



CHAPTER 6

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

Prayer for protection plays an important role in both the Old Testament and Lozi traditions. The presence of individual and communal enemies leads victims to implore the Supreme

Being (Mainga 1972:96; Mbiti 1990:14; Crenshaw 2001:50; Bullock 2001:166). In many instances danger has resulted from malignant attacks on a victim. Tribal people in Africa are perpetually in danger from natural hazards like drought, famine and crop failure. They are exposed to debilitating diseases and chance calamities. Furthermore, they are victims of beasts and human beings. Human enemies attack through divergent methods. Malice and slander are common ways employed by cunning enemies. Ancient Israelites and Lozi people were aware of the existence of evil spirits which cause harm to individuals. Among the Lozi these malevolent spirits may operate through humans such as witches or independently. Prayer serves a purpose of communicating with the Supreme Being and eliciting his protection from the aforesaid dangers and enemies.

6.1.1 Actuality

Prayer in African Traditional Religion has been examined by several scholars like Di Nola (1962), Mbiti (1975), Shorter (1975) and McKenzie (1997). However this study is different from the earlier works of Mbiti, Di Nola and Shorter in scope. The aforesaid comparative studies encompass a broad African spectrum. McKenzie's approach is particularistic and his focus is on the Yoruba people of Nigeria.

Different investigations have been conducted on the religion and culture of Lozi people, yet no comparative study with biblical texts on prayer has been done. Furthermore, prayer is not fundamental to previous research on Lozi people. Notwithstanding the centrality of prayer to religion the works of Coillard (1902), Turner (1952), Jalla (1954), Mupatu (1954), Mainga (1966; 1967; 1972), and Holub (1976) deal with similar religious, political, social, economic and cultural aspects of Lozi society and only make reference to prayer. In these works prayer is not discussed extensively. However, the vitality of prayer in Lozi religious experience is illustrated by its function, in this case in the area of protection. It is used to secure victory at war, safety from enemies and numerous instances of danger.

6.1.2 Problem statement

Historical factors about the early missiological hermeneutics have led to reticence of African culture in the past. This means that African converts responded to a Christianity which was equivalent to Westernization. As a result tribal cultural practices were shunned.

However, a contemporary trend to revitalize indigenous knowledge systems and appraise discourses of the previously marginalized has informed this study. For that reason this research interrogates the religious closeness between the Old Testament and African Traditional Religion. In addition, this study has been precipitated by questions about functionality and vitality of prayer for protection during time of danger in both biblical and Lozi traditions.

This study is motivated primarily by the researcher's cultural background. Being a Lozi he is able to interact with data as an internal observer. Secondly the investigator's experience with African worshipper's who gravitate towards traditional remedies during crises has informed this study. The third reason is owed to this study's contribution to a data bank for indigenous Lozi knowledge systems. A contemporary trend to appraise discourses of the subaltern and the cultures of the marginalized as they rediscover themselves is the fourth reason. Fifthly the proliferation of African Independent Churches and their attempts to manipulate the future through prophets may be paralleled to the role of diviners in African traditional Religion. These activities of intermediaries are important to this study. The development of liberationist contextual models in Africa as protestation against the hegemony of Western hermeneutical approaches warrants the contribution of a comparative model this is the sixth reason.

6.2 Aims and objectives

Through a comparative model and analysis of the various aspects of prayer for protection in biblical and Lozi religious contexts this investigation has yielded both similarities and differences between the aforementioned traditions.

The aims of this study were:

- to apply a comparative model through analysis between biblical and Lozi traditions regarding prayer for protection;
- to examine the different aspects of prayer namely function, motivation and settings with regard to protection in:

- (iii) Psalms 28; 64; 77; 91 and 140 and
- (iv) Lozi religious traditions.

In each of the above references:

- to identify and examine the various elements of prayer for protection;
 - to reflect on the place of the Supreme Being in the given texts;
 - to examine the influence of the adversary and situations of danger necessitating prayer for protection;
 - to demonstrate the place of prayer for protection in both individual and corporate practices;
 - to highlight the role of intermediaries and cult officials;
- and in tandem reflect the results thereof as a starting point for dialogue between the aforesaid traditions and further research;
 - to contribute towards a data bank on Lozi prayer traditions and enrich understanding regarding prayer for protection in the two traditions;
 - to test the thesis that there is religious proximity between Old Testament and African beliefs and practices;
 - to provide aspects of Lozi historical background for the analysis of elements in prayer for protection.

6.3 Comparative analysis

Early comparative studies have been conducted for the purpose of denigrating tribal religions and cultures (Fabian 1998:218; Paden 2000:184; Patton & Ray 2000:1; Ray 2000:101). Consequently the approach has received less attention particularly in the light of pluralistic theory. In this study a comparative model has been utilized as a construct of diachronic, synchronic and theological aspects. Through an integrated approach this investigation has interrogated the issue of cultural closeness between Old Testament and African societies with regard to prayer. Thereafter results from the distinct groups have been analyzed comparatively. This process has focused broadly on the following

schemes: parties involved in prayer, elements, and some other aspects of prayer. Resulting from this approach are lists of similarities and differences between biblical psalms and Lozi prayers. These findings confirm that concepts from different traditions, although exhibiting resemblances, ought to be interpreted in their contexts in order to explicate their meaning. At any rate in both traditions petitioners revert to God in search for answers to the dire situations which surround them.

6.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is as follows:

A comparative analysis of African Traditional Religion and the Old Testament detects proximity and distance amid the two traditions. Microcosmic similarities in prayer for protection between biblical psalms and Lozi prayer traditions confirm closeness in religious experience during times of danger between ancient Israelite society and contemporary African tribal societies. Further, these similarities provide concrete points for dialogue between African Traditional Religion and biblical studies. Inversely differences underscore the uniqueness of prayer for protection in each of the biblical and African traditions.

6.5 Outcomes

Resulting from the study parameters indicated in the above aims and objectives are the following results:

These similarities were explicated:

- During calamities prayers have been directly addressed to the Supreme Being namely *Nyambe* and *Yahweh* in Lozi and Israelite religious experience respectively;
- The Supreme Being possesses power and knowledge these qualities are reflected through praise in both traditions;

- Metaphors are used to describe the Supreme Being. Exemplarily Yahweh is symbolically called my rock and *Nyambe* my king;
- Individual enemies utilize similar attack methods like slander and malice; they also disguise their desires to destroy the victim in the mentioned traditions;
- Foreign enemies of the community who attack through war are common in both traditions;
- In both traditions human intermediaries such as priests and elders and spirit intermediaries represented by angels in Israelite beliefs and mythical creatures in Lozi religious system are found;
- These elements of prayer: petition, lament, curse, thanks and praise are common in both traditions;
- Victims express confidence in the Supreme Being in both Israelite and Lozi traditions;
- Prayer gestures such as bowing, kneeling, prostrating, clapping and raising hands are found in the Old Testament and Lozi religious experience.

To the contrary these differences have been elucidated:

- *Nyambe* the Lozi Deity has a wife *Nasilele* and other wives such as Mwambwa with whom he procreated while the selected biblical texts have not indicated any spouse for Yahweh ;
- Fear of witchcraft is prevalent among Lozi people and is a key cause of danger on the other hand magic seems to have been overcome in the Old Testament tradition;
- The personification of pestilence and destruction in Psalm 91 which appears to be an allusion to certain evil spirits that wreak havoc at community level is absent in Lozi prayers;
- The office of a priest is lacking in *Nyambe* and ordinary ancestral cults;
- These human intermediaries: diviners, medicine men and rain makers are not attested to in the selected psalms;
- Lozi ancestral cult is unparalleled in the Old Testament;
- In selected Lozi prayers there are no mediated sayings which appear in certain psalm texts (P 91:16-20). This is a result of the dichotomy between divination and invocations in *Nyambe* and ordinary ancestral cults;
- While imprecations are embedded in psalm texts they exist as independent utterances in Lozi traditions like the Ila-Tonga and Andonyi curses. This difference

indicates the reliance of the psalmists on Yahweh to effect revenge. On the other hand Lozi people appear to believe in the potency of words and the speaker;

- There are allusions to apotropaic objects such as fragments of scripture and *mezuzahs* particularly in late post canonical literature. Similarly, there is a prevalence of charms in Lozi traditions. However Lozi apotropaic objects do not have a direct connection to the Supreme Being;
- Post-exilic use of psalms leans toward centralized worship at the second temple while the selected Lozi prayers are not a product of a centralized cultic system.

6.6 Implications of this study

Arising from this research are the following implications:

A comparative approach for conducting hermeneutics has a place in biblical studies. It enhances the explication of data from different cultural contexts. This process should consider the historical, cultural and religious gap between the case studies prior to assigning meaning and reformulating phenomena. For that reason Lozi prayers are foregrounded in their historical and broad cultural contexts. However, Lozi historical theories must be considered tentative at many points since certain oral traditions remain untested archaeologically and have not been corroborated with close cultural information.

This research has illustrated that victims generally petition the Supreme Being for protection from enemies and dangers. But a shift has been observed in Lozi religious experience since prayer may be addressed to ancestors. Further various aspects form the rubric on which prayer for protection is built in the two contexts namely: participants-Deity, petitioners, intermediaries and enemies/danger; genre; literary, historical and cultic contexts and functionality. Through comparison meaning of the concept of prayer for protection is broadened since it ceases to be restricted to a monolithic definition. After the process of meticulous analysis the study has yielded similarities and differences between the Old Testament and Lozi traditions. These similarities contribute towards dialogue between biblical and African Traditional Religion.

Through systematic analysis this study has contributed to Lozi knowledge systems and data bank. In addition the presence of many resemblances is a demonstration of cultural

closeness between the Old Testament and African belief systems and practices. However caution must be applied because no matter how similar concepts are, the mere fact that they obtain from distinct traditions separated by time and culture means that they can not be exactly the same.

6.7 Further research

The results of this investigation are a contribution to African studies and Lozi religious traditions in particular. However the immensity of the task and the vastness of the scope imply that further clarification and in depth studies must be conducted on certain matters. The following are some of the areas that remain untapped for research which, through further examination, will illuminate our perception of Lozi religious experience:

- A phenomenological study of the rituals, prayers and significance of royal gravesites in Lozi tradition;
- A contextual comparative study of Lozi royal praises in the light of the divinity of the monarch with reference to the annual migration ceremony;
- Further examination of Lozi historical legends in relation to other related African tribal groups;
- The impact of Lozi religious system on the social economic life of Lozi people with a focus on the role of the Deity in providing success, prayer as a means of sourcing blessings and protection from destructive enemies such as witches who are motivated by jealousy;
- Inquiry into the historical dynamics and relatedness of the three religious streams namely *Nyambe* cult, royal ancestor cult and ordinary ancestor cult.

The above mentioned matters, and perhaps more, ought to be examined and recorded in order to capture the disappearing and unrecorded traditional knowledge systems of the Lozi people.

6.8 Final remarks

Following the analysis and implications of this thesis the following conclusions have been reached:

- In spite of reticence by some scholars regarding the validity of a comparative approach about phenomena that arise from distinct geographical and cultural areas, this study has demonstrated that such a task has a place in biblical and religious studies. Its contribution to research in the wake of a quest for authenticity and rediscovery is crucial;
- After interrogating the hypothesis it is concluded that prayer for protection is important in both examined traditions. These results do not infer an equilibrium of biblical and Lozi traditions. Nonetheless, based on the diverse contexts and functions from the two traditions prayer for protection is a key vehicle for resolving situations of calamity, disaster and difficulty by requesting for redress and assistance from the Deity.
- Aspects of prayer for protection in this contribution can be further investigated and utilized as a contribution towards the promotion of dialogue between African Traditional Religion and biblical studies.
- In view of the differences resulting from this study rushed conclusions concerning resemblance and applicability of ancient Israelite beliefs without due consideration of historical setting should be employed sparingly. The closeness of African culture and Israelite culture arising from a simplistic reading that glosses over differences of compared texts is problematic. The meaning of religious beliefs must be explicated in their contexts in order to realize a fuller understanding. At any rate after careful analysis this study confirms the hypothesis that there is cultural closeness between ancient and contemporary societies.
- This investigation has made a contribution to Biblical and Religious Studies through the application of comparative model which is a construct of synchronic, diachronic and theological aspects to selected biblical psalms and Lozi prayer traditions.