 1993:3). All these are foreign to the human situation and are a threat to **oulinawa aushe wa aveshe** or **elao**. If salvation is so important for human existence, there can be no more challenging task to theologians than that of defining salvation so that those to whom it is communicated understand it in simple and concrete terms.

4.3.1 *Towards a definition of salvation*

Broadly understood salvation as perceived by **Ovawambo** must be defined in terms of what they feared most, namely misfortune in this life, such as, infertility, premature death etc., and their response to avert it. Chapter three described in some detail various ways and means by which **Ovawambo** endeavoured to acquire **elao** [fortune] on this side of the grave: rituals, sacrifices, sacred fire (3.5), fear of witchcraft and sorcery, prayers and spiritual songs (3.6) as well as magic (3.7). The analysis of all these aspects of **Ovambo** religion revealed that the entire life of **Ovawambo** was an open war against **omupya** [misfortune] before it struck and an invitation to **oulinawa** [wellbeing] or **elao** [fortune] before it was too late.

The most common concept which can be translated as salvation in **Oshiwambo** is the noun **exupifo**, derived from the verb **okuxupifa** [to save, to rescue or to deliver]. **Okwa xupifa nge momeva, mondjala, mokanya konghoshi etc** [S/he saved me from water, hunger, from the hungry lion etc]. Jesus is known in **Oshiwambo** Bible as **Omuxupifi** [the Saviour] and in Christian literature also as **Omumangluli** [Liberator], one who saves or rescues and liberates another. In the context of the pre-missionary **Ovambo** culture, these words had a secular significance, and lacked an eschatological relevance.

Ovawambo also spoke of **ekulilo** [the buying out], by which noun they meant ransoming something or somebody. **Ekulilo** is derived from the verb **okukulila** [to buy out]. The pre-missionary **ekumwe** [community] used **ekulilo** to refer to an act of freeing a slave or prisoner of war by paying a ransom in the form of cattle or beads to the capturer. Jesus is **Omukulili** [the Redeemer]. The idea behind these concepts is that of buying a slave back to freedom and to peace. According to Sheyavali and Kaulinge, war captives were taken into **eti** [a log in which a slave's foot was engulfed] by powerful tribes or families. The relatives of such a slave gathered cattle, beads and other expensive items as **oikulila** [price, ransom] to buy the release of their relative out of slavery. Only when such **oikulila** have been paid and accepted could the slave walk free. In that case, **ovakwao** [relatives] of the slave acted as **ovamangululi** [liberators] or **ovakulili** [redeemers]. Therefore, for what Jesus has done for us, he deserves to be called **Omumangululi** [the Liberator], or simply **Omukulili** [the Redeemer]. Salvation was perceived and experienced in concrete terms in daily life marked by **the absence of omupya** [misfortune], e.g. famine, diseases, suffering, sterility, crop failure, sickness and especially early death. Positively put, salvation is **oulinawa** [wellbeing] or **elao** [good fortune]. Thus it was not eschatological. It was a concrete experience marked by good health, safety, security, unity, communalism, material prosperity, stability, peace and harmony today, here and now. Society had to be saved from a calamity in the present. So salvation was never equated with an escape from present reality. Rather it was of this world, to be achieved through human involvement in fighting evil forces, particularly **oulodi** [witchcraft] and **onhiko** [sorcery].

Salvation was not achieved once and for all. It was a continuous process whereby society, through rituals and sacrifices performed by agents of **elao**, **omholo** and **oulinawa** (ancestors, the kings and the diviners] is purged of evil-doers and evil itself. Salvation for individuals, or for individual souls, was perceived as being unauthentic, for authentic salvation was when every individual in society enjoyed safety, material abundance and healthy relationships with others. **Elao or omholo** (good fortune) was further achieved through the observation of moral norms such as acknowledging and venerating ancestors, respect for the elders, orderliness, co-operation in communal events, and performance of propitiatory rituals according to personal and societal needs.

4.3.2 The scope of salvation

Although Mbiti was not writing about **Owambo** religion in particular, what he says in his **Bible and Theology in African Christianity** applies to **Ovawambo** as well. Like many African peoples, **Ovawambo** "recognise and experience many dangers and threats to life ... As a whole, life is a struggle in the face of these threats which are both physical and spiritual in nature" (1986:156). This shows not only that the world in which salvation is needed, is full of threats and dangers to human life. It also shows that the solution to those threats and dangers, whether called salvation or **elao**, must be wide in scope in order to address the situation adequately. The scope must cover the whole person, body and spirit for, "human life is a unity between physical and spiritual entities" (Mbiti 1986:156). Physical threats have a spiritual aftermath and spiritual threats have physical effects. Salvation must target both, if it is to be relevant.

(a) In terms of time

For **Ovawambo**, salvation was, first and foremost, rooted in this life and not eschatological. It was only eschatological in terms of a belief that the highest rank in the history of a person was becoming **omukwamhungu** which had to do mainly with fertility. Otherwise, **elao** and **oulinawa** were conditions to be experienced in life here and now. It affected every single moment of human life. Ideal life was present life without peril. This means that salvation could be equated with survival.

The kind of salvation which **Ovawambo** believed in was world-affirming. This world was accepted as a home which is neither good nor evil in itself except for the evil which ensues from witches, sorcerers and malicious spirits. This world was a home where humans and the rest of creation were meant to live in peace and harmony without threats, dangers or harm. Evil was, therefore, fought where and whenever it appeared.

Personal attempts by one to prepare one's soul for eschatological salvation as it is known in the Christian faith, would have been unnecessary because it was believed that one could not really influence his/her existence after death that way. One could prepare for life after death by having offspring, obeying one's seniors and remaining in **ekumwe** until one reaches old age. Death was feared, not because of the possibility of being condemned to eternal damnation, but because it

may come prematurely. In fact, to die at a mature age was accepted as a natural step because, if one had children, one could become an ancestor.

Just as sin affected present life so did salvation. **Ovawambo** oriented themselves towards a kind of salvation which would proceed from below upwards as opposed to the traditional Christian notion of salvation from above downwards. When relationships with others were favourable, when people were not sick, when there was no crop failure or famine, when people and animals multiplied and barrenness was not a threat, and when people lived longer, it was a sign that human relationships with the world of spirits including **Kalunga** were undamaged. Threats, dangers and meaninglessness of life were problems which threatened present life. Likewise, **oulinawa, elao** and **omholo** [good fortune] were this-world necessities for life on this side of the grave. As among other Africans, "salvation is called for and makes sense only when and where annihilation is a real possibility...." (Mbiti 1986:158).

(b) In terms of target

For **Ovawambo** the scope of **elao** or **oulinawa** or **omholo** was as wide as reality itself. Salvation was total in that it affected **omunhu omudidi** (the entire person) and included both physical, social, political and spiritual needs. Its need was also cosmological in that wellbeing was a need for the whole of creation. This is true if we accept the argument that the opposite of salvation was insecurity and the unavailability of those things which make for a sound and meaningful life. As a remedy to human predicaments, which was believed to flow from **Kalunga** via his/her agents salvation, targeted both all human needs and those of the rest of creation. In the struggle for salvation the enemy was anything and anyone who threatened to disrupt **elao** [good luck] which others may have experienced. What is religion and its aim, after all, if it is not a response to human "desire for happiness, success and long life" (Kasenene 1993:4). **Ovawambo** in particular seemed to understand **oulinawa** as a right for which they had to fight. They believed that it was their natural right to be free from threats and intimidations; to be well, to enjoy health, prosperity and long life. It was in view of this understanding that rites, rituals and sacrifices were rife in **Ovawambo** religion. These were performed almost as duties to ensure that **elao** and **oulinawa** are arrested and preserved. Whether rituals, rites and sacrifices resulted in the desired effects, of course, is a different matter. The issue was: everyone was entitled to sound and meaningful life,

and everything humanly possible was done to make sense of the existence and emergence of evil in concrete situations. There was salvation if concrete human needs were positively responded to and solved, albeit temporally. Life as **Omuwambo** experienced it, was a struggle to overcome the threats, the dangers which hinder humans on their way to **elao**, **omholo** and **oulinawa**.

When traditional **Ovawambo** met, the first thing they enquired about, even insisted upon being informed about, was the condition or state of the broader family and neighbourhood. First, they always greeted in the plural so as to include everyone: **Mwa lele po** [Did you sleep well]? Secondly, in the process of exchanging this phrase, they enquired about the wellbeing of individual categories of people, husband, wife, children, neighbours, village and finally, the whole neighbouring household and the surrounding villages. It took rather a long time to complete the greeting but every single person was considered an individual person in his/her own right and was greeted if present, or enquired about if absent. The understanding was that one must first establish the health state of the next person and his family before any other business could be embarked upon. Everyone inquired about another's **ombili** [peace] and **oukolele** [health] and not **oonkondo** [power] as Hiltunen suggests (1993:). **Oulinawa aushe wa aveshe** [common comprehensive wellbeing] topped the list of the concerns of **Ovawambo**. Today it is still regarded as antisocial amongst **Ovawambo** not to greet people, although the greetings are generally shortened. However, the aim remains the same, to establish whether the next person experiences **elao** [good fortune] and his/her relatives and the neighbours enjoy **oulinawa aushe** [complete wellbeing]. It was not well with them if there were drought, famine, sickness or death, whether of humans or of livestock. There was no salvation if there was **omupya** of some kind due to somebody who, or something which, threatened their lives and made them meaningless.

4.3.3 Owambo efforts to attain salvation

Almost all activities undertaken by pre-missionary **Ovawambo** were either precautions aimed at frustrating **omupya** (misfortune) or redemptive measures meant to save or rescue individuals, families or **ekumwe** [community] from impediments of all kinds. The main concern was the present life although the future life was also a factor. Below we try to spell out the salvific significance of some rites, sacrifices and rituals, prayers and songs as described in chapter three.

(1) During the New Year ritual, **Munyalombe** [the principal wife], is wished happy days; blessings with many children and abundant fruits of her labour in the field. In turn, she wished **mwēnewomakuva** [husband], to have land, to be favoured by the **ohamba** [king] or by **elenga** [councillor], to have his cattle increase, and never to have misfortunes regarding his livestock, field, children and wives. During **oshipe** [new fruits], husband, wives and children wished each other abundant crops, many cattle, happy marriage, children and general fortune. **Oxula** [sacrifice] was meant to ward off dangerous **ovakwamhungu** [ancestors], who were believed to cause misfortunes, sickness, and death. All of these rituals and sacrifices were meant to effect **oulinawa** or **elao**: health, relief, prosperity, peace and harmony, communalism and long life (see 3.5 above). That was their salvation.

(2) A careful study of **Owambo** prayers reveals that they too were all meant to bring about relief in situations of crisis such as a storm, drought, epidemic, infertility, and prolonged labour. In prayers, **Ovawambo** invoked **Kalunga** directly or via his/her agents for the kind of things needed to acquire that which constituted **oulinawa** or **elao**: to have children, a boy or a girl; marriage; healing; to have a rich and strong husband; protection from witches, evil ancestors and other evil spirits in the invisible world. There were also prayers which were an acknowledgement of the presence of **Kalunga** for individuals during their journeys to **oshimanya** [the mine]; to **ohambo** [cattle post] and to far countries. **Kalunga** was invited to accompany the sojourners. **Owambo** prayers also served as requests, which in the final analysis demonstrated their trust in **Kalunga**. They prayed for rain, frogs (for consumption), corn, water, good grazing for animals, human honesty and animal welfare. There were also prayers for rescue and salvation, protection and safety. It must be understood that all the prayers were meant to result in the multiplication of the means of human survival and prosperity. Praying for animals and plants, therefore, must not be understood to mean that they wanted them to live long. Rather, they prayed for their multiplication so that humans could have enough of them to feed on.

(3) In **Owambo** songs, some of which are also prayers, the same attitude of trust towards **Kalunga** was displayed. The singers acknowledged that **Kalunga** assisted and accompanied, protected and guided. Further, **Kalunga** was recognised as an ever-present companion, being

both above and below, that is all-present. In some songs an attitude of surrender, trust and dependence was exhibited (Aarni 1982:74).

4.3.4 *Oidila (taboos)*

These were prohibitions. Paavo Hasheela explains that **oshidila** (taboo) is a noun, derived from the verb **okudilika** (to prohibit) (1995:8). When something was **oshidila**, it was not allowed to be done, said or touched because of its sacred nature or its frightening consequences (Mitchell 1977:99). It was sin to breach **oshidila**. It was believed that:

oshinima sha dilikwa ngeenge sha ningwa, otashi etifa oshilanduli shii, osho ihashi dulu okukelelwa keenghono domunhu wongaho; okuninga te di pewa kunakushiiva apa hadi di, ile kooxekulu nokooinakulu, ve he li vali momwenyo. Okwa li haku tiwa ou a tauluka oshidila, okwa tula ombalu. Ombalu omupya (A breaching of a taboo has bad results which ordinary human power cannot prevent, except if one has been given supernatural power by another who knows its source, or by the ancestors. It was said that a person who has broken taboo has sinned. **Ombalu** is misfortune]. (Hasheela 1995:8)

Hasheela comes close to saying that a taboo is an interdiction, which, when breached, leads to devastating repercussions. The breach of an interdiction was called **ombalu** or **omupya** [a misfortune]. **Ombalu** could not be averted or removed by ordinary human powers, except if these were afforded a person by **onganga** [diviner] or by **ovakwamhungu**. The aftermath of breaching **oshidila** was also called **oshipo** (also **oshipwe**). It was **oshiponga** [the danger] which resulted from such an uncalled-for act. The breach of an interdiction was punishable by **ovakwamhungu** already in the present life. To avoid this punishment, a sacrifice or cleansing ritual was required. Although they were not exactly the same, the concepts of **oshidila**, **oshipo**, **oshipwe**, **ombalu**, and **omupya** [ill fortune] expressed something exceptionally close to what Christians call sin. Each of these concepts expressed what remained in the absence of **elao** [fortune].

Taboos were prohibitions or interdictions, meant to affect the positive, namely to preserve peace, happiness, harmony and life. Negatively put, taboos were meant to prevent misfortunes and death. They were a means to an end, meant to achieve **oulinawa aushe wa aveshe** (total common wellbeing of all]. So **Ovawambo** feared sacred things, places, people and spirits from whom the

living need protection. What Kasenene writes about sacredness in the Swazi religion is also true for **Owambo** religion. Apart from safeguarding "moral values and [maintaining] order in society", Kasenene believe that taboos are meant to protect humans from "spirits, certain people, things, places, actions, physical or ritual state, deformity, kinship, royalty and many manifestations of sacredness" (1993:12).

Breaking a taboo was regarded as a serious issue with serious consequences for the individual, the family, the clan and ultimately the entire **ekumwe**. Therefore, a taboo breaker was normally isolated from the rest of humanity and had to be cleansed before reintegration. As Noss writes about taboos in general:

The existence of taboos means to believers not only a very real element of danger in taboo-breaking, because of the vindictive or retributive action of outraged powers, but the guilt and uncleanness of the unfortunate taboo-breaker. This uncleanness and contamination are such that the whole community may be put in jeopardy. Until the taboo-breaker is cleansed of his defilement, he is ostracized, and may even come under the sentence of death.

But taboo-breaking is not the only source of pollution. Birth, death, bloodshed, blood itself, and contact with tabooed persons are each sources of pollution. And there may be a supernatural condition, such as the presence of an unclean spirit haunting a family or a village, a condition involving as its consequence the need for removing the objectionable presence.(1984:17f)

Ovawambo have observed a number of prohibitions. Although these were for educational purposes and not necessarily religious, their ultimate aim was to prevent **omupya** [misfortune], particularly death. They were rules for life as represented by the following:

(a) It was **oshidila** for anyone to enter **ouhamba** [the palace] with sandals on, except during **ongodji** [the mourning period for the king]. To do so was **oshipwe** [ill-fate] and would bring death to one of the royal inmates and cast the royal family into a mourning period.

(b) If the mother or sister of the king gave birth to twins, both had to die. The mother as well as the extended family had to be cleansed in a special ceremony. "If the wife of a king gives birth to twins, the king abandons her" (Hiltunen 1993:206). **Oku na ombalu** [She was ill-fated]. If the

king still liked her, he called her for a date, but she would never again live in **ouhamba** [the palace]. She was filth and contaminated with death. To avoid death, she had to leave.

(c) The tribal fire in the king's residence was never allowed to burn out, because **life and welfare** of the king and the entire tribe depended on it. If it died out, both the King and his tribe would soon vanish from the face of the earth. This fire was allowed to die out only when the king himself had died.

(d) It was **oshidila** to enter the holy grounds where circumcision took place. Any person who intruded into this place, cutting trees, collecting firewood or disturbing the soil in any way, would soon turn blind and be paralysed. Death would soon visit him or her or their families.

(e) It was **oshidila** to speak about death without apparent reason, particularly by the youth. If by chance the youths started speaking about death, each of them would say: 'It was not me who spoke about death, but the children from the palace who smear their buttocks with fresh milk'. The belief was that speaking about death was like inviting it. To say that it was the children from the palace was an attempt to deviate death from the weak commoners to the powerful king.

(f) It was **oshidila** for a pregnant woman to have sexual intercourse with a man other than her husband. She would be in danger of **oshivatu** [to die in labour]. This meant that she "would not survive when she gave birth unless she could quickly call a 'doctor' ... and confess the entire crime to him, indicating the name of the lover" (Estermann 1966). If she died she would not be buried, but thrown into the bush to rot.

(g) It was **oshidila** for a widower or widow to remarry without purification through the rite called **olufi**. The term **olufi** is derived from **okufya** [to die]. However, the term does not indicate the nature of the rite accurately. The rite aims at breaking the personal contact between the dead spouse and the living one (Bruwer 1967:143). First, the body of the widow or widower was washed by **onganga** a few days after the death and funeral of the spouse. Secondly, the widow or widower had sexual intercourse with **onganga** after which the patient was then free to begin

a new matrimonial life (Estermann 1966:80). If this rite was omitted, the remaining spouse would die.

In addition to taboos which were general rules governing individuals, household, clans and the entire **ekumwe**, **Ovawambo** had specific traditional laws and social norms. The breaking of some of such laws or norms seem to have been regarded as sin punishable by death, while others seem to have been regarded as less evil. Some of them are taboos, which shows that there is a very thin division between the law and norm on the one hand and a taboo on the other. Their introduction, however, had one purpose. Frieda-Nella Williams (1991:187f) listed a couple of the rules (see appendix III).

4.3.5 Who is the saviour in Owambo religion?

That there is a concept of salvation, albeit different from the one proclaimed in Christianity, is by now clear. One further question which calls for our response is regarding **Owambo** concept of the saviour. If there is salvation in the **Owambo** religion, who saved? For people who are well acquainted with **Ovawambo**, their culture and spirituality, the answer is certainly **Kalunga**. This calls for an explanation. How did **Kalunga**, who was believed to be remote, save?

Ovawambo did not believe in the existence of more than one God. They were not pantheists. For them, **Kalunga** was a unique divine being, like no other. Their traditional religion which is no longer a reality, could fit under the concept **Kalunganism** as we said earlier on. Therefore, the First Commandment of the Christian faith was a reinforcement of their basic belief which, if it were written, would most likely be: **Oku na Kalunga umwe, mwene weshito alishe** [There is only one **Kalunga** who owns the whole of creation]. The way **Kalunga** saved must be understood in the light of the hierarchical structure of **ekumwe** already referred to in the previous chapter. For the purpose of understanding salvation imagine how **ekumwe** was structured. Human relationships were vertically arranged according to seniority in age or status. Above the entire reality was **Kalunga**. This remoteness is part of his/her **Kalunganess**, but should not be understood to mean that the Supreme being had nothing to do with, or was not concerned with **elao**, **omholo** and **oulinawa wa aveshe** [fortune and common wellbeing] of reality. On the

contrary, his/her concern was so great that he/she arranged to be represented by what may be called agents of **elao**, **omholo** and **oulinawa** in **ekumwe**.

Kalunga placed her/his representatives in society through whom s/he channels everything which constitutes salvation to individuals, families, clans and the entire **ekumwe**. Topping this list, but under **Kalunga**, were the ancestors. As stated before, they were not believed to be divine. But, being spirits, they were believed to be closer to **Kalunga**. Further, because they were humans and members of certain families or leaders of society, they were good mediators and links between the upper world where **Kalunga** lived, and the earth where living humans lived. It was thus believed that the ancestors received **omholo** [good fortune] from **Kalunga** to distribute among the living. Such blessings did not come from the ancestors, but from **Kalunga** via the ancestry. Depending on their social status when they were alive, ancestors channelled the blessings from **Kalunga** to the living for whom they were responsible in life. The ancestor of a family received blessings from **Kalunga** to pass them on to the family. Royal ancestors communicated blessings from **Kalunga** to **ekumwe** (community) as a whole.

Below the level of ancestors were living authorities. These received salvation from the ancestors to channel through rituals to the living. Very significant at this level, as previously stated, were **eenganga** [the diviners]. They had acquired powers to communicate with the living-dead (ancestors) not only to acquire blessings, but also to enquire when there were problems about possible sources of such problems. **Eenganga** [the diviners] themselves as well as every person knew that they were not divine.

Ohamba [the king] was believed to have acquired a sacred position in **ekumwe**. This position must not be confused with the divinity which belong to **Kalunga** alone. What must be understood is the fact that **ohamba** was a representative of **Kalunga** in **ekumwe**. He was a channel of the blessings from **Kalunga** to the people. Whether this was a clever move to legitimate his actions, as Williams argues (1991:99), is not of interest here. What must be pointed out is the fact that **ohamba** was regarded as one through whom **Kalunga** channelled **elao**, **omholo** and **oulinawa** to **ekumwe**. It is for this reason that **ohamba** was believed to "posses power over fertility, rain, and growth of cultivated plants and a rich harvest" (Williams 1991:99).

Ohamba was a symbol for life to **ekumwe**. Because of this status, **ohamba** played the role of a mediator between the living and the dead. **Ohamba** had a sacred position in **ekumwe** but he was not divine.

So, **Ovawambo** were well aware that **elao**, **omholo**, and **oulinawa aushe** originated from **Kalunga** via ancestors, the king and other authorities such as grandparents and parents. Sheyavali and Kaulinge point out that the very name **Kalunga** means just that, the Saviour.

Edina Kalunga otali holola nakunelungi, onghulungu, nokulonga osho sha wapala osho itashi dulika okuningwa ku umwe e lili, onghee Oye Omushiti
[The very name Kalunga shows that its bearer is useful, one who does everything perfectly and no one can do it like him/her, therefore, s/he is the Creator].(1970:10)

The myth of **Pambaelishita** reinforces the same truth. If our argument that the hero-figure in the story represents **Kalunga**, and that evil will be defeated at last, is accepted, then **Kalunga** must be regarded as a Protector. If the many prayers addressed to **Kalunga** are taken seriously, one must conclude that those who made them believed that the being to whom they were addressed was prepared to listen, willing to respond and able to offer what was lacking.

Owambo prayers were meant to petition **Kalunga**, and in some cases ancestors, for various blessings. They were means to secure salvation. Prayers were said at almost all major festivals, rituals, and rites as we have seen above. Sheyavali and Kaulinge have recorded a prayer for rain:

Kalunga, Kalunga ta pa odula.
Kalunga, Kalunga, owii nau ye netango
[**Kalunga, Kalunga**, give us rain. **Kalunga,**
Kalunga, let all evil go down with the sun; 1970:11].

Another myth of **Kalunga** depicts him/her as a poor person who travels across tribal lands distributing **elao** [fortune] or **omupya** [misfortune]. Again this is evidence of what people thought of **Kalunga**. It was his/her task to bless and if necessary to punish. If one accepts that such prayers were addressed to **Kalunga** there is reason to believe that **Ovawambo** believed that it was **Kalunga** who saved, even if this salvation was communicated via structures which s/he put in place. How does **Kalunga** respond to **onghuwo yepongo** [the cry of the unclaimed]? By

bestowing **elao, omholo and oulinawa aushe** to the people via agents of salvation present in **ekumwe**.

4.4 The points of contact and differences in the soteriologies of Luther and Ovawambo

Chapter two dealt with the soteriology of Luther. It said that salvation is necessitated by human sinfulness, and the inability of humans to save themselves. It is made possible by the grace of God manifested in Jesus Christ without whom humans are in a problematic situation which they cannot solve by themselves. On account of his grace, God took the initiative to solve the problem by providing the means of salvation for them. He bears the consequences. In response, humans accept the free offer of this solution to their problem. Thus, for Luther, salvation is by grace alone, by faith alone and by Christ alone. It should transform a saved sinner into a new person who shares the new life of Christ. This life should permeate the daily life of the saved to such a degree that it flows over to other humans. The saved sinner becomes a Christ to other sinners and bears the consequences of that self-giving love as Christ did.

Chapters three and four concentrated on the soteriology of the **Owambo** religion. Different aspects of this religion have been identified in chapter three. Such aspects include rituals, rites, sacrifices and prayers, some of which were directed to **Kalunga** others to **ovakwamhungu** [ancestors]. All these were performed in response to specific problems of individuals and of **ekumwe** [society]. They were regarded as a means to achieve **omholo** [fortune], an equivalent of the Christian concept of salvation. In some cases, these human attempts brought about more problems than solutions. This proved that humans are, by nature, unable to solve their own problems. Chapter four focuses on the definition of sin, evil and salvation. The central problem for **Ovawambo** was any threat to the present human life. Thus here salvation is defined as relief or help in the present life. Eschatology is lacking.

This section of chapter four pulls threads together by identifying points of contact and differences in the two soteriologies. Its aim is not to blend the two soteriologies, or claim that they are completely identical, but to identify parallel areas or aspects which may help us to formulate a more versatile, accommodating and comprehensive paradigm of salvation.

4.4.1 The encounter between Lutheranism and other faiths

As demonstrated in chapter one (1.5.2), the encounter between Israelite and the Canaanite religions ensued in three different responses in the attitude of the former towards the latter. The first of such responses was **syncretism**, the second was **suppression** and the third was **subordination**. The encounter between Christianity in general and Lutheran theology in particular with other faiths reveals a struggle which has resulted in a twofold response on the part of Christians.

(a) Suppression and dismissal

In his article **Lutheran Theology and religious pluralism**, C. E. Braaten reminds his readers that there was a time when "Christian Rome was forcibly closing the pagan temples and suppressed pagan forms of worship" (1988:106). This was a joint effort between the government of the day and Christendom. Quintus Aurelius Symmachus who was then the spokesman of the senate had a controversy with St Ambrose (339-397) over this issue. Symmachus was stunned by the conviction of some people that "such a mystery [God] should be approached by one road only" (Toynbee cited by Braaten 1988:106).

The inability of the project to dilute the validity of other religions or to suppress them completely has not yielded the desired results. Either the **modus operandi** was wrong or the project was unnecessary. This is born out by the fact that in spite of the joint efforts by Christendom and the Roman government of that time, other religions continued to exist. Many theologians of the twentieth century, including Lutherans such as P. Althaus, P. Tillich, W. Panneberg, M. Ludwig, C. Braaten, S. Maimela etc., have developed a strong interest in the study of other religions, including African traditional religions. The LWF report on **Religious Pluralism and Lutheran Theology** in which a resounding call for a Lutheran theology in dialogue with other religions is made, is a classical example. The emergence of thousands of African Independent Churches all over Africa is yet another sign. The amount of research which is put into African Traditional religions today in different universities is still another indication. Recently, the South African Broadcasting Corporation has given a Saturday devotional slot to African traditional religion which shows that this religion too has adherents. Time for us Christians 'to be absent in the presence' of other faiths seem to have run out. As the LWF report concludes: "Our being

neighbours to people of other faiths means sharing and being present to them, both as humans and as Christians" (Rajashekar 1988:181).

(b) Cooperation and dialogue

Some 1,000 years after the Roman government colluded with Christians to eliminate other religions (Braaten 1988:106), the phase of suppression and dismissal gave way to a second phase: cooperation, dialogue and reconciliation between different religions. This phase continues to date. This phase was introduced by cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464). The aim of Cardinal Nicholas and later of G.E. Lessing (1727-1781) was to cultivate a culture of tolerance among different religions and to discourage attempts to search for absolute truths (Braaten 1988:108). For Lessing religious truth is relative and could be found in all different religions equally (Knitter 1991:146ff).

During the 19th and 20th century, the idea that different religions are different paths leading to the same end gained further momentum and attempts have been made to move away from a Christocentric to a theocentric theology. John Hick is well known for this idea (Knitter 1991:146ff). For Lutherans this would mean a sacrifice of the Lutheran principle that salvation is in Christ alone, by grace alone and by faith alone and on this article the church stands or falls. This might be too high a price to pay. It means that the centrality of Christ and his gospel of salvation and the Lutheran witness to the world is threatened. But it is also true that theologians do not want to be parochial in the manner of Henry Fields' Parson Thwachum who once declared:

When I mention religion, I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion; but not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England (cited by Braaten 1988:108).

Whereas there is little sympathy for the first response to other religions, the second is somehow persuasive. If the aim is not to equalise religions, and without supporting Hick's view that religious truth and salvation are relative and religions are equal, it may be argued that there are different levels of salvation, some of which are available in **Owambo** religion. It is contended that there must be elements in this religion which shows that **Kalunga** acted redemptively in channels which s/he had provided **Ovawambo** before Christ was known by them. This salvation was still a gift. Truth in **Owambo** religion can therefore not be compared to the truth which God

has revealed in the Christ-event as understood by Luther. But because even Christianity cannot claim to have acquired all truth that is in God, it makes sense to argue that what God has revealed to **Ovawambo** may be used together with the divine revelation in Jesus Christ. Christ must serve as **the criterion** in the identification of such elements. Anything that does not contradict his mission to achieve comprehensive wellbeing of the people of God in this life and beyond may be used in his project of salvation. "The gospel of Christ is the final medium of revelation and therefore the critical norm in the theology of the history of religions" (Braaten 1988:118). So any element that seems to be useful must be tested against the love of God revealed in Christ. The identification of those fundamental religious elements which can assist theologians to make Christianity and its message of salvation more relevant to as many people as possible demands special attention from us Lutheran theologians.

There is a need to overcome the tension created by the negative attitude and exclusiveness of Christianity towards other religions. Tension has allegedly generated many uncalled-for "attitudes and actions in intolerance, arrogance, superiority, triumphalism, colonialism, crusades, inquisition, pogroms, anti-Semitism, apartheid, genocide, and the like" (Braaten 1988:109). There is a need to recognize "the significance of other faiths in history and creation" (Braaten referred to by Rajashekar 1988:22). However, the centrality of Christ to the Christian faith and his universal uniqueness cannot and must not be sacrificed (Braaten 1988:109). The only reason why it is necessary to look for parallel points in the soteriologies of Luther and **Ovawambo** is to find a way of rediscovering relevant salvation which is both Lutheran and comprehensive enough to cover the valid concerns of **Ovawambo**.

Such elements may be found in the theological approach of Luther in which the **gospel** is the key concept. No parallels of such a gospel are found in **Owambo** religion. This fact will become evident from the scheme of the theology of Luther outlined below as proposed by Nürnberger. The gospel of salvation speaks of Jesus Christ and his achievement for us. Jesus was a unique person to such a degree that many if not all of those who have come into contact with him or with his story marvel at his gifts in teaching morality, trust in God, practical love for others and selflessness for his project. But this is not what makes him different from other human heroes of human history or ancestors (Nürnberger 1996:13-2). **Owambo** culture and religion know of

heroes such famous ancestors called **Mbangu**, common to **Ovaherero** and **Ovawambo** and **Nangobe** the common ancestor of **Ovawambo** (Williams 1991:58). Other recent ancestors are the kings: **Mandume yaNdemufayo**, **Iipumbu ya Tshilongo**, and others. These are still remembered, but Jesus differs from them. In fact, according to Nürnberger, he is not an ancestor (1996:13-36f). What is he and why do **Owambo** traditionalists need him?

He is the risen Lord who has dominion, not only of one clan, tribe or country like the ancestors, but of reality as a whole. This means he is in charge of everything that is, including human life here and now. The reality of which he is in charge shares the new life which he acquired through resurrection. To share the new life of Christ means to live "in fellowship with God and share God's authority, love and vision" (Nürnberger 1996:13-2). This is not true for **Owambo** religion, because there no human being could claim to be in fellowship with **Kalunga**. The opportunities to share the authority, love and vision of **Kalunga** were abused by human authority, the kings and diviners who, I suspect, had developed systems of legitimating their positions of power. If this were not the case, **Kalunga** could not have been pushed out of human spheres.

The biblical faith knows of such a rift between the sinner and God because of the latter's inability to fulfil the will of God (Nürnberger 1986:104). Christ is special in that, in him, God demonstrated his love for the sinner.

Christ did not merely tell the world of God's love, he makes it happen by reconciling God and the world to each other. Something actually has to happen as the necessary condition and efficient cause of salvation, and the locus of this happening is 'Christ alone'. (Braaten 1988:122)

It is in him that it has become clear that God **accepts** the sinner into his fellowship without condition. In fellowship with God, humans are able to live a life free of disturbance from sin, evil, and death (Nürnberger 1996:13-2). In this fellowship, one does not need to fear the anger of ancestors, evil spirits, even death as was the case in the life of **Ovawambo**. In this fellowship there is no need for any person to make him/herself acceptable to God because all have been unconditionally accepted by God in Christ in spite of their unacceptability. God has forgiven them. All they need is to accept their unconditional acceptance.

The encounter between Christ and **Owambo** religion is necessary because it is in this process that elements in that religion are tested and judged whether they serve the course of God or of humans. In other words, everyone and everything under that religion is confronted with the life of Christ and is shown clearly how life in fellowship with God should be. The authentic life of Christ judges, challenges and condemns human unauthentic life (Nürnberg 1996:13-2). Any element of **Owambo** religion which fails that test is doomed and any element that passes it may be used in the process of enculturation. God accepts us, not our sins. Our acceptance in God's fellowship is, therefore, a judgement of our old and sinful life and is meant to overcome it. Belief in ancestors, fear of witchcraft and evil spirits need to be confronted by this gospel of Jesus Christ. The greed of the diviners and kings need to be confronted with this gospel. Even the dualism and the spiritualised gospel so prevalent in the preaching of ELCIN need to be brought under judgement and be overcome. In short all wrong convictions, whether social or spiritual, need to be confronted with the gospel of Christ and be overcome. Only then can all those who see **ekumwe** or its individual senior members to be channels of the divine blessings serve as representatives of **Kalunga**.

4.4.2 Points of contact

Luther did not live in Africa and had no knowledge about African Traditional religions. However, there are elements in his soteriology which correspond with some elements in **Owambo** religion. It is important to identify these aspects and use them in the process of mutual fertilisation between salvation as viewed by Luther and by **Ovawambo** and towards an appreciation of the fact that Christianity is not completely foreign to **Owambo** religion. These elements will enrich the attempt to formulate a more comprehensive and accommodating paradigm of salvation in chapter seven below.

(a) Humans need salvation

Chapter two (2.2.1) has shown that the need of salvation arises in situations of crisis. Salvation itself is a response to human needs. Luther arrived at the understanding of salvation he teaches in the wake of problems particular to his situation. **First**, he was obsessed with the salvation of his soul. He feared purgatory, last judgement and eternal condemnation. This is born out by his long and painful struggle with the question: **How can I find a merciful God?** **Secondly**, there

were social crises; the ecclesiastical crises of his days; the threat of the Turkish armies to Europe; the threat of Islam to the church; the threat of new scientific discoveries (Copernicus) and his personal suffering, all of which contributed to the formulation of his soteriology.

As a result of this pressure, Luther developed a holistic approach to life, to its problems and to salvation. He saw life as one undivided unit. Sin affects not only one's relationship with God, but also one's relationship with other human beings. His teaching of justification must lead to new life in Christ. After creating love for God, it must create love for the next person. The justified sinner becomes duty bound to serve others. Justification must, if it is genuine, lead to a sound, blessed and worthy life. So predicaments serve as fertile soil for faith in God. Faith leads a person to let God be God, he who alone saves in a crisis situation, that is from sin and its power.

Similarly, it has been shown in chapter three, that human problems are for **Ovawambo** the reason for the need of what might be called salvation in human concrete circumstances. It is their experience of practical problems such as hunger, poverty, barrenness, high infant mortality, droughts, floods, witchcraft, sorcery, evil spirits, loss of vital force and premature death, which prompts their quest for salvation, rescue, reintegration and reconciliation. In short, it is a lack of **elao** [good luck], **omholo** [fortune] and **oulinawa** [wellbeing] which exposes the human need of salvation.

(b) A holistic approach to human problems and their solutions

The approach of Luther to human problems is basically holistic. It was his contention that justification **must** necessarily lead to sanctification. After creating faith in God, it must transform this faith in love towards others. To be **in Christ** is for Luther to be a new person (2.6) who is available for others. The 'not yet' of salvation must be manifested in the 'already'.

The concern of Luther for human wellbeing is evident in his ethics (2.6). He teaches that Christian faith must permeate the life of believers wherever they find themselves, in private and public capacities. The element which Luther shares with **Ovawambo** here is his concern for human wellbeing here and now and his insistence that life is one and God is in charge of it all. There is no area of life where God can be excluded.

The primary concern of **Ovawambo** is to realise an ideal life. Whatever threatens human wellbeing must be confronted head-on and overcome (4.2). Life is not compartmentalised. It is one and must be treated as such. Their overall concern for the whole person led them to approach a person and his/her problems holistically. Healing and cleansing was meant to restore all kinds of broken relationships whether between the individual and the community, or with the world of the spirits of which Kalunga is the Supreme. That **Ovawambo** approach life and its problems holistically like Luther, is evident from what they consider to be salvation: healing, rescue, empowerment, fertility, in fact, **elao** [good luck] **omholo** [good fortune], **oulinawa** [wellbeing].

(c) The left hand of God

For Luther the experience of structures and natural processes in the world (traditionally called "orders of creation") testifies to the activities of a Creator God. There must be a Creator! So for him, the **mastery** of God is common knowledge to all. It is universal. Many, if not all religions (Luther knew only Judaism and Islam) have some measure of the knowledge of God (2.2.3). The first article of the Apostolic creed (creation) is universal although in religions without holy scriptures it is transmitted to generations orally.

Luther speaks of the **hidden God**. God may be known in his activities in the world but his intentions remain hidden. People get a glimpse of him from nature and its processes, but not a complete and saving knowledge. "God is hidden in the cross as the revealed God" (van Niekerk 1982:97). "God does not want to be known except through Christ, nor according to John 1:18, can He be known any other way" (Luther cited by Forell 1979:22). Religions without Christ cannot know the grace of God as shown in Christ, though they may have knowledge about his governance. They know that this God rules the world through social structures, institutions and offices (2.3) but they cannot know his concern for them. That is why, instead of putting their trust in him, they put it in fellow humans and other creatures.

Many elements of **Ovambo** spirituality reveal a knowledge of God whom they called **Kalunga**. His/her attributes correspond to those of **the hidden God of Luther** (Dymond 1966:143). **Ovawambo** understood the majesty, the power, the expectations, the anger and the punishment of **Kalunga**.

They know that **Kalunga** has final authority. The way **Kalunga** rules corresponds with the way the God of Luther rules with the left hand, that is, through social structures of **eumbo** [family], **epata** [clan], and **ekumwe** [community]. It is true that God has not left himself without witness among the nations, including those who have a different faith than Christianity (Acts 14:16-17). "Outside Christ there is indeed a self-manifestation of God, and therefore knowledge of God, but it does not lead to salvation, to union between God and humankind" (Althaus cited by Braaten 1988:118). Luther himself said:

Outside the Christian church (that is, where the gospel is not) there is no forgiveness, and hence no holiness ... All who are outside the Christian church, whether heathen, Turks, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites, even though they believe in and worship only the one, true God, nevertheless they do not know what his attitude is towards them. They cannot be confident of his love and blessing. Therefore, they remain in eternal damnation, for they are not illuminated and blessed by the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Tappert 1959:418,56; 419,66)

Maimela concludes:

In view of the Lutheran distinction between **Deus absconditus** and **Deus revelatus**, it seems to me that the Lutheran theological response to other religions should be one that affirms salvation by God through faith in Christ but does not exclude the possibility that God saves also outside the church.(1988:147)

(d) Agents of salvation

As has been pointed out in 2.2.6, Luther believes that God channels his gifts through humans. This does not contradict the fact that salvation is the gift from God to humanity received by faith alone. The point is God reaches other people through me and reaches me through others with the gifts of grace. Nürnberger calls this aspect of the process of salvation **involvement** (1990:215). Salvation remains the initiative and response of God towards human needs, but he channels it through humans. It is this element of involvement in the project of God to respond to human needs that correspond to **Owambo** determination to fight for what makes life sound, worthy and meaningful. Explaining the meaning of the Fourth Commandment Luther says: "We should so fear and love God as not to despise nor displease our parents and superiors, but honour, serve, obey, love and esteem them" (cited in Girgensohn 1959:67).

Owambo religion is monotheistic. Although it recognises the existence of a number of superhuman spirits, none of them is regarded as divine. As shown in 3.3, **Owambo** believe in a hierarchical reality. Society was structured in a similar way. **Kalunga** was the highest authority. S/he was seen as the Source of all things, good and bad. The parallel between Luther and **Owambo** lies in the fact that God or **Kalunga** is believed to channel **elao**, **omholo**, and **oulinawa** through one person to another. **Kalunga** is responsible for the gifts, but they are channelled through one person to another. To be more specific, even before missionaries came **Owambo** held the fourth commandment (though unwritten) in high esteem. Blessings as well as misfortune flow from **Kalunga** through **ovakwamhungu** (the ancestors), through **eenganga** [the diviners] through **ovakulunhu** [the elders], grandmothers/fathers, uncles, mothers and fathers to the youngest members of the family, of the clan and of **ekumwe**. Concerning society, blessings proceed from **Kalunga** via **omukwamhungu wohamba** [the ancestor of the king], through the king to the counsellors, to family heads and finally to family members. The point to be noted here is not whether the hierarchical approach is acceptable, but the belief that the blessings (salvation) were from **Kalunga** and s/he used people to dispense them. This parallels the concept of involvement in the redemptive activities of God.

Although hierarchical privileges can be badly abused by higher authorities for their own benefit, (and Luther would disapprove of that), it was believed and expected that to affect healing, fertility, harmony, reconciliation; to ward off any threat to life by bad ancestors; to stop or avert drought, and death, **Kalunga** used **eenganga** [diviners].

4.4.3 Points of contrast

(a) The entry point: In search of truth, Christians in general and Lutherans in particular enter the activity of redemption at the unique Christological event where God's work of salvation is made known. Even the consideration of other religions take place in that framework. "This is the decisive factor that provides for us the unique clue by which we can understand what kind of God is at work in the world, also among those of other religions" (Rajashekar 1988:185). The aim here is not to impose the Christological norm on a possible dialogue, but our conviction is that Christ is the means by which we are "able to resonate to God's gracious working in other religions" (Rajashekar 1988:185).

(b) The theology of the cross: The theology of the **cross** makes all the difference between the Christian faith and **Owambo** religion. It cuts right at the root of all human confidence (Rajashekar 1988:189). At the same time it also stands against all impulses of aggression, crusades, and winning in the name of Christ. The theology of the cross puts us in the right position to dialogue with other religions (1988:190).

(c) The true meaning of the law: Luther's understanding of the law is different from that of **Ovawambo** although as in the case of the Sotho, it "finds its counterpart in the tribal customs and rituals" (Nürnberg 1973:30). Although keeping such traditional customs and norms did help **Ovawambo** to maintain order and make life possible in **ekumwe** (community), it was not perceived to be a means to lead to God. Luther offers a different perspective, stating that "the true meaning of the law is: God demands man's heart, not his works! God wants man's love, and not his endeavour to embed himself anew in a safe **unio ethica**" (Nürnberg 1973:30).

The unconditional acceptance of the sinner by God is not present in **Owambo**. One had to fulfil certain conditions to deserve acceptance, to be forgiven, else "one is punished", says Dymond and "the punishment wipes out the offence" (1966:155). Acceptance was **on condition**. **Ovawambo** did not have the idea of the suffering God. The concept of God's actions **sub contrario** (Nürnberg 1973:30) was completely foreign to **Owambo** religion. **Kalunga** did not suffer for the people. They had to bear their own suffering according to the traditional laws and established norms. Human beings could suffer for others, but it was not voluntary. A girl died for the reconciliation between two tribes, but it was not her choice. The principal wife of the king as well as his counsellors were buried with him, but it was by force. So it was not suffering **for** others but **from** others.

The word in which God reveals himself established personalised relationships between humans and himself. God speaks, humans respond. The remoteness of God becomes his/her saving nearness. Then humans experience him more closely. The nearness of God means that he shares in the experiences of humans - suffering as well as rejoicing. He becomes one with humans and shares their fate. He does not only suffer our suffering but their shortcomings as well.

Accordingly the believing soul can boast of the glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own. ... Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sin, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sin, death, and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; ... (Luther 1982:14)

(d) Law and gospel: Luther did not deny "that God is active in all realms of creation, including the religions, and [that] we can expect to learn of God's working from them". "However, it is misleading to posit a complete separateness of God's activity in law in the realm of creation against his activity in the realm of redemption" (Rajashekar 1988:189). God the Creator is the God of redeeming grace through creation and human history. Creation and redemption are the full responsibilities of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The tension between law and gospel must thus be maintained. The consequences of the creative activities of the Triune God is **shalom** - healing, peace, and reconciliation - to be anticipated among all human cultures.

(e) God's self-communication: As was argued before, there are parallels between the *Deus absconditus* of Luther and the remote **Kalunga** of **Ovawambo**. Both represent "the same **existential**" (Nürnberger 1973:28). Both are personified sources of what humans experience in their daily life. But Luther speaks much of the **Deus in vita** (God in life) who appears to be closer and more directly involved in human affairs and history than **Kalunga** who is remote, a **Deus otiosus**, and comes down only at certain critical moments in the history/life of humans (Nürnberger 1973:28). E. van Niekerk put this fact clearly when he wrote of Luther:

For Luther, the human nearness of God in Jesus is his saving nearness for every man. This is the grace that conquers sin. This is saving nearness for every person, a nearness that is for you and for me. (1982:96)

The **Deus in vita** of Luther differs from **Kalunga** in that the former is the same as the God who has disclosed himself and his will to humanity. Luther depended on the Bible, not on tradition. What God revealed is recorded and can be accessed by different generations in cases of doubt about the truth. Although **Kalunga** and what s/he did not approve was known; it was forgotten simply because it was not recorded. So whether **Kalunga** spoke to some ancestors long ago is not known, this information passed with history and cannot be recovered. Luther's God is a personal God. What he revealed is recorded and can be accessed by generation after generation.

It is from scripture that we know today what God revealed about himself; what his will is and what he promises us and what he thinks of us.

So, the **Deus in vita** is a God who personally communicates with his people through the word and the sacraments. He communicated with his people through his Son Jesus Christ. **Kalunga** was believed to communicate through ancestors, the king, elders, family heads, parents and diviners. So the differences between God and **Kalunga** lie also in their means of communicating with humans. God uses recorded scriptures, sacraments, Christ, the church. **Kalunga** used ancestors, the king, the diviner, the elder, the parent and **ekumwe**. Luther has emphasised the need for the word of God in the life of a Christian:

One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as, ... the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word is missing there is no help at all for the soul. If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and every incalculable blessing. (Luther 1982:8)

(f) The **articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae** (the article which makes the church stand or fall). **Faith alone:** The principle of **faith alone** as upheld by Luther marks a fundamental difference between his soteriology and that of **Ovawambo**. It suggests that, as Knitter puts it, "there is something [basically] wrong with us and the world" (1985:87). Reality, including humans is saturated by evil. This idea is foreign to **Owambo** philosophy which views that a human person is basically good, and that evil is introduced in his/her life by superhuman powers. For Luther, however, a human being is a sinner whose heart and will are turned towards the self (**cor curvatum in se**). This has been demonstrated in the case of **ounganga** [divination] where **ounganga** benefited from his/her profession more than the patient. It became clear that divination turned out to be either for economic gain or sexual pleasure or power consolidation. This has shown that the human will is perverted and may not necessarily "insure in progress" (Knitter 1985:87). **By faith alone** implies that humans are limited in their ability to solve this problem even if they wish to. We need somebody to do it for us. We need somebody far greater than ourselves. That somebody is Christ.

It may be argued that **Owambo** religion also had this realisation. This cannot be denied. **Ovawambo** believed that there were evil spirits and people with evil intentions to harm or even to kill. They tried to protect themselves from such evil spirits and people. But Luther teaches much more than that: humanity needs somebody more than itself for salvation. By our own doings, we cannot save ourselves or others. Our help is limited. Luther calls on us to turn to **Christ in faith and trust** and allow him to save us (Knitter 1985:87).

By Christ alone: **Owambo** religion lacks a Christology. It would be unthinkable for the traditional **Omuwambo** to identify **Kalunga** with a human being to such a degree that, as in the case of Mary, she became expectant of the Holy Spirit. **Omuwambo** could not imagine God becoming human. This lack intimacy marks the fundamental difference between the two soteriologies. For Luther, the word of God which is vital for human salvation

is the gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies. To preach Christ means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching. (Luther 1982:9)

So the contribution which Luther makes to human salvation is his **solus Christus**, the presentation of Christ as the only and unique Saviour. In Christ, the limitation of humans has been overcome and the possibility of victory over the powers of evil has been guaranteed. Everything **is done** for the sinner. The message is, therefore, it is done for you! The glory goes to God, for it was he who intervened in human history to overcome human limitation and so save them.

So in line with what Knitter says, it may be argued that the many good and useful aspects of **Owambo** religion need to be confronted with Christ, be separated from the bad ones and become part of the saving activities of God. Luther would have no problem if Christ was to be made a gift to other religions for that is what he actually is - a gift to all humanity (1985:90). Christ as a gift to all humanity is indeed the 'permanent achievement' of the Reformers (Knitter 1985:90).

Fides ex auditu [faith through hearing]. If salvation is **solus Christus** and **sola fide** it means that the world needs just that. Christ can only be acquired if there is **fides ex auditu** (Ludwig

1988:139). **Owambo** religion is not missionary oriented. Following the report of discussion group 21 of the Fourth Assembly of the LWF, Helsinki 1963, it was agreed that the proper understanding of justification

gives a strong impulse to the missionary outreach of the Church. It was recognised that the task of the Church is a **continuing** proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and incorporation into the body of Christ; because justification does not merely create the possibility of salvation, **it is** salvation. As such, it answers the need of modern secularised man when he tries to justify himself and accuse others. (Proceedings 1965:466)

(g) Eschatology: The eschatological element of salvation is very clear from the soteriology of Luther. As "Walter Koeler insisted ... Luther's eschatology was the mirror of his faith" (cited by Forell 1979:23). Luther placed a very strong accent on eschatological spiritual salvation. "Wingren showed that Luther's eschatology is the key to the ultimate hope that upholds the Christian in his vocation" and it "constitutes the limiting principle of his social ethics and the source of his efforts to find a temporary and pragmatic solution to the great social problems of his time" (cited in Forell 1979:24). However, for him all other levels of salvation result from spiritual salvation. It was for Luther a motivating factor towards social action. Human affairs such as physical health, social and economic welfare, politics, and environmental issues come as the consequences of one's relationship with the divine. The fountain is faith and hope. On the basis of these, Luther was able to write: "Behold, from faith thus flows forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbour willingly ... " (Luther 1982:30).

4.5 Misplaced loyalty and conviction

Chapter three of this thesis has demonstrated that there are many elements of **Owambo** religion which point to the fact that the existence of **Kalunga** was taken for granted. There was no need to define him/her, therefore. Questions such as, whether there is **Kalunga** and how s/he looks like, were unheard-of. It was enough to know that there is only one **Kalunga** who was above everything and everybody. It was sufficient to accept the order which was supposed to have been established by **Kalunga**. It was enough to know that s/he provides creation with all its needs of survival: the light from the sun, stars and the moon, rain, and fertility. It was known that s/he protects her/his own, particularly those who could not protect themselves. They knew that

Kalunga could be angry in response to human misbehaviour and power abuse. But what happened to this knowledge of the power and majesty of **Kalunga**? How did it come about that their loyalty and conviction were put in ultimates other than **Kalunga**?

The art of writing, which the Western world possessed put it in a powerful position over those nations and religions which did not keep written records. Further, the art of writing helps those who have it to be able to revise their records from time to time until they make complete sense. Things cannot just be changed by anybody at will. Africans are victims of their own simple technology and orality. Because of the inability to write, therefore to keep written records, many of the original ideas have been forgotten so that there are no records to which later generations can turn to verify their truth as Christians can do with the Canon. Consequently, those members of society who were in positions of power and authority such as kings and diviners have taken advantage of the situation, and exploited it to the full for their own gain. I suspect four possible theories to this question, all resulting from the fact that **Ovawambo** did not have the **art of writing** which would have helped them to record what they believed. Four possibilities exist:

The **first** theory has to do with the role played by **onganga**. If people knew **Kalunga**, as demonstrated in chapter three, what could have happened historically to push the Supreme being so far away from the people? The answer may lie in the desire to control society without too much interference from any other ultimate such as the supreme authority (**Kalunga**). Those in positions of authority and power such as **onganga** might have developed a theory whereby they could freely manipulate individuals and the entire **ekumwe** (society). If **Ovawambo** believed that ancestors and kings were not divine, and **Kalunga** actually loved her/his 'children' as has been shown in many proverbs and riddles, how come that his/her place seems to have been taken by **eenganga** (diviners) **eehamba** [kings] and **ovakwamhungu** [ancestors]? How come that **Ovawambo** placed their loyalty and convictions in creatures? These **eenganga** probably took advantage of the fact that people were in need. Because there were no records against which to test such new theories they were bound to be accepted, established and become part of the tradition. **Eenganga**, it must be kept in mind, were the priests, the philosophers, and the generals of society. They were highly gifted. On the basis of their gifts it was not impossible for them to develop theories which make people believe that ancestors needed to be taken care of otherwise

they could be angry and cause problems. By appealing to **Kalunga**, they could legitimate their claims and made people believe that ancestors were closer to **Kalunga** than the living, so they have power far greater than the living. This could make sense particularly if those people led a respectable life during their life time. That might be how the theory could have developed into ancestral veneration and people persuaded to put their loyalty and convictions into ultimates other than **Kalunga**. As Nürnberger says:

it is they who matter, not the Supreme Being as such. It is they who bless; they demand; they want to be remembered; they are the constant personal counterparts of the living. (1993:7)

Who benefits from this theory? It was **onganga**, not the ancestor. The whole thing of ancestral veneration is an invention of diviners to create business, fame and enjoy life, as was the case with rituals of **epasha** and **oupili**. It is they that benefitted from divination, even though they knew that it was but a game as we have seen in chapter three. Consider a healing ritual. **Onganga** must establish whether the problem was caused by the ancestor, by a witch or by **Kalunga**. In the first two cases, **onganga** received a pay from both the family of the patient, and possibly also from the family of the person who was going to be accused of witchcraft, for the latter would probably also consult the same **onganga** for protection. Things went in circles, and only **onganga** benefited. The whole idea of ancestral veneration was a **distortion** of a useful tradition by **onganga** for his/her own gain in that kind of a game, **Kalunga** must be pushed far away so as not to interfere in the drama of human life. The loyalty and conviction which are due only to **Kalunga** were put in **ovakwamhungu** (the ancestors), **eehamba** (the kings) and **eenganga** (the diviners).

The **second** theory has to do with **the legitimization of the power of the kings**. According to the tradition, **Kalunga** is supposed to be represented by the king through whom divine blessings are channelled to **ekumwe**. How did this come about? There must have been a wise person most probably **onganga** who developed a theory that the king would rule with guaranteed success if he did so in the name of the Supreme Being. Consequently a theory was developed, with the involvement of **onganga**, whereby the king, whether alive or dead, was seen as the representative of **Kalunga**. In other words, this theory aimed at legitimating the power of the king over his

subjects and so keep law and order in society. No person would disobey the ancestors, the king or the diviners because they were the representatives of **Kalunga**. This theory was probably extended down the structure of the society to the clans and the families. It must be noted that again at this level, it **onganga** who benefited. To implement this theory successfully, **Kalunga** had to be pushed out of the way.

The **third** theory has to do with the human fear of death and isolation. It has become clear from chapter three that **Ovawambo** spend most of their time, wealth and energy preventing death, albeit in vain. The theory that people do not die but pass through a stage to another world might have been an invention resulting from the fear of death. It must be obvious that the theory was designed by some wise people before they died. We all want to live longer and have authority over our descendants, even just by being remembered by our offspring or community. So this theory came about. Someone thought, how can I avoid the nothingness of death. So probably this theory developed.

The **fourth** possibility may be the concern of parents for the wellbeing of their progeny which they left behind when they died. Let me give an example from my own life. When I was a boy, I believed that my father was omniscient. He could see me wherever I was, even hundreds of kilometres away. It was he, in fact, who told me of his ability to see at long distances. Later on I discovered that he wanted me to be conscious of his presence all the time so that I did not do funny and naughty things. So it was his concern that led him to develop the theory that he was omniscient. It is possible that somewhere along history, some old people wanted living members of their families to feel that they were in the presence of their senior members, even though they had died. So, the theory was developed that people do not die but go to a far-off village where **Kalunga** lived but they could see what the living were doing. So anyone who beat his wife, neglected children, or the weak members of their families, that is, broke traditional laws and norms, would be punished by **Kalunga** via the ancestors. Those who kept the law would be blessed. So this theory also aimed at keeping law and order and encouraged people to take their responsibilities seriously. This theory may have originated out of good will but, because it was not written down, its original intention was lost and it was abused.

4.6 Conclusion

While Luther perceived sin as unbelief and revolt against God, **Owambo** traditionalists understood it as an act, or lack of it, which resulted in absence of **omholo** or **elao** (good fortune). Such acts are normally attributed to supernatural forces such as witchcraft, sorcery and offended ancestors. While Luther viewed salvation as a result of the Christ-event through which God freely rescues humanity from the grip of sin, **Owambo** viewed it as relief from problems which threaten present human life. A conclusion has therefore been made in this chapter that because Luther and **Owambo** understood sin differently, their views of the remedy (salvation) to this human problem were bound to be different.

While Luther appealed to the gracious and forgiving God of the Bible, who unconditionally accepts the unacceptable sinner into his fellowship to share the victory of Christ over the forces of evil in his life, **Owambo** believed that **Kalunga** has given humans enough tools and agents of salvation which, if utilized appropriately, can bring about relief and help in problematic situations. Consequently, various rites, rituals and sacrifices have been performed as attempts to redeem the situation of **omupya** (misfortune) be it sickness, infertility, drought, or death. Many taboos have also been introduced to prevent people from doing things which could trigger off misfortunes. There are also many prayers, particularly for major occasions, some addressed to ancestors, others to **Kalunga** in **Owambo** spirituality. Luther would have termed these kinds of human attempts to find salvation as salvation by works based on human pride. For him salvation can only be achieved by grace, through faith alone in Christ alone.

An attempt has been made to point out the main points of contact as well as differences between the soteriologies of Luther and that of **Owambo**. At one level Luther and **Owambo** are at one in that there is a Creator God and that humans need salvation. In the final analysis, however, the definition of sin and salvation by **Owambo** is too social and this-worldly, that is horizontal. **Owambo** religion, therefore, does not reach the same spiritual depth as does Christianity, Lutheranism in particular. Sin is more than social transgression and needs a more radical solution than merely making peace within the social system through rites, rituals and sacrifices. But the way Luther sees sin and salvation is also problematic to a certain degree. His view of salvation is not comprehensive enough, simply because it is too eschatological and

other-worldly. There is an imbalance between salvation of the soul and the materiality of salvation. Salvation is too vertical. Particularly his distinction between the "inner man" and "outer man" is confusing.

The soteriology of Luther differs from that of **Ovawambo** mainly because it is based on the biblical witness about Jesus Christ and his redemptive actions. Luther speaks of **the word of God** in which God announces his will and promises to humans. It is this God of the written word who must be trusted and believed. **Ovawambo** did not have the art of writing. Consequently, they could not keep records to which they could fall back in cases of doubts concerning the truth. They depended on the oral tradition which is reliable only up to a certain point. Thus, doubt has been expressed in this chapter whether the placing of human loyalty and conviction in creatures instead of **Kalunga** might not have been caused by human attempts to legitimate their own positions of power, their actions and enterprises. We concluded that ancestral veneration is probably a human device and a means to an end. Religions with ancestral veneration need the power of Christ to serve as a criterion in judging whether that element of religion is in accord with the will of the biblical God, the God of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SOTERIOLOGY OF THE FINNISH MISSIONARIES

5.1 Introduction

Chapters three and four analyzed the tradition of **Ovawambo**, to which the Pauline-Lutheran tradition of salvation was to be introduced by the Finnish missionaries. Chapter five introduces us to the Finnish-ELCIN concept of salvation, the last tradition which we have to analyze in our search for an inclusive concept of salvation. **Firstly**, the history of the Finnish Missionary Society (FMS) from its inception in 1857 to the establishment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) in 1870 will be outlined to form a background to what will follow later. **Secondly**, the chapter identifies some of the early mission directors and/or missionaries whose theologies, soteriologies in particular, had a bearing on those of ELCIN. **Thirdly**, the chapter evaluates three documents which seem to expose the soteriology of the Finnish missionaries. These will be: (a) the Systematic Theology of Pokolainen, (b) the Homiletics of V n nen and (c) the Hymns of Rautanen. The contents of these documents will be compared to the theology of Protestant Orthodoxy to ascertain whether the Finns have not borrowed too much from this 17th century theology and Pietism.

Fourthly, this chapter appreciates the practical activities of the missionaries among **Ovawambo**, but argues that the link between their notion of salvation and their social involvement is not clear enough. **Fifthly**, the chapter looks at three hermeneutical approaches to the Bible to establish how the Finnish missionaries perceived and interpreted the Bible. It suggests that ELCIN adopts the canon-in-the Canon hermeneutical approach to the Bible while remaining aware of its limitations. ELCIN is advised to develop her own theological identity and not to uncritically preserve the theology of the missionaries. ELCIN is advised to carry on with her practical services, but also to translate her eschatological salvation into a soteriology of current comprehensive wellbeing.

5.2 The Finnish Missionary Society [FMS] in Owambo

5.2.1 *The birth of the FMS*

Researchers agree that the early history of the FMS in Owambo is known only very little (Nambala 1994:78). "Finland was the last Northern land to become Christianised after a crusade of King Eric the Holy of Sweden, under the Uppsala Bishop Henrik, in 1157" (Bliss 1975:236). Since then, doors opened for Christianity in the Finnish society. The Lutheran theology was disseminated "through Michael Agricola, Paul Junsten and other Finnish clergymen" (Bliss 1975:236). Consequently, "the whole Finnish people became Lutheran Protestants in the 16th century" under the Swedish king Gustav Wasa (Bliss 1975:236). In the 17th century Finns adopted harsh Protestant Orthodoxy, followed by Pietism in the 18th century, and by revivalism in the 19th century.

An unknown author states that, "an English man" (St. Henry) was the first Bishop of Finns (S.A. Outlook 1951:56). From the time Christianity was introduced to Finland, two centuries expired before they developed an interest in mission work. So Finland "was likewise the last of the Northern nations to take up the heathen mission work" (Lenkers quoted by Nambala 1994:79). She was the last "of the Scandinavian countries ... to enter the missionary movement" (Warneck 1906:144). The spirit of mission work seems to have been injected into the Finnish mind when "a carpenter named Nyberg met with some Moravians at Copenhagen" (Bliss 1975:236). Nyberg was later sent out as a missionary to Surinam under the Moravians. He died there.

Between 1820 and 1830, the spirit of awakening swept across Finland and "a religious movement spread over" her population (Bliss 1975:236). In 1835, a missionary society was established in Sweden (Warneck 1906:144). Many Finnish ministers, among them an enthusiast, Osterbotlen, started to think of people in need of salvation and wished to have a replica of the Swedish Missionary Society in Finland. The most spirited and quick to act was chaplain Jonas Lagus of Yliewiska who promptly purchased a house for "the training of missionaries" (Bliss 1975:236). He consulted the government and solicited its consent to the establishment of a missionary society. Because "all religious work not ordered in the ecclesiastical laws and manual was suspected" (Bliss 1975:236), his application was rejected. But Lagus and other pastors continued to collect money for missionary activities by placing collection boxes before their doors. For this,

they were summoned before the court to explain. In 1837, Lagus "travelled to Stockholm to study the strategies of the Swedish Missionary Society" (Nambala 1994:79). Upon his return, he visited the Southern part of Finland to inflame interest in mission.

At this time, Pastor Reinquist of Sardaval was also an earnest believer in mission, and was collecting funds, which he handed over to the Swedish Society. He also wrote books and pamphlets, which had much to do in keeping alive the missionary interest (Bliss 1975:236).

"For a long time, indeed, contributions had been gathered in little circles for the Swedish Missionary Society" (Warneck 1906:144). Seven hundred years after 1157, the then Bishop of Finland proposed a celebration of the dawn of Christianity among the Finns. The approval of Emperor Alexander II was sought and secured. He ordered a jubilee on the eighteenth of June on a national scale. "In this connection, thanks offering for foreign missions were [to be] made in all churches" (SA Outlook, 1951:56). The proceeds were earmarked for "the building in London of a Finnish seamen's mission church" (SA Outlook 1955:124). The whole of the Finnish population was mobilised. Some young ministers grabbed this golden opportunity to promote the idea of the formation of a missionary society similar to the one formed in Sweden in 1835. They had already drawn up a petition and succeeded in obtaining two hundred signatures of people from all walks of life. This was presented to the Imperial Senate of Finland in 1858.

After proper consultation with Emperor Alexander II, the Senate endorsed the plan. He further dictated that the proceeds collected during the celebration be set aside for the new society. Further, it was decided that "in memory of this feast a collection for foreign missions should be taken on one Sunday in each year" (Bliss 1975:237). The election of the directors for the new organisation was held in Helsinki. F. L. Schauman, professor in Practical Theology (1810-1877), was its first director and military chaplain Rev. Klemens Johan Gabriel Sirelius (1818-1888) its first secretary. He later became its director (Eirola 1985:51). In remembrance of Bishop Henry, the martyrdom of the first Christian preacher (SA Outlook 1951:56), it was decided that January 19, 1859 be the launching day of the new missionary society during its first general meeting in the cathedral of Turku (SA Outlook 1955:124, Warneck 1906:144). The name **Suomen Lähetyseura** (The Finnish Missionary Society) was approved. January 19 has become an Anniversary Day for the FMS (Eirola 1985:51).

The FMS was still too young to operate on its own. For that reason, during its first years, it did mission work through the Leipzig Missionary Society, the Gossner Society, and the Hermannsburg Society of Pastor Harms; "and it maintained a missionary from 1861 to 1867 in connection with the Gossner mission in Chota Nagpur, India" (Bliss 1975:237). Since 1860, the Finnish Missionary Society "supported the German foreign mission work with both money and personnel" (Nambala 1994:79). In the year 1860, the first Finn volunteered to be trained as a missionary for foreign mission work "and the first two [students], K. E. Jurvelin and Malmström, were sent to Hermannsburg" (Bliss 1975:237, cf Eirola 1985:55). Malmström was ordained in 1866, after which

he was sent to the Hermannsburg station, Matleb, South Africa. Malmström operated under the auspices of the Rhenish Mission, [with the FMS supporting] this station, and all information was to be sent to Finland. K. E. Jurvelin was also working under the Rhenish Mission" (Nambala 1994:79).

5.2.2 The establishment of the mission school

In 1862, a mission school was established in Helsinki "following the resolution of the Annual Conference of 18th June 1862". The Missionary School was officially opened as a boarding school on the 17th November 1862 with Rev. K. J. G. Sirelius as its principal (Eirola 1985:55). The other teachers were C. G. Totterman, and after his death (4.10.1865), A. W. Lucander whom students, for instance M. Rautanen, loved and respected (Tirronen 1977:17).

In addition to the five students of mission who were enrolled since the opening of the mission school on the 17th November 1862 (Tirronen 1977:16), Botolf Bernhard Bjorklund and Martti Rautanen joined the school almost a year later. To catch up with what they had missed, teacher Lucander had to attend to them privately during a holiday on a certain farm (Tirronen 1977:16).

In the meantime funds for the Missionary Society increased, adding to the enthusiasm for mission aroused by works and reports done by Malmström and Jurvelin in Africa. It "created a wish among some Finns to work in Africa" (Nambala 1994:79). Since then, "missions under Finnish management were seriously contemplated" (Bliss 1975:237).

5.2.3 C. H. Hahn visits Owambo and invites the FMS

Missionary Carl Hugo Hahn of the Rhenish Missionary Society visited **Owambo** in 1857 and identified the need to do missionary work there. Before he returned to **Owambo** for his second visit, Hahn toured Europe between 1859 and 1863 to campaign for financial support for his missionary activities. He covered Germany, England, Russia and Finland. In his lecture in Helsinki in 1862 about his journey to **Owambo** and about his mission work among **Ovaherero**, he "impressed the Finns and aroused more interest in Africa" (Nambala 1994:80). In 1863, the revived Finns sent financial support to the school of Hahn "for the education of native preachers among the Hereros" (Bliss 1975:237).

In 1866, Hahn visited **Owambo**, once again covering **Ondonga**, **Oukwanyama**, **Uukwambi** and **Ongandjera**. He met and discussed with kings **Shikongo shaKalulu** of **Ondonga** and **Mweshipandeka shaShaningika** of **Oukwanyama** who asked him to have missionaries sent to **Owambo** to start missionary work (Nambala 1994:80; Nghifikwa 1995:11). Thereafter, he sent the Finnish Missionary Society "his journal account of a tour ... and with it a strong appeal that they undertake work in the region" (Bliss 1975:237). In his letter, Hahn wrote:

This will tell you, the Finnish Mission Society, it is time you remember your promise to come over to help us. Trusting that this request will not be denied, I come to you in God's name, who wills that all be saved; and in our Lutheran Mission's name, that is so little known in this land; and in the poor heathens' name, to whom God has opened the door, and ordered me to speak. 'Come over and help!' I have, in God's name, dared to give three tribes the promise that before two years they shall have missionaries and Christian workers (Nambala 1994:80).

5.2.4 The response of the FMS to the appeal of Hugo Hahn

Appropriately, "an extra meeting of the members of the Society was held, and it was decided that on the 18th September, 1867 missionaries should be sent to establish the mission in **Ovamboland**, arrangements being made with the Rhenish Society to divide the field" (Bliss 1975:237). Coincidentally, 1867 was also the final year of the missionary students who attended mission school in Helsinki. Some of these missionaries were sent to **Owambo** in response to the invitation of kings (Nambala 1994:80; Nghifikwa 1995:11). During the Mission festival of the 9th -11th June, 1868, five students from the mission school were ordained by Bishop F.L. Schauman. They were B.B. Bjorklund, P. Kurvinen, K. L. Tolonen, K. A. Weikkolin and Martti

Rautanen, best known to **Ovawambo**, as **kuku Nakambalekanene** (uncle **Nakambale** [small basket]). At this mission festival the first missionaries were sent out by the FMS (Tirronen 1977:18).

[They] were sent to Africa together with Karl Immanuel Jurvilen (1845-1897), who has been trained as a missionary in Germany. They were accompanied by four lay brothers, Juho Heinonen (1837-1898), Erkki Juntunen (1839 - ?), Atti Piirainen (1840-1910) and Juho Nissinen (-) (Eirola 1985:61).

Juho Nissinen went only as far as Germany, where the group was studying German and other things for a couple of months in Barmen under the guidance of the Rhenish Missionary Society. He returned home to Finland. Juntunen too did not reach **Ovamboland**. He returned to Finland. Such returns already begin to give an impression that these newcomers were heading for "one of the less attractive regions of rampant heathenism" which required "much of the newcomers in the way of sacrifice and disappointment ..." (SA Outlook 1955:124).

5.2.5 The arrival of the Finns in Africa

(a) At Cape Town

After their stay in Germany, they left for London to board a ship, "Cape City" to Cape Town. Arriving on January 1, 1869 at the Cape, after their journey of sixty four days, the missionaries were met by an aged Rhenish missionary P. D. Luckhoff. The same day, they left for Stellenbosch to meet C.H. Ritter, the director of the Rhenish Missionary Society (Nambala 1994:81). Returning to Cape Town from Stellenbosch after one month that is on the 1st February, 1869, the group met the famous Anglican Bishop Grey. In Cape Town, the group was also joined by another Finnish missionary, Alexander Malmström, who had trained in Germany. He was already serving as a missionary in South Africa in the service of the Hermannsburg Missionary Society (Eirola 1985:62; Nambala 1994:81). On the 4th February, this group, accompanied by some Germans, boarded a hired boat from Cape Town to Walvis Bay, Namibia.

(b) At Walvis Bay

Ten days later (14.2.1869), they arrived at Walvis Bay. After three weeks in the port, that is on the 3rd March 1869, missionary H. Hahn came to welcome the group. He sent the first group to his mission station at Otjimbingwe where they stayed for a year to learn **Otjiherero**, Dutch and

English languages as well as practical mission work. He remained at Walvis Bay with the rest, including Martti Rautanen. On the 12th April, the remaining group finally left to join their colleagues at Otjimbingwe (Tirronen 1977:20; Nambala 1994:81; Bliss 1975:237). On the 23rd April, all were at Otjimbingwe to learn and "to make first hand observation and to meet **Ovambo** people" (Eirola 1985:62). **Otjiherero** was particularly relevant for their future work because it "is a Bantu language like **Ovambo** ..." (Eirola 1985:62). It was, therefore, strategic for learning **Oshiwambo** in the near future.

Finally the missionaries from Finland left Otjimbingwe on 27 May 1870 for their final destination, **Ovambo**, to minister to "the vigorous people ... whom the Germans fenced off from the rest of the territory" (SA Outlook 1955:124). Meanwhile, Tolonen was assisting Hahn until the end of November that year. So, he remained at Otjimbingwe when the others left for **Ovambo**.

At Omaruru, Hahn received news about peacemaking efforts between the warring parties of Maharero and Jan Jonker. Desiring to play a reconciling role to prevent war, which seemed imminent, he returned to Otjimbingwe, entrusting the new missionaries to the guidance of a hunter, Frederick Green. Of course, this was not without its advantages because, 'Kerina' (i.e. Green), as **Aandongga** knew him, was already known to the King of **Ondonga** and his people (Tirronen 1977:25).

(c) At Omandongo

On the 9th of July, 1870, the convoy of missionaries led by Green arrived at **Omandongo** (Eirola 1985:69), very close to the palace of king Shikongo shaKalulu (Nambala 1994:81). There they were given "a cordial welcome from the king and people" (Bliss 1975:127). That was their first mission station. On their first Sunday (19 July 1870) under a fig tree, the first seed was planted. The date of arrival at Omandongo (9th July) is today celebrated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) in commemoration of the arrival of the missionaries. Eventually, between 1870 and 1883, mission work spread to other tribes of **Ovambo: Uukwambi, Ongandjera and Oukwanyama**.

(d) No easy way for the Finns

The journey of the Finnish missionaries from Finland to **Owambo** was not a smooth one. [1] They did not arrive at Cape Town to celebrate Christmas as they originally planned. This was because of the gale which they encountered on their way from London (Tirronen 1977:20). [2] Rautanen in particular could not find a comfortable place on which to lie his head in the ship (Tirronen 1977:19). [3] There were also quarrels between them while at Otjimbingwe. In fact, some of them never reached **Owambo**. They returned to Finland on account of hardship. [4] Some missionaries died of malaria and other diseases (Nambala 1994:83). For instance, "Skoglund died in 1880" (Nambala 1994:82). But, in spite of the hardship they experienced, the missionaries were filled with praises because they were able to bring the good news of salvation to the people "who where living in darkness of heathenism" (Tirronen 1977:19).

5.3 The slow but certain birth of ELCIN

Owambo kings allowed the missionaries to proclaim their message. But there were difficulties too. **Owambo** was described as "the less attractive regions of rampant heathenism" which most certainly demanded a great measure "of sacrifice and disappointments" (SA Outlook, 1955:124). Nevertheless, this challenge was confronted with an unwavering determination until, finally, "the first **public** [bold mine] baptism among Ovambo took place on January 6, 1883 at Omulonga when six men ... came forward for Holy Baptism" (Nambala 1994:82). It seems proper at this point to put the record straight before investigating the role of Finnish missionaries in the shaping of Christianity amongst **Ovawambo**. The bold word in the quotation above serves as a reminder that this baptism was not necessarily the first one to take place as it is generally believed. Fact is that two **Ovawambo** were baptised before these ones, but neither in **public** nor in **Owambo**.

Ovawambo came to listen the word but, they were not prepared to commit themselves to baptism in public (Nambala 1994:82). The first christian amongst **Ovawambo** was a woman, **Nanguroshi**, a maid of missionary Kurvinen. Four years after their arrival in **Owambo**, missionary Kurvinen was to return to Finland. **Nanguroshi**, his domestic servant, accompanied him. In Finland she was baptised on June 9, 1876 (Nambala 1994:82). **Nanguroshi** received a 'Christian' name, **Eva Maria**, and dropped her traditional 'heathen' one.

After staying for four years in Finland, **Nanguroshi**, now **Eva Maria**, returned to Namibia and but stayed in Hereroland. "She later married one of the young Ovambo men who was baptised by the Rhenish missionary, Gottlieb Veihe, on behalf of the Finnish missionaries at Omaruru on the 6 November 1881" (Tirronen 1977:67). Nambala puts the date at 6.3.1881 (1994:83). The **indigenous** personal names of these candidates are no longer known. However, their 'Christian' and sure names were: William Amutenya, Martin Iipinge, Gustav Iithoko, and Gabriel Nangolo. According to Nambala, the reason why these people were baptised at Omaruru seems to have been the fear of missionaries to provoke the king by conducting such a laughable and "strange rite as that of pouring water on adults in public" (Nambala 1994:83). But perhaps there was a deeper reason. For example, Tirronen states that Gustav Iithoko went to be baptised in **Uushimba** [place of the Hereros] because **pethimbo ndiyaka okushasha okwa li inaaku pitikwa mOndonga** [baptism was not allowed in Ondonga at that time]. Tirronen also says that upon return as a newly baptised, Gustav was reprimanded by the king although he was not arrested or beaten (1977:67). He was one of those **Ovawambo** who were baptised at Omaruru. So the second baptism took place five years after **Eva Maria** had been baptised and eleven years after the arrival of missionaries in **Owambo**.

Today, the third baptism is regarded as the **first, public and official** because it was the first **public** baptism in **Owambo**. On that day, January 6, 1883, at **Omulonga**, six **Owambo** men came forward to receive their 'Christian' names. They were: Moses Iimene, Elias Nangolo, Abraham Shikongo, Jakob Angula, Tobias Negonya, and Johannes Nangombe. With them was also an infant of Eva Maria.

Reasons why it took so long before the first public baptism was conducted are not too difficult to find. At one level, this could be attributed to the carefulness of missionaries. They did not want to rush to this rite before they were well trusted by their subjects. Local people might also have been sceptical about the motives of missionaries. Nambala observes, for instance that:

Thirteen years without baptism should not be looked on from the point of view that the Africans were too 'evil' and deep in their sin. It is natural for anyone to be sceptical of what others are saying, more so if they are foreigners (1994:83).

So, the slowness of **Ovawambo** to come forward for baptism is here attributed to the scepticism of **Ovawambo** themselves. Nambala believes that it was natural for them to be sceptical, antagonistic and suspicious, particularly because they were quite unclear about the ultimate aims and objectives of the missionary enterprise (1994:82). In an article in **The Finnish Mission**, an unknown author gives another reason for this delay as the possible hostility of kings. "After ten years of prayerful toil, the first four converts were baptised (1881), though because of local hostility this had to be done in Hereroland" (quoted by SA Outlook 1951:56). But it can also be argued that the period of thirteen years, which is normally emphasised, is exaggerated. Facts are that the **first** baptism of **Omuwambo** took place merely six years after 1870, and the **second** only ten years. The fourth baptism involving four candidates took place in 1884 at **Olukonda**. These were Paulus (a Herero), David Niitembu, Elias Ashikomba and Elizabeth (Kaukaus = of Nama origin).

King Kambonde kaNgula of Ondonga was the first **Owambo** king to be baptised, although this happened on his deathbed. Even there, however, he had to be given a 'Christian name', **Eino Johannes**. His successor, King Nambala, was given a Christian name, Martin Elifas, as he and fifty six other people joined the new faith at Olukonda. Of course, the baptism of the head of the nation was not without its advantages for missionary work. It opened doors for many of his subjects to join the Christian fold (Nambala 1994:85). It also meant that missionaries could have access to other tribes via the kings who could easily influence one another.

Missionary activities were not confined to one area; they spread all over **Owambo**. Many mission stations were established between 1870 and 1884 in Uukwambi, Ongandjera, and Oukwanyama. Bjorklund served as the director of missionary activities, but, ultimately, Martti Rautanen (called **Nakambalekanene** by **Aandongga**) emerged as their 'Bishop' (Nambala 1994:82). From this stage, Christianity took root among **Ovawambo**. While some missionaries died and some left for Finland, others came to take their places (Warneck 1906:144). When there were only two missionaries in the field, "King Kambonde kaMpingana, in the West **Ondonga**, appealed to the FMS for more missionaries" (Nambala 1994:83). By the year 1887, fifty one **Ovawambo** had become Christians. The first church building was built at **Olukonda** in 1888.

Finnish missionaries also opened doors for indigenous leadership. Abraham Iintamba a lay preacher from Ongandjera, for instance, was responsible for the planting of the first seed of the gospel in **Uukwaluudhi**. In **Oukwanyama**, it was Simson Shituwa and Wilhelm Kafita under the leadership of Emil Liljeblad who was responsible the building of a mission station at Engela. Local preachers were trained very early. For example, Gustav Iithoko, baptised in 1881, at Omaruru, became a church elder at Omandongo in 1887 and a teacher under the direction of missionaries at Onamayi (1893-97) and Oyovu (1898 - 1915) (Nambala 1994:86).

A Teacher Training Seminary for males only was established in 1913 at Onandjokwe, with Liljeblad as its first principal. In 1922, the training of indigenous pastors and evangelists also started at Oniipa less than one kilometre from Onandjokwe. Seven of the first group of students became pastors. The rest ended up being evangelists. The ordination of the first pastors was held on the 27th September 1925. They were: Simson Shituwa, Paulus Hamutenya, Juuso Ngaikukuete, Obadja Iihuhwa, Sakeus Iihuhwa, Gideon Iitula, and Nabot Manasse. The theological seminary was moved to Elim in 1947, and again to Otjimbingwe in 1963, where it became a joint venture between the black Lutheran Churches in the country. At the end of 1996, it moved to Windhoek. The Engela Parish Institute was established in 1962 to train different church workers, including evangelists, catechists, choir directors, Bible group leaders, youth leaders and Sunday School teachers. After the ordination of the local pastors, evangelists and other church workers, the church grew rapidly (Nambala 1994:86). ELCIN is today the largest church in Namibia.

5.4 The soteriology of the Finns

The number of Finnish missionaries in **ELCIN** began to decrease only two decades or so ago. Today, the term **missionary** has given way to a more appropriate one: **church seasonal worker** (ELCIN constitution 1993:3). In terms of self-propagation, ELCIN is no longer a receiving 'daughter church', but an equal partner with the Evangelical Lutheran church in Finland. We turn now to some of the Finns whose theologies, soteriologies in particular, had a bearing on the formation of the Christianity of **ELCIN**.

5.4.1 Mission Directors

Among the directors of the mission schools in Finland only three will be listed here with a few observations. **Kustaa Adolf Paasio** (1869-1935) taught exegesis and dogmatics to missionaries for thirty years since 1903. From 1934 to 1935, he was assistant director of the FMS. He was "primarily known as a revivalist, influenced by Frans Hannula and as a representative of missionary preaching" (Löytty 1971:20f) with a theological stress on a "complete surrender to the Lord". For him, "all work for the kingdom of God must aim at the salvation of the soul" (Löytty 1971:21). The thrust of missionary activities is the spreading of the gospel and the bringing of the souls of sinners to Christ the Saviour. **Matti Tarkkanen** (1862--1938) was a Mission Director for the years 1914 - 1934. He was a biblicist, viewing the Bible as an "unerring revelation of God" (Löytty 1971:21). Thus he was very uncomfortable with, and critical towards, "the exegetical research of his time, as also to theological liberalism and the Social Gospel movement" (Löytty 1971:21). He emphasised "sanctification and eschatology" (Löytty 1971:21). **Uno Henrik Berndt Paunu** (1873 -1948) was a Mission Director between 1936 and 1946. In his later theology, Paunu reflected an affirmative attitude towards the biblicist movement.

5.4.2 Missionaries and lecturers

Victor Alho (1878-1963) served as a missionary for forty years in **Owambo**. For thirty years he was the "principal of the Finnish Ovamboland mission" (Löytty 1971:22). He emphasised the necessity of teaching for missionary activities. Walter Bjorklund and Alpo Hukka described Alho's conception of Holy Scriptures as "soundly fundamentalistic" (Löytty 1971:23). He was bitterly opposed to liberal theology, arguing that "it was detrimental to the sound concept of faith" (Löytty 1971:23). He insisted that liberal theology "could not be accepted by anyone who wished to remain faithful to the Bible" (Löytty 1971:23). About his scepticism, Löytty writes:

An illustrative example was the matter of having Finnish books translated into Oshiwambo. Alho had been entrusted with the task of translating Aarni Voipio's book **Koulu raamattutieto** [Bible knowledge for schools, 1948]. In a long letter [dated 29.09.1959] to the Board of the FMS, however, he explained that in his opinion, the book included such a number of the claims of liberal theology, detrimental to the sound concepts of faith, that the undertaking should be relinquished. Voipio's work could not be accepted by someone who wished to remain faithful to the Bible (1971:23).

The central problem of Alho was **liberal theology**. About Voipio's²¹ **book he wrote: "it would be detrimental of God's work if the said book were delivered to the Ovambo"** (Löytty 1971:23). **The book was never published. Kalle Petaja** (1881-1964) exerted influence on **Owambo** pastors in practical matters and life. During his twenty nine years of service among **Ovawambo**, he served as "a teacher to the pastors" (Löytty 1971:24). In 1948 he served as a tutor of student pastors and between the years 1951 and 1952 as their teacher. Petaja was mostly known as a Biblical fundamentalist. According to Löytty, he is most remembered for his "anxiety for the souls of fellow men" (1971:24). Of all the missionaries Petaja distinctly represented the winner of souls and preacher of justification by faith alone (Löytty 1971:25).

Valde Kivinen (1897-1955) was responsible for organising **Owambo** parishes towards autonomy in the 1930s. He organised refresher courses where he guided pastors and preachers in many theological disciplines including the art of preaching. About his teaching, Löytty reports:

In his tuition Kivinen stressed the proclamation of sin and grace, the necessity of spiritual awakening and the importance of 'breaking the heart'. Prerequisite to vigorous activities is a care for one's own spiritual life. He continually emphasised that the care of the souls was necessary (1971:25).

Maija Kantele (1901-) was one of the few female theologians and teachers who served in **Owambo** as missionaries. For over thirty years in all Kantele taught student pastors during the periods 1939-1961 and 1937-1947 and at the Teacher Seminary at Oniipa (Löytty 1971:26). She considered the Bible as the unerring word of God in which God speaks through divinely inspired human authors. She was bitterly opposed to liberal theology and scientific researchers who abandoned miracles on rational grounds. For her, findings of liberal theology uproot the omnipotence of God and sabotage the reliability of Scriptures. Historical critical scriptural study should aim at helping readers to overcome discrepancies between the world then and the world now. But its conclusions must be viewed cautiously because of the possibility that old theories are soon replaced by new ones. Therefore, for Kantele, the Bible is meant to be the object of Christian study day in and day out. This requirement is entrenched in the Church constitution of ELCIN until today (ELCIN Constitution 1993:38).

²¹ We have no information as to who Voipio was.

5.4.3 *The systematic theology of Urho Poikolainen*

In 1978, Poikolainen published his book **Ame ohandi itavele ...** [I believe ...], the first of its kind in **Oshiwambo**. In its fifty two pages, Poikolainen focuses on **Oukristus** [Christology pp.1-18], **Oulinawa = Ehongoxupifo** [Soteriology, pp.19-40] and **nOixuuninwa** [Eschatology pp 41-52]. It should be noted that Poikolainen wrote during the war of liberation in Namibia and about one hundred years after the arrival of the first missionaries in **Owambo**. These two events should have had a serious influence on his perception of theology. I expected him to write about twentieth century theology, soteriology in particular, which is different from classical Protestant theology of the 16/17th century. The three sections of the book of Poikolainen will be analyzed below.

(a) **Oukristus** [Christology]

Poikolainen acknowledges the eternity of Christ. At the right time, Christ left **oukule** [remoteness] **ndeke te ya popepi** [and came closer]. God revealed himself in the way in which it became possible for humans to encounter him without being hurt by his majesty (1978:6). He became a human being of flesh and blood. The miracle of incarnation is not the birth of Christ, but his coming into the sinful world (1978:7). This is biblical and historical. It was taught by the church fathers such as Ignatius [d.110] as we read in his **Sobrum Romanum natus este de spiritu sacto et Maria virgine**. But humans are unable to accept this fact. It is a mystery (1978:8).

So Christ was truly human, and truly God. He was baptised, an occasion which served as a point of departure for his missionary activities to save humankind (1978:9). As a human being, he was tempted in all respects, but "**alushe okwa kadula omutondi ou kwali a hala oku mu kufa mondjila yeifano laye**" [he always overcame the devil who wanted him to abandon his course] (1978:10). His course was to save humankind as **omupokati** [mediator] (1978:12) between the sinner and God. Jesus carried his duties out as a prophet, as a king and as a priest (1978:13-18). These three offices were not mutually exclusive and through them all, Jesus has effected salvation for humankind (1978:12-13).

(b) Ehongoxupifo [Soteriology]

Poikolainen compares a sinner to a prisoner. It is not sufficient to declare a sinner free, because real freedom starts when the doors of the prison are thrown open for a prisoner to go free. Likewise, it is not enough to hear the liberating gospel, because this must be accepted in faith, if it is to be effective (1978:19). The works of Christ and the entire Christ-event is a mystery which a human mind cannot fathom. God gives the believers the Holy Spirit to help them comprehend their benefits in Christ. Only the Holy Spirit brings the sinner into contact, first with Christ and finally with **Kalunga** (Poikolainen 1978:19,20). Here is the Trinity as Poikolainen understands it. **Kalunga**, the Father, is the Creator and the Ruler. The Son is the Redeemer. The Holy Spirit is God who is at work in human beings everywhere (1978:20).

The church was born and established on the day of Pentecost (1978:19, 20). She is the Kingdom of God here on earth. But the kingdom is not identical with the historical churches. True members of the **ecclesia (eongalo)** are only those who truly believe in the Saviour. Not all members of the historical churches are necessarily believers. So, there is a visible and an invisible church. For Poikolainen, **Extra ecclesiam nulla salus** [there is no salvation outside the church] (1978:21).

Here Poikolainen adopted the Roman Catholic dictum, which dates back to Cyprian, as it was adopted by Protestant Orthodox theologians of the 16th and 17th centuries. According to this dictum, as found in Schmid, the preaching of the word of God brought believers together, commonly called the church. It is through this communion that God channels salvation to believers. Those who are outside this body cannot taste salvation.

It is necessary for everyone of those who are to be saved to be a living member and true citizen of the Catholic and Apostolic Church; and those who are outside the church are, necessarily, alien from God, from Christ, from the benefits of the heavenly kingdom, and the hope of eternal salvation (Schmid 1961:589).

Though the Catholic Church and Protestant Orthodoxy have adopted the same dictum, they understood it differently. When the Roman Catholic Church declared that there is no salvation outside the Church, it meant the Catholic Church. In contrast, the Protestant Orthodox

theologians meant that there is no salvation outside the church of Christ, "the assembly of the saints" whether Roman Catholic or not (Schmid 1961:597). The use of this dictum by Poikolainen shows that his theology, particularly salvation, is taken unaltered from Protestant Orthodoxy which was strongly influenced by the Greek philosophy of the immortality of the soul and the Roman Catholic perception of salvation as shown above. ELCIN needs to learn a lesson here that theology is not static. Paradigms do shift so that old established truths become obsolete. A further lesson, or perhaps a challenge, is that a church should not just accept what missionaries, or any theologian for that matter, taught. When the church trains her own theologians, these must, of necessity, develop a theology which picks up the valid concerns of the members of that particular church in their particular context.

Poikolainen believes that God can be known by humans through specific and general revelation. He writes: ... **nokuli oha longifa yo oilonganghono yaye meshito nomoiningwanima ha i monika mokukalamwenyo kwetu** [... he even makes use of his mighty works of creation and concrete events in our lives]. In this quote, Poikolainen testifies that God constantly "makes himself known through creation and mighty events which take place in human life" (1978:30). God reveals himself in **vocatio generalis** that is, through nature, history, and experience (Rom.1:19-20;2:4). **Eifano laaveshe** [general revelation] is useful, because through it "the spirit of God reaches to the heathens" (Poikolainen 1978:31). However, it does not lead humans to salvation, simply because it does not know Christ and his works. It is only preparatory for **eifano la yooloka [vocatio specialis]**. **Vocatio specialis** comes to human beings through the word of God, (Rom.10:14-17) which has power to lead to faith. Humans are unable to save themselves. Thus Poikolainen believes that their salvation depends solely on the word of God, the primary means of salvation. This is brought to the attention of a human being by other humans such as prophets, apostles, pastors, and parents [**ovakulunhu**] (1978:30,31,33). It is through these and many others that the word of God is received and salvation is gained.

Poikolainen rejects predestination. If a person misses salvation, God is not to blame. God wills that in Christ all should be saved (1978:32). It is, therefore, significant for humans to differentiate between knowing God (general revelation) and knowing his will (special revelation). It is important for a sinner to view his/her entire life in terms of the will of God. This means, a human

being should always be conscious of the fact that s/he is always in the presence of God [**coram Deo**]. Poikolainen is quiet about the other **coram** - relationships: **coram mundi** and **coram hominibus** (Ebeling 1983:199).

A human being is by nature a sinner, unable to live up to the standard of God. It is, therefore, important for him/her to live in constant repentance - **metanoia** (change of mind), **epistrophe** (turning around to take a new direction). This stage is achievable only through the word of God. Poikolainen stresses that such a change of mind, or a turning-around is only of any help if the person turns towards God and not to something or someone else. To turn from sin but to something else is self-justification before God. Such a person needs an encounter with the word of God. Here Poikolainen stresses confession which is evoked by the proper preaching of the word of God (1978:33).

For Poikolainen, humans are sinners, unable to rescue themselves. No sinner can secure forgiveness of sins before God and no one can do justice to the demands of God. Thus Poikolainen believes that we are not saved through our works or by the fulfilment of the law. A sinner is saved through justification by God's grace in Christ, through faith. So, Poikolainen upholds the three **solas** of Luther: **sola gratia, sola fide, propter Christum** (1978:35f).

Justification is by grace alone. Grace is the love of God in operation whereby he reconciles the sinner to himself. Poikolainen upholds the teaching of Luther that "faith is humble trust, but firm in the grace of God in Christ" (1978:35). Sinners are justified on account of the redemptive event of Christ (Rom. 3:24). To be justified means that the redemptive action of Christ has been reckoned ours. Thus, Poikolainen upholds a principle of **mutual exchange** between the sinner and Christ. The sinner is declared just because of Christ, while Christ is condemned on behalf of the sinner (1978:36).

In justification, the sinner is forgiven and accepted without any condition laid down. He is clothed with the justice of another [**iustitia = ouyuuki u yeni**] and is made acceptable to God. This also means, in essence, that a justified sinner remains a sinner. Poikolainen upholds this teaching of Luther: **omunhu oye omulunde, ndele oye omuyuuki molwa Jesus** [a person is a

sinner but s/he is righteous on account of Christ] - **simul iustus et peccator**. Due to the process of justification plus the trust which the sinner puts in Christ, sinners can rest assured that their salvation is guaranteed.

Poikolainen also speaks of sanctification which results from justification. Sanctification is a necessary stage to demonstrate the effect of justification. The latter takes place outside the sinner, while the former is a transformation of his inner being. A justified sinner is expected to lead a new life. This is the meaning of being in Christ (1978:37). New life is supposed to result from justification. It is called sanctification. For Poikolainen, **omwenyo mupe ota u tameke momutima womunhu** [new life starts in the heart of a person]. New life in Christ starts in the heart of the person who is justified (1978:38). Sanctification itself does not save us, however. Our salvation lies solely in Christ. In other words both our justice and our sanctity are foreign to us, for they come to us from Christ and they lead us into a new life in Christ (1978:38).

(c) **Oixuuninwa** [Eschatology]

Poikolainen believes that it has been confirmed by science that the world will one day cease. This is also proclaimed in various religions due to the human desire to comprehend the end of reality, humankind included. Theologians distinguish between individual and collective eschatology. Christians are informed by scriptures that, as it was in the beginning, reality is in the hands of Christ. Through him everything came into being. Likewise, he will bring everything to an end (Col.1:14-19; John 5:22; Poikolainen 1978:41). Poikolainen is at one with Rautanen in defining death as follows: **efyo olo etopoko lolutu nomhepo yomunhu** [death is a separation of the body and the spirit] (1978:41). While in life, a human body and spirit are closely related. At death, the two separate.

Olutu otali fudikwa medu ndee tali shuna mondwi omu la dile. Omhepo yomwenyo otai i monghatu yopokati kefyo nenyumuko, onghatu yolupe lwopamhepo ashike, kamu na oshilipo (materie). Ondwi otai shuna medu omu ya dile, ndele omhepo otai shuna kuKalunga ou e i yandjele. Olutu olo alike tali fi hamhepo yomwenyo (Omuudifi 12:7, 1 Mos. 3:19; Luk. 23:46; Mat. 10:28; John. 11:25) [The body is buried in the earth and is returned to dust where it was taken. The soul gets into an intermediary stage between death and resurrection, which is only a spiritual phase, there is no material. The dust returns to the earth from where it came, but the spirit returns to **Kalunga** who gave it. Only the body dies, not the spirit of life (1978:42)].

Poikolainen teaches that at death the spirit and the body, which until then were very close, 'separate'. The body is buried in the earth, its place of origin, to rot, but the spirit goes back to God from whom it originally came. It is not the **soul**, but the **body** which dies. So he does believe in the compromise between the resurrection of the dead and the immortality of the soul.

Poikolainen dismisses as not biblical the views that **omunhu aushe olutu nomwneyo ota fi, ngaashi omunhu aushe ta ka nyumuka (1978:42)**, [the whole human being, body and spirit/soul, dies in the same manner in which the entire person will rise]. For him, the New Testament disagrees and testifies that death is **oshivelo** [passage] through which the dead pass into eternal bliss or eternal condemnation, via an intermediary place, called **oshovafi** [sheol]. He points to passages such as Luk.16; Eph.4:9; 1 Peter 3:19; Rev.6:9; Luke 23:43; 2 Cor.5:1-10; Phil.1:23. All the dead will enter into this phase, but only as spirits/souls without bodies (Acts.2:27; 1Peter 3:19; Hebr.12:23; Rev.6:9). This Poikolainen based on the fact that the New Testament speaks of two contradictory places in death: the bosom of Abraham [or paradise] and the place of suffering (Luke 16:23;23:43). During this phase, disembodied souls dwell in transition, for they are awaiting their respective rewards (1978:42).

The souls are awaiting a resurrection. Poikolainen contradicts himself by adding that **divadiva konima yefyo, ovaitaveli otava tambulilwa moparadisa omo tava makele ouwa welao laalushe** (Luke 16:22; 23:43), **ovo ve li nokuli naKristus**, (Phil.1:23; 1 Thess.1:10) (1978:42) [immediately after death, believers are received in paradise where they shall immediately taste eternal bliss]. The immediate sharing of the reward soon after death is also true for the unbelievers. They go straight into suffering but only for a while, awaiting the resurrection and judgement day.

Poikolainen has borrowed a lot from 17th century Protestant Orthodoxy. About the relationship between the body and the soul, he hooks onto the belief that a human being is composed of the body and the soul. Life is, according to Schmid "an act of the soul in the body" (1961:628). There is a bond between body and soul. The body is a sort of a "covering garment of the soul" (1961:628). Therefore, the soul which is in the body shares the afflictions and sufferings of the body as long as they are united. When death occurs, the bond between the body and the soul is

broken and the two are separated. So death is an event which marks "the separation of the soul from the body" (Schmid 1961:626).

Immediately after death, the soul enters a stage where it is either comforted or distressed. Protestant Orthodoxy theology does not accept the Roman Catholic view that there are five various places to which the soul of different categories of people go. A neutral condition in which the soul is neither pleased nor sorrowful is also rejected as erroneous (Schmid 1961:625). When Poikolainen teaches that the soul returns to God immediately after its separation from the body at death, he is hooking onto the 16th and 17th century eschatology of Protestant Orthodoxy which teaches that:

in death the soul is separated from the body, and returns to God, to whose judgement it is committed, from which it is either borne by holy angels into heaven, or is delivered to evil spirits to be cast into hell; the body is turned back again into the dust of the earth, from which its first and earliest origin proceeded ... (1899:629).

According to this theology, only the body really dies. When it is returned to earth, it "is reduced to its primitive elements" (Schmid 1961:629). The soul in turn spends an immortal life, and, removed from all intercourse with the body, it is preserved somewhere until general resurrection, when the body will be raised up by divine power and the two are again joined. So, "human souls are immortal and they do not perish with the bodies" (1961:629). The immortality of the soul, however, is not the same as that of God. God is able to destroy or preserve the soul. So in the final analysis, only God can limit the immortality of the soul (1961:630).

Poikolainen, however makes it clear that these experiences are only a foretaste of what is to come. They are also temporal, a sleeping for a while. So, for him, it is absolutely right to teach the congregation about the rest and comfort of believers immediately after death. What must be kept in mind is the fact that the New Testament does not speak of the dead going to heaven immediately after death or that in death the entire person (body and soul) dies. So, after a short time of being in the intermediary phase, the souls still await the second advent of Christ which will activate those who died in the Christian faith (1978:48).

After the general resurrection believers will inherit the kingdom of God and enjoy eternal life from God. The unbelievers will be thrown into eternal fire (Mat.7:13-14; 25:34). But, the worst thing that will happen to them will be separation with God. Eternal bliss is to be in heaven: to rest, to be comforted and to enjoy eternal life (Mat.25:46). Eternal life is life in God and because of God. There is no deficiency. Believers are free from sin and temptations. They see God and Christ and are in communion with the whole company of all other holy people of God (Rev.21:4,27;22:3,5; Phil.1:23; Mat.8:11,25:21) (1978:51). Thus Poikolainen!

5.4.4 The homiletics of Nestori Väänänen

(a) An introduction to his thoughts

The attitude of the early Finnish missionaries towards **Ovawambo**, their culture and spirituality is clearly demonstrated in Väänänen's booklet: **Euvitho**, [The sermon] meant for **Owambo** preachers. Väänänen made it clear in the introduction to the booklet (1934:3), that throughout its fifty one pages the purpose of the sermon is to proclaim the gospel of salvation. The gospel should take precedence over the law. It is the former and not the latter which saves sinners (Väänänen 1934:11f). It is through this same book that one learns the kind of Christianity which was planted among **Ovawambo** from Finland. Briefly stated, its core message was the salvation of the soul (1934:12). Little emphasis is put on the implications of the gospel in terms of the concerns of **Owambo** religious and practical life. The missionary works are viewed as vehicles to rescue pagans from this world's ills into a blessed eternity in heaven.

Speaking about where the stress should be put in sermons Väänänen suggested that a preacher should not waste time speaking about and illustrating evil. "Enough time should rather be spent on the consequences of sin" (1934:10). This statement suggests the accentuation of the law and its works. Väänänen believes that fear of punishment and eternal fire have scared many **Ovawambo** to separate with paganism. **Egeelo Iya Kalunga nomulilo gualuhe gua tilitha Aauambo oyendji okutopoka nuupagani** [The fear of the punishment of God and eternal fire led **Aawambo** to separate with paganism]. Therefore, he called on the missionaries and preachers to "use all these things in our preaching and in meetings, to make people repent" (1934:39). By these "meetings" he probably meant youth groups, Bible studies, Sunday school, evangelisation

etc. Väänänen himself used the word "force", as a means to achieve a missionary objective.

Writing about how and what to preach to the heathens, he said:

If they continue to live in heathenism, we will **force** [bold mine] them to separate with it. We will do so by teaching them **uunene wesilhenda** [the broadness of grace] and the severity of punishment ... (1934:40).

This contradicts the suggestion which Väänänen made earlier on that the gospel should be emphasised rather than the law. What he is suggesting now is actually that the preacher should threaten 'the heathens' with hell as a means of bringing them to accept the word of God. He believed that fear would lead people to repentance (Väänänen 1934:15) to seek "forgiveness of sin in faith" (1934:19) and eternal salvation (1934:7) for their souls.

Väänänen further discussed the **how** and **what** of sermons for different occasions and groups including heathens. He insisted that in every sermon, whether occasional (1934:34), for children (1934:35), for the youth (1934:36), or for 'the pagans' (1934:37), a preacher must be **omutseyithi guevangeli** [an announcer of the gospel] of salvation. It is in connection with the youth that Väänänen demonstrates - perhaps for the first time - the Christian concern for concrete human problems. He advised his readers and preachers that they should encourage the youth, whom he regards as the site of the battle between good and evil, to prepare themselves for future life by obeying authorities. This is, of course, in addition to the everyday responsibility of fighting evil for purity and goodness. Väänänen should also be credited for suggesting that the youth should be encouraged to teach children, visit the sick, assist the weak, and make their parents and elders happy (1934:37). This picks up both Luther's and **Owambo** concerns for human responsibility for human welfare.

Finally, Väänänen moved on to the sermon for pagans. He rightly suggests that in preaching and teaching, a preacher and teacher should proceed from what the heathens know, have and see, to what they do not know, after the manner of the apostle Paul (Acts 17:22-31). There is nothing wrong, as far as he was concerned, with using concepts from pagan rites and rituals, history and language to drive the gospel home. I concur. The content of the sermon must be measured against what 'the pagans' needs. The gospel should be an answer to the questions of the listeners.

According to Väänänen, there were two things in the life of **Ovawambo** which the gospel had to address:

Fear: The pagan lived in constant fear of powerful humans, because there is no law which demands that they protect him/her. A pagan fears witchcraft, sorcery, ghosts, sacred places and taboos, taboo places and objects, natural disasters such as sickness, drought, floods, lightnings, eclipse of the sun and the moon. Doubt: The pagan lived in doubt. No one, not even his friends can protect him/her. Rites and sacrifices fail to ward off witches, ancestors and all evil powers. Rain makers fail to effect rainfall (Väänänen 1934:38).

Thus, Väänänen concluded that 'the pagans' lived under fear and fate. Concerning fear, Väänänen was right because **Ovawambo** feared evil spirits, sacred place and sacred objects. In fact, it was this fear which defined life. There was indeed a need for the liberating power of Christ to confront **Ovawambo** for their own liberation. It is not clear what Väänänen mean by fate. Chapter three has shown that it was difficult, if not impossible, for **Ovawambo** to accept their fate. Everything humanly possible was done to fight and uproot evil to such an extent that human lives were lost. It is, therefore not true that **Ovawambo** gave up and said: **shono tashi ya nashi ye ngaashi sha hala, itandi vulu oku shi lundulula** [Let what is coming come, I cannot change it] (Väänänen 1934:38). Witches were hunted and killed, contravention of traditional laws and norms was punished, many times by death. All these were attempts not to accept fate. For every event an explanation was sought and a solution offered albeit cruel.

What Väänänen recommended should be taught to **Ovawambo** was right in the light of the fear and doubts just referred to above. Because pagans lived in fear, their immediate need was to proclaim the Almighty God who is in charge of the powerful, who loved and protects the poor. Next, they needed to be confronted with the story of Jesus, who ousted demons, healed the sick, who loves and communed with the despised and the excluded. These stories would be a comfort for the souls of those pagans who were sick or terrified by supernatural powers in the universe. This would be true, particularly, if they heard that the Lord Jesus was in their midst. They would be comforted to hear that all natural and supernatural forces were under the control of the loving God who hears prayers and is eager to see us prosper. In short, 'the pagans' needed to be confronted with the almighty loving God who is willing and able to help them, and Jesus Christ,

the good Lord, who saves from the hands of demons, sickness and death (1934:38). That was indeed good news!

For Väänänen, 'the pagans' were too proud of themselves, of their culture and of their religion as apparent from his recommendations about what kind of a message should be preached to them.

In his own words:

Omupagani okwiigilile olwindji oluhepo lwe, e shi oshilongo shaandjawa osho oshiwana. Oye a gwana na shono e shi na no ta ti: `Omikalo dhetu omiwanawa kutse. Eitaalo lyetu tali tu opalele. Otse aayamba. Aakwiilongo mboka oyo aakwankala. Otse aawanawa, katu shi aalunde' [A pagan is accustomed to his/her poverty. S/he thinks that his/her country is beautiful. S/he is satisfied with what s/he has saying: Our customs are good to us. Our religion befits us. We are rich. Those foreigners are bushmen. We are good, being no sinners (1934:39).

A few observations about the attitude of Väänänen towards **Ovawambo** may be made. **First**, the heathens lived under poverty. Agricultural technology was not advanced. As a result, food was insufficient. There were famines and people died of hunger. The **Owambo** concept **oluhepo** which Väänänen used to explain the condition on the ground and which is translated **poverty** in the above quote could also be translated **deficiency**. With it, therefore, Väänänen might have been referring to many other deficiencies. Those years were marked by diseases, draughts, lack of clothes etc. But it is also possible that the satisfaction of 'the pagans' with what they had followed the overemphasis of the missionaries on the poverty on earth and the wealth awaiting believers in heaven. In fact, life after death was not a problem for **Ovawambo**, so eternal life was not necessarily good news for them as such.

Secondly, he charged that they were self-righteous. What made pagans say that their country was "beautiful?". Such a response might have been prompted by the overemphasis in the teaching and sermons of the missionaries on the heavenly kingdom to which people go after death. Missionary preaching, as shall be shown below, was characterised by the contrast between the evil world and the blessed heaven. On earth, people live in poverty, in heaven they shall be rich. Pagans responded by saying **otse aayamba** [we are rich] not referring to material wealth. It was the stress put on the fact that when people die, they leave their belongings on earth. So there might have

been a communication problem. While missionaries had spiritual poverty in mind, **Ovawambo** probably understood them to speak of material poverty.

Thirdly, Väänänen quotes the so-called pagans who said that their culture and religion were good for them. This could have been a response to the missionary approach to **Owambo** culture and religion. From the responses of 'the pagans' one sees that there was a clash between the teachings of missionaries, local culture and religion. The problem with the missionaries was their approach to culture and religion. They did not realise as Rautanen later did, that building bridges between aspects of **Owambo** culture and religion and Christianity could have been useful in their mission.

Fourthly, it was easy for **Ovawambo** to say: *otse aawanawa* [we are good] because of the teaching of Lutherans about original sin. For 'the pagans', a person is not a sinner by nature because there is no fall. One becomes a sinner after committing an act which others disapprove. As shall become clear below, **Ovawambo** felt accused of what they thought they were not. They could not understand why missionaries constantly accused them of being sinners without having committed any crime. Surely there were those who could be said to be sinners, but for them, it could not be all of them.

Väänänen argues that this self-confidence and self-esteem of 'the pagans' had been disturbed, in fact, broken down, when pagans learned that there were people elsewhere in the world who were far better than and superior to themselves in many respects: clever, affluent, and strong. This could easily have been interpreted by 'the pagans' as a boastful attitude of the missionaries. It suggests the presence of a feeling of superiority. Although he discouraged preachers to speak bad of **Owambo** customs and spirituality, because this would estrange them from the gospel, evidence from his own work points in the opposite direction. The preacher may compare pagan culture with Christian customs which happened to be Western, but only to show that the latter were far superior and more beneficial. Väänänen hoped that 'the pagans' would abandon their customs and spirituality upon learning about Jesus wrapped in his own culture (1934:39).

As far as Väänänen was concerned, pagans lived in darkness. They had no idea of the true God. Therefore, *otatu uvithile aapagani, omeho gawo opo ga tonate, ye ethe uupagani noya*

taambe Omukulili [we preach to `the pagans' to open their eyes and to depart from their heathenism and receive the Redeemer] (1934:40). And about prayer, he says: **inaa igilila egalikano** [they are not used to prayer] (1934:41). The significance of this suggestion lies in that knowing Christ would mean putting one's loyalty and conviction in him.

In a demonstration sermon recorded in his booklet **Euvitho** (1934:50f) based on John 14:1ff, Väänänen clearly demonstrated his understanding of salvation, his attitude towards this world and what he thought would happen when humans die. A reproduction of his model sermon as a representative of a missionary's sermon meant for `the pagans' may be in order:

(b) His model sermon for `the pagans'

Introduction

There are huts in our homes. Those are good huts. They protect us from rain and cold. There are also huts in the place of the dead [heaven]. Now I want to tell you:

Rooms in heaven

Aawambo too spoke of rooms in the place of the dead. They said to the dead: **Prepare us a room when we come**²². The Lord, the Redeemer, said, there are many rooms in my Father's (**Kalunga's**) house. Those rooms are good. They are neither hot nor cold. There are no mosquitos. They are not dirty. There is no sickness. There is no death. Those who enter there will always be well.

The people who live in those rooms are very good. They do not quarrel or curse one other. They do not accuse one another falsely. They live in constant peace and serve one another. There are enough rooms which Jesus has prepared for us. Our present rooms are not good. There are many dangers in them. Those who live in them make one another suffer. But there will come a day when we will have to leave these present rooms.

Are you eager to go there?

There are far better rooms. How can one get there? We are not in the dark. We have the word which guides us how we can get there. Before one dies, the Redeemer himself comes, to fetch the soul of a person. He embraces the spirit until he brings it safely into the good room prepared for it. This is our fortune. The soul will not remain on this earth. The spirit of the person shall not wander on earth in poverty to be troubled by **aadhudhu** (troublemakers). It will be embraced by the Redeemer himself and be brought to rest.

²² This is said when one intends to visit another person. One tells the envisaged host to prepare for the visitors who will come at a later date.

Many have already been fetched. They arrived at the home of the Father. There was a troublemaker who came to Jesus for help. The Lord then took him/her to the good rooms. Today also, there are some people somewhere who have been redeemed by the Redeemer. They have been embraced and brought to their good heavenly rooms. You are poor. You are a simple immigrant, facing death. Are you not willing to allow the good Redeemer to bring you at your place when you depart from this world? Are you not willing to be embraced?

Jesus takes us [home]

Who are worthy to be embraced? Jesus said: "believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms ..." (John 14:1). So we see that the believers of Jesus will be taken there. They believe Jesus's words. Jesus himself has forgiven their sins, cleansed them while they were in this world. These are the people who will dwell in those rooms. There are many of them.

Neither the affluence nor the power of this world will take us there, because many rich people end up in shame. Only Christianity matters, because only Christians will be embraced by the Redeemer. So relinquish paganism. Come, become a Christian, to become one of those whom the Redeemer will embrace. Come, before it is too late for you.

Christians will be brought there

Today we have heard of different rooms in heaven:

- 1] There are many nice rooms at our Father **Kalunga's** place;
- 2] Jesus will bring people there;
- 3] He [only] brings Christians.

Rush! Accept the word of Kalunga to be brought into those excellent rooms.
[Amen!]

(c) Critical observations

A few observations about this sermon should be in order here. This sermon may be taken as a demonstration of what missionaries thought of **Ovawambo**, the world, heaven and salvation. On the whole it was in line with the theology of Poikolainen analyzed above. For Väänänen, as for many Westerners, it was the concept **pagans** which could describe **Ovawambo** best. The very usage of this concept reflects the attitude of its user towards these people it describes. Derived from the Latin sociological word **paganus**, the concept originally denoted a person who lived away from civilisation, from enlightenment, therefore rustic, unpolished and unsophisticated. Upon acquiring a religious meaning, the concept came to denote a person who does not acknowledge Yahweh, Allah or Christ (Idow 1973:116).

The sociological use of this term 'pagan' to refer to **Ovawambo** during the time of Väänänen may be acceptable to a certain degree if it was their simple technology and life style which were compared to that of the Westerners. However, its religious usage is not acceptable. Using it, Väänänen revealed that as far as he was concerned, **Ovawambo** had no idea of a true God, not even the hidden God of Luther. The fact that this concept found its way into religious use "by way of derogatory comparison through those who believe their religion to be superior to, or more meaningful than the religions which they describe as pagans" makes it derogatory and unacceptable to modern Africans (Idow 1973:118). The RSV is right by translating the Hebrew word **gojim** in Psalm 2:1, for instance, as **nations** and here all nations are included. One wonders why **Oshiwambo** Bible translates **gojim** as **ovapaani** (pagans), effectively excluding any adherent of Christianity, Islam or Judaism. The right translation should be **oiwana** (nations). This means the spirit of religious superiority and inferiority is also reflected in this (**Oshiwambo**) translation. The same concept **pagans** is found in Matthew 6:32. A comparison between the Revised Standard Version and the Authorised Version shows that they "retain the word 'Gentile', following the original Greek or Latin which simply means 'race' or 'descent' as a translation of the Greek **ethne**, which is of exactly the same meaning and purport as **gojim** (see Matt. 6:32)" (Idow 1973:120). The New English Bible translates **ethne** as **heathen**, while the New International Version and **Oshiwambo** Bibles have it as **pagans** and so make matters even worse.

The contention is that the origin of concepts such as **heathen**, **gojim** (Hebrew), **ethne** or **barabaras** (Greek), were coined in the "cultural arrogance" and "spiritual pride" of the Greek Romans and Hebrews respectively (Idow 1973:120). So although the concept **pagan** is used with a religious tone, its basic meaning is sociological and that makes it discriminatory, derogatory and unacceptable. Instead of using concepts such as **pagan** and **heathen** to refer to people of other faiths which disturb the spirit of dialogue and cross-fertilisation, better concepts can be coined. The concept **Kalungaism** coined by Aarni seems to be more acceptable, otherwise, call these people **Ovawambo** (1982:134, 140).

The contrast between the earthly and heavenly rooms in the sermon of Väänänen clearly shows what kind of gospel was preached by the Finnish missionaries and how they understood salvation. **First**, he believed that this world was evil, as opposed to heaven. Although it was appropriate for

Väänänen to teach that **Ovawambo** lived in terrible fear of supernatural forces, his view of salvation was other-worldly because it encouraged an escape from this world of troubles into heavenly rooms in which there were no deficiencies. The language used was probably meant to attract the "heathen" and divert them from focusing on world affairs such as affluence and power. Most significantly, Väänänen spoke mainly of embracing the soul and taking it to heaven. The body does not feature at all! This is a sign of classical Protestant Orthodox soteriology.

The problem with this kind of theology and soteriology is that it detracts human attention from their daily problems and responsibilities towards everyday life, including other humans. Such a kind of message of salvation presupposes that the world is evil and the sooner one could evacuate it, the better. This actually meant that dying was better than living, as Socrates thought [see chapter seven]. People were thus discouraged from paying too much attention to worldly issues and social problems. This kind of a gospel provides the fertile soil for socio-political problems such as apartheid, oppression, abuse of political power as well as dictatorship. Since this world is not our home, why should we be involved in making it a better place?

For Väänänen, the gospel targets the soul of a human being. Christ would fetch the soul and bring it into the room. This tells us of what Väänänen thought happens at the time of death. The body dies but the spirit is embraced and brought into those rooms in heaven. This shows a belief in the compromise between the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Väänänen probably believed that heaven is a specific place somewhere above where the disembodied spirits are received after death. He could say, therefore, that after death the soul does not remain on earth to wander about. It goes to heaven immediately after death. The body is evil so it will return to dust, its original place.

The key to heaven, according to Väänänen, is faith and forgiveness of sin. The sermon does not direct its bearer to social involvement. Believers are not encouraged to make the world a better home to live in. The power of God to raise the dead is not mentioned. Mission work is thus meant to prepare the souls of people for the best rooms in heaven.

5.4.5 *The hymns of Martti Rautanen (Nakambalekanene)*

Neither the history nor the theology of the FMS in Namibia can be complete without the name of Martti Rautanen, **Kuku Nakambalekanene**. Eriksson categorises **Nakambalekanene** among the two most prominent names in the history of ELCIN, the other name being that of the late Bishop Leonard Auala (1977:5). The soteriology of Auala will be analyzed in chapter six. An unknown author wrote about Rautanen:

Nothing, perhaps, better illustrates the isolation of the Mission than the fact that the name of Dr. Martti Rautanen is hardly known in South Africa, even in Christian circles. Yet, he rendered most notable service in Ovamboland for no less than fifty-seven years, coming out with the original party and becoming the pioneer-founder of vernacular literature (**Oshindonga**), and the translator of the New Testament as well as of a great part of the Old. He ranks with the greatest figures in the history of missionary pioneering in Africa (SA Outlook 1951:57).

Both the Finns and **Ovawambo** portray him as a type of the apostle Paul (Tirronen 1977:146,142). An American historian described him thus:

Rautanen was a missionary superior to all who worked in Owambo. He may be compared to Moffat among the Tswana and Hahn among the Hereros. He translated the Bible and other literature in Oshindonga and had an enormous influence on many Ondonga kings in succession (quoted by Tirronen 1977:148).

Informants Wilhelmina Gustaf (born 07-05-1909) and Victoria Mpingana Namupala (1901) remember that Rautanen was an energetic missionary and a man of peace. Under his leadership and through his personal contact with **Owambo** kings, the communication of the gospel was made easy. **Nakambalekanene** was a staunch believer in the grace of God in which he always rejoiced. It was precisely this simple joy and the power of life which he wanted to transfer to **Ovawambo** (Immonen 1995:11). "He spent all his energy in mission work", writes Tirronen and his central aim was:

to spread the good news of salvation among humankind. This led him to translate the Bible [into Oshindonga] and to write Christian hymns (1977:145).

It is appropriate, therefore, to look closely at the impact on **Ovawambo** of the life and teachings of this great missionary who most probably served longest in **Owambo**. What soteriology did he

preach and what was its impact on the church which resulted from his tireless service for fifty five years? He died and was laid to rest at Olukonda in 1926. (Tirronen 1977:142)

Thirty five of the fifty six years of his service in **Owambo, Nakambalekanene** served as a mission director. In the missionary conference of 1920, he was relieved of the leadership position and devoted the rest of his lifetime to writing (Tirronen 1977:138). Rautanen was not highly educated. He did not have a degree. However, he worked very hard and produced a few books. Apart from translating the Bible, Rautanen wrote many hymns which interest us here. His theology, or more precisely, his soteriology and eschatology are not self-evident from the books which he published. Our main sources are, therefore, the hymns which he wrote and the books other people wrote about him. **Nakambalekanene** added many lyrics to existing hymns and sang a lot. The present official hymn book of ELCIN contains six hundred and fifty-six hymns. Thirty four, that is, five point two percent [5.2%] of these were written by him. The red thread which runs through these hymns is the grace and mercy of God upon the weak and poor sinners which can be acquired through Christ alone by faith alone.

According to hymns numbers 18, 163, and 185, humans are without wisdom and are languishing in spiritual poverty. Christ has come down into the human situation to enrich and to save them. In these three hymns, the anthropology of Rautanen emerges. Humans are under the grip of sin. They are poor and lost because they have no God (hymns 163:1; 185:3; cf. hymn 308 verse 1,2). This is in accord with the anthropology of Luther as outlined in 2.3.1 above. A human being is a sinner who cannot save him/herself. It is interesting to note that Rautanen starts both hymns 163 and 185 with the problem of humanity, that is their lostness and need of a Saviour. He continued to show in the two hymns how God responded to the human predicament mentioned above. According to hymn 163 verse 1, it was God who took the initiative to rescue the poor and lost sinners. According to hymn 185 verse 3, this happened because God is a loving and merciful Father. It was due to his love and mercy towards sinners that he sent his Son into our situation of impoverishment. The point is that salvation is a gift of God. It is God who saves. No sinner can save him/herself. The words of Paul in Rom.5:6 and 8 come to the mind here: **While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly (v.6) [and] God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (v.8).**

How did the Son of God achieve salvation? According to Rautanen **Luhihi kwe lu teya, oondu lwondeveli** (He broke the power of the devil). The powers of the devil were broken by the gospel. According to verse 4, that event is good news for poor sinners. They are invited to receive the gift of the gospel. This gift, according to hymn 185 verse 3, enriches. Those who were poor can now be enriched by receiving the gospel of salvation. Rautanen makes it clear in hymns 262, 266, 274, 329 369, 371, 419, 442, and 468 that the redemptive activities of God through Christ are gracious, and grace saves. In the words of hymn 266 verse 1:

**Ohenda yaKalunga kandje, Ohenda ye nombili ye,
Oyo etalaleko lyandje, Oyo tuu tandi inekele.
Ohenda ye ya kongo ndje, Nohenda ye ya toola ndje.**
[The grace of my God, His grace and peace,
It is my comforter, This grace I trust,
His grace searched for me, His grace found me.]

The grace of God is the only reason which made him send his Son for human salvation. Again, this missionary breathes Luther's breath by giving the grace of God its rightful status. It is the key to human salvation. It broke the heart of God and moved it towards us sinners. According to hymns 307, 308, 407, 419, and 478 this grace is received by the sinner only through faith in Christ. Hymn 307 is a prayer. In verse three, Rautanen takes a vow to cling to the Lord [**Omuwa gwandje nde ku dhama**] and asks him to increase his faith [**Kokitha eitaalo lyandje**]. In hymn 408 verses 4 and 5 Rautanen writes:

Einkele lyandje nehempululo oondi: Ongoye Jesus gwandje, Omuwa Omukulili. Koonkondo dhandje mwene itandi vulu sha. Ongoye Jesus mwene oto dhi gwanitha [My trust and confession is this: You are my Jesus, the Lord my Saviour]. [verse five] **Nda nyanyukwa pombanda. Meinekele ndyo, U yambeke ndj' uuyamba mbo waa ne'hulilo. U kwathe ndje kukondja, ngu u kondjele ndje wo. Kungoye ondi igandja, ndi adh' ethikilo** [I rejoice on high in this trust. Bless me with those unlimited blessings. Help me to carry on fighting but fight for me also. I surrender to you to reach my goal.

So far **Nakambalekanene** has shown himself to be an upholder of the Lutheran principles of **sola gratia, sola fide, and solus Christus**. A careful analyses of other hymns of the same poet, however, shows that he did not have an understanding of soteriology which was different from that other missionaries. The idea of the salvation of the soul surfaces in hymn 458, where Rautanen starts off by speaking to the soul of the singer. He exhorts his soul to wake up and be

calm [v.1-2], to listen to the voice of Jesus and be saved by him now [v.3]. He warns that, if the soul continues to sleep much longer, the devil will soon attack and overcome it [v.4].

In the next hymn [459], the poet is not specifically clear on whom he is addressing. It may be presumed that he is again speaking to the soul. If that is the case, it follows that he is in full agreement with the Orthodox theology of the 17th century where the soul is believed to be separated from the body at death and to go to heaven into the bosom of Abraham (Schmid 1961:628ff). In this hymn, the addressee is invited to come to Jesus to be saved and be calm. The soul should come into the bosom of Christ to be saved through the help of Christ. The content of the sermon of Väänänen analyzed above springs to mind here. There is a common understanding of what happens to the body and the soul at death and what their destinations are. The two separate and in the spirit of this hymn (459), the soul is taken to heaven for salvation (vv. 1, 3). Because the body is not mentioned here one can conclude that it is taken for granted that it returns to dust to be "reduced to its primitive elements" (Schmid 1961:629).

But perhaps the most revealing hymns of **Nakambalekanene** are numbers 105 [v.2] and 254 [v.1-2]. In verse two of hymn 105, the writer sings that Jesus has suffered here on earth for us sinners. He has now returned to his glory. He overcame the devil and so "healed our souls". In hymn 254, the separation of the body and soul is more evident. **Nakambalekanene** sings [v.1-2]:

Olutu nduka talu si, notalu shuna mevi.

Omwenyo ngu itagu si, inagu shitwa evi.

Omudhimba tagu fumvikwa, omevi tagu siikilwa,

gu vululukwe manga [This body, which is mortal, returns to dust. This soul which is immortal, is not mud. The corpse is laid in the grave which is then closed. It is resting for a while].

Pethimbo tatu topoka, noondjenda nge dha hulu,

omwenyo tagu holoka kOmuwa ngo gwomegulu.

Shaa ngoka okwii gameke kuJesus nokwe mu longele, oye ta yi megulu [At the moment of our death, when we stop our journey, the soul appears before the Lord of the heavens. Anyone who sided with Christ and served him, shall enter heaven].

In this hymn, Rautanen teaches in verse one that this physical body is bound "to die and return to the earth". But "the soul in us does not die", because it was not taken from the earth [but from God]. "The corpse will be buried and be covered in the soil [grave] to rest for a while". Verse two

tells us what happens at the moment of death. "When a human being dies, the soul will appear before the Lord in heaven". "Only those who allied themselves with Jesus and have served him will get to heaven".

This theology is similar to that of Väänänen and Poikolainen mentioned. As in the cases of Väänänen and Poikolainen, the soteriology of Rautanen can be traced back to the 16th and 17th century Protestant Orthodox theology as found in the **Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church** of Schmid. The main thing in this connection is the dualism between body and soul. In life the two are in contact. At death, they separate. The body is buried, the soul is taken to heaven, if it was forgiven, or to hell if it was not. At resurrection, the two are expected to meet again. This theology is strongly influenced by Platonic views of the immortality of the soul which imply a rejection of the resurrection of the dead (Tremmel 1984:169). Resting "for a while" suggests that the poet believes in the resurrection of the body as well as the immortality of the soul. That is exactly the problem. Why not only resurrection [cf chapter seven]?

5.5 The practical services of the Finnish missionaries

5.5.1 *Owambo traditional education*

Traditionally, **Ovawambo** education was meant "to conserve and transmit the people's cultural heritage of beliefs, behaviour patterns, emotional dispositions, skills and tools from one generation to another" (Unam 1993:7). Children and youth either participated in appropriate activities under the guidance of adults, or they observed adults in everyday life. Roles and skills of adults were also internalised through story-telling, riddles, poetry, memory tests, songs, dances and games (Unam 1993:7). During the early years of life, children were educated by female adults. At about the age of six, male adults took over the role of shaping the boys into manhood while their female counterparts took care of the girls. About the education of girls Seppälä writes:

During the days of paganism, females were domesticated. They were educated to be married and be at home. The mother and grandmother imparted skills of how to be a married women and keep the family. These included working in the field, pounding, cooking, basket weaving, etc. Girls were also taught norms and traditions, riddles, and traditional beliefs (1977:26).

It was assumed to be the responsibility of all adults to educate, that is, to correct, teach, even punish the child and so shape it into a disciplined adult with strong moral codes such as attitudes of solidarity, co-operation, respect for elders and for nature. Education also aimed at the cultivation of vocational skills such as trading, and crafts such as carving, basket weaving, building, drumming, hair plaiting, bead work, and pot making. Skills such as those of herbalists, blacksmiths, midwives, hunters, cult leaders, village headman, were open to every youngster. The aim of traditional education was geared to help the individuals and **ekumwe alishe** [the entire community] to live a worthy life.

5.5.2 The social services of the Finnish Missionaries

From the very beginning, education was important for the Finnish missionaries (Löytty 1971:29). Among others, missionary education "focused on elementary schooling as a prerequisite to evangelisation" (Unam 1993:9) and "to teach converts literacy in order to read their catechisms and the Bible" (Unam 1993:10).

What Tjitendero says about the missionaries of the London Missionary Society was also true for the Finns. The principal aim of missionary education was "to make the grace of God known" (Petäjä cited by Löytty 1971:29) and enhance "the moral and spiritual development of the students" (Unam 1993:10). Also, due to the lack of funds, missionary schools focused on vocational education to become self-sufficient. There are also charges that missionary education was meant "to create a docile, Christianized African work force for their vast estates and the White farmer" (Unam 1993:10). In the **Owambo** context this was not true, because Finnish missionaries neither accumulated wealth nor possessed land in their mission field.

Concerning values, however, what Tjitendero thinks of missionary education in Namibia in general applies equally to the Finnish missionaries. Their education too was based on European values. Neglecting the African social and cultural environment, it created an identity crisis for the African learners (Unam 1993:10). Because all teachers were from Europe, they were presented as models of moral, intellectual and spiritual development. "Learners were encouraged to accept that ... Western values were superior to their own" (Unam 1993:10). For instance, it was not

uncommon among the first few generations of pastors, teachers and preachers to speak **oshihongi**, that is like missionaries.

The primary aim of missionary activities was to spread the gospel of salvation. All their efforts were directed, therefore, to this one central aim. In the final analysis, social works were of auxiliary nature. So the fact that major aspects of the **Owambo** traditional educational system were replaced with missionary schools was in line with their central aim. But there was much for **Ovawambo** to benefit. Education led, instance, to the creation of a written language for **Ovawambo**, and thus of a literature through which history and tradition could be preserved. It also led to the opening of doors to Western and other world views and concepts and finally to technology (Eirola et al. 1983:50). For that to happen, missionaries needed to have some human resources. Therefore, they created "new social groups: missionaries themselves, African clergy, and teachers" to help them in their huge task (Eirola et al 1983:51).

(a) Domestic servants

Missionary education started among the domestic workers at mission stations, many of whom were females. For baptism, they were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, Bible stories and Christian doctrines. They were also taught different skills such as washing, cooking, sewing, and cleaning (Seppälä 1977:29). It may be argued that this move had multiple purposes, to teach the Christian faith, but also to transfer Western cultural values to the domestic servants. Moreover, the process was helpful to both the missionaries and the domestic servants. The latter became Christians and gained useful skills which they could not have had were it not for what missionaries had done for them. The former had the satisfaction that their gospel accepted. Thus, the exercise must be viewed positively. Tobias and Tjitendero are, therefore, right that education served as a means to reading the Bible and the catechism and schools were a good breeding ground for Christianity where learners could be properly monitored and be selected for appropriate training for church responsibilities (Unam 1993:9). Seppälä agrees with Tobias and Tjitendero:

Schools had a definite connection with Christian education. Reading was a prerequisite to baptism (1977:30).

From Elizabeth the learner to Hilja the teacher

With the increase of converts emerged the need to clothe them. That called for an establishment of a weaving school in **Owambo**. Already in 1885, Elizabeth Iitope was sent to learn weaving. Although she did not do much upon her return in 1892 because she was "married away" from the mission station, it can be argued that the intention of sending her was good. Her input could have benefited the converts by getting clothes, and the missionaries by doing some trading with the indigenous people to augment financial resources. After Elizabeth left, and following the visit of Jooseppi Mustakallio, Director of the Finnish Mission, Hilja Lindberg was sent from Finland to teach weaving among **Owambo** women (Nambala 1994:84). She taught weaving between 1899-1901 (Seppälä 1977:30). Again, this attempt must be seen in a positive light: doing mission work in word and deed, thus addressing all human needs.

(b) From the hostel to an orphanage home

As early as 1881 Ida Weikkolin unofficially ran a hostel for children at **Omandongo**. There is no available information about how it ended in 1887. In any case, in 1905, Anna Woutilainen proposed to an exclusively male missionary conference that a hostel for children be established. The proposal was rejected (Seppälä 1977:30), perhaps because it was made by a woman who was not a member of the conference, but probably because it was going to lead to a division of **Owambo** society and an identity crisis of those children.

The idea of Anna Gald, nee Woutilainen, was realized when an orphanage was established at Oshigambo in 1914. The orphans were taught Christian teachings and trained in domestic skills. It was this hostel which later on became the school for girls (Seppälä 1977:31). The establishment of the orphanage was a brilliant move on the part of the missionaries. Although it may be argued that it was a clever move to create a class of converts who later would serve as an example to the unchristian community, the fact remains that Christians are called upon to take care of orphans and widows. This was one of the best ways of proclaiming salvation (James 1:27).

(c) From fiancées to the school for girls

Anna Rautaheimo felt the need to help the fiancées of the trainees at Oniipa. Her aim was to instruct them in the Christian faith, in which their future husbands were being trained. She aimed at imparting to them skills which they would need when they served as wives of Christian

teachers, evangelists or pastors. So, in 1921, Anna called some fiancées of the trainees together in her house and taught them the Bible, reading, writing, singing and house management.

This non-formal education was later transformed into a school for girls established at Oshigambo in 1924. The same year, another school for girls was established at Engela. To start with, the main subject in these schools was the Bible, but in 1931, various useful skill subjects were added to the curriculum. When it became apparent that more schools for girls were necessary, other schools were opened at Otsandi, Elim, Oniimwandi, Ondobe, Omundaungilo and Okavango (Seppälä 1977:31-33).

(d) From Teachers to preachers

Missionaries needed indigenous people to help them spread the gospel of salvation. As early as 1887, Gustav Iithoko, one of the first **Ovawambo** to be baptised became a church elder and a teacher, as we said earlier on, to assist missionaries, primarily in their proselytising and making of disciples (Nambala 1994:84). The visit of Jooseppi Mustakallio in 1900 resulted in more missionaries, including professional teachers, coming to the mission field in **Owambo**. Later, when church activities increased, the need for more church workers, particularly teachers, came to the fore (Lehtonen 1978:68). Consequently, the all male Teacher Training Seminary was established at Oniipa in 1913. Such teachers received a christian-oriented education with many vocational skills in addition.

Although the Teacher Training Seminary at Oniipa was meant to be all-male, it soon received its first female applicant. Johanna Kristof was first only allowed to observe classes. As time went on, however, she was allowed to participate in all class activities like her male mates. She graduated in 1928 and so became the first **Owambo** woman teacher. Yet another move to be appreciated was taken with regard to women. The year in which Johanna graduated, three girls applied to be admitted at the Teacher Training Seminary. Later many more followed so that in 1840, half of the enrolled teacher trainees were females. Missionaries favoured sexual segregation. Consequently, they built a female Teacher Training Seminary at Ongandjera in 1947 (Seppälä 1977:33). This was both negative and positive in that it uplifted women, though in the same vein, it segregated them.

On the whole, however, the two-fold aim of missionary education which was good: to open the way for **Ovawambo** to come to Christ and to uplift their educational standard. This became clearer later, when they objected to the educational policies which were enacted in 1935 and were being introduced in **Owambo** by the government of South Africa. The regulations stipulated that no school should be established within a distance of five miles of another; that all school buildings must be of bricks; that every single teacher must be well qualified, at least with a teaching diploma, and that Afrikaans must be taught in every school as an official language (Nambala 1994:86).

Clearly, these conditions targeted mission schools and their possible impact on **ekumwe** [community]. They were most probably meant to force the missionaries out of the educational arena and to prevent **Ovawambo** from advancing any further, particularly in learning English. The regulations affected about three thousand learners in many schools of that time which did not comply with the set requirements. It was on that basis that missionaries threw them out of the window, arguing that schools under missionary administration did not stand to benefit from government subsidy (Nambala 1994:86).

(e) From material support to spiritual conversion

Although it took the Finnish missionaries many years before they could **officially** baptise a single person in **Owambo** (Nambala 1994:82), the church grew rapidly soon after the first baptism. To what should this radical change of the hearts of **Ovawambo** be attributed? Partly, the answer lies in the material support which missionaries offered **Ovawambo**. A few examples may suffice.

Food: 1878 and 1879 were years of drought and famine in **Owambo**. Many people and much livestock died. Particularly in 1879, many people in need of food flocked to mission stations in search of food. Missionaries did their best to share the little they had with the hungry people. As Tirronen writes: **kaapagani nokakwatho okashona nopwaa na ofuto yasha oka li oshikumitha oshinene sha nengeneke omitima dhawo** [The little gift which 'the pagans' received was a big miracle which softened their hearts] (1977:39). The 'pagans' were very appreciative of the food they received even if it was insufficient. Food, e.g. bread, was also enjoyed at other times by people who came to schools and services, particularly at Christmas and

New Year. This event 'softened their hearts' and led to their conversion. In other words, food distribution was a more concrete way of doing mission work. Indeed, actions spoke better than words. It is, indeed, easy to reach human hearts via their stomachs.

On the one hand that the hearts of those who received food were softened as Tirronen says, does not necessarily show that by providing help to the people in need they had ulterior motives. On the other, it does not show that it was not the case either. It seems that the missionary concern for the starving people was genuine, but in that process, an opportunity also presented itself to preach to the 'pagans' by deeds. As a result, trust between missionaries and indigenous people was established. From all these, we may draw a lesson that as far as our human faculties can judge, what the missionaries did in that situation was the most Christian thing to do. It was a practical way of communicating salvation to others. Their faith was right, but their theology was not.

Clothing: Apart from food, the 'pagans' also needed clothes. Missionaries used to receive used clothes from friends in Finland. These they gave to **Ovawambo** who took part in Christian activities. Kings were also given their share, even though they did not necessarily come to church services. Some people were given trousers, others shirts, yet others aprons (Tirronen 1977:120, 121). These gifts too brought people closer to the missionaries and paved the way for effective evangelization.

Tobacco: Tobacco was one of the important commodities of those days. **Nakambalekanene** used it as a means to an end. Every Saturday, he called adults together and distributed tobacco among them. Before distribution, however, he preached and taught them. He also informed them that the next day was reserved for Sunday service and people should not work. Instead, they should come to listen to the word of God. Those who came to Sunday service received tobacco the next Saturday. **Oshiwambo** word for tobacco is **omakaya**. To this day, Saturday is known in **Oshiwambo** as **Olomakaya** [tobacco day].

The distribution of **omakaya** on **Olomakaya** by Rautanen caused tension between the missionaries who regarded smoking as sin, on the one hand, and Rautanen who viewed tobacco somewhat positively. This is yet another indication of how missionaries generally understood

Christianity. Views that smoking was sin were generally held by pietistic Christians. This led to the fact that Finnish missionaries did not preach against smoking as sin, as they did against many other things (Tirronen 1977:120). However, smoking is not viewed in a favourable light by ELCIN Christians and a pastor is not expected to smoke, even though there are those who do. **Ovawambo** themselves did not allow young people to smoke. The reason for such a negative attitude is social rather than spiritual.

Health services: The Finnish missionaries were already involved in medical exercises very early after their arrival in **Owambo**. Jurvelin was the first nurse who worked for the king Shikongo shaKalulu already in 1871. Tolonen took over when Jurvelin was dismissed by the king, following the biting of the king by his own dog. After Tolonen returned to Finland, Skoglund became the nurse of king Kambonde kaNankwaya. Skoglund spent three and half hours every day in the palace (Tirronen 1977:41). Trust between the missionaries, the king and his people was built and strengthened. By providing health services to the king and his people, missionaries concretised salvation and presented it in terms understandable to them. No wonder, therefore, that king Kambonde lamented the death of Skoglund:

My heart and my head are full of tears; I cannot speak. He was my true friend and helper, and I shall mourn him all my life (Nambala 1994:82).

After the death of Skoglund in 1880, **Nakambalekanene** took over as a nurse for the king. The success of the medication of Rautanen administered to the king made it possible for him to become the nurse for all in the palace (Tirronen 1977:42). This brought missionaries even closer, not only to the royal family, but also to all the inmates of the palace. Onandjokwe hospital was founded three years after that. Since then, many clinics were established and people were helped. Many diseases were also healed.

Involvement in politics: Missionaries were soon at the political forefront of that time. Their good service to the kings, particularly their health services, and their trading with arms and ammunition (Siiskonen 1990:130), brought them closer to the palace. Weikkolin who had made trading trips to **Uukwambi** already in 1874, did not see anything wrong with this type of activity (Siiskonen 1990:130). For two reasons, Rautanen **omwiinekelwa womukwaniilwa nomudipolomate**

[trusted friend of the king and a diplomat] (Tirronen 1977:147) justified the involvement of missionaries in the political affairs of the natives: [i] Politics deeply involved the very people for whom the missionaries had come to Africa and [ii] the involvement of missionaries in local politics provided them with a golden opportunity to oppose the violation of basic human rights (Munyika 1995:7). **Nakambalekanene** served as a mediator between German officials and **Owambo** kings (Eirola 1992:223).

5.5.3 How the Finnish Missionaries made ends meet

For a very long time, the attitude of ELCIN towards profit-making business was ambiguous. She could only be involved at a small scale. Until recently, when ELCIN began to speak of profit-making projects both at the church and parish level, a perception that the church should not get too involved in money-making business prevailed. Her task was to preach the gospel of salvation. This attitude may be traced back to the attitude of FMS towards trade during the first generation of Finnish missionaries in **Owambo**. But, as we shall see below, circumstances in which the missionaries found themselves made the official policy of FMS unworkable. They broke it.

In a letter to the **Cape Argus** in 1872, the hunter Green emphasised "that the missionaries could not survive in Ovamboland without trading" (Siiskonen 1990:128). In fact, the missionaries were in a dilemma. On the one hand, "trade was necessary if only for securing supplies". On the other, "at the beginning of the 1870s ... the director of the Finnish Missionary Society strictly disapproved of missionary commercial involvement, because it hindered and endangered the spread of evangelical work" (Siiskonen 1990:129). As circumstances dictated, however, though contrary to the official policy of the directors of the Missionary Society, "the field missionaries decided, in a conference held in 1870, to allow themselves to trade independently to an extent which they deemed suitable to their missionary work" (Siiskonen 1990:129). However, a warning was clearly sounded that they were to be extremely careful "to avoid being labelled as traders" (Siiskonen 1990:128). The Board of the Finnish Missionary Society's decision in 1870 to allow missionaries to engage in trade only confirmed the already existing practice. The annual salaries of missionaries were not sufficient to cover their needs. Rautanen was so dissatisfied that on March 10, 1877, "he sent an irate letter to Mission Director Totterman demanding a pay increase" (Siiskonen 1990:129). They were also pretty uncertain as to what extent they could trade because

of the perception that "trading was damaging to missionary work, since by carrying out business trips the missionaries were viewed as traders" (Siiskonen 1990:129). Trading they did, nevertheless, mainly for grain and cattle for their own consumption. But they also

traded to a lesser extent for ivory and ostrich feathers, which they resold to the Walvis Bay traders. Like the Walvis Bay traders, the missionaries used tobacco, arms and ammunition, clothes and various functional items and trinkets as mediums of exchange (Siiskonen 1990:129).

Ironically, arms and ammunition were the main articles of exchange between the heralds of the message of salvation and the kings. The deep involvement of the missionaries in trade at this stage clearly represents a major shift in their attitude towards the arms trade. They originally opposed and spoke against it. But, as Bojroklund is quoted to have remarked in 1871;

it was not possible to obtain cattle from the kings except for rifles and gunpowder. Nonetheless, the arms and ammunition business was profitable for the missionaries (cited by Siiskonen 1990:130).

However, missionaries did not only trade with the kings or within the confines of the **Ondonga** tribe. They acquired their supplies through trading with ordinary households and beyond the **Ondonga** tribal area. Already in 1871, there were trading trips undertaken to **Uukwambi**, **Oukwanyama**, **Ongandjera**, **Ombadja** and **Okafima**. This mainly took place out of necessity, e.g. when famine struck. For the kings, trade was superior to evangelisation. This is evident from the fact that, when relationships between the kings and missionaries were at their lowest, the kings forbade "the sale of grain and cattle to the missionaries" (Siiskonen 1990:130). This partly explains why missionaries traded with other tribes whom they had not yet reached with the good news. It further worked out in their favour because then they learned to know those areas and communities.

One may infer from this situation that missionaries used trading opportunities to acquaint themselves with the kings. Siiskonen records that "Martti Rautanen, A. Karl, Weikkolin and Pietari Kurvinen made a trading trip to Uukwambi already in 1874, even though king Nuujoma of Uukwambi was the first person to order the prohibition of missionary work in Ovamboland" (Siiskonen 1990:130). Weikkolin, particularly, did not see anything wrong with trading with a

nation even if the gospel had not yet been preached there. So, Pietari Kurvinen concluded arms deals with king Nuujoma excluding the subject of mission work completely.

Although missionaries were not eager to engage in trade, it finally turned out to be the main source of their income. In the 1870s, for instance, they used their income to "pay transport costs and servants' wages" (Siiskonen 1990:130). Missionaries who traded enthusiastically had surpluses from their business profits after their own basic needs were covered. One may ask for the reasons why the messengers of the gospel of salvation got entangled in trade with arms and ammunition, ivory and ostrich feathers. The answer is simple: to make ends meet. Economic survival forced the missionaries "to accept the arms and ammunition trade, and to practise it themselves [because] it was essential for their livelihood" (Siiskonen 1990:131). We are not justifying arms trade by the missionaries. The point is that in spite of the official policies of the FMS, missionaries were forced by their own context to find alternatives to make ends meet. This action contributed to the advancement of the gospel of salvation. So there is no contradiction between the spiritual work of the church and her involvement in profit-making activities. After all this requires money.

ELCIN has for many years been struggling with economic problems. Some pastors have already left her, partly because of economic hardships. She has been very reluctant to engage in fully fledged business as a means of income. One wonders if this is not the influence of missionaries and the mother church. ELCIN should break this tradition and change her attitude towards trade, as did the first missionaries. Is the church in Finland not engaged in trade of any sort? If the answer is no, we must consider the fact that the Lutheran church in Finland is a state church and "almost nine out of ten Finns are members of the Lutheran Church" (Heino 1995:171). All these members contribute financially to their church through taxation by the state. It can be argued, therefore, that she does not need [at least for now] to bother about engaging in profit-making business. But ELCIN should, because the contexts of the two churches are completely different and each needs to find her own ways and means of survival without copying the other. In view of the fact that those who are proclaiming salvation are doing so with 'empty stomachs', this issue is considered an impediment to the achievement of comprehensive salvation.

5.6 A critical analysis and evaluation of the soteriology of the Finnish Missionaries

The study of the theology, particularly the soteriology of prominent Finns whose proclamation, teachings and lives had an impact on the spirituality of ELCIN, brought positive and negative things to the fore. We turn now to these two categories.

5.6.1 *Positive: giving credit where it is due*

As it may be inferred from chapter four [4.5], **Ovawambo** lived under a gruesome fear of supernatural and superhuman powers and spirits. Their chief enemy was death which, in many cases, was believed to be caused by other human beings or evil spirits. Therefore, they did everything they could to overcome this scourge, even things that led to the loss of the very human life which they originally intended to protect. The activities of the missionaries can be appreciated better in view of this fear.

The fear of **omulodi** [the witch] almost always led to the killing of an innocent person, usually a woman. When the gospel was preached, **Ovawambo** were liberated from this fear and the senseless killings stopped. Although **oulodi** [witchcraft] is still heard of, it is no longer something as strong in **Ovawambo** as it used to be before Christianity gained a foothold. This was the result of the preaching of the gospel, first by missionaries, and now by **Ovawambo** themselves. The government of Namibia too has outlawed it.

Onhiko [sorcery] has died out completely. It is no longer heard of today. The church outlawed it [resolution 61 of the ELCIN church constitution]. But in the past it was believed that a person could go to **onganga** [diviner] and ask for **etikilo** [extinction] of the entire family of his/her enemy, perhaps as a revenge. Members of that family would die one by one, unless they found someone, probably the same **onganga**, who could undo the damage. That is known as **etikululo** [reversal of a curse] (Hiltunen 1986:105-126; 138-154). We also referred to the fear of **epasha** [twins] and **oupili** [feet-first birth]. Twins and children born as **oupili** were either killed or a ritual involving sexual acts was held. Particularly children that belonged to a royal family were not allowed to live (Hiltunen 1993:201-202). These killings too were outlawed by the church and have stopped very early when the gospel took root among **Ovawambo**. But cleaning rituals of **epasha** [twins] and **oupili** [feet-first] are still heard of today in the country side.

Ounganga [divination] is another practice which tormented **Ovawambo**. They feared and respected **onganga**. **Onganga** is both bad and good. On the one hand, s/he helps **ekumwe** [community], on the other s/he exploits it and works for his/her own enrichment. In the final analysis, this was and is the person who was and is controlling **ekumwe**. S/he was and is still today a 'jack of all trades'. S/he is the one to find out through **enyanekelelo** [detection] the sources of all crises: sickness, drought, epidemic, famine, sterility and death. But, as we learned from Hiltunen, **eanekelo** [sorcery detection] is a lie (1986:87). **Onganga** was paid for this job and many people suffered and died following his/her findings. S/he was and is most certainly enemy number one of **ekumwe alishe** [the entire community]. S/he was a primary trigger of the chain of evils. On the one hand, s/he played a protective role, on the other, s/he played a destructive role. I am not denying the good contribution s/he made in terms of healing. The gospel of Jesus Christ was preached and in its power people realised that many practices were found to be deceptive and, in fact, dangerous to **oulinawa aushe waaveshe** [total common wellbeing] for which people were striving. Many people have today been freed from the fear of the power of **onganga**.

Another contribution made by the work of the missionaries was to expose the reality of **oidila** [taboos]. **Ovawambo** were, to a very great extent, enslaved by **oidila**. There were just too many laws which a person was supposed to obey. The result of such taboos was a lack of initiative and, therefore, of progress. Very few people took risks to make new discoveries, all because it was **oshidila** to do this or that. In some **Ovambo** subtribes, pregnant girls were burnt to death. If they were lucky to live and deliver their babies, the latter were regarded as children of misfortune. They had no rights. Their potential was not allowed to be unlocked and develop, and their talents were wasted. Today, many **Ovawambo** are free to take risks. They climb the social ladder as high as their circumstances allow them.

The Finnish missionaries contributed greatly to the state of health of **Ovawambo**. Diseases such as Sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, contagious diseases, malaria and many others, were threatening to destroy people. Missionaries brought with them Western medical services which finally reduced the danger posed by epidemics to a manageable level.

Missionaries also contributed to **oulinawa** of **Ovawambo** through education. Although education was Christian oriented, it was still education. Vocational skills were, right from the beginning, part of the curriculum of the mission schools. Education exposed **Ovawambo** to the outside world of ideas through their study of languages, mathematics and different sciences. The most important achievement by the missionaries through education was perhaps the development of **Oshiwambo** language through which **Ovawambo** are now able to express themselves in writing, record their own history and culture. Missionaries such as Martti Rautanen and Toivo Tirronen have contributed a great deal to the development of **Oshiwambo**. It is just fair to put credit where it is due.

Finally, the Bible! It was through education that **Ovawambo** were able to read the Bible for themselves. I contend that the word of God contained in the Bible has liberating power. I dare to suggest that the Bible served as a major liberating factor in the life of **Ovawambo**. It was mainly through Scriptures that **Ovawambo** got their inspiration to shake off the yoke of colonialism. As a matter of fact, many of the founders of the first political parties in Namibia are Christians and most of them were educated in mission schools.

5.6.2 Negative: challenging what should be challenged

[a] The missionary views of the Bible

Bible knowledge was central to almost all the Finns who were directly or indirectly involved in missionary work amongst **Ovawambo**. Two of the mission directors (Tarkkanen and Paunu) were fundamentalists. Tarkkanen believed that the Bible was an unerring revelation of God and rejected findings of contemporary exegetical research. Many of the missionaries who worked in **Ovawambo** too were fundamentalists. Among them was Kaale Petaja, Walter Bjorklund, who stressed the reading of the Bible without interpretation and Maija Kantele who, like Tarkkanen, considered the Bible as the unerring word of God which speaks through divinely inspired human authors. Kantele was particularly known for her bitter opposition to liberal theology and the scientific interpretation of Scriptures. She viewed a historical-critical approach to Scriptures with misgiving, or rejected it in toto.

The task of missionaries was primarily to mediate the word of God to **ekumwe alishe IOvawambo** [to the entire **Owambo** community]. This, however, required of each of them, whether in teaching or preaching, hermeneutical skills. But there are many hermeneutical approaches to the Bible which have emerged in the history of Christianity. All such approaches aim at establishing the authority which Christians "should recognise when questions of truth and error arise" (Nürnberger 1996:3-1).

It is not as easy to establish this desired authority as it seems. One can, of course, generalise and argue that Christians already have well established criteria of authority and truth on which they are united. Such agreed criteria could include [i] belief in God, who must be trusted and obeyed by all; [ii] belief that Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God and in him God saves us; [iii] belief that God and Christ are known to us all through divinely inspired Scriptures and [iv] belief that it is the Holy Spirit who directs us into all truth as disclosed in the Christ-event (Proctor and Van Engen 1994:559).

All these assertions are true and acceptable, but only to a point. Experience teaches us that Christians are badly divided on the question of truth and authority. "Christians differ widely on which human authority is the most appropriate expression of the authority of God" (Nürnberger 1996:3-1). It is for this reason that the Bible needs to be interpreted. When the Constitution of ELCIN, for instance, reads: **The ELCIN Church is based on the Bible, the Holy word of God which never errs** (1993:11), the question arises whether the Bible is identical with the word of God. Hasheela disagrees. "The Bible did not drop from heaven as some people think" he says, "it is a book written by people" (1980:20). The divine authority of God, which is in the Bible, is communicated to the community through fallible human beings. First, the biblical books are witnesses written by fallible humans in their particular situations. They could err. Coming to us through their skills of communication, the witness of the biblical authors shares the fallibility of their authors. Second, biblical witnesses need interpretation because they were written within specific contexts for specific audiences. It must be proclaimed to us by fallible humans. In that process, it shares human limitations. Therefore, not everything found in the Bible or coming from the pulpit is the word of God. The reason is: in both cases, the word of God is communicated to us by fallible human beings.

Many hermeneutical approaches which crystallised out in the history of the church - institutionalism; narratives paradigms and metaphors; fundamentalism, and canon in the Canon are particularly relevant for my critique of the way the missionaries interpreted Scriptures. The radical spiritualists who believe in the indwelling of the Spirit will not be treated here because, apart from the fact that the approach has elements parallel to fundamentalism, its proponents do not appeal to the Bible at all (Nürnberger 1996:3-12).

Institutionalism

Institutionalism, also known as **Depositum fidei** [deposit of faith] is typical of the Roman Catholic Church and aims at finding stability, uniformity, and authority in the church with regard to truth. It locates "the authority for the truth of the Word ... in the church as an institution, represented by its hierarchy", particularly the Pope (Nürnberger 1996:3-3).

It all started with the appointment of an overseer [**episkopos**] over every congregation in the early church. The **episkopos** was believed to have received authority from the Apostles who in turn received it from Christ himself. The result was the so-called apostolic succession. The office of the **episcopos** unfolded into the office of the Bishop, then into that of the Pope. In 1870, the First Vatican Council declared that when speaking in his capacity as the leader of the universal church (**ex cathedra**) the Pope cannot err. His pronouncements are infallible. The danger of this approach lies in that it tries "to bind the Holy Spirit into an ecclesiastical institution, which is then absolutised" (Nürnberger 1996:3-5). Wright sees the danger as the ecclesiastical captivity of the word of God (1994:920).

Luther rejected this approach by arguing that since all humans are sinners, the pope too is a sinner, because he too is a human being. The missionaries who worked among **Ovawambo** did not follow this interpretation. However, the Lutheran church in Finland claims to be in the line of apostolic succession²³ (Kramm 1947:89). Because ELCIN is "a daughter church" of the latter,

²³ According to Kramm, Luther differentiates between 'Apostolic succession by ordination' and 'priestly succession'. Only the latter is necessary for ordination. It is for this reason that "the ordination of almost all German, Danish and Norwegian ministers, superintendents and bishops can be traced ... to Luther himself and to his friend Bugenhagen, the Vicar of Wittenberg. In Sweden and Finland, the episcopal ordination and succession were retained by an accident of history" (1947:87). This 'accident of history' took place this way: There was a stage when Finland followed the views of Luther and dropped "Episcopal Succession" and

she too claims to be in apostolic succession. So, in this respect, ELCIN is more Catholic than Lutheran.

Fundamentalism or Verbal inspiration

There are no known records from any patriarch before Moses.

Between the time of Abraham and Moses, the faith of Israel was transmitted orally, even though the art of writing was already developed. It is generally accepted that Moses was the first known Hebrew who wrote sacred history down (Exodus 24:4,7). Following the compilation of the Pentateuch, Joshua wrote "these words in the book of the law of God" (Josh.24:26). Hereafter, many writings followed, all claiming to reveal the truth and claiming authority in matters of faith. This led to a crisis of authority and truth. Eventually by the process of canonization, "the prophets and writings, were ... selected out of a larger literature" as sources of truth and authority. That became true also for the New Testament books. According to McRay the canonization of the New Testament books was necessitated by the emergence of apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature in the intertestamental period and the increasing need to know what the limits of divine revelation were (1994:141). It was the need of the establishment of the truth and authority which finally led to the canonization of the Old Testament and New Testament.

Derived from the Greek, canon generally meant anything by which to measure - a rod, a rule, or a list (Hasheela 1980:27). In Judeo-Christian circles, it refers to the process by which biblical books believed to be inspired and "considered authoritative" were distinguished from other books which existed before the canonization process began (Richards 1990:190). As Raven puts it "the essential element is that of authority" (1910:17). Now canon designates books accepted by the early church "as the rule of faith and practice" and are "considered to be spiritually superlative, by which all others were measured and found to be of secondary value in general church use" (McRay 1994:140). It is believed that the process of canonization transpired under the influence

"replaced it by a 'Priestly Succession' in the 19th century" because, apparently all the Lutheran bishops of Finland died in the same year. "The Russian government refused permission for the consecration of the new Finnish bishop by a foreign Lutheran bishop". Consequently, the consecration of the new bishop was done by a priest, quite in line with the reasoning of Luther. However, as time went on, "certain Finnish and Baltic bishops were ordained with the assistance of the Swedish Archbishop, thus recovering the 'Apostolic Succession'" (Kramm 1947:89). For Luther, therefore, true apostolicity is located in the gospel as proclaimed by the apostles and not in an office transferred by office bearers such as bishops and priests.

of the Holy Spirit. It was agreed that "the written Word of God alone was to be faith's rule and guide, not human interpretation of the word" (Richards 1990:191; TEEC 1993:35). Apocryphal books are excluded from the biblical canon because it was argued that they were "secondary to the faith" (McRay 1994:140).

Thus in theological terms the word [canon] was used to refer to that standard by which our lives and faith can be measured, or which is authoritative for life and religion ... Certain books were [thus] accepted as a 'measuring stick' or standard by which to measure [human life] in relation to God" (TEEC 1993:33,35).

Fundamentalism as a hermeneutical approach to the Bible is traceable to the canonization of the Bible. There came a time when "the role of Scripture declined" (Nürnberg 1996:3-5) and the authority which was supposed to be in Scriptures shifted onto the Pope and ecclesiastical tradition. That was cause enough for the drama of the Reformation to take place.

The sixteenth century saw "a wide-ranging movement of religious renewal in Europe" flowing from earlier reform initiatives in political, socio-economic and intellectual domains (Wright 1994:921). In the religious arena, the Reformation was triggered off by the 16th century practices of indulgences, "the means by which the Roman Church claims to give remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins, whose guilt has already been forgiven" (Toon 1994:558). The Reformers targeted a "degenerate late medieval Catholicism, over against which they set the faith of the apostles and the early fathers" (Wright 1994:920). They reacted against the abuse of authority by the Pope in connection with the issuing of indulgences. It was against the theology and practice of indulgences that Luther directed his Ninety-five Theses, affirming that a sinner is justified by divine grace alone, through faith alone and on account of the righteousness of another (Christ).

This whole drama brought the authority of the Pope into the spotlight. It also brought about a fresh interest in the study of the Bible and ecclesiastical documents, the aim of which was to undermine the Roman Catholic Church's claim "that the pope is personally preserved from error by God ... [and] is enabled by God to express infallibly what the church should believe concerning questions of faith and morals when he speaks in his official capacity as 'Christ's vicar on earth,' or **ex cathedra**" (Proctor and Van Engen 1994:559). The Reformers considered this issue as

nothing but the holding in captivity of the word of God by the church. So they declared Scripture to be the "judge of all ecclesiastical traditions and the sole source of authentic doctrine, as well as experienced as the living power of God in judgement and grace" (Wright 1994:920). "The Scripture is the **causa media** by which man learns to know God and his will ... the one and only source of theology" (Johnson 1994:667).

Proctor and Van Engen have identified three lines of thought about truth and authority, matching the three major partitions of the Christian family: (i) The conviction that "the general councils of the church are guided by the Holy Spirit so as not to err" advanced by the Eastern Orthodox Church; (ii) the belief "that the pope is personally preserved from error by God", a belief maintained by the Roman Catholic Church and (iii) the opinion of the Protestants who rely "on the sufficiency of the Holy Scripture as the guide to God's self-revelation" (1994:558).

The principles of the Reformers were "subject to a variegated history in the centuries following the Reformation era" (Johnson 1994:669). "In the seventeenth century they were elaborated in a scholastic" way by Lutheran Orthodoxy, "whose classical period began about the year 1600, ..." (Johnson 1994:669). Lutheran Orthodoxy was "profoundly influenced by the neo-Aristotelianism which had secured a foothold in the German universities" (Johnson 1994:669). The era of Protestant Orthodoxy was followed by "the pietist movement in the latter part of the seventeenth century" as "a reaction to what was perceived as an arid intellectualism in the orthodox theology." (Johnson 1994:669). Proponents of Pietism include Spener and Francke, Zinzendorf, the Moravians and later J. Wesley. It was strong in Germany from where it spread to the Scandinavian countries.

Influences radiating from Halle, Wittenberg, and the Moravians moved rapidly into Scandinavia. When soldiers from Sweden and Finland were captured in the battle with Russia (1709), pietist commitments [sic?] migrated to Siberia (Noll 1994:857).

It was against the captivity of the word of God that the Reformers reacted. The dictum of the Renaissance, **ad fontes** [back to the sources], comes into play here. It referred to the Bible. This was in essence also a rejection of the conservative elements which taught that it was not only Scriptures but also church tradition which was normative. This is how the battle cry **sola Scriptura** came about. The danger of **sola Scriptura** lies in that its proponents took for granted

that the Bible was divinely inspired without agreeing first as to "what kind of truth it was that was to be found in the Scriptures" (Nürnberg 1996:3-5). So they too differed amongst themselves on this point. Luther preferred the canon in the Canon approach. Other Reformers regarded Scriptures in the sense of "revealed information" (Nürnberg 1996:3-5). The theology of 17th Century Protestant Orthodoxy is equally based on the sola Scriptura principle.

Agreement as to the exact location of truth and authority was, therefore, not possible even in Protestant circles. The closest they could come to each other's positions was to agree that God revealed his truth in Jesus Christ as recorded in Scriptures. Luther considered grace as opposed to the law as the locale of the infallible revelation of God. Humanists including Reformers such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, Melancthon and Calvin regarded "the Bible as the source of truth in the sense of **revealed information**". The Protestant Orthodox theologians "responded to Catholic theology with an elaborated dogmatic system based on the prevalent method of the time, namely that of deriving logical deductions from fundamental assumptions. Such a system needs a reliable foundation" which was sought in an inerrant Scripture **alone** (Nürnberg 1996:3-5). An theological system could only be true if based on Scripture or revelation.

The variations between the positions of the Catholics and the Protestants was then that, for truth and authority, the former was appealing to "natural insight, revelation and tradition," the latter only to the Bible" (Nürnberg 1996:3-5f). Sequentially, the stance of **verbal inspiration** was redefined and received a new meaning.

The boring intellectualism of Protestant Orthodoxy was followed by Pietism with its emphasis of spiritualism and emotional devotion to Jesus Christ, the personal Saviour. Most unfortunately, Pietism embraced the theology of Protestant Orthodoxy without question. As a matter of fact, Pietists themselves were in desperate need of the divine word to stir them up into an emotional state. So, if the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God, and God has dictated what the authors wrote word for word, they were satisfied. These tendencies were in turn uncritically taken over by revivalists and most missionary movements which were sweeping Europe from the 17th century on (Noll 1994:857). The Finnish missionaries were no exception. Passio, Tarkkanen, Paunu, Kantele and many others were fundamentalists, bitterly opposed to liberal theology and the social gospel. In their teachings, they have all displayed pietistic and revivalistic tendencies. This is what ELCIN has inherited from her "mother

church" too. Without suggesting that the approach of the Finnish missionaries to the Bible was completely incapable of unravelling the truth, I want to join Nürnberger to contend that Biblicism is one of the most formidable obstacles to an appropriate understanding of the Bible, a source of endless agony for serious believers, a scandal for countless potential believers. In fact, biblicism obstructs access to the real scandal, which is the cross and resurrection of Christ, by putting up a pseudo-scandal in the form of a demand to sacrifice one's sound observation and one's common sense. It is outrageous to claim that one has to believe in the inerrancy of an ancient document such as the Bible, before one can believe in Christ. It is the witness to Christ which creates faith, not the perfection of its historic form (1996:3-6).

There are countless examples in which the Bible has been proved to be mistaken and the problems which flow from that are enormous. The following are listed by Nürnberger (1996:3-7ff): [i] The earth is not flat and does not rest on pillars as the Bible seems to assume (Ge. 1:1ff; Gen. 7:11). Scientifically educated people cannot possibly be expected to accept such archaic statements.

[ii] We read in Exodus 21:2-11 of the family laws where the father seems to have had the right to sell his daughter into slavery. No serious Christian or human rights lawyer can possibly be expected to embrace such an obvious violation of human rights. In fact, such a perception undermines the Christian faith itself. It is a "gross disobedience" against divine redemptive intentions. It is sin!

[iii] We read in the Bible that God favoured the nation of Israel over others to such a degree that he actually commanded them to drive the Canaanites out of their land (Deut.7). If this text is taken literally, it would mean that taking the land of other peoples is justified by the Scriptures. If this was so, then the struggle which people of Namibia waged against 'land grabbers' was wrong. No democratically minded and human rights oriented person would possibly accept such a senseless teaching albeit recorded in the Bible.

[iv] Fundamentalism denies the most natural. If we accept that the Bible is human and historical, arguments to support its inerrancy cannot stand. This is so simply because [a] it was written by mere human beings; [b] it is historical; [c] there is absolutely nothing human without mistakes and [d] there is absolutely nothing historical which is eternal. This argument must be understood properly. It does not for one moment deny that the authors of the Bible were divinely inspired.

What it does is to argue that the Bible was not possibly dictated to them word for word. It is not God who wrote, but humans, who err.

[v] As a matter of fact, the Bible itself does not claim to be without error. The Bible depicts its authors as humans who are capable of blundering and sinning like any other person (e.g. Peter, and Paul).

[vi] The inerrancy of the Bible is also theologically wrong. It is argued by fundamentalists that [a] all Scriptures are inspired by God, and [b] God cannot err; thus, [c] everything in the Bible is right. The problem, however, is that the word of God is carried in human words and historical vessels such as Christ. This means that, in the Bible, we find both the word of God and the human word, or the human witness. Thus, the Bible is not necessarily identical with the word of God (Nürnberg 1996:3-7). The fact that God speaks to us in the human word does not render the Bible infallible. So it is not the inspiration which is problematic, but the human inerrancy as a dogma. As a matter of fact, even our sermons are human means to communicate the divine word. They are not divine and are saturated by human elements.

[vii] Fundamentalism forces its adherents into being selective. They do not utilise the entire Bible, in fact, they cannot. Therefore, they select only some key verses and pericopes to underpin their doctrinal statements. The rest of the Bible is simply ignored, or an attempt is made to harmonise it with the accepted system. The original intentions of the texts are then spiritualised. New human discoveries such as evolution are then rejected because they do not sanction the view of the Bible. Believers are then expected to accept doctrines which no longer make sense. The rejection of modern research by Tarkkanen and Kantele is, in fact lamentable, because it deprives the church and her believers of new insights which are being discovered. This also means that new problems will be responded to with old answers which may be irrelevant to them. It is important to remember that there is always a need to translate the biblical message into modern patterns of thought if it is to respond to contemporary human needs. Hans Küng is right when saying that "biblicism has remained a permanent danger for Protestant theology", because the true foundation of genuine faith is shifted from the Christian message and the preaching Christ, to "the infallible biblical word" (quoted by Bosch 1995:243).

Narratives, paradigms and metaphors

This approach was necessitated by "the strenuousness of historical investigation and translation" (Nürnberg 1996:3-23). Here, a believer does not apply historical-critical tools of analysis to the text. Instead, the text is handled as a mirror through which one views one's life in a new perspective. A biblical reader identifies his/her life patterns in the text which is then applied to his/her crisis situation for "**comfort and encouragement**" (Nürnberg 1996:3-23) without much historical-critical interpretation. The story of Jesus calming the sea is, for instance, applied to any crisis; the exodus event to any oppressive reality, words of comfort are directly applied to situations of mourning. As Nürnberg has it, "the ancient texts are used directly to unlock the meaning of contemporary life and to give it both stability and direction, quite **irrespective of their own original intentions**" (1996:3-23).

Ordinary readers of the Bible have little choice other than to adopt this method. But theologians are called upon to help them go beyond such direct applications by empowering them with some hermeneutical skills and tools. This should be part of the task of the parish pastor. The problems with this approach include the following: [i] It does not take account of the original life situation of the text. [ii] The original meaning and intention of the text can be lost. [iii] The biblical message is seen as fragments of isolated truths. [iv] Taken in isolation, there is a possibility for the texts to be used arbitrarily to justify one's personal desires and legitimate one's own interests. Apartheid and dictatorship are good examples (Nürnberg 1996:3-24ff). [v] The text may be understood differently a million times.

Finnish missionaries have shown tendencies towards this approach too. This is so because few efforts have been made to teach people the art of interpreting the Bible. **Omaleshelo** (Bible and other Christian literature readings), which are still practised by ELCIN, for instance, are readings without any attempt to discover the life-situation of the text and its original intention. The accent is put on mere reading and reproduction. As a result, the superficial reading of the Bible is common among ELCIN members. It is a pity that even many years after the independence of the church, these tendencies are still with us, in spite of the fact that our ministers are no longer trained by missionaries.

The canon in the Canon

The champions of the canon in the Canon approach to the Bible desire to return to the core message of Scriptures. All other texts are to be interpreted in line with it. Practically it means that there is a canon within the Canon - a standard within another. For some the core message is the double commandment of love. For others it is the Christ-event. Some locate it in the Sermon on the Mount. Still others [e.g. Luther] situate it in justification by faith. Liberation theologians locate it in the preferential option for the poor and oppressed. I opt for love to be the criterion of scriptural interpretation because all other cores revolves around love. This hermeneutical approach is compatible with a historical-critical, a social-critical and a theological exegesis of Scriptures as long as the core message of the text is not compromised. It allows theologians and believers to express the same truth in response to any situation that emerges. There is no expectation that believers should accept binding truths which may be irrelevant for their immediate context.

The problems with this method include the fact that [i] theologians do not agree as to what the core message is; [ii] the fact that the imposition of the core message on all other texts may not necessarily do justice to the original intentions of all of them; and [iii] the rich historical insight of the texts is not taken into consideration. Moreover (vi) it presupposes that the core message is ready made and has fallen from heaven. In the end, the canon in the Canon turns out to be rigid and most probably irrelevant (Nürnberg 1996:3-10f). The Finnish missionaries did not adopt this approach, because it had tendencies to lead to liberalism which many of them were uncomfortable with (e.g Kantele and Alho). We recommend the canon in the Canon hermeneutical approach to the missionaries, in spite of its pitfalls. Its appeal is in that it puts Christ and love in the center and all other theories revolve around these. The love of Christ would help us to accept each other, learn from each other and correct each other.

(b) The missionary views of salvation

The Finnish missionaries understood and taught salvation in terms of classical Protestantism with an emphasis on the non-materiality of salvation. Petaja was not only known as a biblical fundamentalist, he is also remembered for his concern for the salvation of the souls. In his missionary activities, Kivinen focused on the breaking of the hearts of **Ovawambo** and their

awakening and **renewal**. It is when the heart of a person is regenerated, that s/he acts accordingly and then structural change follows. So Kivinen and Petaja emphasised personal regeneration, salvation from above.

In this regard, they were very close to the Pentecostal approach. Although Pentecostals see salvation as wide enough to include "the material aspect of human life" (Volf 1989:457) and agree with liberationists about "the materiality of salvation" (Volf 1989:447), they have a reputation of stressing "the individual's salvation [regeneration] and hope for social change as a consequence" (Volf 1989:449). They stress "the transcendence of God and God's activity as coming down vertically from above" (Volf 1989:447f). Pentecostals do not advocate **transformatio mundi** [the transformation of the world] but **annihilatio mundi** [the destruction of the world]. This world is under the big thumb of the devil and is evil. It must be destroyed to give way to the new and spotless creation [Volf 1989:448]. These tendencies are prevalent in the soteriology of the Finns and ELCIN has uncritically inherited them.

Väänänen too displayed pentecostal tendencies. His sermon reveals that, like the Pentecostals, he regarded the world as evil, as opposed to heaven. He did not propose the transformation of the world but its annihilation. Believers must go home! Although it was appropriate to say that **Ovawambo** lived in terrible fear of supernatural forces, his view of salvation was an escape from this world of troubles into heavenly rooms in which there are no deficiencies. His language was meant to attract "the pagans" and divert them from focusing on "earthly things" such as **affluence** and **power**. Most significantly, Väänänen spoke mainly of Christ embracing the soul (or spirit) and taking it to heaven - a typical tendency of classical Protestant soteriology.

Nakambalekanene was no exception. On the one hand, he upheld the Lutheran **sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura and solus Christus**. On the other hand, he was at one with his fellow Finnish missionaries [e.g Poikolainen] in as far as his view of salvation was concerned. Particularly his hymns show that he was extremely revivalistic and eschatologically oriented. Salvation for him was exclusively reserved for the soul. At death, the soul escapes from the body into heaven. The body returns to dust, from where it was taken, to rot. This means, Rautanen understood that the soul or spirit of a human being was an immortal part of God. Therefore, like God, it could not

died. The body was mortal; therefore, it dies. Again, this missionary is quite in line with the eschatological thoughts of Protestant theology of the 17th century. A good example of Rautanen's view on the last things is clearly revealed in hymn 254 [ELCIN Hymnal 1991] already referred to above. There is virtually no mention of resurrection of the dead in the hymns written by Rautanen.

The present ELCIN Hymnal (1991 edition, second impression) is divided into different sections following the Church Year and important events or themes in the church activities. There is one hymn by Rautanen in each of the following sections: Christmas (18), Epiphany (45), Good Friday (65), Ascension (105), Pentecost (115), Second last Sunday of the year (judgement Sunday, 150), the word of God (163) thanksgiving and praise (348), mission (488), morning devotion (604), and funeral (254). There are two hymns in each of the following sections: Holy Communion (237, 240), and hardship and comfort (369, 361). There are three hymns in each of the following sections: the protection and guidance of God (407, 419, 434), faith in Christ (307, 308, 329) and worship service (185, 189, 207). There are four hymns in the sections on the grace of God in Christ (262, 266, 274, 283), and five in the section on the call and obedience (442, 458, 468, 478, 459).

The contents of the hymns written by Rautanen may be put into two different categories according to the emphases. In the first category, the emphasis is placed on the problems of present life, the graceful protection of God during this life and the necessity of faith in Christ. The hymns in the second category place their accent on the dualism between this life and the life to come, this world and the world on the other side of the grave and, by implication, between resurrection and immortality.

None of the hymns written by Rautanen speak of the resurrection of the dead or the power of God to raise the dead. The funeral hymn by Rautanen (254) has already been analyzed above. As has been shown, it is about the mortality and the immortality of the body and of the soul respectively. It is also interesting to note that none of the eighteen of the Easter hymns (87 -104) was written by a Finnish missionary. On the whole, therefore, Finnish missionaries have not put enough

emphasis on the resurrection while immortality is almost always implied in the hymns written by Rautanen.

The hymns which the members of the ELCIN use to sing during vigils and funerals are in accordance with the eschatological views of the Finnish missionaries. The emphasis is put on the going of the soul to heaven which implies its immortality. So little emphasis is put on the resurrection. This is not to say that the Finnish missionaries and ELCIN members do not believe in the resurrection. On the contrary. The point to be made is that they believe that the resurrection which they confess every Sunday will take place when the immortal souls of the dead will return from heaven to join their mortal bodies. Thus they believe in the compromise between immortality and resurrection. The following hymns which are normally sung during vigils and funerals bear witness to this fact: 515, 516, 507, 653, 404, 392, 538, 539, 251, 143. It needs to be written in bold that **the theme of resurrection needs to be promoted in ELCIN**. We need to sing it in the word of Hans Adolf Brorson, the writer of hymn 255 in the ELCIN hymnal:

**Lwokeso tandi uka ko, shaa mpoka ngame ndi li.
Enyanyu nando ndu_udhe wo, mombila tuu ote yi.
Itii shi yanda sho. Ongee ondigolo,
nonge oohodhi ndi dhi na, lwokeso tandi uka mpa.**

**Megulu tandi uka mo, shaa ndi na Jesus gwandje
Te si note yumuka wo, te mon' uuthiga wandje.
Ongame omutembuki. Sho ndi li kevi ndi,
Nge tandi lamb'Omukulili, Tandi uka ngeyi megulu mwi.**

[Every moment of my life, I am going towards death. In spite of rejoicing in my heart, I am going down to the grave.
I cannot avoid my lot. Whether in joy or in mourning, I am going towards death.

If I have my Jesus, I will go to heaven. I die and resurrect, to receive my inheritance. I am a sojourner, on this earth. If I follow the Saviour, I will get to heaven].

Although there are many Lutheran elements in the theology of Poikolainen, he, like other Finnish missionaries [e.g Rautanen], upholds the 17th century Protestant theology which describes a human being in dualistic terms. Poikolainen is right when he attributed redemption to the Trinity, and to see a human being as a sinner incapable of self-redemption, but he breathes a Protestant

Orthodox breath when he underlines the separation of the body and soul at the moment of death. As we shall show under 7.3 below, it is not theologically correct to teach that only the body dies and not the soul. To do so is to deny resurrection and to give some credit to the power of death.

Poikolainen shifted from his Lutheran stance by embracing the old, but famous dictum **extra ecclesiam nulla salus**, which dates back to Cyprian and which he got from Protestant theology. It means that 'there is no salvation outside the church'. Protestant Orthodoxy rejects this dictum contending that the church in this phrase is not the Roman Catholic Church alone, but any communion of saints such as Protestant Churches (Schmid 1961:597). In this respect, Poikolainen joined the theologians who believe in "the ecclesiaticization of salvation" (Bosch 1995:217) which dates right back to St Augustine. According to this view, the authority and truth is in the Bible and the institutional church which dates back to the apostles and further to Christ himself (Bosch 1995:218).

Why did Poikolainen, a Lutheran missionary, define salvation in Roman Catholic terms? Either he did not know the original idea of the dictum, or he ignored it, or he simply did not understand it. The study of the history of this statement shows that it was uttered by Cyprian in "a particularly stormy conflict in the first half of the third century in the same geographical area where Augustine had to refute the claims of the Donatists ..." (Bosch 1995:218). In other words, the dictum originally referred to the Roman Catholic Church in a specific geographical area.

As time went on, the original scope of the statement of Cyprian was widened to cover the universal Roman Catholic Church. It was, for instance, endorsed by the papal bull **Unam Sanctum** of Pope Boniface VIII (1302) in which is declared that "it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subjected to the Roman pontiff" (Bosch 1995:218). Further, the Roman Catholic Church, through its Council of Florence (1441), affirmed that all non-Catholics, will not inherit the Kingdom of God, unless they join the Roman Catholic Church before their death. Also as late as 1958, Pope Pius XII maintained in his encyclical **Ad Apostolorum Principis** that there is only one true church of Christ under one supreme shepherd. Anyone who dares to deviate from this doctrine does so at the expense of his/her faith and

salvation (Bosch 1995:218). The edict of Cyprian simply says that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true Church; to be outside it, is to miss God and his salvation.

But most probably Poikolainen has taken the understanding of this dictum from Protestant theology. Protestant theologians understood the dictum as not specifically referring to the Roman Catholic Church, as Catholics taught, but to the church of Christ in general. Against the Catholic views on the dictum, Lutherans would argue that since the source of truth and authority is the word of God, salvation must be available in all churches in which the word is proclaimed. The stance of the Protestant Orthodox theology is to a certain degree also problematic in that it presupposes that God has revealed himself only to the church and there is no knowledge of him outside her. This is injurious in the era of religious pluralism during which calls for the theology of dialogue are on the increase. Care must be taken that the dictum is not pushed to an extreme.

With regard to eschatology, Poikolainen has displayed Platonic thoughts which maintain that "the soul is by its own nature without beginning and indestructible" and "the destiny of the soul ... is to escape the entrapment of the body and be free" (Tremmel 1984:169). This simply means that Poikolainen does not accept the mortality of a human being. In this respect also, he is in line with the theology of Protestant theology which was influenced by the hellenistic views of the immortality of the soul.

It has become evident from the descriptive study of missionary activities that their views of salvation were in accord with Protestant Orthodoxy in general, and its soteriology and eschatology in particular. They viewed salvation as a rescue of the individual soul from this evil world into heaven after the death of the individual. A chasm opened up between the **person** and the **work** of Christ, between **Christology** and **soteriology**, between divine **salvific** activities and divine **providence** (Bosch 1995:394), between **coram Deo** and **coram hominibus** and between justification and sanctification (Pero and Moyo 1988:269). A clear distinction was made between spiritual and material benefits, between the redemption of the soul and the wellbeing of the body. Other services which missionaries rendered in their mission field apart from the proclamation of the gospel of salvation tend to be seen as **auxiliary**, meant in the first place to back up the actual mission work that is geared to saving the souls of "pagans". Bosch sums it all up when he writes:

Thus - even if throughout all the centuries of Christian missionary history - remarkable services had always been rendered in respect of the care of the sick, the poor, orphans, and other victims of society, as well as in respect of the education, agricultural instructions, and the like, these ministries were almost always viewed as 'auxiliary services' and not as missionary in their own right. Their purpose was to dispose favourably toward the gospel 'soften them up' and thereby prepare the way for the work of the **real** missionary, namely, the one who proclaimed God's word about eternal salvation. In most cases, then, a strict distinction was maintained between 'horizontal' and 'external' emphasis (charity, education, medical help) on the one hand and the 'vertical' or 'spiritual' elements of the missionary agenda (such as preaching, the sacraments, church attendance) on the other. Only the latter had a bearing on the appropriation of salvation (1995:394).

5.7 Conclusion

Finland was Christianised in 1157 AD. Lutheran Protestantism was already well established in the 16th century. One more century later, the Finns adopted harsh Protestant Orthodoxy. By the 18th century, Pietism made itself felt among the Finns and revivalism followed in the 18th century. These historical developments culminated in the upsurge in missionary activities. The Finnish Missionary Society was established in 1857. By the year 1862, a mission school was established in Helsinki. In response to the invitation of Hugo Hahn of the Rhenish Missionary Society, the first Finnish mission field was opened in **Owambo**, Namibia in 1870. Five students from the mission school, including Martti Rautanen were sent out as missionaries to Namibia. As a result of their works, the ELCIN was born and spread across **Owambo** and **Okavango**. It is the largest Lutheran Church in the country today.

Six years after the arrival of the missionaries, a woman, Nanguroshi, was baptised. Four years later the second baptism took place involving four male candidates. Both these baptisms took place outside **Owambo** and it is for this reason that they are not marked as the official beginning of Christianity in **Owambo**.

The baptism which is marked as such took place at Omulonga in **Owambo** in 1883, involving six male candidate and the baby of Eva-Maria [Nanguroshi].

Reasons for the seeming delay before the first baptism took place are listed. Later the king of **Ondonga** was baptised and his subjects followed suit. National disasters such as famine drove

people closer to the missionaries in search of food and medication. Missionaries did their best to share the little they had and in so doing paved the way for the acceptance of their message which they had concretised through sharing. The church grew rapidly.

The attitude of the Finnish missionaries towards **Owambo** culture and religion was, on the whole, negative. Many traditional things, some quite useful, were thrown out of the window. But the concept **Kalunga** was retained as an expression of the God they had come to proclaim. One gets a feeling that they identified **Kalunga** with the biblical God. There is no available evidence about any debate which might have taken place to establish whether the concept **Kalunga** expresses the God of the Bible. It seems that was taken for granted.

All Finnish missionaries were Lutherans. Their theology, particularly their soteriology and eschatology, is strongly tied up with the Protestant Orthodox theology of the 17th century. This has become apparent in the analysis of the soteriologies of Poikolainen, Väänänen and Rautanen. Their teaching is saturated with Platonic and Hellenistic philosophy and speculative ideas. They can best be classified as Pietists, revivalists and fundamentalists.

Most of the Finnish missionaries upheld the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible. They saw the relationship between God and humanity as vertical by definition. Salvation is from above and personal. The cardinal thing is to save the soul from this world. The social gospel is viewed with great suspicion or rejected in toto. Social activities in the form of education and health services must be appreciated, although they were basically a means to an end, paving the way for the real thing, the salvation of the souls.

It might be in order, therefore, to conclude that, though they were Lutherans, many Finnish missionaries were not Lutheran enough in their teachings. In practice, however, they upheld Luther's and the **Owambo** concern for human welfare. ELCIN has taken over these soteriological tendencies without contextualising or Aficanising them. They are clearly evident in her sermons, teachings and services. Like mother like daughter. The trouble is that there is little evidence of the link between these two Christian domains in the theological arena.

Because the soteriology of the Finnish missionaries is not completely capable of addressing the concerns of **Ovawambo**, ELCIN should avoid taking it over uncritically as it seem to be the case. ELCIN theologians should avoid thinking like missionaries. But because the practical activities of missionaries are the best way to concretise salvation, as a church, ELCIN is encouraged to act likewise. The slogan should be: **act likewise, but think differently.**

CHAPTER SIX

THE SOTERIOLOGY OF ELCIN

6.1 Introduction

The focus of chapter five was the soteriology of the Finnish missionaries who shaped the soteriology of ELCIN. We found that it was rather other-worldly. This chapter brings us to the ELCIN tradition of salvation. What has ELCIN done with the kind of salvation presented to her by the missionaries? To what extent did ELCIN develop the missionary paradigm of salvation to acquire her own theological identity? In order to find out, the soteriologies of some ELCIN members will be explored, focusing **first** on the popular views for those who believe that salvation is for the **soul** after it has evacuated from the troublesome body into the blessed heaven above. **Secondly** I will turn to the soteriologies of those who tend to see salvation as a progressive experience, a divine venture in which humans are invited to participate during their earthly life time.

We shall argue that ELCIN did very little if anything to grow theologically and acquire a theological identity of her own. What has been handed down by the missionaries has been safeguarded unchallenged, unquestioned and unchanged. There is theological and ethical stagnation. I therefore contend that ELCIN tends to look back and pick up what she can find in the past to respond with to the current issues. There is little or no debate. Consequently, the church is fast becoming irrelevant and ineffective in many respects, caring primarily for salvation in the world beyond. If the comprehensive concept of salvation is to be achieved, this deficiency *must* be overcome.

6.2. The soteriologies of some ELCIN members

There are two kinds of soteriologies which may be found in ELCIN. The first is the salvation-later soteriology, the second is the progressive soteriology. Below we analyze documents written by and interviews held with different people, both clergy and laity, considered to be representatives of the two categories. The choice of the documents analyzed in 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 is done on the basis that they reveal the kind of soteriology taught and believed in ELCIN.

6.2.1 Representatives of a salvation-later paradigm

(a) Bishop Leonard Nangolo Auala

The second most prominent name to that of Martti Rautanen in the history of ELCIN is that of the late Bishop Auala. Born in 1908, Leonard Nangolo Auala was under the influence of missionaries in his early youth. In 1925, at the age of seventeen, he witnessed the ordination of the first **Owambo** pastors in the Oniipa congregation (Eriksson 1977:5), an event which left a lasting impression on him. Auala was trained by missionaries, first as a teacher between 1929 and 1931, then under missionary Vedder at Okahandja between 1934 and 1935, to improve his teacher qualifications and then as a pastor for only one year in 1924. He joined the other students later as there was no one to replace him at the Teacher Training Seminary, Oniipa, where he was teaching. With Efraim Angula, Auala continued his theological training at Elim, 1955, but also attended the Moravian Theological Seminary, Port Elizabeth in South Africa, in 1956-1957 (Nambala 1996:58).

After graduating as a teacher at Okahandja in 1935, he became the first **Owambo** teacher among missionary teachers both in the Teachers Training Seminary and in the Theological Seminary at Oniipa. The principal of the Teachers Training Seminary was Valde Kivinen [nicknamed Manyá] and the principal of the Theological Training was Erkki Lehto [nicknamed Amutse] (Auala 1977:145). Auala himself writes that in their sermons and lectures, the principals of the above mentioned seminaries guided their teachers and students towards spiritual awakening, confession of sins, mutual forgiveness and happiness (1977:146). Auala himself was no exception.

It was Erkki Lehto, the spiritual father of Auala, who finally convinced him to be trained as a pastor. After being ordained as a pastor in 1942, Auala was assigned to his home congregation, Oniipa, where he served for fifteen years (Auala 1977:147ff). When the **ELCIN** divided into three circuits, all the deans appointed were Finnish missionaries until 1958, when Auala became the first indigenous dean of the former Ondonga circuit. Other indigenous deans followed a year thereafter. Auala served only for two years as a dean and was then in 1960 elected the first **Owambo** moderator for the entire The Evangelical Lutheran Owambo-Kavango Church (ELOK) (Auala 1977:158f). When, in 1963, the Synod decided that the Church among **Ovawambo** was to become an episcopal church, Auala was elected its first indigenous bishop.

Missionary Victor Alho trained Auala for his task as the leader of the church (Auala 1977:161). It may be argued, therefore, that from his early years, Auala had been inhaling the kind of Christianity which the missionaries believed, preached and taught.

Bishop Auala was a good speaker and an excellent preacher. He spoke a lot, but did not write much. It follows, therefore, that literature revealing his eschatology and soteriology is rather scanty. My sources are only four: his autobiography **Onakuziwa yandje** [My past], published in 1977; **Onakuziwa yaELOC** [The past of ELOC] which he wrote after retirement but did not complete before he died in 1983 (still unpublished); a short sermon delivered in 1976/7; and his sermon delivered in 1976/7 to an unknown audience.

In his introduction to the autobiography of Bishop Auala, mission director Alpo Hukka wrote: **Oshilonga oshinene shongeleki, euvitho lyevaangeli nesiloshimbwiyu lyoomwenyo** [The supreme task of the church is the communication of the gospel and the care for the souls] (Auala 1977:3). Hukka explained further that it was this task which filled the **soul** of Auala. My personal encounter with bishop Auala confirmed this to be true. He was deeply spiritual. But there was evidence that Bishop Auala did not perceive his task, or that of the church, as merely spiritual. Spirituality was the base from which he penetrated other dimensions of human life. After his election as a bishop, for instance, he said: **Oshilonga shandje osho okuhepekwa pamwe noshigwana shandje** [My task is to suffer with my people] (Hukka 1977:3). This statement became a reality when, in 1971, he and other Black Lutheran Church leaders wrote their famous open letter to the then South African leader, B.J. Vorster, protesting against the abuse of human rights by the South African regime which occupied Namibia during those days.

In spite of his open vision, however, the theology of Auala was still geared to what he had learned in the seminary, from his spiritual father Lehto and from other missionaries. His theology was, to a very large extent, in line with the pietistic concern of the seventeenth century, namely bringing souls to heaven. Consequently, salvation was, for him too, the departure of the soul from this world to the father. According to Auala, a human being is a weak sinner who cannot save him/herself. The grace of God is amazing. In fact, **Okukalamwenyo kwomuntu kehe ... okwo**

esilohenda alike, lyesiku kehe [The life of every human being is daily grace alone] (Auala 1977:9).

The kind of eschatology and salvation which Auala believed and taught emerges in three places.

[1] in chapter 57 of his autobiography where he tells his progeny about the death of his own parents. It was only seven months after he became a moderator of the church, that his mother, Loide yaShikongo, died. About one year later, his father, Vilho Auala, also died. Pertaining to their deaths, Auala writes:

[About his mother] **Omuwa gwe e mu zimbula miilonga yomivo odhindji nokwe mu fala kegumbu kaandjawa megulu omuvo 1961.**[About his father] **... Gwo omvo gwa landula ko, ano 1962, tate Vilho Auala Omuwa gwe e mu zimbula ishewe miilonga yomivo odhindji nokwe mu fala kegumbo megulu** [Her Lord released her from her task of many years and took her home to heaven in 1961. ... And in the year 1962, my father Vilho Auala was also released from his task for many years by the Lord and was taken home to heaven] (1977:160).

By quoting Auala's comments concerning these two instances the intion is not to suggest that Christians should abandon their hope to be 'with the Lord' after death, which is our eschatological salvation. What interests us are his views on death and resurrection. We want to find out what Auala thought happens to people when they die. The quote reveals that Bishop Auala believed that human beings do not belong here on earth. When they die, they immediately go 'home', to heaven. Death is seen here as a process whereby the good Lord fetches the souls of his own to bring them home to heaven. What about the body? We have encountered this kind of eschatology in the theology of Martti Rautanen, Poikolainen and V n nen in chapter five.

[2] Another pointer to the eschatology and salvation of Auala is the reference to the speech of Martti Rautanen during the ordination of the first **Owambo** pastors on the 27th September 1925, with which Auala ends his autobiography:

Nakambale manga inaa mana oondjenda dhe, ano manga ondjila ye yokushuna megulu tayi longekidwa kuKalunga, Kalunga okwa talitha Nakambale iikumitha yesilohenda lye [Before Nakambale died, which means,

while his journey to return to heaven was being prepared by God, God showed Nakambale miracles of his grace] (1977:166).

Why did Auala think that God was preparing Nakambale **okushuna megulu** [to return to heaven] if he knew Nakambale came to **Owambo** from Finland? I think Auala believed that the real home of Nakambale was not Finland but heaven. But, Auala also knew that after his death, Nakambale was buried at Olukonda. The conclusion I can draw from the statement of Auala is that he was speaking of the **soul** of Nakambale. This would agree with what he said about the **souls** of his own parents, that of Iitope yaNambili (1977:150ff; 158ff) and that of his friend Pinehas Kambonde (Auala 1977:142).

I am reminded of a speech made by the chief missionary, theologian Ulla Nenonen, in 1983 at the funeral of missionary teacher Tirronen. Nenonen ended her speech with the following words: **Owa zi mevi, to shuna megulu** [You were taken from the soil, but will go back to heaven]. It might have been a slip of tongue, but it could also be argued that the belief that the **souls** of the dead escape to heaven immediately after death lay in her subconscious.

[3] Chapter fifty four of **Onakuziwa yandje** makes the perception of bishop Auala about eschatology and salvation even more vivid. Here he narrates the story of Iitope yaNambili, a woman diviner, who died before she was baptised. Iitope was taught the Christian faith by bishop Auala when he was pastor of Oniipa parish. She was ready to be baptised as soon as the traditional amulets which were in her possession were transferred to her successor Nuugonya. Auala wanted to baptise her even if she still had the amulets because he thought she was free from them anyway. After all she was sick. But Iitope insisted that the baptism ceremony be postponed to the following Sunday. In the mean time, diviner Iitope would hand all amulets to Nuugonya²⁴. Auala agreed and left.

²⁴ One would have expected that if the amulets in question here were bad for Iitope, they would be bad for Nuugonya and should have been burned. The reason why this did not happen was probably because Iitope was a high ranked diviner entrusted with the amulets of the whole tribal area of **Ondonga**. When she agreed to quit, she had to return them to the tribal authorities who would assign them to her successor.

In his dream that night, Auala was called to baptise a child in the upper section of Oniipa church building. On his way to do so, he met the Lord Jesus who told him that he had already baptised the child. This dream raised serious fears in the heart of Auala, because it was clear that Iitope had died before she was baptised. Early in the morning, the death of Iitope was confirmed. Auala cried bitterly, as he felt guilty.

Akutu ngame! Omwenyo gwIitope yaNambili ngele gwa kana, te ti ogu na okupulwa miikaha yandje? Yaye ngame, omusita omuhethi [Poor me! Does this mean if the soul of Iitope gets lost I will be held responsible? Oh, me! I am a negligent minister.] (1977:152)

The question which puzzled Auala was: if the **soul** of Iitope gets lost, am I not responsible? This question was based upon the awareness that a baptismal ceremony was not performed on Iitope. For Auala, it was not enough that she had actually indicated very clearly that she believed.

He was not sure whether the soul of Iitope was saved or not. The title of this particular chapter is most revealing: **Iitope yaNambili okwa yi peni?** [Where has Iitope yaNambili gone to?] (1977:150). Auala himself confesses to his children, for whom his autobiography was written, that the death of Iitope forces a lot of questions on him and up until then (when he wrote] he had not found a satisfactory answer (1977:150). The adjective **satisfactory** presupposes that there was something which gave him some peace: the words of the Lord Jesus in the dream, that Jesus himself had already baptised the child. At least these words were a source of some comfort. Maybe the **soul** of Iitope was saved after all. But then, it was a dream and not all dreams are true. The death of Iitope before she was baptised was a reality and her soul might be lost (Auala 1977:150).

This story brings four questions about the theology of bishop Auala to the fore: [i] Auala narrated that Iitope clearly believed in God and in Jesus Christ. Was that not enough proof to guarantee her salvation? [ii] Auala blamed himself for agreeing not to baptise Iitope. He cried and confessed his weakness in that regard. What was his view of the effects of baptism? [iii] What were his views about the relationship of body and soul in terms of salvation? [iv] If Auala believed that the soul of Iitope went straight to hell, or to heaven because Jesus baptised her, was that biblically or theologically correct?

In a sermon based on John 17:16-23 delivered in 1976/7, Auala spoke about mission. Missionary work, he said, has its origin in God, that is in heaven. This is particularly demonstrated in the incarnation of Christ. This means, Christ came into this world, from heaven, from God the Father. Thus, according to Auala, Christ has his roots in heaven, which supplied him with all his needs. He does not feed on worldly things. Those who are 'in Him' feed from him, therefore from God in heaven.

To feed from heaven is to feed from the divine word of God mixed with nothing worldly. The divine food from heaven is meant to "save the soul" (Auala 1976/7:2). It is clear that Jesus is presented here as a channel of heavenly blessings. Missionaries and preachers should feed from Jesus. The problem here, as with the sermons of many pastors of ELCIN, is that they are quiet about the existential problems of the believers. They say nothing about the betterment of human living conditions now. They are likewise silent about their empowerment and the unlocking of their natural capacities. Also, there are tendencies to emphasise church growth rather than the quality of life of church members. As Auala writes:

... believers will be made to believe by the proclamation of missionaries and preachers. Believers then grow in great numbers. This is possible because in such sermons are the powers of Jesus from heaven through Christ. These powers multiply the group of the saved. (Auala 1976/7:3)

In spite of his pietistic tendencies, Auala did not leave ELCIN without a good example to emulate in the area of social involvement. His concern for human wellbeing on this side of the grave is acknowledged world wide. It would, therefore, be a grave mistake to conclude a discussion on the soteriology of Auala without acknowledging his contribution to the process which finally led to the independence of Namibia. Bishop Auala is remembered as a co-signatory of the Open Letter to B. J. Vorster, the then Prime Minister of South Africa, and to the Epistle to the Namibians both on the 30 June 1971.

On the 21 June 1971, the World Court of Justice at the Hague declared the administration of Namibia by South Africa illegal. In response, the students and lecturers of the Paulinum Theological Seminary in Otjimbingwe drew up a document which they handed to their church leaders. Following the suggestion of Auala this document served as basis for both the Open letter

to Vorster and the Epistle to the Namibians both dated 30 June 1971 (Katjavivi 1989:134ff; Groth 1995:20).

In their Open letter, the church leaders condemned the illegal presence of South Africa in Namibia and called for her withdrawal from the country in accordance with the demands of the many United Nations resolutions. These church leaders stated that they could no longer be "indifferent to the continuing suffering caused by South African policies in Namibia (Katjavivi 1989:133). They declared apartheid "inhumane" and a source of the violation of human rights. "We could no longer remain silent", the church leaders said (Groth 1995:20). As a result of these documents, Vorster was forced to meet Auala and other church leaders to discuss the Namibians' "cry for help" and to hear from Auala that Namibians have a "burning thirst for human rights" (Groth 1995:21). The Open letter and the Epistle to the Namibians informed the congregations and the world of the problems of Namibia. It also mobilized international support for the independence of Namibia (Katjavivi 1989:134).

In 1964, the Bantustan system was introduced into Namibia by the South African regime. Migrant labourers and their families were most affected. Families were torn apart, because between 35,000 and 40,000 men had to work in "the white man's mines, towns, villages, and solitary farms" (Groth 1995:23). Most of them were members of the Lutheran church which Bishop Auala led. In December 1971 and January 1972, **Owambo** contract workers to the tune of 21,000 in 23 places downed tools, starting from the fish factory workers in Walvis Bay. They were all protesting against "the much-hated system of contract work and its inhumane conditions" (Groth 1995:23). Auala is reported to have supported the workers on strike because their demands were genuine and justifiable. We can, therefore, conclude that pietistic, as Auala was, he did not fail to translate his upward vision into a forward one.

(b) Efriam Angula

With bishop Leonard Auala, belongs to the fourth group of pastors ordained in ELCIN (1942). He received almost all his education from missionaries (Nambala 1996:20). He was trained by missionaries as a teacher between 1938 and 1940. He trained as a pastor under missionaries at Oniipa between 1941 and 1942, then at Elim in 1955. Between the years 1956 and 1957 Angula

attended the Moravian Theological Seminary with Bishop Auala in Port Elizabeth (South Africa) and took courses in the theology of Evangelism in London, England in 1977 (Nambala 1996:54).

takes missionary Lehto as his model in preaching (L ytty 1971:24). For a very long time, he was an evangelist of the whole of the ELCIN, conducting evangelistic campaigns and Bible weeks which aimed at spiritual awakening. These kinds of church activities are similar to those which were organised by the Finnish missionaries in 1939. Between the year 1952 and 1954, there was a dynamic spiritual awakening in **Owambo**, an event which, according to L ytty, sparked off an across the board evangelisation and "gave new impetus to this activity" (1971:35). The emphasis of these activities was, and still is, on the much longed-for spiritual awakening, similar to that of 1952. More about this later.

Efraim Angula himself told me that his understanding of salvation was similar to that of the late bishop Auala. Angula published a devotional booklet: **Ohapu nde yi pumbwa nena** [The Word I need today], from which I hope to capture his soteriology and eschatology. In a short talk based on John 17:15, Angula asked a very crucial question: why are Christians in the world? He observed that the prayer of Jesus contradicts our prayers. We Christians normally appeal to God to take us out of this world of afflictions and bring us to heaven. On the contrary, Christ did not pray for our evacuation from the world. Angula asked: **Omolwashike Jesus a hala tu kale muuyuni?** [Why does Jesus want us to be in the world?]. Angula answered his own question by referring firstly to what it meant for the disciples of Jesus and secondly what it meant for the present Christians. Jesus wanted his disciples to have more time **opo ya fale Evaangeli lyehupitho kuuyuni** [to spread the gospel of salvation to the world] (Angula 1979:128). Angula did not explain the implications of the gospel to the world in this devotion but, it became clear with regard to the present believers. **Ou li muuyuni muka, u gongele iihampi yoomwenyo dhaantu u dhi fale kuye** [you are in this world to gather bundles of human souls to bring to him (Jesus)] (Angula 1979:128).

Angula then asked the reason why current believers were in the world today. In his response to this question, he stated: [1] Christ did not want them to perish in it, but to be saved. He had protected them thus far so that they may have more time to surrender themselves to Christ for

their salvation (1979:128). [2] Believers have been kept safe in this world to be the bearers of the gospel and to communicate it to those whom they encounter. Then followed the implication of preaching the gospel:

Ou li muuyuni muka u gongele oomwenyo dhaantu u dhi fale kuye. Ina tu tulwa mo tu kanithe oomwenyo dhaakwetu. ... ngele ethimbo lyiilonga lya pu, ote tu ithana mo muuyuni ... [You are in this world to gather the souls of human beings and bring them to Him. We have not been put here to lead the souls of our fellows astray. When it is the right time, He will call us out of this world. (1979:128)]

A believer was in this world for a reason: to gather the **souls** of people and bring them to Jesus. When this task had been completed, s/he would be fetched out of the world and brought to heaven. It must be noted here that a believer had no responsibility to make the world a better place to stay. After all, s/he did not belong here.

This immediately brings to mind hymn 537 in the ELCIN Hymnal in which the seventeenth century poet (Benjamin Schmolck) expressed his desire to leave this world and go to heaven. In this hymn, which is commonly sung at funerals, we sing: "Let us go to heaven because earth is not our home" (v.1). "Look up my soul, you do not belong here. Gaze there, from where you came. Be free from things of this world and long to be with God from whom you came" (v.2). "You death, take me home - our home. To rejoice there and celebrate my victory. Jesus will meet me" (v.6). "Oh, it is like that with heaven. It preoccupies me always. Get away, things of this world. I have eternity. I only struggle for heaven" (v.7) [see also ELCIN hymn 515:1,3, 1991].

The short talk referred to above ties up very well with another talk (Angula 1979:9). This talk is entitled: **Kalunga ta yuulukwa** [God yearns over] based on James 4:5. What does God expect from a human being? According to the text on which this address is based, God yearns for his spirit which is in a human being. He wants it back. In an interview, Hendrik Dengeinge referred to this particular verse to underpin his argument that, at death, God takes away his spirit from the body, and the latter is buried until the resurrection day. In a letter to the researcher, retired Rev. Jason Amakutuwa agreed that at death, God withdraws his spirit from the body.

Angula is convinced that there is a divine spark in a human being which has its origin from God. It is the spirit of God himself, put in us at the very beginning of creation. **Oye okwa fudhile ombepo ye mutse peshito, oshitopolwa shomuye ...** [he has blown his spirit as part of him into us at creation]. Thus, Angula argues that God will never forget his spirit. This divine spirit in humans is constantly at war with our bodies and this world. It cries to God, however weakly. God is aware of this constant struggle. It is for this reason that God gives us the Holy Spirit who cries much louder with our spirit (1979:10).

In another talk based on Philippians 1:19-21, Angula speaks of human hardship on earth and what must be done to alleviate it. He assured his listeners that present suffering is only temporal. Moreover, there is only one thing which God is using to end human suffering, i.e. prayer: [1] The prayers of other believers. We wonder why Angula mentioned only the father and mother, wife and children who pray for the husband and father. Only the father and children seem to have a problem and are prayed for by the family. But the father does not do the same for the family. Angula also mentioned friends and the congregation praying for a person who is in a problem. [2] Jesus is on the right hand of the father. He prays for those in problems. The Holy Spirit does the same.

The believers are exhorted to note that **the prayers from the above-mentioned levels will result in their salvation** (1979:28). The awareness of the believer that people, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are praying for a sufferer should, therefore, evoke praise in the situation of suffering.

Without undermining the power of prayer, I miss the Christian existential responsibility. Is Angula only speaking of spiritual problems? Are there no people whose problems are rather socio-ethical, socio-economical, and socio-political and who would need down-to earth responses? What about those who live in poverty, hunger, and sickness? I have a feeling the gospel which Angula preached was rather pietistic, individualistic and other-worldly. Actually, it belongs to the sixteenth/seventeenth century Protestant theology. He did not address existential problems at all.

In his address (1979:70), Angula demonstrated a somewhat more holistic approach to theology. Although he did not uphold this principle elsewhere, here he mentions the fact that salvation was meant for the whole person and not only for the soul. Basing his argument on 1 Thess. 5:23-24, Angula wrote:

Oye te ku tseye, ongoye ku shi omwenyo aguke noku shi ompepo ayike nosho tuu ku shi olutu aluke. Oye okwe ku shiti omukwatatu, omwenyo nompepo nolutu. ... Kalunga koye ote ku kondjele, ote ku gamene ongoye ahuhe. ... Omuwa ita kondjele omwenyo aguke gu hupithwe, aawe, ota kondjele ongoye omuntu aguhe [He (God) knows that you are not only a soul, or the spirit, or the body. He created you a trinity: soul, spirit and body. ... Your God is for you, he protects the whole of you. ... The Lord is not only trying to save your soul, no, he aims at the whole of you]. (1979:70)

Angula knows that God is gracious or rather that he is the source of grace. **Esilohenda otali zi muKalunga ... Nando wa ya kokule muule uulunde ... ngele to ya mesilohenda, oto taambwa** [Grace comes from God ... Even if you have gone so far in sin ..., you will be accepted if you come into grace] (1979:32). The grace of God starts where the human capability to save the self ends (1979:32). Again, grace affects only the **soul** of the believer which is darkened by sin and full of bitterness (1979:143). As Angula writes: **[esilohenda] ... olya gwana okwoopaleka omwenyo gwoye gwa luudhikwa kuulunde** (1979:32). [Grace is able to change and clean your soul darkened by sin]. Further, the seat of this grace is the soul of Jesus (1979:143, address no.178). It is evident here that grace has no effect whatsoever on other dimensions of human life.

(c) Tomas Shindongo and Juuso Shikongo

Shindongo was ordained on the 18. 08. 1949 (Nambala 1996:20) with Jason Amakutuwa and Juuso Shikongo, the 5th group of ordination. He wrote a sermon meant for publication. Taking Luke 11:29-32 as his text, Shindongo focused on the behaviour of Jonah during his divine mission to preach in Nineveh. After refusing, Jonah went his own way. There he faced many problems and came close to death. According to Shindongo, this was the price Jonah had to pay for his disobedience. Shindongo believed that there were similar people in **Owambo** society. These were those who were called "to school" but disobeyed and chose their own ways. Young men chose to work as migrant labourers, young women chose to get married. Like Jonah, both

found it difficult to cope with their chosen situations. They received insufficient salaries and encountered hardships such as divorces in their marriages. According to Shindongo, those situations which the people concerned have chosen for themselves were the 'ships' on which people try to escape from God's mission today. Shindongo believed that agreeing to go to school to become a pastor was the best ship. Jesus is the first ship (Shindongo 1973:1-4).

Shikongo also prepared a sermon for publication. It was based on Luke 3:1-6. He focused on how a believer should prepare for the coming Messiah. He argued that people who had not repented were like those places mentioned in the text which needed some cleaning up for the coming Lord. Human sins were like mountains, valleys, curves and hills in a human heart (1973:1). As to what should be cleaned up, Shikongo pointed to the souls of those people who had heaped up sins. He wrote:

The soul does not belong to its bearer. A human soul, as we read in Gen 2:7, belongs to God. In other words, human souls belong to God. Being in human bodies, such souls have lost their aims. Therefore, the sender has sent John the Baptist to prepare before him (Mark 1:1-8). Christ has no wish to stay outside a human being. He wants to take his place in the human soul. (1973:2)

Shikongo was not able to reconcile verse six with the preceding verse. He simply mentioned the fact that all flesh had to be saved. He was apparently aware that Christ brought salvation to all flesh. As to how flesh would be saved, Shikongo was quiet. It is not clear from the context of the sermon whether Shikongo was aware of the fact that the Hebrew word "flesh" includes the entire human being, body and soul. One thing was clear though. Shikongo saw a human being as a composite of a troublesome body which was apart of the world, and the imprisoned divine spark, the soul which had its origin in God. This spark belonged to God and returned to him immediately after death. It was the desire of God, as revealed in Christ, to free this divine spark from the body and to return it to heaven. For this, Christ sent John to do the preparation, the cleaning of the soul. The Lord himself would come to occupy it.

(d) Titus Ngula and Johannes Iitope

Titus Ngula was ordained in 1965 (Nambala 1996:167). He received his theological training from missionaries first as an evangelist, then as a pastor. Ngula may be categorised as an apocalyptic.

The emphasis of his sermon was on the duality between this world and the world to come. Ngula was quite in line with bishop Auala who, in a sermon delivered in 1976/7, clearly taught that Jesus had his roots in heaven where he got all his spiritual supplies so that those who would be in him too would benefit (Auala 1976/7:1-2). In his sermon, Ngula called on believers to be watchful and wary of this world. The sin of this world blinded people and made it impossible for them to see approaching dangers. Being blind also prevented people from knowing when the Lord comes. In fact, the tone of the sermon was a preparation for some kind of evacuation of believers into heaven. He called on believers to be awake and watchful for not one of them knew when the Lord was coming. Things which blind people were also listed: idols, divination, hatred, anger, crookedness, jealousy, and quarrels. Further he mentioned drunkenness, pride, self-hardening, disobedience to parents and to God, not keeping Sunday holy as commanded. One infers from this list that the sermon was rather legalistic, with little if any gospel at all. It was nothing but a command: Be watchful! The sermon was based on Luke 12:35-40.

Iitope was ordained 25.07. 1937. In his sermon based on Mark 1:15, he focused on the way that leads to heaven, namely the way of repentance. He emphasised that the kingdom of God had come closer and people needed to be prepared for it (1973:1). After quoting some verses to confirm the nature of the kingdom of God, Iitope remarked that all of us were definitely eager to have a share in the kingdom of God. However, there are people who do not stand any chance of entering this divine kingdom. These are mentioned in the book of Revelation 21:8 as the cowardly, the faithless, the murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters and liars. All these would burn with fire and sulphur. The unconditional acceptance of God was not mentioned.

Although Iitope referred to the fact that God loved the whole world (John 3:16), it is clear from the content of his sermon that he viewed the world as a great mischief. It was important for the believer not to be entangled in the affairs of this world, as this would make them unable to accept the gospel, which required repentance, and so open the way into the kingdom. For Iitope, "this world with its greed would come to an end". It would not, therefore, help for one to inherit the world and lose his/her soul (John).

(e) **Emilia Mwafufya, Veronika Shindinge and H. Kaukolwa**

1995 was a year of celebrations in ELCIN. It was 125 years after the arrival of the first Finnish missionaries in **Owambo** 1870, seventy years [70] after the ordination of the first pastors in ELCIN in 1925 (Nambala 1995:6), and thirty years [30] since the establishment of the Revival and Sobriety Movement in ELCIN. The latter event may best be described as a **vigorous spiritual awakening**.

The aims of The Revival and Sobriety Movement²⁵ are spiritual revival of people, awakening in parishes, to strengthen abstinence, to strengthen leadership and inspire youth. To this effect, the Movement organises revival and evangelization meetings in churches, schools and markets and other outdoor places in townships (ELCIN 1996:38).

An unnamed witness traced his/her experience of an awakening to the year 1945. According to this witness, the revival was first introduced during this year by a Finnish missionary. It reemerged again in 1951 and spread over the entire Owambo until 1952 (Nima 1995:9). The effects of the awakening were described by L ytty as "invigorating" (1971:35). The awakening of 1951/52 did not leave the ELCIN Church unchanged. The impact of this movement is still evident within her circles. To a certain degree many pastors and ordinary Christians, particularly of the older generation, regard spiritual awakening as a hallmark of genuine Christianity. Emilia Mwafufya, who experienced the 1952 awakening, ended her article with this prayer: **Natango Tate Kalunga ngeno e tu tumine omhepo yaye moshiwana shetu ngaashi pefimbo linya** [May God send us his/her spirit similar to that of those days] (1995:11). An unnamed witness also expressed a wish for the repetition of the 1951/2 revival (1995:9).

Emilia Mwafufya is the wife of a retired pastor of ELCIN. From her article **Ondjokonona yepapudukoidiliko mu ELCIN** [The history of awakening-abstaining in ELCIN], one can observe much of what was happening with the believers. Those events also confirmed what kind of concept of salvation was imparted to the minds of ELCIN Christians. Mwafufya described the 1952 awakening as follows:

²⁵

In the ELCIN five years plan, this movement is called The Sober and Revival Movement, but since sober is an adjective, revival a noun, it should rather be Sobriety and Revival Movement.

eenghono deendjovo daPamba, da li tadi longo meemwenyo pefimbo linya ... tadi pangula omadiladilo etu ... naaveshe nee ava va tomhwa kudo, ova hepaulula omatimba avo ... moipafi ... ve he na ohoni. Omatimba avo okwa dimwa po, nova li ve na ombili nevadimo ... moipala yavo ... va shituluka, va ninga va pe [the power of the Word of God was working in the souls of people at that time ... condemning our evil thoughts ... all those who were convicted by it, confessed their sins in public ... without shame. Their sins were forgiven, they were at peace and had the glory of God in their faces ... changed into new beings (1995:11).

For Mwafufya, that awakening was caused by the power of the word of God, which judged their evil thoughts, forced and convinced people to confess their sins in public without shame and the received forgiveness. The effects of forgiveness were evident from the faces of many. Many who were evil changed and became new beings.

Veronika Shindinge, the wife of a retired evangelist in ELCIN also experienced the 1952 awakening. She published an article: **Ame epapudoko osho la hanga nge ngaha** [This is how I experienced awakening] (1995:6f). According to Shindinge , and Mwafufya, all the congregations were 'on fire'. Pastors and youth went from one congregation to the other, preaching and singing. Confessions of sins were rife. **Vamwe ova yandja ombili keongalo, vamwe ova pa vakwao ombili** [Some confessed their sins to the congregation, others to their fellows] (Shindinge 1995:6).

While I welcome the success of the preaching of the word of God at that time, I wonder what the message of the sermons was which made so many people confess their sins, even in public without shame. Why were Sunday school children and youth crying and confessing their wrongs to their parents (Shindinge 1995:7; Mwafufya 1995:8)? Shindinge leads me to believe that the content of those sermons took a form of **the law**. People were most probably bombarded with eschatological events, particularly judgement and hell. This is evident from the following quote from Shindinge:

Onda mona mongeleka mwa fa mu na omalinyengo amwe, twa fa twa tila ... Otwa tameka okulilila omatimba etu, keshe umwe ponhele yaye (1995:6). ... otwa li tu wete Jesus a fa ta tuka moilemo te uya diva keongalo laye. Otwa ekelashi ashishe shetu [I saw as though there were strange movements in the

(Okahao) church. We were terrified. ... we started to weep over our sins, everyone him/herself (1995:6). ...we were convinced that Jesus was on the clouds coming soon to his church. We rejected all that was ours]. (1995:7)

In the above quote, Shindinge recalls what was happening with believers at that time. While preachers were preaching and singers singing, suddenly people appeared terrified. They started crying, each for his/her sins. It seemed to them as if Jesus was flying on clouds coming to his congregation.

When Mwafufya met people who experienced the awakening before her, she noticed that they were changed. When she joined them to one of their crusades, she noticed that **otava kundafana ashike oinima yopamwenyo** [they only discussed things about eternal life (1995:2). At first, Mwafufya was not able to join their conversations. But then, **eenghono deendjovo naame osho da longo momwenyo wange ... ekondjo ola tameka meni momwenyo mwi**. [The power of the word of God came into my soul, then there was a struggle in it] (1995:2). An unnamed witness agrees with Mwafufya that the awakening targeted the inner person of the believer. For him **Omhepo yOmwene okwa li tai longo momitima**, [The Spirit of the Lord was at work in the hearts]. The Spirit was specifically awakening them from sin and their ignorance of the will of God regarding eschatological events (1995:9).

Mwafufya testified that during awakening crusades, people saw visions with their inner eyes. According to her testimony, at Eenhana congregation, an adolescent was at prayer:

onda mona nomesho ange omeni eshi eulu la yeuluka le uya pedu notwa ilikana tu li meulu loovene. Eshi ka mana, onda mona nghee la yeluka la shuna pombada, nonda dimbulukwa nee kutya eilikano lomwiitavelo olo oshipatululo shoku patulula oshivelo sheulu [I saw with my internal eyes when heaven opened and descended down. We prayed being inside heaven itself. When we finished, I saw again how heaven ascended up again. Then I realised that the prayer of a believer is a key to heavenly gates]. (1995:10)

During the prayer referred to above, Mwafufya saw 'with her inner eyes' (whatever that meant) an opened heaven brought down. She saw how they prayed being right inside it. After prayer, she saw heaven ascending. She then remembered that a prayer of a believer is a key to open heavenly gates.

There were other visions as well. While a small group was at prayer, they saw an angel descending on them with a book and a cross. The cross was laid on the shoulder of the person who was praying. **Opo nee vakwao va tameka okulila, shaashi ova li va tila kutya otava ka kana** [Then the rest began to weep for they feared that they would perish] (Mwafufya 1995:11).

I am not against the revival. In fact, we need the spirit of awakening, not only in ELCIN, but in the whole country where crime is on the increase. We need the confession of our sins and obtain forgiveness. The question is, however, how will awakening come about? Attempts have been made to employ methods similar to those used by missionaries in the 1950s. But the people are not the same. If awakening is to come again, new methods must be employed ensuring that salvation is not spiritualised and the gospel is not divorced from the law. People of today need a sound theology, one which does not abandon this-worldly hope for the sake of other-worldly salvation. However, they also need a theology which does not abandon hope beyond the grave for a this-worldly goal. They need comprehensive salvation.

(f) Lecture notes from Elim²⁶

The eschatology of ELCIN members has its roots in the teaching of the Finnish missionaries, many of whom served as teachers in schools and seminaries. In the dogmatics lecture notes of 1964 for the pastors who were ordained in 1965, it is made clear that **oshinenima shomokukalamwenyo osho ehupitho lyomwenyo** [The main thing in life is the salvation of the soul] (Lecture notes 1965:31).

To say that the salvation of the soul is **the main** thing in life is to presuppose that there is a **secondary** thing. From the context of the lecture notes, the latter is the concern for material things. An impression is created here that the lecturer believed in false alternatives: body or soul, material or spiritual, world or heaven, sacred or profane. The irony lies in that these notes were taught to **Owambo** pastors who were being prepared to minister to the indigenous people. We have seen in chapters three and four that **Ovawambo** do not make such distinctions. This means

²⁶ The author of these lecture notes is unknown. Rev. P. Shipena who belong to the class which received these notes remembers that they were taught by Kantele to whom we have referred in chapter five, but does not know whether she wrote them, or Seppo L ytty, or somebody else.

that the lecturer concerned did not take the philosophy of the indigenous people into consideration. The lecturer could have presented this particular part of his notes within the context of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdom as we have outlined in chapter two. No mention of the rule of the right and left hands of God is made in these notes. The subtopic where the salvation of the soul is dealt with is most revealing: **The concern for the salvation of the soul** (Lecture notes 1965:31).

These notes are characterised by the apocalyptic view of reality according to which this world is evil and dark. Its main problems are egoism and materialism. People once hoped to change the world through development and technology, but this hope was shattered by the World Wars. Christians must, therefore lift their heads above the problems and hope for the Day of their salvation (Lecture notes 1964:41).

In the same notes the lecturer responded to a question about the whereabouts of the dead. S/he rejected the view that the faithful dead went to heaven immediately after death. **Eihololo lyaKalunga tali tu hololele kutya oye li mpoka pu na Kalunga** [The revelation of God tells us that they are where God is] (Lecture notes 1964:42). It is not said where God or heaven is. There is a contradiction in the notes because, if the dead are where God is, then they are in heaven. Heaven is where God is. What is clear, however, is that the notes are speaking about the **souls** of the dead as is evident from the following quote:

Meso omwenyo nolutu talu topoka. Olutu talu shuna mevi, otau ningi evi, ihe omwenyo tagu kala po, oshoka Kalunga okwa pa omuntu omwenyo tagu kalelele sigo aluhe (Gen 3:19). Edhiladhilo ndika kutya omwenyo gwomuntu tagu tsikile okukala kwagwo nokombanda yeso wo, oyo konyala lya ayehe, aamateria taye li ekelehi ngaa [In death, the body and the soul separate. The body returns to soil, but the soul remains, because God gave a human being the soul which lasts for ever (Gen 3:19). The view that a human soul lives on after death is accepted by all, but the materialists reject it. (Lecture notes 1964:42)

6.2.2 Representatives of a progressive salvation paradigm

(a) Josua Hanyango

Hanyango belonged to the fourth group of pastors who were ordained in 1942, with and the late Bishop Auala (Nambala 1996:20). He was a missionary among the San in the extreme Eastern

part of Oukwanyama. His understanding of mission was similar to that of his two school mates, mentioned above. In his sermon, which was meant for publication and based on Luke 9:1-6, Hanyango wrote that mission had its origin in God. In mission God aims at "returning the souls of his people to him" (1974:1). It might be correct to infer from this statement that Hanyango too believed that the soul of a human being was part of God. To believe in God and to die in that faith allowed the soul to escape death and return to God from where it originated.

But Hanyango's true position becomes clear when compared to others. In the 1954 Synod of ELCIN, held on September 1-3 at Engela, Revs. Jason Haufiku, Simson Ndatipo and Josua Hanyango shared their views on mission work. In his presentation, Jason Haufiku emphasised the spiritual preparation of 'all' because, "Jesus is coming soon" (Auala 1982:25). The references he made to the blind and the deaf sounded symbolic. It seemed he had spiritual infirmity in mind. Ndatipo picked the very interesting text of Exodus 3:7-9. After affirming that mission had its genesis in God, he referred to missionary agents of which he mentioned only missionaries and pastors (Auala 1982:26). Thus, the scope of mission and salvation according to Haufiku and Ndatipo was rather narrow.

Hanyango saw mission and salvation differently. In his presentation, he demonstrated that his view of both mission and salvation was comprehensive in scope. He picked a very special text which I think he understood very well. "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev.11:15b). After testifying about how he was called and sent to the San community, he related his experience there. When he arrived there, he noticed the following:

- [1] The San did not have God,
- [2] They had no physical food,
- [3] They had no clothing,
- [4] They were not healthy enough,
- [5] They had no gospel (Auala 1982:25).

It is interesting to note the priority list of Rev. Hanyango. First he mentioned the lack of God, but next in line were basic physical needs. The spiritual needs were listed last. The list of Hanyango agreed with those who believe that spiritual needs cannot be satisfied apart from other human

needs. The whole reality must be brought under the rule of Christ. This includes human bodies. To quote from his speech, Hanyango asked the Synod:

So, what must we do? Who of us will see to it that the San get clothing and that their smelly wounds are dressed? How will they find a person to preach the gospel of salvation to them? Prayers are indeed called for here, but it is also required of us to give (Auala 1982:25f).

Again the order of the needs of the San started with the basic needs. Hanyango believed that physical needs should be addressed first. Once survival was ensured the people would be more willing to listen to the preaching of the gospel. In the sermon referred to above, Hanyango did not only speak of the salvation of the soul or the return of the soul to God. For him, there was much more. He believed that God sent her/his agents "to work for justice" (Auala 1982:1), not only to help with the reunification of the souls with God, but also to save them "from their difficulties" (Hanyango 1974:1).

For Hanyango, Jesus was the chief missionary sent by God into the world of the New Testament. In turn, Jesus sent his own messengers. It was the composition of the messengers of Jesus which was most revealing. While Ndatipo mentioned only missionaries and pastors, the list of Hanyango included secular leaders: "preachers, teachers, missionaries, nurses, deacons, kings, chiefs and councillors" (Hanyango 1974:2). It is interesting to note that Hanyango saw all these as communicators of the gospel of salvation. For him, Jesus gave power and rule to those missionary agents to spread the Kingdom of God by "expelling demons, healing spiritual, but also physical patients" (Hanyango 1974:2). Hanyango appealed to the Synod delegates:

Pray for kings and chiefs to rule the nation under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and by the power of Jesus. This would ensure that we shall have peace. Jesus said 'Tend my sheep' (1974:3).

It is also interesting to note that Hanyango mentioned what amounts to law and gospel, which constitute the word of God. The aim of missionary work was to help people, accept the gospel, but the whole word must be accepted.

He who accepts the entire word of God will be saved by it (the gospel). But whoever does not believe it, the word will accuse (the law) him/her (Hanyango 1974:2).

There are indications that Hanyango mixed Christianity with civilization. In 1955, he published an article in *Omukwetu*, in which he spoke of the longing of the San community. He wrote that the San community was not eager to embrace Christianity. However, he noticed, that they showed an interest in the new religion:

They deserted their traditional names such as Haikondo and Haixuxwa, to take up Christian names. They no longer want to cover themselves with animal skins as they traditionally did. They want materials and dresses. It would be very beneficial if a hospital is built for them, because this would make it easy for them to be reached with the gospel (Hanyango 1955:8).

Further, Hanyango clearly combined the immanent and transcendent needs of a human person. He wrote:

... let us think where the gospel found us when it was brought to us by the Finnish missionaries. Let us remember what they did so that we may get bodily and spiritual cleanness which we now have. (1955:8)

(b) Festus Ashipala and Loide Mbodo

Rev. F. Ashipala was born in 1935 and ordained in 1962. Apart from training as a pastor at Elim under the Finnish missionaries, Ashipala also took special courses in Psychology, Clinical/Pastoral and Marriage Counselling, Alcohol Abuse and Drug Abuse in Helsinki, Finland, 1965-1968, 1985-1986.

On the 10th July, 1996 I interviewed Ashipala. His observation about the kind of salvation portrayed in the sermons of most of the pastors in ELCIN was that salvation awaited us on the other side of the grave. Emphasis was put on what has been promised, what was hoped for and what was to come in the future, i.e. eternal life. Whereas this emphasis has its advantages, they were probably outweighed by the opposite. According to Ashipala, his task as a counsellor was to alleviate the suffering now. It was his task to help those who came to him attain a better life now. He believed that eternal life should not be postponed to the other side of the grave. Ashipala argued that it was only when a person lived a better life here and now that s/he could possibly see

a better life on the other side of the grave. Eternal life should not be understood to be a second kind of life. For Ashipala it was a continuation, or better yet, a fulfilment of a kind of life started here on earth. Ashipala believed that this could also be said about hell. If people suffered now, the possibility of them missing eternal life was great.

If a person is under suffering, that person is literally in hell, it does not matter whether such a person is a Christian or not. To me, that is what hell is. We should use the time at our disposal to bring suffering people from hell now to life already here on earth. Life is peace, love and happiness [Interview with researcher on the 10th .07.1996].

In his book: **Oonkundathana tadhi mangulula omwenyo [The conversation which liberates the soul]**, Ashipala argued that to help a person appreciate the love of God, one had to concretise that love of God. "When a person is assisted physically, s/he will realise and appreciate the love of God" (1979:9). For Ashipala, a human being encounters God in another human being. "When a person comes to another, that person comes at a holy place where **Kalunga** dwells" (1979:15). It is, therefore, very significant for the church to "communicate the message from above, but in counselling we have to tackle human needs which prevent him/her from accepting the message of God" (1979:31).

Olwindji onda tala wo kutya oku na aavithi oyendji mboka ya uvitha sha gwana kombinga ya Satana noheli nosho wo kombinga ya Kalunga negulu nomwenyo gwaaluhe. Ihe shoka nda tala shi na natango okuuvithilwa aakwanegongalo yetu, oshika kutya: Jesus ota ti shike mokukalamwenyo kwonena, miilonga yetu, momagumbo getu, momauwehame getu. Oshoka okuya kwaJesus monyama kaku shi ashike oshinima shehistoli, ihe osho oshinima shoka tashi ndhindhilike sha mpaka methimbo ndika. Jesus ke li mongamba yethimbo nenge yinima yontumba, nenge yuuyuni tau ya ashike, ihe enyanyu nuudhigu, ombili noluhodhi lwomonyama ndjika otayi gumwa kushika, kutya Kalunga okwa tumu Omwana, a hupithe methimbo ndika [I have a feeling that there are many of our pastors who have now preached enough about Satan and hell on the one hand, God, heaven and eternal live on the other. What I think needs to be proclaimed to our parishioners is the effect of the Jesus-event on our daily lives, on our work, on our households, and on our sickness. The incarnation is not only a historical event. It affects our life here and now. Jesus should not be confined to a specific time or event or to the world to come. He affects our daily lives: our joys, our problems, our peace, our lamentations must all be affected by the fact that God has sent his Son to save us now] (Ashipala 1979:80).

Ashipala believed that the problem of human beings, whom the church and her services targeted, were rooted in sin, that is in separation from God. The primary task of the church was, therefore, to reunite the sinner with God - to affect reconciliation between the Creator and the creature. To this end, the church must be practical in its approach to human needs (1979:32). Ashipala believed that this was the prime task of the different services of the church. The whole person must be targeted and not only the so-called **soul**. "Soul", argues Ashipala, "means a human being before God" (1979:15).

Perhaps Ashipala was exposed to modern theology when he was studying in Finland. If that is the case, it shows that not all Finnish Christians are trapped in the pietism of the missionaries. It would also confirm that most of the early missionaries who came to do mission work in **Owambo** were mainly pietists. The views such as those of Ashipala need to be preached and taught more often.

The views of Ashipala were shared by another counsellor, a professional teacher Loide Mbodo. Loide too believed that salvation should be realised here and now, if it was to become a reality on the other side of the grave. Loide thought that many parishioners missed down-to-earth sermons, which addressed human problems. She felt that the theology of ELCIN was too other-worldly. There was even a need to allow parishioners some time after the service for sharing their concerns (20.07.1996).

(c) Bishop Kleopas Dumeni

Bishop Dumeni is the second bishop in ELCIN. Born in 1930, Dumeni was ordained in 1959. He too was trained by missionaries for the ministry, first at Oshigambo (preparation), then at Elim (Nambala 1996:64). In his contribution to the booklet **Oshipala sha Elok**, Dumeni hinted at the general and situational aim of the church.

The complete aim of the church is to bring all ELOK members into the Kingdom of God, and that living and active Christianity may be realised. It is also to spread the kingdom of God by planting the seed, by bringing the gospel to the people of God both inside and outside ELOK (1978:9).

It is clear from the quote above that Bishop Dumeni sees the task of the Church as the communication of the gospel to all people. It must be noted that when he wrote this in 1977, he emphasised that the church is called to preach the gospel to all people. About the more situational objective of the church, Bishop Dumeni wrote:

The aim is to **speak the truth in love**²⁷ so that we can achieve peace for all in this or the world beyond. This can be achieved by showing the seed through the preaching of the gospel to all people of God (1978:10).

From the year 1987, Bishop Dumeni seemed to have added a new dimension to his perception. He now spoke not only of 'all people' but also of 'the whole person'. In his opening addresses to the pastors conventions on the 14.9.1987, and the 28. 8. 1990, Dumeni remarked that pastors were called "in the service of communicating the gospel to every person and to the whole person" (1987:1; 1990:1). This new element might have been the result of the political situation of Namibia at that time. It was common practice for the apartheid politicians to silence the church, and advise her to stick to the pulpit. She was commanded not to involve herself in political matters. Julius Mtuleni interpreted the statement as apologetic (Interview with the researcher on 11.07.1996).

Therefore, on the 25th July 1996, I wanted to find out in an interview what Bishop Dumeni had in mind when he made the statement: "to all people and the whole person". Bishop Dumeni explained that behind that statement was a view that the proclamation of the gospel knows no limits in respect of age, colour, creed or political affiliation. It meant that the church had a task to bring the gospel of salvation to all, including pagans, friends and foes. The aim was one, salvation for all.

For Bishop Dumeni, salvation should be understood in its vertical and horizontal dimensions. The former, to restore the relationship between the sinner and God, was the priority of the church. Only then would the restoration of relationships between sinners themselves become possible. This was the message of salvation which the church must preach to all people without discrimination.

²² This objective is based on Ephesians 4:15.

Salvation must be understood vertically and horizontally also with respect to basic human needs. For Bishop Dumeni, this could be expressed in terms of salvation today and salvation tomorrow, salvation on this side of the grave and salvation on the other side of the grave. Salvation here and now included concrete human needs such as education, food, health, security and safety. Solving these problems for a person was offering that person salvation now. The solution to those problems was good news for that person. The good news was only good because it solved specific problems here and now.

Bishop Dumeni argued that a human being was indeed one and should not be subdivided into compartments. No human being would be left if we separated the spirit from the body. The former would be a ghost, the latter a corpse. Nevertheless, Bishop Dumeni added that, as a spiritual leader, his priority was the attainment of eternal life. That was important to him because there were people who had missed salvation on this side of the grave. It is the task of the church to ensure that such a person did not miss eternal salvation on the other side of the grave.

Regarding his views that the gospel must be preached **in truth and love**, Dumeni explained that this must be understood in view of the composition of our audiences. Our listeners come from all walks of life. They belong to different political parties, religions, and denominations. They have different needs and view us and our message differently. They receive it differently too. Whoever they are, however, we have to confront them with the word of God as it is. Even if it hurts as it does, we have to abide in truth and preach in love.

The church is a church and it stands on her platform, different from other groups such as political parties. It is from this platform that we operate. That is why the church should not have favourites. We go to members of our church who belong to different parties motivated by love and speaking the truth. They can even become aggressive, but that should not deter us from carrying out our task. We have to speak the truth in love. If the truth is that a certain person or group of people are outside the realm of salvation, we tell them the truth in love. Parents do the same to their children and doctors to their patients. Both are motivated by the truth and by love.

Truth and love also have to do with justice. They are inseparable and none can exist without the other. Bishop Dumeni also speaks of the truth and love in its connection with the priority, of eternal salvation. Faith and hope will one day achieve their fulfilment and their task shall have been completed, but truth and love we need today and for ever. They have to do with salvation now and with eternal salvation.

I put it to Bishop Dumeni that the general tendency among the ELCIN pastors was to overemphasise what he had called priority number one, the vertical aspect of salvation. It had become very clear from my interview with both clergy and lay people that when they spoke of salvation, ELCIN members meant an experience awaiting a believer on the other side of the grave. In his response, Dumeni referred to the period of the struggle against apartheid in Namibia. It was important, as it is now, for the preacher and teacher to know the composition of their audiences in order to respond to their needs. Our listeners were the oppressed, the exploited and the victims of war. It was not helpful for people in such cruel conditions if the church did not respond directly to their needs. For them, the good news was the alleviation of their problems and their salvation was freedom. To an injured soldier, the good news was medical treatment. To the fleeing guerilla, the good news was to hide him/her.

6.2.3 A critical evaluation of the soteriology of ELCIN

The theology of the early Finnish missionaries was strongly penetrated by pietistic and revivalistic elements. Their soteriology may be characterised as a soteriology of the life to come. This kind of soteriology permeates the theology found in ELCIN. One hears of it in hymns and songs, in sermons and speeches, in testimonies and prayers. Although it has advantages it is not without disadvantages.

(a) Advantages of the salvation-later paradigm

The soteriology about the world beyond concerns itself with what would happen to the believer on the other side of the grave. If one died in faith, one went to heaven. If one died unbelieving, one went to hell. Time to put things right was now, but it was now short. The Lord was near. This kind of soteriology served as a strong force and a bottomless source of inspiration for the missionary movement. It drove Finnish missionaries to do what seemed humanly impossible: to leave their beloved country; to undertake dangerous journeys across the seas; to go into foreign

and hostile environments; to struggle to learn difficult languages and cultures under the most difficult conditions, and to face destructive diseases, even death itself, in alien countries. There seemed to be no better way of describing Finnish missionary zeal and activity than to say: **they loved Ovawambo and were determined to bring them salvation.** They have done us a great deal of good in all spheres of life. We owe them an appreciation which no expression such as **thank you** can express even if it was said by all **Ovawambo** at once.

It was further their pietistic and revivalistic determination and persistence which **helped missionaries to overcome Owambo destructive cultural elements which did not serve the common good.** The **establishment and rapid growth of the ELCIN Church** was possible because of those pietistic and revivalistic elements in the soteriology of the Finnish missionaries.

Although **Ovawambo** already knew that there existed another life beyond the grave, the soteriology of the missionaries, with its stress on the significance and primacy of the **soul** and life on the other side of the grave, contradicts it when they taught that God loved all human beings, young and old, rich and poor and welcomes all into his kingdom in lieu of their faith in him.

I believe that the emphasis of ELCIN on eternal life, even long after this church had become self-propagating, has **helped Christianity to sink its roots deep into Ovawambo**, to such a degree that Bishop Dumeni was justified in saying "Christianity has become our culture" (25.07.1996). It might also be true to argue that it was due to the spirit of pietism and revivalism that **ELCIN has remained one united Church for over 125 years now.** There is no known church which can claim to have broken away from ELCIN. ELCIN is one!

(b) Disadvantages of the salvation-later paradigm

However, the soteriology which places too much stress on life after death seems to have more disadvantages than advantages. It is not completely fair to blame only the missionaries, because missionaries were children of their days. They came from a very different context and cultural background. We may point one finger at them for preaching and teaching an other-worldly salvation, but other fingers must certainly be pointed at us.

They viewed things from their own perspective and rightly so. I am not aware of any law which prevents us from challenging what the missionaries taught and developing our own theology. If we have not done so yet, we have only ourselves to blame.

Salvation-later as evident from the soteriologies of Auala, Angula, Shindongo, Shilongo, Iitope, Ngula, Mwafufya, Shindinge, Kaukolwa, Amakutuwa, Dengeinge and many of my informants is partial. In the soteriologies of these ELCIN members, both lay and clergy, the **soul** is made the target of all salvific activities of the church, whereas the body is slighted. The body and the world, the primary group, the community, the society and nature are not regarded as something which the gospel targets to effect transformation. Bishop Auala saw the task of the church as **caaring for the souls**. For him, this was the first priority. The concern for physical, socio-economic wellbeing only featured as a second priority. In an interview (25.07.1996), Bishop Dumeni expressed the same views. "My priority is eternal salvation, the vertical", he said and added: "the horizontal comes only second".

This approach is in line with Greek philosophy which sees the human being as a composite of body, soul and spirit, the spirit or soul being the most significant aspects. Bishop Dumeni argued that eternal salvation was more important than the temporal one. It was for this reason that the vertical took precedence over the horizontal. He argued that this was very important, especially for those church members who, for one reason or another, miss salvation on this side of the grave.

Further, this argument presupposes that God is above and his relationship with human beings is vertical. This view is in line with seventeenth century Protestant Orthodox theology, to "keep the heritage" as Bishop Dumeni would put it. But is God above us? Did he not come down to us in Christ and so horizontalized relationships between himself and human beings? Also, this approach presupposes that human relationships are horizontal. But, is that the case? Are not human relationships vertical by definition? Are not seniors above juniors? Are not pastors above parishioners, deans above pastors, bishops above deans and so on?

Auala rightly held the view that a human being was a sinner who could not save him/herself. He was right to observe that it was God who granted human beings the right of existence and so a human being existed by grace alone. In this respect, Auala was in line with Lutheran anthropology. However, like many pastors of his time, his soteriology was characterised by Platonic elements. He regarded the gospel as a means to prepare human souls for heaven. The gospel had power to liberate the soul from this world of which the body was a part. Heaven and the earth are treated as two separate and opposing entities. This view contradicts the perception of Luther who refused to locate heaven at some specific place. He saw it as the sphere where the power of God was operational.

Auala and Angula in particular, had negative attitudes towards the world. Angula, saw the world as a kind of stop-over for the soul of a believer to fulfil a task: to gather the souls of believers and bring them to Jesus in heaven. A believer, or rather his/her soul, is a stranger on earth. It has little or no responsibility for the world and its condition. When this task has been done, the good Lord Jesus calls it into heaven. This view is common among ELCIN members, particularly the older generations, who fed on pietistic books such as **The Pilgrimage of a Christian** by J. Bunyan and the little book, **The Heart of Man**. This negative attitude is also shared by Iitope and Titus Ngula.

Obviously, this salvation-later soteriology does not encourage believers to take seriously their responsibility towards the world with which they are charged in Genesis 2:15. God said humans are to guard and till the earth. Christ also taught that God loved the world so much that he was obliged by his love to give it his only begotten Son for eternal life (John 3:16f). The kind of theology we encounter among many ELCIN members does not encourage them to get involved in the process whereby the world is to be transformed into a place for all to live in comfort and peace. This kind of theology is evident in many hymns of ELCIN, for an example verse 3 of ELCIN hymn 423 [1991], which reads:

**Tala mwenyo wange lineekela,
Ye Omwene woye u mu itavele.
Ngang' wa mana oweenda woye,
Oto tambulwa nee meulu laye.
Oudjuu aushe wa xula po,**

Ehafo linene handi mono.

[Look my soul, trust. He is your Lord, believe him. If you complete your visit here, you will be received in his heaven. Then all troubles will have ended. Then I will rejoice greatly].

This hymn is quite in line with hymn 536 already quoted in chapter five. It is the soul that is assured that there will come a time of evacuation into heaven.

Efraim Angula, Hendrik Dengeinge, and many others hold the view that at death, a human soul returns to God from where it originally came. Angula has pointed to the necessity of prayer in the midst of earthly troubles. According to him, prayer is not meant to empower the believer and unlock his/her capabilities of transforming the world into a better place. Instead, prayer is seen as a means to increase the expectation of believers that one day the good Lord would free them, or rather their souls, from this troublesome world. They will leave suffering behind when He takes them home to heaven. There is no hope that the world could be changed and living conditions made better. What prayer actually does is to kindle praises in the soul of believers in spite of the horrible conditions they live in. Their internal eyes are being lifted up to look beyond these bad conditions and to see the possibility awaiting them on the other side of this life. Therefore, little effort, if any, is made by the church to empower people to change things on earth. The earth is doomed to perish and the best one can do is to leave it behind.

Another disadvantage of salvation-later as believed, preached and taught by many ELCIN members, both lay and clergy, is that this approach to salvation tends to be legalistic. Many of my lay informants believe that salvation will be gained by fulfilling the Ten Commandments. The youth leaders of the entire ELCIN Church met in January 1995 at Ongwediva. In response to a question put to them, they stated that salvation is available only to those who have obeyed **all** the Ten Commandments. The same belief was expressed by the office workers at Ongwediva Youth and Conference Centre (06. 07.1996), as well as the adult literature class at Ongwediva parish (10.07.1995). As can be observed from the sermon of Rev. Titus Ngula, the emphasis was squarely on what Christians should or should not do, i.e. on the law. It is good to stress the law of God, but it may be dangerous to do so at the expense of the grace and love of God.

The spirit of pietism and revivalism also has tendencies to uphold the law at the expense of the gospel. It is true, therefore, that in many of the sermons of pastors in the ELCIN church, the emphasis is put on the law. Congregations are intimidated by the law and threatened with hell. The wrath of God is overemphasised, ignoring God's graciousness and willingness to forgive and save. In terms of the understanding of Luther about God, many preachers only present the **Deus absconditus** to the listeners while neglecting **the Deus revelatus**. That is law. The result is that, instead of appreciating what God is doing, people are terrified and start fearing, even hating God on account of his impossible demands on them. This is the kind of Christianity one finds in the Sobriety and Revival Movement as we observed from the testimony of Veronika Shindinge and Emilia Mwafufya.

(c) Advantages of the progressive-salvation paradigm

The progressive salvation theory is more attractive to the minds of modern people in that this salvation concerns concrete problems, both physical and spiritual. It is beneficial here and now. Among ELCIN members, I have selected only Hanyango, Ashipala (clergy) and Loide Mbodo (lay) to represent these tendencies. This group believes that the scope of salvation must be wide enough to cover all human needs and respond to all human questions. Whatever motivated Hanyango to see salvation in concrete terms, his perception of salvation was in line with what Jesus was doing to the people of his days. He was not only interested in their souls and in their lives after they had died. He cared for their social, physical, economic and spiritual needs.

In an interview, Nambala expressed wondered as to what made Hanyango differ from his colleagues such as Auala and Angula. Was it a practical lesson he learnt during his missionary activities among the San? That might be so. What is important, however, is to note that Hanyango introduced a practical dimension [salvation-now-too] in the perception of salvation which many pastors have failed to see until recently. We need to learn the lesson from Hanyango that, apart from prayer as suggested by E. Angula, our practical participation in God's redemptive activity is crucial for the completion of the process of salvation. **Ora et labora.**

Similarly, Hanyango teaches us that God is free to use people of different professions and statues in society to effect salvation. He does not only allow God to be God, he also allows salvation to

be an experience whereby every deficiency in human life is addressed. God may use pastors, but he can also use secular leaders to bring about justice, which is part of salvation. This actually means that for Hanyango salvation is more than a spiritual experience.

Perhaps Ashipala was influenced by his encounter with people with marriage problems. In my view, he is right to see salvation as a progressive process which starts on this side of the grave. For him, eternal life is not a second life to be lived after death. It is rather a climax of the new life in Christ already started before death. Ashipala and Bishop Dumeni differ in that the latter sees our relationship to God as vertical whereas the former sees it as horizontal. I agree with that, in Christ, God has horizontalized our relationship to himself. God encounters us via other people. Thus, for Ashipala, salvation proceeds from below.

Ashipala is right that ELCIN has put too much stress on Satan and hell, eternal life and heaven. Ashipala thinks that the theology of most ELCIN pastors is too other-worldly. It makes the church irrelevant, because it ignores the present concrete problems of her members. For Ashipala, Christ must be the Lord who saves now. There is a need for a proper understanding of the biblical meaning of concepts such as soul and heaven. For him, **soul** signifies a person before God. I will return to this in chapter seven.

Loide Mbodo who represents the laity is convinced that the church renders herself irrelevant by concerning herself too much with the unseen and the hoped for. "The soteriology which we normally hear is too other-worldly", she complained in an interview. As teachers and preachers, we need to ensure that the gospel lives up to its name: good news to all.

ELCIN seems to be buried in 16/17th century Protestant theology. Her understanding of salvation is traditional and this has long been challenged by new and modern interpretations. If ELCIN has problems with the understanding of salvation, then this is also the case with the whole of theology, because "soteriology is the existential root of theology" (N rnerberger 1990:206). In bringing this chapter to conclusion, a few deficiencies in the theology of ELCIN have been identified.

(d) Disadvantages of a progressive-salvation paradigm

This theory is appealing because of its emphasis on the contextualization of theology. However, it is not without its possible dangers, of which we mention only five:

(i) The danger of breaking with the past

The danger emerges when this theory gets its proponents to abandon their historical ties with the traditional heritage, [the Pauline-Lutheran in this case]. Balance needs to be kept between evolution and revolution. In the words of Bosch:

Paradigm shift always means both continuity and change, both faithfulness to the past and boldness to engage the future, both constancy and contingency, both tradition and transformation (1995:366).

(ii) The danger of relativism

Overemphasising the context results in relativism where the context determines the truth. It is possible that such a theology loses contact with those elements of the Christian faith "which must be respected and preserved" (Bosch 1995:427). Champions of this theory will do well to built on "universal and context-transcending dimensions of theology" (Bosch 1995:427). So care must be taken that theology is not determined by the context to such a degree that each context has its separate theology unrelated to the universal elements of theology.

(iii) The danger of absolutising contextualism

Western theology was contextualized so much that their culture was elevated to gospel, exported to other continents and made universal. Our own contextualization is not immune. No contextual theology can claim universal validity.

(iv) The danger of know-all attitude

Westerners tended to believe that they alone knew all there is to divine truth. Proponents of this theory can get into the same trap of claiming to know the will of God in every single situation including the future. The truth is that no single system, however good, can monopolise the truth and the will of God.

(v) The danger of spiritual dryness

Although this thesis aims at overcoming the spiritualisation of the concept of salvation, it does not suggest that spirituality should be abandoned. The progressive-salvation theory can remove the eyes of believers from heaven, fix them on mother earth and cause spiritual dryness. Care must, therefore be taken that justification remains the basis and sanctification always ensues from it.

(e) Deficiencies in the theology of ELCIN

Lack of critique

The theology which the early missionaries brought from their home country was uncritically accepted by the young church (ELCIN) as an eternal truth. Their attitude towards the Bible was also embraced without question. Further, their negative views towards liberalism were also internalised. Nothing was questioned or challenged, let alone developed further within the ELCIN context. This seems to be in line with the tendencies in African culture to preserve a tradition. When a person tries something which has never been tried before, it is not uncommon to hear a remark like: **Owe shi uda peni** [Where have you ever heard of such a thing]? **Owe shi mwene sha ningwa nale kulyelye** [Have you ever seen somebody doing such a thing before]? These remarks presuppose that people are not expected to introduce new theories but stick to old ones. Many Owambo families have experienced problems simply because each spouse refuses to change his/her attitude because: I have not seen or heard of such a thing from my father or mother. This also ties with ancestral veneration as we have seen in chapter five.

Current terms such as enculturation, contextualisation and Africanisation are, until now, unheard of in ELCIN's theological and ethical circles (see 7 below). This is so in spite of the fact that some ELCIN theologians have identified the need for such an exercise. In his thesis, S. S. Shivute pointed to a need for making the church more relevant and its ministry more contextual (1981:1). Long before that, T. Shivute pointed to the fact that some theologians recommend dialogue between Christians and people of other faiths because there is a recognition "of God's activities in the world" (1974:100). He "works in all ways in all the world, which is preeminently his world" (1974:100). He maintains that there is no problem with doing so as long as "the uniqueness of Christ" and "the uniqueness of revelation" are not sacrificed (1974:101).

There are many ingredients of **Owambo** spirituality which are not in contrast to the Christian faith, for instance, the sense of community and mutual support. These could be used as significant building blocks of the Christian witness without any harm being done to the uniqueness of God's revelation in Christ.

No own theological and ethical identity

The result of this state of affairs is that ELCIN does not have an independent theological identity. This is evident from the lack of literature written by ELCIN pastors and from the interviews held with both clergy and lay believers in this church, which is over a century old.

No risk-taking

ELCIN is known for her reluctance to take theological risks. She literally clings to what her church-parents originally taught. One still hears remarks referring to what **Kantele, Amutse, Manya, Voipio and other early missionaries** taught. There is, of course, nothing wrong with keeping our lecturers in high esteem. However, the problem is that, theologically, we are still where they left us, as if what they taught was an eternal truth and their paradigms needed no shift. Is there such a thing as an eternal truth? Is every theory not temporal and every truth relative? Is theology static or dynamic? It is for this reason that the church must be open to new theological paradigms even in the case of soteriology.

ELCIN is fortunate to have theologians who, in their studies, have made constructive recommendations as to how she could improve her services. H. Nashihanga, for instance, advises her about "the direction ... [she] should take ... [and] the role [she] ... is expected to play as [she] seeks to render [an] appropriate service to the people of Namibia" (1993:2). He feels that more than anything else, "The church needs to reshape its methods in order to fit the situation it faces" (1993:2). This is a call for the church to render herself relevant to the people she serves and to preach a relevant salvation to her members.

What puzzles me is that the new theological insights, which are discovered by the few who reached university level, have no noticeable impact on the theological status quo in ELCIN. Most

of the young pastors dare not introduce any radical changes after their university education. Either they do not make new theological discoveries in their research or there is just no room for such an implementation. The latter seems most likely.

Up to 1994, ELCIN has produced no less than fifty-eight post graduates. Many of the dissertations of these theologians are put to rest in the Auala library at Oniipa. Some theologians have sent copies of their dissertations to Paulinum. That is good. In practice, however, the impact of their discoveries is minimal. In an interview, Bishop Dumeni gave two possible reasons for this:

(i) They do not read. In general, ELCIN pastors do not read. Consequently, they do not acquire new insight. This is true. A person who does not read can be compared to another who has slept for a decade.

(ii) Bishop Dumeni also thinks that theologians are just not confident enough of themselves. For him, a theologian who has acquired some knowledge and insight need not even be invited to share it. He/she must be motivated and brave enough to present his findings and recommendations. Dumeni thinks that there are people who have every opportunity to implement what they have learned, but they do not do so. I concur.

Nambala puts some of the blame on the past. He reminds that we have to recognise "the colonial impact on the theological" platform during the apartheid era when "people in this country were taught not to think critically almost on anything". That was also an epoch of seclusion "whereby Namibian theologians could not engage in trans-border theological debates, seminars or symposia". It follows therefore that "the chance to review the missionary perception was narrow" (written comment on this chapter, p.2; 02.08.1996).

Newly graduated theologians have difficulties in sharing their insights and challenging established paradigms because, if they tried, they would be swimming against the theological current of the church. Rev. F. Ashipala, for instance, remarks that only a few people are courageous enough to upset well established norms. Unfortunately, as I see it, the theological

current of ELCIN is flowing backwards if it does not stagnate. This means, the majority of pastors or theologians in ELCIN are not inquisitive enough to find out about new theological theories.

No platform for theological gymnastics

To have no debate, no critique, no challenge means to accept, maintain and defend the status quo. This means maintaining and defending existing theological paradigms. In practice, it means facing backwards to the theology of our church-parents: Kantele, Lehto, Alho, Voipio, Eirola, Auala, Dumeni and others. This further means, we do not grow theologically or develop our own theological identity. Nambala is right that there is no renowned Namibian theologian as yet, let alone in ELCIN (02.08.1996). So one should seriously ask: what is wrong with our theologians, or with ELCIN?

I feel that, contrary to what Nambala asserts (see above), Namibian theologians had good reasons to develop a down-to earth soteriology hooking on to the Open Letter of the Lutheran Church leaders on 1971 (Katjavivi, Forstin and Mbuende 1989:133ff). Why was there no integration of the said letter into the theory and message of salvation one hears from the pulpits? The normal practice during the struggle for liberation was that the church was involved, but this involvement was not clearly articulated theologically. Pastors and believers should have been made aware of the fact that this involvement is, in fact, a way of working out our salvation with fear and trembling in the concrete situation. Many other countries, such as South Africa, were also isolated, but they did develop theologically, Why?

This brings another issue to the fore. ELCIN is renowned for its institutional preoccupation. There is no platform in ELCIN upon which theologians can debate theological issues free from constitutional matters and their official duties. There is no theological magazine or journal. The only church newspaper, **Omukwetu** is theologically dry. If a theological article appears, people either reject or accept it silently. Nobody dares to question what has been said.

It is for this reason that we have very few theological books written by our own theologians. One of the good books produced by ELCIN pastors is **Ehongoxupifo** [Salvation], by A. Kaulinge and

A. Sheyavali. Instead of developing this book for use in confirmation classes, for instance, ELCIN opted for foreign materials and spent a lot of money translating them into the vernacular. Confirmation class teachers have already complained that the books are too difficult to understand and too long to cover in a limited time. If this is true, it calls for the use of locally produced materials which speak directly to the needs of our people. **Ehongoxupifo** is appealing in that it is African oriented and compares **Owambo** culture with the Biblical faith. It helps us to see which parts of **Owambo** spirituality could be integrated into the Christian faith without any harm to the gospel or to the uniqueness of Christ.

What about the so-called Theological Committee? Many people whom I have interviewed believe that it has not been functional or productive for a long time. According to my informants, this committee did not have an agenda of its own. Of course, if you do not know where you are going, you go nowhere and any road will get you there. If you do not know what to do, you can do anything or nothing. The Committee does not take any initiative. Instead, it waits until the Church Council instructs it to look into a certain issue only and report back. It will meet only in response to that instruction. But I think that the meetings of such a committee should be established routine, say quarterly. It should become the task of each member as well as for the general membership of the church to place burning theological and ethical issues on its table. It should be in the habit of producing literature.

Policy makers decide on theological issues

Perhaps the problem lies with the Constitution of ELCIN which prescribes in resolution 167 that it is the Diocesan Council, the Bishop and the Synod who take care that the correct teaching prevails (1993:91). In many cases, this too means maintaining the traditional theology, since bishops and deans are not always researchers and not all members of councils and synods are theologians. However, there appears to be no place for theological debate by this forum. Once again the theological current flows in the opposite direction, towards the past or else it stagnates altogether. It is not that old paradigms are replaced by new, but that the new are prevented by the old from taking root.

The Constitution of ELCIN provides for the progressive training of its pastors and theologians, but the organisation fails to live up to its stipulations. The Symposia Generalia which were introduced by Dr. T. Shivute²⁸ as a forum of theological and ethical debate, have almost died a natural death since he left to take up a position of lectureship at the Paulinum Theological Seminary. Nothing tangible has been produced to help the church in theological and ethical matters. Some people say that these symposia were not taken seriously by the church leadership, therefore they had no funds. Others blame the officers in the office of Christian Education which was charged with this task. Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that very few documents on theological or ethical issues were produced. I am only aware of the voice of ELCIN on AIDS and her statement on abortion.

To date, the only training which ELCIN has carried out is to send some individuals to Universities outside Namibia. This, of course, has been a brilliant tradition. Unfortunately, ELCIN seems to experience problems when such researchers return home. Bishop Dumeni put it this way: the problem is the lack of skilled workers. Because of this, people are not assigned to the areas of their specialities. Consequently, they cannot implement what they have learnt or discovered. I agree, but this comes very close to wasting money, time and energy. What can we do about it? Should we not rethink this procedure seriously and consider sending people for further training or studies for specific responsibilities? When are we going to have experts? If the person who has majored in counselling is assigned to an administrative office, and another who has studied Christian Education is made a dean upon return, when do we expect them others to deliver the goods?

Because these theologians are preoccupied with administration, it is difficult for them to test their theological theories and produce something theologically tangible. They are almost compelled to join the prevailing current and swim with others in the traditional direction. In practice, the church offers old solutions to new problems. As a result ELCIN continues to preach and teach 16th and 17th century theology. It may be argued that they can exercise their skills wherever they

²⁸ Dr. Shivute was a Secretary of Christian Education in ELCIN. He organised symposia aimed at theological debates. My hypothesis is that if he had remained longer in that capacity, these symposia could have achieved their original aims, to serve as a theological forum and to produce theological literature.

find themselves. I contend that this is true only to a certain degree. In the final analysis, this is not a viable solution.

Little contribution to current theological and ethical debate

Because of the shortcomings outlined above, ELCIN does not participate much in the current debate on theological, ethical and socio-economic issues. ELCIN has so far failed to facilitate a theological debate in search of a direction on the questions of reconciliation, AIDS and abortion. The voice of ELCIN on AIDS must be welcomed. But there is a need for a more serious theological debate on the issue in search of possible alternatives and solutions. Paulus Heita believes that "a balance needs to be struck between pietism-revivalism on the one hand and a theo-ethical debate on the other" (interview with the researcher on the 22.07.1996). He is absolutely right. The two must keep each other in check.

Concerning abortion, ELCIN was brave enough to make a statement "although ELCIN has not been directly approached on this issue" (1996:1). However, the question remains, what happened to the mighty ELCIN of the 1970s and the 1980s? It is a bad sign when the largest of all the churches in Namibia is not consulted on this or on other important issues. It simply means that such a church is no longer a force to be reckoned with. It is true, as the statement says, that the church should "feel the need of expressing herself" (ELCIN 1996:1) on any issue and she should not wait until she is consulted. We should pick things up and react on them right away. To say it differently, we should address all human deficiencies wherever they occur. The church should make her presence felt in society.

The content of the statement on abortion is also unsatisfactory for two reasons: (i) It is a repetition of what the church "once stated in 1985 regarding abortion" (ELCIN 1996:1) which again confirms my suspicion that the theological and ethical thinking of ELCIN is geared to the tradition, to the old paradigms. We tend to look back and pick up what we find in the past to address the problems of today. In fact the reiteration of the stand of the church of more than a decade ago on the abortion issues presupposes that nothing has changed in the morality of society since that time. Therefore, the remedy for 1985 is the remedy for 1996. But is that true? (ii) The statement did not interact with specific points of the proposed bill. It is a very general statement

rather than a theological and ethical response to specific ethical issues on abortion. (iii) No appeal is made to African morality so as to ask whose morality will be reflected in the final bill. (iv) The statement did not question the perception implied in the bill that the soul comes to the developing fetus at some definite point of its growth. This kind of reasoning is certainly informed by Greek philosophy that the human being is composed of body and soul which are quite distinct in origin and destiny and only merge for a time while we live on earth. This further implies that the soul is more important than the body, because only when the soul has entered the embryo is a human being formed and only then is it a case of murder when one aborts it. If the theology of ELCIN was right on the soul/body issue, she should have presented a stronger argument.

Contextualisation, enculturation and Africanisation

A further negative consequence is that there is little contextualisation and enculturation in ELCIN. There are many ingredients of Owambo spirituality which are not in contrast to the Christian faith. These can help our parishioners to appreciate some aspects of traditional religion, and discover that Christianity is not a foreign religion after all.

Too much law, too little gospel

Another problem which seems to suggest that the theology of ELCIN is oriented to the past is the overemphasis put on the law at the expense of the gospel which results in legalism. ELCIN is, on the whole, law-oriented. We are good at telling people what not to do, but very weak at telling them what God has done for them in Christ. Further, there seems to be too much accent put on problems without helping people to find solutions to them. The perception is that the solutions to past problems are applicable to the problems of the day. For this reason, pastors tell people what is wrong and problematic and the consequences of certain actions, without helping them how to overcome such problems. Because the law predominates, the gospel is suffocated. The wrath of God is held up, and the love of God is concealed. People are always bombarded with the law. Consequently, there is a strong perception among our members that salvation comes by fulfilling the law. Many of my informants believe that they have to obey **all** commandments in order to be saved. This, of course, is salvation by merits, by works of the law, which is not a Lutheran view at all. One can therefore argue that on the whole ELCIN is a church of the law without the gospel, as is evident from the many sermons I have studied.

The concept of salvation is neither appropriate nor versatile

The culmination of all the pitfalls outlined above is that the ELCIN message of salvation remains irrelevant and other-worldly. Its theology has, in many cases, failed to respond to the concrete needs of its parishioners and society at large. Ashipala writes, as indicated above, that many Christians are probably fed up with our monotonous message of hell and heaven. They have heard enough of it. What they would like to hear is what Christ means for them now and here. What does Christ mean for people with marriage problems, the unemployed, people with AIDS, orphans, widows, etc. They expect the church to respond to these day-to-day problems. Thus, ELCIN should not just be concerned with orthodoxy but, also with orthopraxis. Today there is just no mutual check between theory and praxis. It is also true that there is no connection between the official emphasis of the church in matters of salvation and the ministers on the ground. To a certain degree, the leadership of ELCIN sees the scope of salvation wide enough to cover the whole person, but what is preached to the people is salvation for the soul. As has been mentioned above, Bishop Dumeni seems to have wide horizons and at least some documents imply that officially the church would like to be open for a comprehensive soteriology, but this intention does not penetrate the lower rungs.

In his thesis, Martin Nelumbu has clearly linked salvation to liberation. "When we talk of liberation ... we mean 'salvation' of the whole person - experienced both in spiritual and physical sense" (1994:6). For Israel, liberation was a historical experience in historical and concrete predicaments such as slavery (1994:141), oppression (1994:255), enemy threats (1994:88), sickness (1994:113), and its consequences of death and entry into Sheol (1994:110ff). Salvation must be **shalom** which means comprehensive wellbeing (Nelumbu 1994:261).

The need for a relevant concept of salvation for ELCIN has also been pointed out by Nambala. Against salvation-later, as preached by most of ELCIN pastors, Nambala stressed that the main concern in our proclamation is not salvation over there, in the remote future, but salvation here and now (1986:14). According to the New Testament testimony, God loves this world. Consequently, salvation which is a divine act must "be understood as something to do with this life here (and with) life to come as well" (Nambala 1986:15). God cares for our present as he does for our future, and this must be part of our proclamation on the pulpit and of our practice.

I would therefore encourage ELCIN pastors and Christians to see salvation not as "a combination of many 'little salvations'" (Nambala 1986:18) but as intervals of a progressive experience of reliefs from different deficiencies, starting with human life on this side of the grave but culminating in an eschatological salvation in eternity. This makes salvation both a past, present and future experience. The right of existence now is already the realisation of divine eschatological salvation.

If recommendations mentioned above are not taken seriously, there can be no development of theology in ELCIN and no theological identity for her. Care must be taken that the correct information is disseminated down to the parish levels. Deans and bishops should develop a habit of speaking about major theological and ethical issues in their visitations and opening addresses. A devotional talk is just not enough. If bishops and deans are to guard against false teaching, it follows that they must champion the correct teaching.

6.3 Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this chapter to clarify the soteriology prevalent in ELCIN. Two different perspectives on salvation have been found. On the one hand there are ELCIN members who believe that salvation is an eschatological experience of the **soul** to be realised after death. This group continues the soteriology of the missionaries which has already been outlined in chapter five.

The adherents of this soteriological paradigm tend to have a sceptical attitude towards the world. For them, the believers are aliens in this world and their task is only to prepare **souls** for an imminent evacuation into heaven. The world is not their home; therefore they have little or no responsibility towards it.

Consequently, supporters of this view cannot help but engage in a spirituality which is both dualistic and escapist. For them, God "yearns jealously over the spirit which he made to be in us" (James 4:5). This spirit is understood to be a divine spark which God has put in humans (Genesis 2:7) according to which "the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man become a living being." It will allegedly return to God at

the hour of death. In the light of human misery on earth, believers are admonished to use prayer as a means to alleviate their misery. They should find comfort in the fact that not only are many believers praying for them, but that Jesus Himself and the Holy Spirit are praying for and with them. That we should actively conquer evil and suffering is not implied.

The champions of the "salvation-later" paradigm put a very strong accent on the law and the imminence of the Parousia. Therefore their slogan is: **be vigilant and watchful**. Awakening and revivalism are hallmarks of authentic spirituality.

Contrary to the salvation-later paradigm there are those who see salvation as a progressive experience of relief being accomplished in the present as a pledge for eschatological fulfilment. This view makes salvation both a divine initiative and a human response to alleviate human incompleteness, whether physical or spiritual. The slogan here is **ora et labora** [pray and work].

This group maintains that if the scope of salvation is allowed to be as wide as it should according to the biblical witness, and the daily human problems are responded to, social salvation will pave the way and, in fact, culminate in eschatological salvation. There are no two separate experiences of rescue, but one progressive salvation. This group does not reject the eschatological salvation of the soul as such. The point is that, for them, the soul is not a separate aspect of a human being, but the entire person before God.

This group advises the church not to limit the concept of salvation to the soul (spiritualisation) or limit her proclamation to the law (legalism) unless the spiritualising trend emphasises the gospel. What must be preached and taught is the Christ-event and its implications for the believer here and now and in eternity.

The Finnish missionaries who came to Namibia were revived pious Christians rather than theologians. The theology they had was rather shallow and permeated by pietistic and dualistic ideas. Unfortunately ELCIN took over their perceptions without question. To make things worse, she did not develop them further as a self-propagating church, in spite of having her own qualified theologians. Missionaries did their duty by bringing the liberating gospel to us. For

that we must be truly thankful and remain liberated. Most of the blame for the stagnation of ELCIN theology goes to ELCIN theologians and leaders.

There is a need for openness to change. Obsolete paradigms of theology in general and soteriology in particular must be adjusted or replaced by new ones. ELCIN has to make maximum use of the theologians within her own ranks. Such theologians themselves must come forward in theological and ethical matters and do their part in the process of building the society and the church. This further calls for a forum specifically for theological dialogue without which the church can hardly acquire a theological identity of her own. It also means that theological issues should not be left to church policy makers alone. The Committee on Theology should be re-activated and given more autonomy. Only then can the church expect herself to be relevant and effective in the Namibian milieu.

If the above proposals are accepted and implemented, ELCIN shall resume her role and status in society as a power to be reckoned with. This will happen if she is able to offer an appropriate and versatile understanding of salvation which is wide enough in scope to respond to social, physical and spiritual needs. Only then shall we teach and preach the kind of salvation which is in line with the biblical faith.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TOWARDS A PARADIGM FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SOTERIOLOGY

7.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter concerns the centre of this thesis (cf map, p. 4) to which the Pauline-Lutheran soteriological heritage (chapters one and two), the **Owambo** traditional concern for human wellbeing (chapters three and four) and the Finnish-ELCIN concept of salvation (chapters five and six) should contribute if the desired inclusive concept of salvation is to be realised. By now we know that no theory of salvation can claim permanency for all have been challenged. The reason for the temporality of such theories lies in the fact that human needs, which these theories were meant to address, are constantly changing. It seems impossible, therefore, to have a permanent or universal theory of salvation. However, the fundamentals can be the same. The chapter calls for a definition of salvation which is informed by the biblical witnesses and by concrete human needs. Its scope should be wide enough to respond to all human needs in different circumstances. It also looks at the ethical implications of salvation, arguing that the saved should become 'saviours' for others. Finally, it makes a few recommendations for ELCIN to help her on her way to theological and ethical maturity; to take her rightful position in society; to meet the challenges of the day, and to regain her relevancy.

7.2 Dissatisfaction with some soteriological paradigms

The twentieth century has seen the emergence of new soteriological theories because the established ones have become obsolete and irrelevant. The most important schools which tried to find a more adequate concept of salvation are: **social gospel** [Rauschenbusch 1861-1918] with its opposition to individualism and capitalism and its stress on justice, democracy, social involvement, brotherhood and the kingdom of God (Magnoson 1994:1028); **political theology** (1960s, Moltmann and Menz) which stressed hope and the fact that eschatology and salvation have entered the present to give "the church a much broader vision of reality than a 'mere' private vision of personal salvation" (Smith 1994:533); **liberation theology** (Gutierrez) which calls for the application of theological truths to human situations to improve them, the realisation of love

for God in the love for one another, the encounter of God in one another and the salvation as wholeness (Webster 1994:637); **black theology** (Cone, Maimela) with its emphasis on the interpretation "of the gospel of Christ in the light of the black condition" to improve it (Maimela 1983:34). All these schools have called for "a qualitative and intensive concepts of salvation" which cannot "be postponed for another time in the future and in another world" (Mofokeng 1983:52); **feminist theology** (Daly, Russel) which rejects male religious symbolism which encourage male superiority and female domination (Maimela 1983:42) and calls on women to be subjects of history (Maimela 1983:43). It calls for the equality of sexes in a society which look at women as less than human (Sutphin 1977:50).

In his article **Salvation or Liberation**, Nürnberger expresses his discontent with some of the theological traditions:

The fact that I deal with this theme at all, is a symptom of my frustrations with evangelical theology, with liberation theology and with the seeming impossibility to get the message of the Bible across in a situation of social conflict (1990:106).

This quote presupposes inadequacy in the theories of salvation put forward by evangelical and liberation theologians. David Bosch shares this dissatisfaction and calls for a new reflection on our perception of salvation, even if it means revisiting our biblical view of salvation (1995:399).

Liberation theologians too, whether blacks or feminists, share dissatisfaction with the classical view of salvation, alleging that it is incapable of responding adequately to the real needs of the downtrodden (Maimela 1987:88ff). This common unhappiness indicates that there is a need for a new concept of salvation. In view of the focus of this thesis the **Owambo** theory of salvation may be added to those two. This suggests that none of the theories of salvation is completely satisfactory. This necessitates a need of formulating a theory of salvation which is more versatile and comprehensive, so as to respond to concrete human needs whatever form they take. It is now in order to briefly summarise the pitfalls of the models of salvation as presented by the classical, the liberation and the African traditional religions.

7.2.1 The classical theory of salvation

The classical theory of salvation has been challenged because of its alleged inadequacy to respond to all human needs. For Bosch it is inadequate precisely because it focuses either on the pre-existence and incarnation of Christ, or on his death on the cross, or on his ethical life and ministry. The accent is rarely put on all three (1995:399). For liberation theologians it spiritualises salvation and privatises the work of Christ on the cross. Salvation is confined to a personal relationship between God and the sinner. Consequently, it does not solve the concrete problems experienced in concrete situations. It is dualistic, other-worldly and irrelevant (Maimela 1987:88ff). They call for "salvation as total-wellbeing in community with others" (Sutphin 1977:41).

7.2.2 The liberationist notion of salvation

Included here are also black and feminist theologies. Contrary to classical theology, Liberation theology tends to politicise, secularise and despiritualises salvation. The two seem to be on two opposing poles. The one is too other-worldly; the other is too this-worldly and too social.

It is also inadequate in view of what Nürnberger calls their 'shallow' and 'biased' concept of sin and evil, as well as their selective use of scriptures (1986:202f,207f). Concerning sin and evil, only the oppressors are held responsible; the victims are completely innocent. This cannot possibly be true. Concerning scriptures, only texts in favour of the poor and the oppressed are selected. Those which seem to show grace to the rich, or challenge both the poor and the oppressed, are ignored. Concerning salvation, therefore, liberation theology is as guilty as classical theology, even though they are at opposite extremes.

7.2.3 The African theory of salvation

The upsurge of interest in African theology is yet another sign that Africans are unhappy with the primitive theories of salvation which are geared to the Western world view. Africans are calling for enculturation whereby aspects of their traditional religions are utilised to express their relationship to God and its implications for their lives here and now without running into the danger of syncretism. They call for cross-fertilisation between Christianity and African beliefs and practices in religious or cultural aspects where the latter do not negate the former. Mercy Amba Oduyoye seemingly opts for outright syncretism:

The word 'syncretism' has become a bogey word, used to frighten all who venture to do Christian theology in the context of other world views and religions. But is syncretism not in fact positive and unavoidable? Christian theology and practice have always interacted with the religious and philosophical presuppositions of the various periods. (1985:114)

This quote shows that its author failed to see the differences between syncretism and enculturation. Not all African Christian theologians would agree with the view that Africans call for a syncretistic religion, that the concept is positive, and that it is unavoidable (Oduyoye 1985:114). That there is no pure religion calls for enculturation but not for syncretism. If "syncretism of the Christian gospel occurs when critical or basic elements of the gospel are replaced by religious elements from the host culture" (Imbach 1994:1062) then this is not what African theologians have in mind when they call for cross-fertilisation between Christianity and their religion. This "undermines the uniqueness of the gospel" (Imbach 1994:1062) for it leads to serving two masters and try to please both (Matt.6:24).

Soteriology is crucial for Africans, but it is practical. Western oriented soteriological theories are not capable of adequately addressing concrete problems of African people. Therefore, calls for a relevant salvation for Africa have recently become common. To be relevant, theology must speak of a relevant salvation, of a deliverance of all people from whatever threatens their lives, present and future, for as Becken says: "there is little use in offering salvation from a situation about which he [a human being] is little bothered" (1974:7). A relevant concept of salvation for Africans must of necessity be wide in scope so as to be able to liberate them from fear of evil, as personified in witches, sorcerers and wizards, imaginary and superhuman. It must be capable of liberating Africans from the consequences of sinful acts such as inferiority complexes, poverty, oppression, exploitation, sickness, social disharmony, social tensions, the dependence syndrome and death, particularly, premature death. It must be a salvation which liberates African people from all kinds of material and psychological misfortunes in this world for a better life here and now and not only for the world on the other side of the grave.

The consequences of the Christ-event must become a reality in the present life of Africans and Christ's words in Luke 4:18ff must become true in their concrete situations of incompleteness.

The redemptive work of Christ must bring about **shalom**, a total wellbeing in body, mind and spirit to the African. It must affect the life of an individual and of **ekumwe** [community]. African theologians particularly want to bring their contribution to Christianity to enrich it and make it more whole. Particularly, African theologians want to challenge theologians to return to scriptures to rediscover the scriptural notion of reality and humanity.

A sense of **wholeness of the person** is manifested in the African attitude to life. Just as there is no separation between the sacred and the secular in communal life, neither is there a separation between the soul and the body in a person. Spiritual needs are as important for the body as bodily needs are for the soul. ... Moreover, for wholesome life people not only have to be at peace with themselves, but also must be fully integrated into the community. The African contribution can help purge the Christian religion of the separation of the human being into body, soul, and spirit (Oduyoye 1986:112).

Care must be taken here that an impression is not created that **Ovawambo** did not distinguish between different aspects of human reality. Although they do not separate those aspects as Greek philosophers did, **Ovawambo** distinguish between four aspects: **omhepo**, literally meaning wing, but also breath or character of a human being. Closely related to this is **omwenyo**, which means life, soul or character. It was believed to live in the blood. **Omutima** is another concept which means physical heart or human character. Then, a human being has the physical aspect called **olutu** [the body] (Aarni 1982:66ff). Together, these different aspects constitute **omunhu omudidi** [the entire human being] whose needs must be met. When one or more of such human aspects are not well, there is deficiency and lack of wholeness. **Ovawambo** would try hard to right this wrong.

But African soteriology too has serious limitations. Its principal weakness lies in its insistence that the ancestors have a role to play in the salvation of their living relatives. My strongest objection is that, according to this theory, salvation is not only left in the hands of a fallible human being like me, it is, in fact, left in the hands of a person who exists only in human memories. If my salvation is left in the hands of my late grandmother, it is in the hands of a person who depends on me because if I do not sacrifice to her, or if three or four generations pass and recent famous members of the family take her place, then she fades away (Aarni 1982:66f). And my salvation? By implication this means that my salvation depends on me. If salvation means 'wholeness' as

Africans claim, ancestors cannot help me achieve the status of wholeness. They have no idea about all the modern problems which I experience in my days such as completing my degree, a bug in my computer software, etc. There is, for me, nothing wrong in remembering my grandmother, but there is no risk worse than entrusting my salvation into the hands of a fellow human being, dead for that matter.

Moreover, as humans, **ovakwamhungu**, are as imperfect as their living relatives. They could make mistakes or be manipulated to be partial. In terms of time, they are behind me in the past. So in claiming my life, they suck me into the past, their life time, rather than releasing me into the future which I need to overcome. So their claim is enslaving and not liberating as that of Christ Jesus (Nürnberger 1995:19-22ff). This is against development, progress and change.

It is evident that there is a measure of agreement between theologians about the inadequacy of the different notions of salvation. Thus, the call of Bosch for a return to scriptures must be sounded again and be adhered to, for our central problem seems to be our selective use of scriptures on the one hand and our disregard of some aspects of human problems on the other. In the words of Nürnberger:

The most intractable problem which we face in soteriology today is the failure of the Christian faith to see the comprehensiveness of the problem. We tend to isolate certain aspects of the human predicament and absolutise them at the expense of others. Spiritual salvation, for instance, is pitted against political liberation and vice versa. As a result we find it difficult to come to grips with the great dilemmas and challenges of our times. (1995:10-1)

On the whole, Christian theology is sick with a disease called dualism. The point that life should be approached holistically has been missed. We need to heed the call of Kretzschmar and join her in search of "a holistic spirituality" (1996:63). This will help us to view a human being as a unit. Here we can learn from the **Owambo** religion it tends to regard human life holistically. We should open up and allow the challenges emanating from other religions to send us back to our roots. It does not help us to insist on our traditions because, after all, these might be wrong.

7.3 The elimination of two false alternatives

The problem of finding a relevant model for salvation can also be expressed in terms of the tendency in theological circles to think of wrong alternatives. The entanglement of theology with Platonic philosophy, for instance, led Christian theologians to think of salvation in terms of soul and body. There is a need to rid theology of this philosophical garment. To do that, we have to consider eliminating some of the false alternatives entrenched in soteriological theories.

7.3.1 *Immortality versus resurrection*

Both the concept of immortality and resurrection refer to life after death but the two are not identical. 'Immortality of the soul' is a Greek concept, while 'resurrection of the body' is a Judeo-Christian term (Tremmel 1984:169). According to Greek philosophy, the soul is not created; it is indestructible and eternal. According to the Judeo-Christian theology the soul is created by God and is mortal. He can destroy it at will. For the Greeks, the body is not only created, it is evil and serves as a prison for the soul; the Greek philosophers therefore believe that the soul is entrapped in the evil body from which it escapes to freedom only at the moment of death. By contrast Jewish and Christians teach that the both the body and the soul are mortal and are given new life in resurrection.

The differences between immortality and mortality of the soul become very explicit when the death scenes of Socrates of Athens and of Jesus the Nazarene are contrasted (Cullmann 1965:12). Socrates died a calm and admirable death. Jesus died a painful and contemptible death (Cullmann 1965:13f; Matt.27:46). It was Socrates, a great teacher who spoke to younger prisoners with him about death and immortality in an attempt to make it more acceptable to them.

He had led them to understand that death was a friend, a great liberator, for it freed the soul from the confines and restrictions of the body. The soul was indestructible -immortal. (Tremmel 1984:170)

On the basis of that perception, Socrates believed that it was far better for him to die earlier because death was not the end but the beginning of freedom. Trying to save his life for a moment was, in fact, saving a life "which [was] already gone" (Tremmel 1984:170). Delaying death, was delaying 'his' freedom and his salvation for he was the soul, not the body (Cullmann 1965:13). He

drank poison of his own will and died "quietly, serenely, securely" (Tremmel 1984:170). So the Greeks, and finally Christians came to believe that, in the words of Brown:

The body is mortal, subject to corruption, and will decay after the moment of physical death. The soul on the contrary, is immortal, not subject to corruption, and will continue in unending and eternal existence, apart from the body. (1964:187)

This philosophy is comfortable for humans and easy to accept, for who wants to die? It makes death more acceptable and easy to face. What can be good news for humans than a message that the human soul, the real self, is indestructible, absolutely immortal, imperishable and permanent (Tremmel 1984:170)? And it seems true. We are brought up in the understanding that the body is troublesome. It has evil desires. It gets sick. So it makes sense to believe that it is a vessel, the soul is its content; a prison in which the real person, the soul is locked up until death frees it. Even Paul's words in Romans 7:1ff may be misunderstood to mean just that. He sounds as if it was his soul that was speaking within the body. In fact, it is not the body which has desires, but the soul. The body only has needs. And so we see again one of the deceitful aspects of the hellenistic view: it shifts the blame from the person to the body.

But the concept of the immortality of the soul is foreign to the Judeo-Christian faith. It occurs only in Rom.2:7; 1 Cor.15:53-54; 1 Tim.6:16, and 2 Tim.1:10. Theologians agree that it was "through the Greek tributary" that it came into Christian theology (Brown 1964:187). The biblical words for 'immortality' are **athanasia** and **aphtharsia**. In 1 Cor. 15:53-54 **athanasia** characterises the resurrected body which is no longer subject to death. In 1 Tim. 6:16 it describes the nature of God. Only God is inherently immortal. **Aphtharsia** denotes indestructibility and incorruptibility (1 Cor. 15:42ff AV.). In Rom.2:7 immortality is used to refer to the glory and honour which awaits believers and to which they aspire. In 2 Tim. 1:10, immortality is brought about by Christ by destroying death and bringing new life. In the words of Kerr:

It may be said ... that immortality in the biblical sense is a condition in which the individual is not subjected to death or to any influence which might lead to death. God is uniquely immortal in that he is without beginning or end of life and is not in any way affected by change or diminution. Man, on the other hand, is immortal only by derivation and when his mortal body has been replaced by one which is immortal (1994:552).

Like Socrates, Jesus was courageous in facing death. He did not avoid the agony of his crucifixion. But he did not share the Platonic belief of the indestructibility and eternity of the soul. Death is an enemy which must be feared, fought and defeated. Therefore, for him, death could not be a friend or liberator of the soul from the body. It is an enemy that annihilates the creation of God, body and soul. It does not bring salvation but destruction of the plan of God. When confronted by death, Jesus was "greatly distressed and troubled" (Mark 14:33). "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death", he said (Matt. 14:34). He prayed to the Father: "remove this cup from me" (Mark 14:36; Cullmann 1965:14ff).

Three things emerge from this contrast: first, that there are wide differences between the Greek and Christian positions on the concept of life on the other side of the grave; second, that traditional theology has taken on a foreign garb, and third, that there is a necessity to get rid of it if theology is to remain plausible. We should note here that the adoption of the Hellenistic dualistic thought pattern is the reason why traditional Christology became spiritualised. This is an example of how things can go wrong during the process of enculturation. This was enculturation which has impaired the effectiveness of the gospel. Those who call for some syncretism like Oduyoye above should thus learn a lesson here.

Only when death is perceived as an ultimate enemy of God and his creation can the recreative activities of God be appreciated. Cullmann is right: "if life is to issue out of so genuine a death as this, a new divine act of creation is necessary" (1965:18f). If this divine and necessary act of reconciliation is to be of any meaning, it must create anew. Creating anew then must mean the calling back to life of the entire human being and not only some of his/her parts such as the body. What is to be re-instituted is everything which God has created and everything that death has obliterated. To make that possible, Christ had to enter death itself and conquer it from within (Phil.2:8).

Here there is a basic difference between Greek thoughts and Judeo-Christian theology. For the former, there is no need for recreation because what is essential, the soul, survives the onslaught of the enemy, namely death. It does not need recreation because it was not created in the first

place and did not die to require recreation. For the latter, however, there is a need for resurrection through which God recreates what was destroyed and so demonstrates his/her superiority over the power of death.

Kerr formulates the differences between the Greek and biblical idea of immortality as follows:

The biblical idea of immortality thus differs from all others in certain important aspects. One of these is that in non-biblical teaching man is inherently immortal. Another is that it is the spiritual aspect of human nature only which is thought to be immortal. The human soul or spirit survives death. (1994:552)

To be in accord with the Pauline-Lutheran theology, anthropology and eschatology, we must strip Christian theology of the Greek dualism. We should return to the original Jewish-Christian perceptions of God who is for us, with us and not against us, who wills our total wellbeing and is able to bring it about. The genuine biblical witness sees a human being as a unit.

Owambo anthropology could help us here because although they recognise different aspects which constitute a human being, they insist on their inseparability in life or death as we have shown above. Without repeating, we only emphasise the fact that **Owambo** philosophy did not split a human being into two conflicting aspects of body and soul. A human being was viewed as a unit and the soul was not believed to be imprisoned by the body. Likewise, they kept a balance between social and individual dimensions of a human being. A person was an individual member of **ekumwe**.

In death, both the body and the soul are destroyed. In resurrection both are recreated. In other words, it is death which must be conquered in resurrection, not the body (Cullmann 1965:18f). Therefore the Judeo-Christian tradition clearly rejects the whole immortality theology to embrace the extremely radical belief of recreation, best known as resurrection.

A person who is dead is dead! Totally. Only as God recreates that person does he or she live again. To die is to be annihilated. To live again is to be resurrected, and, according to John's revelation, resurrected only at the end of time (Tremmel 1984:172).

It is painful not to be. However, even if the feeling of being nothing is frightening, die we must. This is the only way we allow God to be God and Christ to overcome death. He died and his

Father rescued him (Mark 23:46). The comparison between the death of Socrates and Jesus is most persuasive and directive. It helps us to undress Christian theology of its Platonic attire. If we want to be biblical, capture the perception of Jesus Christ in this matter and walk in the footsteps of the early Christians, we must depart from the comforting idea of immortality and learn to live with what seems so radical, disconcerting and impossible, the resurrection of the dead. It was the intimidating power of death which compelled theologians to find comfort in the Greek doctrine of immortality as opposed to the resurrection theology which comes from Judaism (Tremmel 1996:172).

We cannot possibly live in both camps. We have to choose either to follow Socrates via Plato or Jesus via the Bible. It is the compromise between the positions of these influential figures which finally became responsible for the soteriological chaos in which we find ourselves today. As things stand now, traditional theologians have "endorsed a doctrine of immortality, as well as a doctrine of resurrection" (Tremmel 1984:172) as though they are obliged to live with both.

According to genuine Christian theology, there is nothing immortal in a human being. The influence and impact of the philosophy of Plato, especially its acceptance by the Christian theologians is, indeed, lamentable even though "they did not endorse the idea that the soul was immortal by its own indestructible nature" (Tremmel 1984:172), but struck a compromise between the two ideas: that the immortality which the soul possessed was a divine gift. Many church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tatian, Theophilus, Arnobius, Lactantius took the position that the soul was a creation of God which he can destroy at will. This was true also for Augustine who internalised much of the Platonic views about the immortality theology arguing that the soul "is not as immortal as God is" (Tremmel 1984:172).

Early biblical literature is silent on this subject which shows that the idea of life beyond the grave was not a central part of the Hebrew spirituality at all. Judaism, we are told by Tremmel,

was a religion of God and God's Chosen People. It was a religion not of life-after-death salvation, but of moral righteousness and of national salvation. Jews may or may not believe in their own personal survival after death, but to the degree that they are Jews they hold firm to the keeping of God's holy law and to the ultimate triumph and fulfilment of Israel as the kingdom of God (1984:174).

The Old Testament speaks of the death of people who have gone down to Sheol (Job 10:20-22; 14:13ff.; Ps.88:10-12 et al). Sheol was not outside the scope of the power of God as we read in Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2. But deliverance from Sheol means prevention of death rather than resurrection from the dead. (Job 19:25-27; Ps.16:10,49:14ff). It was in apocalyptic literature that this deliverance was developed into the idea of resurrection and only God could bring it to pass as we have seen in chapter one (see Dan.12:2).

It is this combination of "personal resurrection and immortality" which we find in the centre of the message of the church today. The emphasis is put on life after death. The 'not yet' of salvation is over-stressed, its 'already' is either forgotten or ignored. The Kingdom of God is left for another world after death (John 18:36). Believers are urged to endure hardship for it is only temporal and the kingdom of God is near. There is a vision for 'upward' to heaven to a beyond in terms of space and almost no vision for a 'forward' in the direction to the beyond in terms of time. If a future is envisaged it is a future outside history which does not affect present life. Christians are not prepared and empowered to protest against the evil they experience now. They are sojourners whose home and salvation is in heaven. Salvation was made possible by the death of Christ, attainable by grace alone and through faith alone, not by our own struggle. The souls will eventually inherit the kingdom prepared for them.

Early Christians too speak of immortality, but of a different kind. This immortality has to do with resurrection and is attainable only through it. People die to be present with the Lord in the same manner in which God has been present with them in life (2 Cor.5:8). So both in life and in death, we are in the presence of God. There is a need of a new body, like that of the resurrected Christ, for all of us, one which we also need in life but do not get until we have died (Phil.3:21). In that phase of our existence we shall share the new life of Christ.

7.3.2 The Horizontal versus the vertical

This alternative has become popular in recent years. It has divided Christendom into two camps. On the one hand are those who emphasise the horizontal dimension of salvation which concerns our relationship with each other and the materiality of salvation. On the other hand are those who

emphasise the vertical alternative which concerns our personal relationship with God or spiritualisation of salvation. According to Nürnberger, "this distinction seems to be based on a theologically and sociologically wrong imagery" (1990:218).

As we saw in chapter two, Luther argued that God cannot be confined to one place called heaven. It follows, therefore, that he is not 'above' as the Greek philosophers depicted him. He is closer to us and more present with us than anything or anybody. He is acting redemptively in every step of our lives. This presupposes "that our relationship to him is horizontal, not vertical" (Nürnberger 1990:218). The coming of Christ as Immanuel has horizontalized our relationship to God and demands the horizontalization of human relationships.

The horizontalization of our relationship to God presupposes that they were vertical before. We have seen this in chapter one when we dealt with the effects of sin and the law. Sin alienates humans from God. It verticalizes our relationship to God. Forgiveness and unconditional acceptance horizontalizes it. From a sociological point of view, in fact, in a sinful human situation, it is human relationships which are vertical. We have seen this in chapter three when we dealt with the human relationships in **ekumwe** [community] of **Ovawambo**. God requires the horizontalization of these relationships as we read in 2 Cor.8:9. God's horizontalization of our relationship to him is a way of empowering us and making us share in his redemptive activities. According to this view, God is not to be sought above in heaven, but in human relationships. Our horizontal relationships to him challenge us to horizontalize our relationship to one another. As Nürnberger says: "To relate to God, therefore, is not only to look for him in the horizontal dimension, but to actively horizontalize vertical relationships" (1990:218). This set of alternatives needs to be done away with in theology, for as we have seen, healthy relationships with one another result from healthy relationships with God. Or to put it the African way, healthy relationships with one another authenticate our good relationships with God.

7.4 Determinants of a comprehensive and versatile soteriology

Theologians should not rest until they have formulated an appropriate theory of salvation. If this means that the established models should be revisited again and again, so be it. Salvation is too central for our theology to be allowed to degenerate into something irrelevant.

The emergence of different models of salvation in the long history of Christian theology shows that the formulation of an appropriate theory of salvation is a difficult task and constitutes a serious challenge to theologians. The call for a redefinition of the Christian concept of salvation as made by theologians including Maimela (1987:87); Nürnberger (1990:206), and Bosch (1995:339) is appropriate. "There seems to be no theological task which is more pressing at present than to redefine the soteriological basis of our theology ..." says Nürnberger (1990:206).

Nürnberger calls for a soteriology based on the scriptural witness and informed by genuine human needs (1995:10/3ff). Bosch, as we said above, longs for "an interpretation of salvation which operates within a comprehensive Christological framework, which makes **totus Christus** - his incarnation, earthly life, death, resurrection and parousia - indispensable for church and theology" (1995:399). Only when all these Christological aspects are taken together do they constitute "the praxis of Jesus, the One who both inaugurated salvation and provided us with a model to emulate" (Bosch 1995:399). We need a new theory of salvation, one which is practical, "gleaned from the biblical witness" which shows "that God aims at the comprehensive wellbeing of all his creatures and that, therefore, his specific redemptive actions are directed against any deficiency in comprehensive wellbeing" and one which requires us "to analyze the nature of the needs of these creatures, especially the needs of humanity" (Nürnberger 1995:10-2). Generally defined, salvation is comprehensive wellbeing. Now, a word about the two pillars of salvation.

7.4.1 Biblical witness

We are in search of a soteriological paradigm which is informed by the biblical witness. By so doing we are trying to avoid the temptations of text selectivity, of which the evangelicals and the liberationists are guilty. Our desire is to formulate a comprehensive theory of salvation, one under which the needs of the entire reality are adequately covered. To achieve our goal, we must learn from the adaptability of the biblical tradition, a quality which the Christian tradition should have to be able to deal with new situations and challenges as they emerge. The biblical faith has displayed this incredible quality in the face of clusters of new religious systems which claim to respond to human needs better than the biblical faith does. The biblical tradition was able to absorb, demythologise and transform what seemed to make sense in non-biblical traditions (Nürnberger 1995:10/4). This means, the biblical concept of salvation is adaptable to conditions

of different peoples, be they Europeans or Africans. It should not be privatised or narrowed down to a point where people have to stop being themselves in order to be covered.

The challenge which faces Lutheran theologians today is to formulate our Lutheran faith in more relevant terms, and to leave its scope wide open so as to cover all human needs whatever forms they take. The challenge is also to allow cross fertilisation between different cultures and religions by absorbing, demythologising and transforming those elements of non-biblical religions which make sense, which reinforce but do not contradict fundamentals of the Christian faith. If we fail to do this, chances are that our message of salvation will become obsolete and irrelevant. If we do, we will also help adherents of other religions and cultures to feel accepted unconditionally within the Lutheran faith even if this does not mean accepting every part of their cultures and religions unconditionally. Certainly not everything that people of other religions believed and practised contradict Lutheran fundamentals and are thus garbage. Those members of other cultures and religions feel that even those elements of their cultures and religions which do not contradict the gospel have been discarded unnecessarily, while non-Christian elements from Western cultures are retained, even if they negate the Christian faith. That makes the Christian religion appear completely foreign and non-accommodating.

It is surprising to note that some theologians resist views from African traditions but appear reluctant to let go of Greek dualism. There is a need for the intake of some elements of other cultures and religions into the Christian tradition as long as these are in line with the intentions of the biblical God. This was exactly what the biblical tradition did with elements of other religions such as the Babylonian mythology of creation (Levenson 1988:3ff). We have seen in chapter one how believers of Yahweh claimed everything, including other gods, for their God. Christians can do the same.

All this must be understood to mean that our reality is an open-ended system. Just as new human needs arise, so do new possibilities exist to respond to them. But we have to work harder to find such solutions, because the old ones may not be appropriate any longer. Genuine salvation is a response to an acute cry of people in need (Mofokeng 1983:52) and a historical "process cannot

be rounded up on this side of the grave" (Webb 1974:107), but must help people "to grow to their full nature, measured by the humanity of Christ" (Webb 1974:3).

The God of the Bible wills our total salvation. He is "with us" (Matt.1:24) and "for us" (Rom.8:31). He is not against us. He wills our total wellbeing and is able to bring it about. It is his ultimate aim to ensure that humanity, including Africans, and the whole of reality attain wholeness, in the words of Jesus: "I came that they [all] may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Nothing reveals the love and intentions of God towards his creation more than that he desires all humans to enjoy complete life. This means, God is compassionate towards his creation and desires nothing less than its comprehensive wellbeing or salvation. The determinant words here are wholeness and comprehensiveness. They express the Old Testament idea of **shalom** and the New Testament meaning of the Kingdom of God. The implication is that it is part of God's plan that all needs of reality must be met. What ought not to be must be transformed into what ought to be. As Nürnberger says,

... the ultimate goal of God's creative and redemptive activity - we could say the content of his vision for reality - is the wellbeing of the whole human being in the context of the wellbeing of the whole of humanity, which in turn has to be seen in the context of the wellbeing of the whole of creation (1995:10-6).

Everything and everybody should be afforded a chance to become whole, that is, what s/he can become! Wholeness is salvation. Sin and evil, that is "everything that dehumanises people" (Webb 1974:3) must be overcome practically to make room for wholeness because God wills it. When the church proclaims the good intentions of God, people may wonder how possible that is, because they experience the contrary. Things are just not as they ought to be. We need practical and concrete salvation. In Rwanda, they need food, shelter, medical care, dignity and hope for their future as their salvation. The good news is the gospel in practice.

In line with the biblical witness, the church must constantly try to overcome the tension between what ought to be and the actual experience of people. Wholeness is not impossible in this life for, according to the Genesis story of creation, God reckoned that everything "was good" (Gen 1). There are theories which suggest that goodness cannot be experienced in this life. A theory called 'protology' projects what ought to be to the beginning of time. It suggests that it was sin which

caused what was good in the beginning to be bad now. 'Eschatology' projects what ought to be into the future. This theory recognises that reality, humans included, is not as it ought to be according to the plan of God. But, since God is in charge, comprehensive wellbeing will be attained in the final days "after God has transformed" the present experience into what ought to be (Nünberger 1995:10-5). The same thing can be said in terms of space: although it is not well on earth now, "...authentic reality" will only be experienced in 'heaven'" (1995:10-5).

Lack of what ought to be should not be understood to mean that what is projected either in the past or future cannot be experienced now in this present life. On the contrary, on the basis of this knowledge, believers **must** protest against what should not be, challenge and overcome it. That is living by hope. This process keeps us fighting evil, injustice and every deficiency in our comprehensive wellbeing until perfection is reached.

It is the tension between what the concept of comprehensive wellbeing describes and actual experience which forced the believing community, whether that of biblical times or the church, to project what ought to be either into the indefinite past or into the indefinite future. What humans experience today seems to suggest that comprehensive salvation, which the Old Testament community called **shalom** and the New Testament called **the kingdom of God**, is not attainable in this age (Nünberger 1995:10-6). But it is these very projections which must help us to protest against the deficiencies which we experience. If it was good in the beginning, and we hope that it will be good in the end, we should be determined to experience that good also in the present because reality is under the same God.

The recognition of the said tension between what is and what ought to be calls for the dynamic proclamation of the love and intentions of God for us here and now. Because God is love, he shares our experience of the opposite of what should be. He is unhappy about it. His intention is to transform this ugly situation into what ought to be - to make what we project into the past or the future, a reality in our daily experience. So we see that God is at work, with the aim of attaining peace. He is restless because we experience what ought not to be. "This restlessness of God is the root of Christian soteriology" (Nünberger 1995:10-6). With God the Creator of all reality, who is in charge of everything we experience on our side, we can rest assured that **shalom**

is possible. We may take the risk of having peace with him "in anticipation of God's peace with reality as a whole" (Nürnberg 1995:10-6).

This is what the church should live on: hope! Complete wholeness is not possible in life on this side of the grave but we can anticipate it and be empowered by this anticipation to protest against inauthenticity. All our attempts are "anticipatory" (Webb 1974:107). There is so much that we as the church can do for our members to move towards this comprehensive salvation. According to Bosch, the church has never been in a better position to bring about changes in the lives of her members than before. As Christians, we have never been in a better position to fight deficiencies in the comprehensive wellbeing in human wellbeing: crime, corruption, poverty, misery, sickness, social evil etc. To do that is to bring relief which is part of salvation to our people. Therefore, the scope of the mission of the church needs to become wider than it has been before. "Salvation is as coherent, broad, and deep as the needs and exigencies of human existence" (Bosch 1995:400). The church needs to proclaim salvation now both in words and deeds. After all the whole point of the Christ-event was the transformation of human conditions from what they are into what they should be. On the whole, however, we have to heed the warning of Bosch not to "overrate" our human ability to bring about complete salvation because this is not possible. This task belongs to God alone and the ultimate stage can only be arrived at in eternity (1995:400).

We have seen the inclusiveness of the redemptive intentions of God. The love of God is revealed to humans in his response to their particular needs, although not all of them are satisfied at the same time. The tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' of salvation remains with us (Bosch 1995:399). But the love of God was revealed to Abraham through getting an heir; to the blind man, by getting sight; to Jesus, by resurrection; to Luther by discovering the principle of justification by faith; to Namibians by getting the word of God preached to them and gaining independence. The love of God was always concrete and specific as the contents of the Old Testament **Shalom** and the New Testament **soteria** or kingdom of God suggests. These concepts,

denote the transformation of a particular situation of evil, danger and need into a situation of wellbeing, safety and sufficiency. Redemption, salvation, deliverance, liberation are concepts which only make sense if they are defined as responses to real needs. ... the target of God's specific redemptive activity is always a particular

deficiency in comprehensive wellbeing suffered by particular people (Nürnberger 1995:10-6).

This deficiency in the total wholeness of reality can develop in any dimension of reality. It can take the form of drought, famine, epidemic, suicides, sterility, unemployment, divorce, misplaced convictions, or fear of imaginary powers, such as witchcraft and sorcery. Wherever the deficiency is situated, as long as it impedes the development of our potentiality, threatens our lives or ruins the creation of God, it qualifies to be classified as evil. The church must proclaim a kind of salvation in which God overcomes evil whatever form it takes. Because deficiency takes different forms, salvation must take different forms too.

To say that God wills our comprehensive wellbeing therefore means that his redemptive actions should not be confined to one, or a few needs of human life. They must be specific responses to specific human needs which are being experienced. The reason why diagnosis is never omitted in the hospitals is to ensure that the exact problem is established before a treatment is prescribed. Likewise, the church must first analyze the problems of her members before formulating the appropriate message of salvation. She should also be practical in her response to that deficiency. Salvation must be specific! A hungry person needs food, not a raincoat. An unemployed person needs a job, not just salvation in heaven. It is our task as modern theologians to rescue the concept of salvation, which has unfortunately been restricted to one dimension of human needs, namely the transcendent needs, by Pietism, and ensure that we do not restrict it again to this-worldly needs as did liberation theologians. We should be free to use concepts from religions other than our own as long as they do not negate the gospel, but reinforce it.

God loves reality and is concerned for its total wellbeing. This knowledge of God's concern for our total wellbeing together with all other creatures, comes to us as good news indeed! What else could be good news for us than the message that God, the very Source of all existence is not happy with our condition, is sharing our experience and is busy transforming it into what ought to be? This is indeed proof that God is Immanuel - God with us.

But this good news is a statement of faith. When things go well with us, this is easy to understand and accept. But as soon as they go wrong the problem starts. God is love as long as my marriage

is going well, my children are healthy, it rains, I have a job and so on. Come problems, then I start doubting whether God is still for me and not against me. The solution is faith that stubbornly protests against what is and clings to the message that God is for me and not against me, in spite of what I experience. Again, we do well to learn from the biblical witness. During similar situations of mixed blessings, the biblical tradition established three different ways in which God's involvement was experienced (Nürnberger 1995:10-27ff). Briefly stated, they believed that:

(a) God directly intervened invisibly but redemptively in human affairs to put wrong things right by himself. This divine redemptive intervention was believed to either stabilise disturbing or threatening situations or change them into what they ought to be (Nürnberger 1995:10-27). The story of creation is a classical example. God is believed to have overcome the forces of chaos, darkness and evil which prevailed at the beginning of times. There, the Bible says, God turned chaos into order (Levenson 1988:3ff).

(b) God went into solidarity with those who suffered want and shared their experience. He did so in Jesus Christ when he became the Immanuel, to "save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21ff). So his solidarity is redemptive. He shares our experience of what prevents us from achieving wholeness not to condone, but to overcome it.

(c) The biblical tradition hopes that what happened to Christ will happen to us as well by the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers live by their hope that Jesus' sharing of our experience and his overcoming of evil made what Luther calls an 'exchange' between Christ and sinners possible. He received what is ours [death] so that we could receive what is his, namely new life (Rom. 6:). This anticipation is a motivating force for a believer to live, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit (2 Cor. 10:3; Rom. 8:12f). This becomes possible for believers, on the assumption first that the powers of evil have truly been overcome by Christ, as we have shown in chapter one, and secondly that they are able to share in his victory by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is this hope which empowers believers to stage a protest against things as they are and to refuse to rest until they have put them right. This hope pushes us into joining God in righting the wrong. We should work for a better life now and not fold our arms waiting for what is promised us in heaven. The

future promises must bring their rays into the present. This brings us to the diagnosis of human needs as a prerequisite to the formulation of any message of salvation.

7.4.2 Concrete human needs

Sin and evil are universal problems. Salvation is a universal necessity. All religions are in search of some kind of a solution to the problem of sin and its consequences. Unfortunately, theologians of different theological streams tend to stress one human need over another. To a certain degree this is inevitable simply because human needs are not, and cannot be, the same over the globe or at all times. Even the needs of the same person differ from time to time depending on the circumstances. Different needs become dominant to some people at different times (Wright 1989:11ff). They differ from individual to individual, community to community, religion to religion, culture to culture, continent to continent etc. (Wright 1989:14,21). To define salvation properly, therefore, one must first analyze human problems and identify specific needs. No one can defeat an unknown enemy. First diagnosis, then prescription.

By human needs is meant "any requisite for the free unfolding of the life of a creature as it is meant to be according to the intentions of its Creator" (Nürnberger 1995:10-7). Wright reminds us of Maslow's stance: "what a man can be, he must become ... [he] must be true to his own nature" (1989:19). Although the needs of all creatures are inseparably linked, our interest here are those of humans. Nürnberger has placed them into three categories and from each humanity must be saved.

(a) **Basic human needs:** Humans need space, time and energy for their survival. These needs are called basic because they are indispensable for survival and form the foundation of all other human needs. Nothing, absolutely nothing can exist "without a space which it can occupy, a time during which it can exist and some energy by which it can continue" (Nürnberger 1995:10-8). Due to the fact that these basic needs form part and parcel of all other human needs, it stands to reason that discussing the two other clusters of human needs will automatically mean discussing this cluster in the same breath.

(b) Immanent human needs: This cluster of needs has to do with survival and prosperity. It encompasses personal needs, that is biological, psychological, rational, and spiritual needs; as well as contextual needs such as economic, social, political and ecological needs (Nürnberg 1995:10-8). The church which is serious about the relevance of its message of salvation must ensure that these needs are targeted and met. Although the Finnish missionaries have, in practice, taken care of many, perhaps all of these human needs and ELCIN followed suit, many Christians did not see the link between eschatological salvation and its ethical implications. They still think in terms of the false alternatives of the vertical and horizontal dimensions. Christians seem to see little connection between faith and a concern for human welfare. They distinguish between 'salvation' and 'wellbeing' (1995:10-17). At this level, which Nürnberg calls the 'outer circle' of needs, salvation must take a form of a solution to each of these needs. To the hungry, salvation must take the form of food; to the sick, health; to the unemployed, employment; to the uneducated, education; to the despised, acceptance and dignity; to the hopeless, hope; to the spiritually uncertain, assurance; to the enslaved, freedom; to the grieving, comfort; to the powerless, empowerment; to the dying, life. These needs are a challenge to the ministry of the church simply because she can access and influence them. She can do something about them and by so doing she renders herself relevant. To bring salvation to the people must include the transformation of their situation of incompleteness into the situation of wholeness. At this level of human needs, salvation must mean adequate responses to immanent needs. The church must present that dimension of salvation which she can present in practice.

(c) Transcendent or religious human needs: This is the "inner circle" of the three human needs, namely the need of meaning, of the right of existence and of empowerment. These needs exceed human natural abilities. For their complete satisfaction, there is a need for divine involvement for which religious organisations such as the church are responsible. These needs extend beyond our natural ability and sphere of influence. But this does not mean that we cannot do something about them. On the contrary, they challenge us and call for our response, albeit limited. These needs too do not occur independently from the needs in the outer circle. In fact, they form the transcendent dimension of the needs for survival and prosperity referred to above (Nürnberg 1995:10-8).

The human need for meaning may be exposed by the comparison between human life and that of other creatures. While the life of plants and animals determined by natural laws and instincts respectively, human beings possess qualities such as wisdom, dignity and freedom to enable them to make sense of their lives and its contexts. If this is not ensured, life loses its significance. Therefore, it is imperative for humans to:

know how they fit into their communities, how their communities fit into society, how society fits into the rest of creation on our globe, how our globe fits into the galaxies of the universe and upon what the universe as a whole is ultimately based (Nürnberger 1995:10-18).

Another crucial human need both for individuals and communities is the right of existence. Every individual or group of people needs acceptance, belonging, legitimisation, justification, dignity and so on. This is so because of human awareness that there is something fundamentally wrong with human nature. There are feelings of guilt, of doubt of one's right to do certain things, or even to be. There is a need for some authority to declare us lovable, and qualified to live on. Authority to play this crucial role in the life of an individual does not lie within the person him/herself. This status must be offered by some external power (Nürnberger 1995:10-19). **Ovawambo** consulted **eenganga** [diviners] in this regard. But even there, their hope reached beyond this human being who was believed to have gifts or power to grant the right of existence by manipulating natural forces and employing them in his/her service. In other word, even **onganga** has no power to grant the right of existence to another human being for he/she him/herself has a similar need. The only authority who can play this role is God, who owns us all, who is in charge of us all, who is in charge of life itself (Nürnberger 1995:10/19).

The third transcendent human need is to be in charge of their own lives and their environment. Again for this need, **Ovawambo** consulted **eenganga** [diviners] to enable them acquire power and authority to manipulate reality to their advantage. This means, "the ultimate source" of authority lies beyond human reach (Nürnberger 1995:10-19). So to control their lives, humans need power from beyond themselves. They need authorization from the being believed to be the source or channel of such power. In many African cultures, this source or channel is the ancestors or the diviner. In the Christian faith it is God.

These three religious needs are inseparable. Lack of power to effect change implies lack of authority, doubt about one's right to be and meaninglessness of life. Neither of the three categories of human needs emerge independently from the others. The basic needs are implied in both the immanent and religious needs and the religious needs are necessitated by immanent ones (Nürnberger 1995:10-8). Nürnberger writes:

Transcendent needs or religious needs do not exist as independent entities. Rather they form **the transcendent dimension of immanent needs**. In fact, they are mediated by immanent needs. They seem to crop up only because other needs present themselves. Thus one's right of existence is threatened by guilt, which is a breakdown of relationships, but it is also questioned by stomach cancer, marriage failure, social ostracism, bankruptcy, political oppression, or untimely death. Meaninglessness and impotence arise from exactly the same sources. A transcending need is, therefore, not an other-worldly need but a need whose fulfilment transcends the limits of human autonomy. We cannot fulfil these needs with our own means. We depend on a superior entity (1995:10-20).

A classical example are material needs. The majority of humankind suffers material deficiency. There is poverty, disease, hunger, unemployment, war, lack of skilled workers, oppression, injustice, etc. These needs lead to spiritual needs, a purposeless life and a world without meaning. People cannot see the reason to exist because they have no power or authority to control their lives or their destinies. Thus material needs appear simultaneously with transcendent needs. Material needs also affect the Christian faith. Christians believe in a loving God who is both willing and able to provide all their needs. However, suffering leads to doubt in God.

It is in this situation that the church must proclaim the gospel of salvation: in spite of all the contradictory experiences, **"God ... is for us and with us and not against us** - and particularly with those who suffer want" (Nürnberger 1995:10-21). This is indeed good news to those who suffer, but as it stands, it is still a theory which needs to be demonstrated in practice. Again it is the church which must communicate it to people to believe it. She must incarnate it in her life. "Religion must be a response to human need, or it is irrelevant" (1995:10-21).

There seems to be a hierarchy of human needs. The outer circle of needs is formed by the essentials of survival and prosperity. The transcendent or religious needs form the inner circle of needs. However, humans do not always experience their needs in the order proposed here by the

concentric circles. The emergence of specific needs is determined by specific situations in which humans find themselves. There is thus no permanent order in which needs present themselves. In certain situations human "needs arise in greater intensity in some dimensions of human existence than in others" (Nürnberg 1995:10-9). The order in which the needs arise is therefore temporal. There is no permanent priority structure or hierarchy of needs. "When bodily needs are satisfied security needs become dominant" (Wright 1989:13).

The change of the priority of human needs is indeed a challenge to the church for it calls her to first analyze the human needs of the day and then find a remedy to respond to them directly. This means, the message of salvation, that was relevant yesterday may not necessarily be relevant today. Salvation to the people of different ages, of different economic statuses is not always the same. The rich may be financially secure, but may suffer the need of belonging. For this reason, it may be argued that in every situation, salvation has a unique element in it.

Nürnberg uses a **threshold theory** to explain change in the priority of human needs. In each human situation one, or a set of concerns top the priority list of needs. When this need is responded to satisfactorily, it loses its importance step-by-step. Eventually another set of needs tops the priority list and demand immediate attention (1995:10-9,21). Liberation theology was very relevant during the struggle for independence in Namibia. Today, many people hardly think of it because, "we are free". We think more of the theology of reconciliation, reconstruction and development. This is the reason why we have different soteriological paradigms - evangelical theology, liberation theology, and African theology. Theology needs to ensure that believers see their needs in proper perspective in the light of the concentric circles and their centre - the divine.

At first sight, material needs seem to be "the most fundamental of all needs". At one level, they are, because without them there can be no life. At another level, however, "religious needs are more fundamental than all other needs" (Nürnberg 1995:10-21). Consider the fact that humans spend their wealth, time, energy, principles, even life itself trying to satisfy transcendent needs. Some rituals and sacrifices involve human lives. Consider nuns and freedom fighters. They sacrificed their lives for the ideal. People do even inhuman things to unlock the powers they need to introduce meaning into reality or their own lives, or regain their right of existence if it was

under threat. The church needs to proclaim beyond reasonable doubt that God is in charge of reality and is unconditionally for us and not against us.

This conviction is a **powerful motivation to serve life** within the context of reality as a whole, to affirm its right to exist, to channel power into life, to give meaning to life, to transcend or overcome the limitations and forces which threaten life on these levels (Nürnberg 1995:10-22).

7.4.3 The ethos of salvation

We have spoken of the basic, the immanent and the transcendent needs of reality, including humanity. We have seen that humans are not completely capable of fulfilling the transcending needs. But this does not mean we cannot do something about them. We will now look at our responsibility in the process of fulfilling these and other needs. We can do something about almost all of them because the Trinity is on our side and the Holy Spirit empowers and enables us. To quote from Nürnberg:

We cannot overcome suffering but we can alleviate it. We cannot see the meaning in fateful developments but we can proclaim God's mastery and benevolence. We cannot escape death but we can prevent untimely and agonizing deaths. Christian ethics is rooted in eschatological hope (1995:10-29).

God in his Trinity has intervened in our unstable and evil situation to stabilise and transform it into what he originally meant it to be. He does so in fellowship with us. We share his power, authority, and victory (Matt. 8ff). So the presence of God in our reality is a redemptive and empowering presence. Because of our new status in Christ, we hope for final victory over whatever threatens human wellbeing. What seemed humanly impossible has been shown to be possible in the Christ-event. We now anticipate it for ourselves, for our fellow humans and for our world. On this basis, Paul was able to declare:

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:31ff)

This fellowship with God, this anticipation, this empowerment and this sharing of the new life of Christ lures us into the stream of divine activities in the world here and now. Our fellowship with God requires us to be open to God (Hazelton 1964:340) and to get involved in his redeeming activities. With him, we intervene directly to stabilise what is instable, to transform what ought not to be into what ought to be and orientate humanity towards fullness (Mofokeng 1983:52). We share God's vision for reality. With God, we get into solidarity with reality and suffer it, not "to legitimate an unacceptable situation but to overcome it from within" (Nürnberger 1995:10-28), "to bring about peace, justice, righteousness, caring love and meaningful co-existence between humans ..." (Maimela 1984:220).

Involvement is the ethical implication of salvation. As the saved, we must do for others what the Lord has done for us. As we have been delivered from whatever threatened our wholeness, we should do the same for others (Hazelton 1964:340). Salvation must be a concrete event in this life to save humans from "pain, loss and estrangement" (Hazelton 1964:339). So care must be taken that salvation is not turned into an escape from this world. Rather, the ethos of salvation requires the saved to experience enormous power to stand without shaking in the midst of danger (Hazelton 1964:340). If salvation means health for us, we must strive for the health of others. It is not enough to know the truth. We must actually do and live it (Hazelton 1964:241). Salvation means that those "who have seen a vision of salvation that belongs to God become the inspired agents of that salvation in their local salvation and their own days (Webb 1974:107). We are saved to save.

God communicates salvation to reality through us. He uses parents to bring new human life into being; rulers to keep order; educators to educate; doctors to heal; churches to proclaim his gospel of salvation. In short, God acts redemptively towards reality through us. The possibility exists for us to be used by God to bring about liberation, wholeness, and soundness to reality when and if our "life is founded upon openness to God", that is if we trust in him (Hazelton 1964:340). Without claiming equality with God in this project, we must recognise the privilege of being used as channels of salvation to reality including humanity (Nürnberger 1995:10-32). The church needs to announce this message loudly and continually, and encourage her members to avail themselves

of this divine service. She also needs to recognise the fact that God has been using non-biblical religions and cultures to reach some of his intentions in the world. It is no use denying this fact.

So God's redemptive activities do not negate ours. Because a doctor is a Christian, he should not stop working hard for the health of his patients. Because a doctor is not a Christian it does not mean that God is not using him/her. That God can provide does not mean that we should not improve our qualifications and seek employment. Because salvation is not by works, it does not mean that we should not work hard for it. God does not nullify our ventures. As a matter of fact, he invites us to act redemptively as he acts through us. Reality is an unfinished project and God acts through us to bring this completion or the kingdom of God about (Maimela 1984:220).

Lutherans need to be careful in keeping the balance between salvation by grace alone and the ethos of salvation here. Paul and Luther, as we have seen in chapters one and two respectively, have emphasised the fact that salvation is a free gift from God. It is! Salvation is no human achievement. "In the final analysis salvation belongs to God" (Webb 1974:107). But law and gospel, justification and sanctification, faith and works must be kept in a creative tension at all times. Faith without works is no faith at all. So we do not have an either - or situation here. It is not either the law or the gospel, faith or works, salvation later or now. It is both - and. The free gift of salvation motivates, empowers and allures into acting redemptively towards reality as a whole. God's love and life draws those who receive it into redemptive actions. It makes them become 'a Christ' to others as we have seen in chapter two. In Romans 12, Paul speaks of the ethos of salvation. The saved should love one another (Rom.12:10); live in harmony (Rom.12:16); contribute to the needs of the saints; practise hospitality (Rom.12:13), and live peaceably (Rom.12:18). Faith must necessarily lead to love, love to service and service to life. Life is the fruit of salvation.

We can only bear the fruit of salvation as long as God acts through us. In the final analysis, only when God enables us to bear fruit do we bear it, or as Nürnberger would put it:

Only because God acts we can act. His actions make our actions possible ... God acts through our actions ... God's action does not exclude our action but makes it possible and effective. (1995:10-33)

So salvation requires a careful balance between salvation by grace alone and our responsibility to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12f). Neither law nor grace is of less significance. There is no contradiction here! God alone is accountable for our salvation, but not because we ourselves are not accountable, but precisely because he brings it about by acting through us. We are just as responsible as God is although we are not on the same level. So the alternatives, law or gospel, God or us, are false and should be avoided (Maimela 1984:221).

The Word of God is his means of empowerment. It reveals God himself, his power, his authority, his love and his intentions to us. The same word is his means of communicating himself, his power, his authority, his love and his intentions. In the story of creation God spoke a word and it happened as he commanded. That not only shows that he is powerful, it also shows that he is in charge of reality. In the story of Jesus, Jesus spoke a word and the sick were healed, the blind saw, the deaf heard and the dead came to life (Matt.20:29ff; Matt.8:1ff; Luke 7:11ff; 8:40ff).

The church is called to communicate the word of God which is his redemptive power, his love, and his life (Rom.1:16). This is the task of the church. The church is involved in the mission of communicating the power of God by which he creates, recreates, saves and sustains (Clinebell 1984:28). But how does she do that in practical terms? By preaching, teaching and singing? That too is important, but it is not enough. We need to engage in a soteriology whereby we enact the word of God. If the church does not do more than preaching, teaching, singing and praying, she is doomed to become irrelevant and ineffectual. It is not enough to tell people that God loves them, that he accepts them without condition, that he cares for them, that he wills their comprehensive wellbeing. It is not enough to delight in growing statistics of church members and the areas we have covered with the gospel. The issue is salvation as good quality of life for the members of our church (cf Mofokeng 1983:52). We must make all these a reality by loving one another, accepting one another unconditionally and working for the wholeness of one another. Our salvation must motivate us to join God in making life better for others, in striving for peace and justice in society, and of course for eternal life. After all:

The same Jesus who said that we should not worry about food because God cared for us (Mat 6:25), paradoxically fed the masses when they were hungry (Mat 15:32ff). He even asked his disciples to feed them (Mt 14:16). In short, God's care is mediated through our caring, though it also goes infinitely beyond our caring (Nürnberger 1995:10-35).

But how do we know that a certain person is enacting the redeeming word of God? How do we know whether a person does not act in his or her own interest? The criterion is the word of God. Our attitudes and actions need to be declared "manifestations of God's attitude and actions" (Nürnberger 1995:10-35). In the main, there should be no discrepancy between divine promises and human actions, between theology and ethics. This is not to say that there are no differences between divine and human acts, even though they are all redemptive. Divine activities are original, "the real thing", to which human actions are only a witness. However,

The witness to the real thing is part of the real thing. Otherwise the Word would lack all evidence. (Nürnberger 1995:10-35)

So human actions need verification from the word of God. Scriptures are the most credible witness we have to carry out the verification, because it is the nearest link to the Christ-event and "the first series of witnesses of the events and acts which the biblical faith considers foundational, as well as their first interpretations, which are still available" (Nürnberger 1995:10-36).

This process is significant for the proclamation of the message of salvation. This understanding of the function of the word of God and the interpreter or verifier of both our actions and other historical events will save the church from the danger of spiritualising the gospel as it has happened many times. It will help us realise that God's word is not

essentially a spiritual affair, an eternal truth located somewhere in a bodiless, timeless, community-less heaven, from where it descends to take shape in this world. The corollary to the latter conception is that the Word must first be preached and then - if we are lucky - it will also be applied and bear fruit in terms of our action. This is Greek idealistic thinking, not Hebrew dynamic faith. It is, once again, docetism. The proclamation of the Word of God should, in contrast, always be the interpretation of an enacted word. This is what it was in the life and death of our Master and his disciples and this is what it should be amongst us (Nürnberger 1995:10-36).

7.5 Concluding remarks

As is evident above, for this chapter we depended heavily on the writings of Klaus Nürnberger. There are reasons for this: (a) Although his model of salvation is not exactly identical with the **Owambo** concept of salvation, it entrenches many elements with which Africans in general, but **Ovawambo** in particular could identify with; (b) he is a specialist on Luther. The key concepts in the soteriological model of Nürnberger are comprehensive wellbeing and unconditional acceptance. The latter marks the difference between the soteriology of Luther and that of **Ovawambo**, the former brings them very close.

Nürnberger defines salvation as comprehensive wellbeing. God's intention is that reality enjoys this state. He acts redemptively also through humans to bring this wholeness about. Only when all different levels of human needs are responded to adequately can the state of wholeness be realised. This implies that a human being is one unit and unless all his/her needs are satisfied as each of them emerges, salvation remains incomplete. To be saved means to be involved in the redemptive mission of God. All these points and many others are convincing proofs that **Owambo** religion and culture was not completely devoid of salvific activities.

As we have shown in chapters three and four, **Owambo** life was characterised by the sense of wholeness **Omunhu omudidi** [A human being is a whole]. All their activities were geared towards securing survival and prosperity. **Owambo** life was life in search of happiness, health, and long life. Life marked by these and other nouns can only be described as "whole". **Oulinawa** (wellbeing) was the central concern for every **Omuwambo**. This ideal life was behind their greetings which appear rather long and time-wasting. They ask in the plural: **Omu li nawa** [Are you all well]? Behind this question is a concern for the encyclopedic wellbeing, which may be called salvation in Christian circles.

According to Nürnberger, God is concerned with this wellbeing. **Ovawambo** too believe that wholeness comes from **Kalunga**. S/he has structured society in such a way that each individual can receive wholeness from God. Outside those social structures, one will most probably miss wholeness. For this reason, it is significant for every individual to belong to a family, a clan and **ekumwe** [community]. Apart from these structures, wholeness is not attainable. Through these

structures, **Kalunga** blesses people with children, food, health, the sense of belonging, right of existence, authority, power, protection, order, long life etc. All human needs, be they basic, immanent or transcendent were taken care of within the confines of **ekumwe** and its sub-structures.

On the basis of these facts, it is difficult to accept the traditional argument that **Kalunga** does not act redemptively. Missionaries such as Dymond and Aarni who have studied the **Kalunga** concept concluded that this Supreme being is only an expression of fate (Aarni 1982:121). This, by implication means that **Kalunga** is not a true God and does not save.

I disagree. The fact that the dealings of **Kalunga** with **Ovawambo** were not committed to writing does not disqualify him/her from being a true God, the Father of Jesus Christ who was then unknown by **Ovawambo**. It further does not mean that **Kalunga** does not save. **Kalunga** communicated with **Ovawambo** by proxy but such communications were not committed to writing because the art of writing was unknown. We have seen in chapter six when we treated the issue of the Canon that the word of God was first in an oral form. What we have in the Bible was committed to writing after it had been word of mouth for ages. It can be argued, therefore, that to have the word of God written down is not the only way God communicates with people. It was believed, for instance, that **Kalunga** saved and blessed people through social structures which are put in place. Her/his will was known although it was not written down. **Ovawambo** knew the first, second, fourth, the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, the eight commandments long before missionaries came to teach them from the Bible and this knowledge was believed to have been channelled by **Kalunga** to **ekumwe** through the king (Williams 1991:99). There was no special day for worship (third commandment) but it is known that for Africans religion and life belong together so much so that there was no need to designate one day the day of **Kalunga**. One was expected to live religiously every step of one's life.

Although we said that God was believed to be in heaven, this does not mean that s/he was confined to heaven. S/he was far, yet near, inaccessible by all, yet accessible for everyone, especially **omapongo** [the unclaimed]. There are many expressions and prayers listed in chapter three which show that if **omapongo** [the orphans, the widows, the accused for witchcraft etc, i.e

the unclaimed] are mishandled by the powerful, they can turn directly to **Kalunga** for help, without using prescribed channels. In the final analysis, we must say **Kalunga** is everywhere.

Kalunga revealed himself in times of crisis. This is common in all religions. It happened to Jesus, to Paul, and to Luther. So it is not unusual that **Kalunga** was believed to intervene in times of crises. As Aarni rightly has it "... **Kalunga** was regarded as a helper in times of danger and as a last resort in times of need" (1982:122). So the seeming remoteness of **Kalunga** was actually his "kalunganess". As we said before, this must be understood in terms of the **Owambo** social structure. He has put structures in place through which he communicates with his subjects. He does not speak to them, at least not directly. But he has his representatives among them, e.g the king, elders and parents (Williams 1991:99f). It may be said that the king does not protect his people because he does not go from home to home doing so. But, since he has put structures in place through which he exercises his protective power, it can also be said that the king protects his people. He is the chief in command.

By analogy we can say that **Kalunga** is in charge, s/he protects and saves all people although it was believed that s/he does so through different agents. This is born out by the following expression: **Kalunga ke fi inakulu ya umwe** [God is not grandmother to one only]. This simply means **Kalunga** is impartial. He could not have revealed himself only to the Jewish people while leaving part of his creation whose comprehensive wellbeing he desires without any clue of himself (cf Maimela 1985:63).

7.6 Recommendations to ELCIN

This thesis has analyzed the soteriology of the apostle Paul, an analysis which was meant to help the researcher come to a better perception of the soteriology of Luther. The soteriologies of Luther and of the Finnish missionaries were studied to establish whether the latter communicated the genuine Pauline-Lutheran soteriology to ELCIN or a watered down version. The soteriology of ELCIN was done to find out what she did with the kind of soteriology she received from the Finnish missionaries. The study of **Owambo** traditional religion was studied to find out whether there are useful elements which may be helpful in the process of formulating a soteriological paradigm which is informed by the Bible and by the concrete needs of the people among whom

ELCIN is working. We are now able to make recommendations about what ELCIN can do to render herself relevant and ready to meet the social, economical, theological and ethical challenges of our times. This thesis recommends for ELCIN:

7.6.1 To show her appreciation through her theological maturity

ELCIN needs to appreciate the Finnish missionaries for the gospel of salvation which they brought amid "many tribulations" which they "suffered" (Nashihanga 1993:41). This is so, because the primary need of a human being is wholeness or total wellbeing which the gospel tells us is available in faith and trust in God. The best way for ELCIN to express her gratitude is, of course, not to slavishly guard over the soteriological paradigm originally taught by the missionaries, but to consider it an unfinished product, to develop it, to contextualise it, to Africanise it, to enculturate it and to make it truly our own. Every parent rejoices over the growth and development of her/his child.

7.6.2 To implement research findings of her own theologians

ELCIN will only reach theological and ethical maturity if she listens to her own theologians. 126 years have lapsed since the arrival of missionaries in 1870. Ovawambo have changed very much since that time. What the missionaries preached then may be quite irrelevant today. This calls for paradigm shifts in our theology in general and in our soteriology in particular if the church is to remain relevant to her members. ELCIN needs to take recommendations made by her own theologians seriously, and utilise them to the full, if she is to reach maturity and remain relevant and effective. There is a need of self-criticism and self-evaluation. The recommendations made by indigenous theologians after their research need to be analyzed carefully, sorted out systematically and those that are truly useful must be used to help the church to revisit her established theological models and replace them with new ones. Theology is dynamic, not static. Old theories must give way to new. Another way to help the church mature theologically is to assign theologians to responsibilities for which they have been trained and in which they have specialised. One of the reasons why ELCIN lacks expertise is that there seems to be no habit of allowing specialisations. In most cases our theologians are made jacks-of-all-trades - good at everything and best at nothing.

7.6.3 To continuously analyze the current needs of her members

ELCIN should always remember that Finnish missionaries came from a different continent and from a different culture. Consequently, their basic needs, immanent needs and transcendent needs were bound to differ from ours. This implies that they were bound to understand and interpret the gospel differently according to their backgrounds, culture, experienced problems and concrete needs. What was good news for them then may not necessarily be good news for **Ovawambo** now, although the basic truths of the gospel remain the same. In other words, ELCIN needs to take on the task of constantly analyzing the concrete needs of her members and seeking new ways of responding to each of them afresh. It does not help to respond to twentieth century questions with 17th century answers.

7.6.4 To aim at providing a comprehensive salvation

ELCIN needs to revisit the definition of salvation. An attempt should be made to add a this-worldly dimension of salvation to the already overemphasised other-worldly dimension to make a complete whole. Many missionaries were pietists and revivalists who emphasised the journey of the soul to heaven and its salvation. Thus, their scope of salvation was too narrow. ELCIN needs to widen its scope to cover all human needs, discard old theories which no longer make sense to the modern mind and take courage to use beneficial elements from **Owambo** culture which make sense and which reinforce the biblical view of salvation. There is a need for a down-to-earth kind of soteriology, one which picks up concrete human needs: social, political, economical and spiritual. In the words of Nashihanga:

... the church must not only use the vertical approach that human beings have been liberated for God, reconciled to Him, and forgiven. People also need to be reconciled to one another and forgive each other. (1993:100)

Time to do so is long overdue, but there is still hope. This task will not be difficult because the Finnish missionaries have shown that the church needs to take care of both human welfare and heavenly salvation. The only problem was that they did not keep the bi-polarity of salvation in a healthy tension. What they said and did was good and right, but they did not ground it in theology. So it is recommended that ELCIN do as the missionaries did, but theologise differently.

7.6.5 To put more emphasis on the ethos of soteriology

The ethical implications of salvation need to be emphasised. Faith in God is important. However, its presence needs to be proven a reality by the saved. We need to read the letter of James more and to live according to its recommendations. Faith without works is dead. Faith must be tested through behaviour towards our fellows, just as theory is tested in praxis. This mutual testing is absolutely necessary in the life and work of the church. Although the church has limited means to carry out her practical programs, she has no other way than to keep theory and practice in a healthy tension. Nashihanga has recommended that church members be allowed to own the church (1993:103). This is only possible if the structure of the church is revised to allow participation of church members in the decision making processes. As things stand now, the church belong to the clergy, to the old, and to the uneducated. This is one of the things which ELCIN has inherited from the missionaries, and she is either unwilling or unable to change. A new way of running the church needs to be found which will eventually allow more participation, more utilisation of gifts, more paradigm shifts and more relevancy. In short, we need a paradigm of salvation which will help us to keep revolution and evolution in a creative tension.

7.6.6 To embark on the process of indigenisation

ELCIN should accept the fact that there is a need for contextualization, enculturation and Africanisation of theology, music and liturgy. Many theologians, including our own, have called for these processes to take place, but few if any of those recommendations are known in ELCIN. S. Ailonga called for Africanisation, "a theology of pragmatism" (1985:86), S. Shivute for indigenisation and contextualization of theological education to prepare pastors to meet the challenges of the twentieth century and serve their enlightened parishioners better (1981:1,12,13,95). V. Shivute called for cross-fertilisation between the traditional Owambo models of counselling the bereaved and the modern Western theories of care and counselling (1995:v, 92ff). T. Shivute called for openness towards elements of other religions and cultures which make sense. He pointed to a need of dialogue between religions in the spirit of maturity and cooperation as long as the uniqueness of the self-disclosure of God in Christ is not sacrificed (1974:89,100, 101). Nelumbu called for defining salvation in view of its Old Testament meaning. Salvation is **shalom**, which suggests human fulfilment (1994:272). These calls suggest undressing

our theology of its Platonic and Western garments, to express it in an African idiom and so make it more appreciable by Africans.

7.6.7 To make her presence felt in society

As during the apartheid dispensation, ELCIN should make herself present in society. The church must be a force to be reckoned with. Therefore, the ideal situation is when other forces in society, including the state, are conscious of the presence of the church. The church does not need to be invited, as implied in the ELCIN statement on the legalisation of abortion. She should follow the events, read the sign of the times and be proactive. It is not advisable to wait for an invitation to take part in a debate on crucial issues such as the legalisation of abortion. As a matter of fact, the church should initiate such debates within her own structures. What if she is not invited? In any case not to be invited might be a sign of disregard and could suggest that the church is no longer a force to be reckoned with.

7.6.8 To join the competition for relevancy

ELCIN should be aware that she lives in the era of fierce competition for relevancy amongst ideologies and religions. Namibia has a secular government, one which allows freedom of religion. In practice this means that people are free to join, not only other churches, but other religions as well. They are also free to belong to no religious organisation. The best way to face this challenge is for ELCIN to ensure that she remains relevant to ensure that her weaknesses are not exploited by ideologies, other religions or sects. Instead she must exploit the weakness of others and use their appeals in her service. These weaknesses of ELCIN which may be exploited by sects, ideologies and other religions include her confinement of salvation to spiritual matters, the alienation between her theory and practice and the rupture between her theology and ethics. The expression of faith in idealistic and individualistic terms, the reluctance or failure of the church to respond promptly to concrete human needs leaves a vacuum in regard to material needs for others ideologies and religions or sects to fill.

If salvation is reduced to other-worldly bliss, human concerns for this world and this life are left unattended; the injustices of social structures are ignored and any other ideology, religion or sect picks them up, addresses them and attracts people to its folds. Expressed in terms of life after

death, eternity and heaven, eschatology tends to rob people of their vision for the immediate future on earth and within the context of history. An overemphasis of divine providence allows only little room, if any, for human initiative and accountability. Therefore, care needs to be taken that the theology, and soteriology to be specific, does not become too narrow to exclude current human dilemmas. If it does, other religions will fill the gap left by the church by proclaiming what she was supposed to proclaim and doing what she was supposed to do. It may be true after all that "sects are the unpaid debts of the church" (Nürnberger 1987:105). If that is true, the church has an urgent duty to reappropriate what actually belongs to her: "a sincere struggle for social justice as an indispensable dimension of the wholeness of life Christ came to restore" (Nürnberger 1987:107; John 10:10).

7.6.9 To translate her upward vision into the forward

ELCIN needs to strive harder to offer her members a vision which fascinates their imagination and tantalises them into action. As Ashipala said, enough of heaven and hell has now been heard. There is now a need to hear how Christ affects life on mother earth (1979:80). The goal of our teaching and preaching should not only be to tell people of what is dishonourable on earth and its opposite in heaven. We should tell people that the earth too is God's good creation for which Christ has died. So it needs salvation too which God channels through us. It is important to tell people what is wrong and what not to do. But what they probably need to know most is what exactly needs to be done to overcome evil and their own impediments. It is good to tell people what the law of God demands and what the gospel offers. However, what they need to hear most are the ethical implications of salvation. Our preaching should be a means to keep hope for good life on earth and for life after death alive. Now we "know in part" but then we "shall understand fully" (1 Cor.13:12). Salvation is already here but not yet. So we should teach hope and anticipation. Those who hope for a better future, shall live according to that hope now. So, our task is to translate the "upward" into the "forward", the "divine acts" into "human acts", the "not yet" into "the already" (Nürnberger 1987:108).

7.6.10 To always keep God in the picture

We need to keep God in the centre. The church needs to teach that there is something basically wrong with humanity, and this fact must be accepted. For that reason, we need divine involvement

so that when we fail to realise our dreams, we have somebody to fall back onto, and that is God. He is benevolent. If God is for us, there is hope for success even if we as humans fail. So there must always be room for the divine. Humans must be able to receive life, justification, right of existence, empowerment, as a gift from the divine, not as their own achievement. The balance between law and gospel must be sought and found, so that divine involvement in salvation does not nullify but enables human involvement.

7.6.11. To have "shalom now and forever" as her permanent slogan

The ultimate goal of ELCIN should always be to make room for salvation, that is the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. It is the kingdom of **shalom, of peace**, of completeness, of soundness, and of wholeness and of wellbeing. May the second petition of the Lord's Prayer be echoed by all mouths: ***Your kingdom come!*** As to its timing, Luther says:

God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and live a godly life on earth now and in heaven forever (Luther 1979:18).

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²⁹ Except for this sermon which was delivered at an occasion unknown to this researcher, other unpublished sermons were meant for the publication of a devotional booklet. According to popular opinion the envisaged book was not published because most of the sermons were below the standard. Those sermons are, however, kept at the office of Omukwetu, at Oniipa, Namibia. They are written in the indigenous language.

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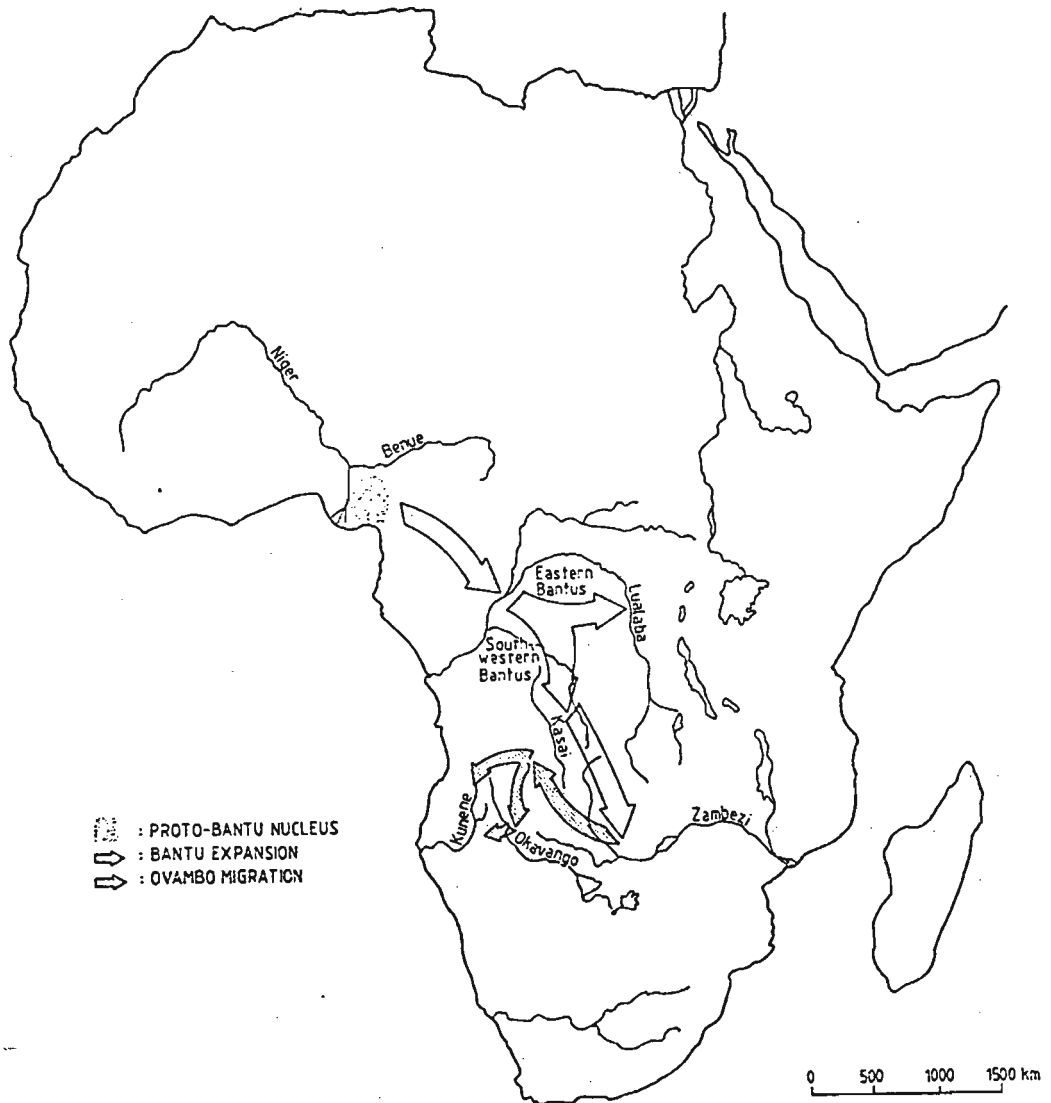
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APPENDICES

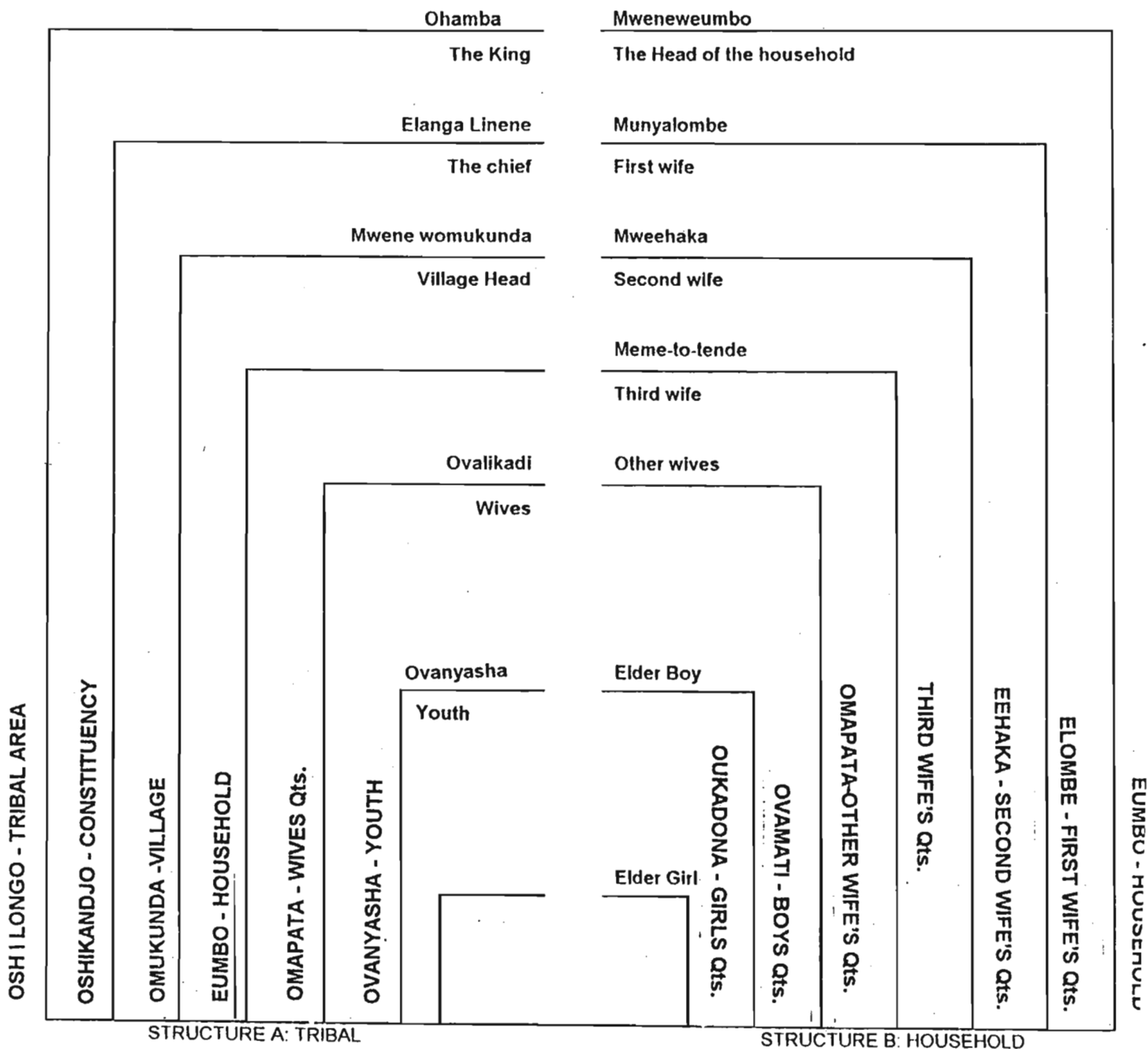


Map 1: The Routes of Bantu Migration

This map is based on Greenberg's linguistic theory of Bantu-speakers origin, Pfouts study of 1984. And phillipson s studies of 1977 and 1984. It is adopted from Williams, 1991: 52

EKUMWE LOVAWAMBO

The organisation of Owambo community [ekumwe] with Oukwamyama tribe and family structures as examples.



Please, note that members of both structures A and B are arranged in a descending order.

APPENDIX

TRADITIONAL LAWS AND SOCIAL NORMS OF OWAMBO KINGDOMS

A. Traditional Laws

1. *Murder*: No one was allowed to take the life of another person. If such a case occurred, the offender was expected to pay the following to the deceased's clan:

(i) *Ten oxen*: The two clans, that of the offender and that of the victim, were summoned to a certain place, where an ox would be slaughtered with a spear. The blood spilled was a sign of the deceased's blood. This ox was never skinned; it was just cut and roasted with its skin in open flames. Another ox was given to the King, and the rest to the deceased's clan.

(ii) A well-processed *string of pearls made from ostrich eggshells*: as a sign of the deceased's intestines.

(iii) A *ball of tobacco*: symbolized the deceased's head.

(iv) A *loaf of salt*: symbolized the deceased's brain.

(v) A *pipe* which would be smoked in turns between the offender's and the deceased's clans: the pipe was aimed at binding the two clans together, hence as a sign of peace and forgiveness.

2. No one was to put out another person's eye.

3. Rape or adultery were serious offences.

4. No grown-up girl was allowed to leave the kingdom. And no pregnancy was allowed before the girl passed through the initiation rite, or she was exiled or punished by death.

5. All contracted debts must be paid; in case of death, then the clan will be responsible for paying or claiming the deceased's debts or credit respectively.

6. Pyromaniacs were to be punished with death.

7. Witchcraft and magic were prohibited.

8. No bull were allowed to leave the kingdom.

9. No one was allowed to harvest sorghum before the king have send people to fetch ontsakala.

10. No one is allowed to fetch salt from the pans before such a period is formerly inaugurated and before all the grain is harvested.

11. No one is allowed to be armed while on a salt-fetching trip; only a knob-kierie is allowed to be carried.

12. Cattle must not be let into the field to eat stalks before the salt-pan excursion had returned.

13. No one was allowed to build a granary during the salt-pan excursion or before its return.

14. The drum must not be beaten during the rainy season

B. Social Norms

1. The King is untouchable: no commoner is allowed to beat or kill a member of the royal clan.

2. No one was allowed to enter sacred places with sandals on his/her feet.

3. No one was allowed to touch sacred things: for example, the country stone, etc.

4. The King must not eat pig's meat.

5. A blind prince/princess must be killed.

6. A left-handed prince/princess, or one with an eye cataract were not became a King or a queen.

7. If the King's wife gives birth to twins, then he should give her to become the wife of one of his subjects.

8. Two mature members of the royal clan cannot live close to each other, and their cattle are not supposed to graze on the same field.

9. Royal persons were not allowed to marry each other.

10. No thief must take away the sacred fire, and it must never be extinguished while the King is alive.

11. No salt must be fetched between the seeding and harvesting periods.