



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Student no. 12259731

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A Pentecostal View of Approaches to Revelation

By

M. Mikateko Shingange

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M. Mikateko Shingange, B.Th., B.A.

Supervisor: Prof Vuyani Vellem

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Declaration

Moses Mikateko Shingange (12259731), declare that this dissertation, A Pentecostal View of Approaches on Revelation, is my own work, and that any and all sources that I have used or quoted have been dully indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference following the Harvard Style for Referencing and Bibliography. Some aspects of the works represent some assignments I have completed during my Honours and Master's Degrees years of study at the University of Pretoria. Wherever this has occurred, I have acknowledged it in the text.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name of the Supervisor: Prof Vuyani Vellem

Signature: _____

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family, my mother: Somisa Rose Nukeri, who supports all of her children to this day. To my siblings, Miyelani, Irvin, Ntsako and Mrs. Luann Shingange, you are always there for me. Dedication to my spiritual parents Pastor D.H. and the late Mhani Mfhundhisi Doreen Shingange who found me in 1996 and brought me up and all the believers who have played a major role in my life to this day, thank you and may God richly bless you.

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Abstract

This dissertation presents arguments in the main by John Macquarrie, James H. Cone and Bolaji Idowu on revelation with other scholars from a Pentecostal perspective. Chapter one offers a general outline of the study, highlighting the structure of the dissertation, its methodology and the literature review.

Chapter two presents an interpretation of Macquarrie's views on revelation based on existentialism. Revelation could be explained philosophically, Macquarrie being an example that I have chosen. He uses existentialism as a philosophical category to explain revelation. Macquarrie (1966:92) uses "existential thinking" as his approach to revelation and perceives existential thinking as a way of thinking which is common to humankind every day. Therefore, revelation is ordinary in this sense. At another level, "Classic' or 'primordial' form of revelation," according to Macquarrie (1966:8) depends on a community of faith that traces back in history an event that establishes a 'classic' or 'primordial' form of revelation.

In Chapter three Cone engages existentialism. Cone sees revelation in history particularly God's covenant with Israel and God's deliberate choice to side with the oppressed and the marginalized. Revelation is God's liberative acts in history. Cone (1975:62) argues that "God's revelation is inseparable from the social and political affairs of Israel." He believes that to know Yahweh is to experience Yahweh's revealed acts in the concrete affairs of the struggle against oppression. Cone argues (1984:65) that first, the Exodus is the point of departure of Israel's existence and covenant is an invitation to Israel to enter into a responsible relationship with God. This invitation places Israel in a situation of decision, because the covenant requires obedience to the will of Yahweh. Second, Cone perceives the rise of prophecy as an important dimension to the covenant. Prophets proclaimed Yahweh's future activity of judgment and renewal that was about to burst into the present. Cone (1975:66-67) portrays Israel's tragedy that it is due to Israel's failure to remember the Exodus-Sinai tradition. Third, Cone (1975:72) believes that Jesus is the continuation of the Law and the prophets who

addressed justice and that His words and deeds are signs of His forthcoming. Cone (1989:35) states that Christians' knowledge of God is revealed in and through Jesus Christ only.

In Chapter Four Idowu and Mbiti argue for an interpretation of God and God's revelation within the framework of African indigenous knowledge systems. This chapter essentially argues that Western forms of knowledge cannot be the monopoly to know God. It argues through the work of Idowu that African knowledge could be used to explain revelation too. For Idowu, it should be understood that Africans are capable in their own native tools to engage and explain their understanding of revelation. Second, to Africans, time is composition of events which are realized and those which are occurring simultaneously. Mbiti (1970:159) argues that "what has not been realized belongs in reality to no – Time." But Jesus is the centre of all times. Jesus is also a revelation of times in His primary revelation of nature. Christian times can make a radical contribution to God's natural revelation in Africans.

Chapter five is a brief background on Pentecostal roots and its views on revelation. This Pentecostal view of revelation is in dialogue with the chapters above. While the Pentecostal view of revelation also uses Western Philosophy, there are traits of African culture that have come to be used as well to deal with this concept.

Chapter One

1.1. General Introduction

This chapter offers a general outline of the study that contains the background of the study, research problem, and research questions, the purpose of the study and synopsis of research design and methodology, literature review, and limitation and scope of the study, summary and conclusion.

1.2. Background to the Study

I intend in this study to engage the views by John Macquarie with others, especially James Cone and African Scholars such as Bolaji Idowu and Mbiti to broaden my Pentecostal understanding of revelation. Macquarie's views on revelation are based on the philosophy of existentialism. His approach is more philosophical than others'. James H. Cone (1975:63-64) perceives God as the God of Old Testament, Yahweh, who revealed Himself as the Saviour of the oppressed people, the Israelites. He argues that Exodus event revealed God by means of His acts on behalf of the weak and defenseless people from the Egyptians. John Macquarie (1979:270) concurs that history has been the vehicle of revelation and that God's reconciling and saving work is seen in His historical providence in dealing with Israel. While there seems to be some commonality between Macquarie and Cone, there are differences too. It seems Macquarie's focus on developing an understanding of revelation does not emphasize the struggle of the weak and thus God's siding with the poor as a starting point of God's revelation. These differences are important for this study.

From an African perspective, Bolaji Idowu (1970:17) argues that any people from any ethnic group can claim God as their own as long as God can be fitted into their ethnic group's world view. This background highlights the literature review within the scope of the research which seeks to examine points of agreement and differences from a Pentecostal view.

1.3. Research Problem

This research examines John Macquarrie's understanding of revelation. It engages Macquarrie's views with Cone's and Bolaji Idowu in the main. Macquarrie (1966:7) views revelation as a primary source of theology. Revelation for Macquarrie (1966:84) is a Christian doctrine that can be explained through the cognitive mode of knowledge and human experience. In other words, by analyzing our human existence and our existence as human beings, we could attain the knowledge of revelation. Macquarrie says, (1966:23)

Existentialism is similarly analytic, but it admits a more substantial content of philosophy; what is analyzed is human existence in its manifold modes of being, and the aim of this philosophy is that humans should attain to self-understanding."

From this statement above, one sees the explanation of revelation through philosophy. In this case it is the philosophy of existentialism. Cone's approach sees revelation in terms of history, in other words the historical journey of God with the oppressed as seen in the story of the Bible. Idowu critiques the forms of Western evangelism and argues that God could be understood within the native idiom of African people. Exploring these views, the dissertation ultimately seeks to engage them in dialogue with my Pentecostal view of revelation.

1.4. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to examine various approaches on the understanding of revelation, particularly the Black and African perspectives. This dialogue is conducted from a Pentecostal background as an ordained Pastor from The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, Lowveld Region in Limpopo. To achieve my purpose, I have identified the following scholars as my primary conversation partners:

- 1.4.1. John Macquarrie's approach to the Revelation
- 1.4.2. James H. Cone's approach to the Revelation
- 1.4.3. E. Bolaji Idowu and John S. Mbiti's approach to the Biblical revelation and African beliefs and
- 1.4.4. A Pentecostal approach to the Revelation

1.5. Synopsis of Research Design and Methodology

In this study the literature engaged comprises John Macquarrie's understanding of revelation, James Cone, Bolaji Idowu and John S. Mbiti and other Pentecostal scholars dealing with revelation such as Simon Chan, Amos Yong and Christopher R. Little, Agrippa G. Khathide and other scholars.

This research is a study within the theological discipline of Systematic and Christian Ethics. The literature review examines what developments are established within the selected scholars on the perspectives of revelation. According to Lawrence A. Machi and Brenda T. McEvoy (2012:40) "the literature selected from the search will qualify and refine the topic statement, causing it to narrow and become more concrete."

The literature review examines the different approaches of the understanding of revelation of God in a manner that scholars' perceptions vary in content and analysis. The literature review explains the various approaches of the subject of the research in order to assess them and also to assess the logical sense of their arguments and their significance on the concept of revelation.

1.6. Limitation and scope of the study

As this study is hypothetical literature, it is limited in its methodology. It focuses on literal facts gathered from literal documents or secondary sources onto the various approaches to the revelation of God by specific scholars selected. Since this is destined to be a limited research on the subject it has purposely avoided other methodologies of data collection for the reason that it would take the study beyond its possibility. It is

limited too because it is written from a background of a Pentecostal view, within the limited scope of a mini-dissertation for a Master's Degree in Systematic Theology.

1.7. Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter one provides a general introduction to the study. It gives an overview starting with the background of the study, purpose of the research study, and research problem, research questions, and purpose of the study, synopsis of research design and methodology, literature review, limitation and scope of the study.

In chapter two focuses on Macquarrie's approach to the revelation of God, chapter three it is Cone's approach to the revelation and chapter four shift the focus to Idowu and Mbiti's approach on the Biblical revelation and African beliefs. Chapter five contains Pentecostal approach of revelation and chapter six concludes.

1.8. Conclusion

I have presented the background of the study, highlighting the approaches of the scholars' contents on revelation. I then presented the research, the purpose of the study highlighted chapters' and the methodology of the research. I propose that we now continue with our discussion on Macquarrie's approach of the revelation of God.

CHAPTER TWO

JOHN MACQUARRIE'S APPROACH TO THE REVELATION

2.1. Introduction

Revelation could be explained philosophically, John Macquarrie being an example that I have chosen. He uses existentialism as a philosophical category to explain revelation.

John Macquarrie was born in Scotland in 1919 from his parents John and Robina Macquarrie. According to Cummings (2002:4) Macquarrie's family was not poor, but they were certainly not affluent. John's parents were both devout Christians, his father being an elder in the Presbyterian Church. John's influence comes from his minister in his hometown at Renfrew and about this Cummings says, "John Macquarrie thought to some extent a bit of hero-worship comes in to his pastor." However, "At the time was a man of considerable learning who had a first-class degree in philosophy, who practiced what he preached" (2002:4).

Macquarrie studied in the normal range of high school and in the fifth year of course he entered and won a Glasgow University bursary completion that became a ticket for his success, for without it, he probably would not have gone to university. Cummings (2002:5) says, part of the university application form inquired about the candidate's vocational aspirations, and Macquarrie found himself writing "the Christian ministry."

Bradley (1846-1924) was Macquarrie's fellow at Merton College, Oxford, whom he describes as the most brilliant of the neo-idealists and probably the greatest British philosopher of any school in his recent times. Macquarrie found Bradley's Principles of Logic particularly revealing and that shows where he also got his influence. However, Macquarrie received his first degree, the M.A., with first-class Honours in mental philosophy in 1940. Another influencer in Macquarrie was his professor of logic and rhetoric, Charles Arthur Campbell, to whom in 1972 he dedicated his book *Existentialism*.

2.1.1. On a brief Note on Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice. Robert C. Solomon (2005:xiv) says “many existentialist believes that every act and every attitude must be considered a choice.” According to David E. Cooper (1999:2), existentialism is not only a philosophy; it had also become a ‘movement’ and a ‘fashion.’ Which means existentialism is a lifestyle. For Cooper (1999:2-3), the special sense of existence from which existentialism derives its name is that first, “existence refers to the kind of existence enjoyed by human beings.” Second, “it refers only to those aspects of human being which distinguish it from the being of everything else – ‘mere’ physical objects, for instance.”

Solomon (2005:xi) says “existentialist philosophy is the explicit conceptual manifestation of an existential attitude – a spirit of the present age. He continues to say it is an attitude that recognizes the unresolvable confusion of the human world, yet resists the all – too – human temptation to resolve the confusion by grasping toward whatever appears or can be made to appear firm or familiar – reason, God, nation, authority, history, work, tradition, or the other worldly, whether of Plato, Christianity, or utopian fantasy.

On the other hand Solomon (2005:1) says “it is generally acknowledged that if existentialism is a ‘movement’ at all, Kierkegaard is its prime mover.” But Solomon also argues that “It is not a movement or a set of ideas or an established list of authors.” Existentialism, for Solomon, is a growing series of expressions of a set of attitudes which can be recognized only in a series of portraits. He perceives an attitude which has found and is still finding philosophical expression in the most gifted writers of his times (2005:x).

This brings us to further pursue Macquarrie’s influence on the existentialism as he also perceive and interpret revelation from a philosophical background.

2.1.2. Macquarrie and Existentialism

About Existentialism, Macquarrie (1966:23) says: what is analyzed is human existence in its manifold modes of being, and the aim of philosophy is that human should attain to self-understanding. He says, all the existentialists agree about the limitation of human's powers and they agree that it belongs to the very essence of the human's existence that the human must live without that comprehensive knowledge that was sought in metaphysics."

As we know, Macquarrie (1966:60) says, only human being is open to himself or herself, in the sense that he or she is not only himself or herself, but is aware that he or she is, and aware too, in some degrees, of what he or she is. He or she has his or her being disclosed to himself or herself and this disclosure, will be shown, for it comes not only in understanding, but also over the whole range of his or her affective and expressing effort in his or her existence in a world.

Existentialism by Martin Heidegger means, 'I am because I exist,' and God is understood as a God who is existing God (Macquarrie 1966:84-103). But how? What is the essence of God? After two decades Macquarrie (1990:363) continues to mention that "existentialism is the most obvious example of an anthropology that stresses human transcendence." The philosophy of existentialism says anything that I think, that I act, anything, it is about my existence. But in reality, it is therefore difficult for one to go out of his or her existence and talk of the existence of another being.

If existentialism is the view that humans define their own meaning in life, and try to make rational decisions despite existing in an irrational universe, then to me existentialism is a personal attitude that determines everything based on its experience and knowledge. This means that existentialism is limited to its background, environment and understanding. And therefore, existentialism cannot fully interpret the revelation of God.

Coming from an existentialism background, Macquarrie's approach with regard to revelation says "revelation is a primary source of theology, and is also a basic category

in theological thinking” (1966:7). In this chapter, I expand on Macquarrie’s approach of revelation in dialogue with other scholars on the following themes: reason and revelation, Scripture and revelation, experience and holiness, experience and revelation, special revelation and general revelation, for Macquarrie uses the philosophy of Heidegger to interpret the mode of thinking and knowing and to argue that revelation is primordial, revelation is ordinary and revelation is something that other people may not see in the same way as the one who claims revelation (1966:84-103).

2.2. Reason and Revelation

Macquarrie explains revelation in connection with the formative factors of doing theology. “There are formative factors which are not all on the same level or of equal importance.” These factors are: experience, revelation, Scripture, tradition, culture, and reason (1966:4). He says that “some of these may operate unconsciously, that we are not even aware.” He finds revelation to be caught up in these factors and argues that revelation and these factors need to be identified and distinguished theologically.

According to Macquarrie (1966:84) “revelation” is a concept that points to the cognitive element in the human experience. He approaches revelation in a form of personal experience and thinking. These literal expressions of revelation are in a method that is equal to natural activities of humankind. For Macquarrie the religious person experiences the initiative from beyond him or herself in various ways in the revelation. On the other hand, revelation and the modes of thinking and knowing have several objections.

“Calculative thinking” is the first level of objective thinking which Macquarrie (1966:91) adopted from the work on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Calculative thinking is about what humans see as an “object” to them; an object as that which stands outside of us. Calculative thinking suggests that “our thinking is directed towards handling, using, manipulating this object and incorporating within our instrumental world” (Macquarrie 1966:91). He further mentions that the calculative thinking unfolds that which we subject it in the sense of rising above it and to master it.

A second level of thinking is “existential thinking” which is called ‘repetitive’ thinking. Macquarrie’s explanation on existential thinking is a way of thinking of humankind everyday which is common; he draws back to it in view of general revelation (1996:92). Existential thinking aims at nothing, as calculative thinking does, which means it goes back to the factors that which may not be clearly noticed if not unfolded or monitored. This thinking according to Macquarrie does not take its object as we think about, but recognizes what is thought about as another subject having the same kind of being as the person who does the thinking; as a result this is a balanced experience from both sides of participants. When one does not treat another as an object but a subject like one believes is, and then the mode of thinking is different, it is existentialism, something that Heidegger argues.

According to Macquarrie’s understanding this kind of thinking involves participation; this is thinking about a subject and “thinking into” the subject, because it is a common kind of being on both sides (1996:92-93). He indicates that we can only know a person when he or she makes himself or herself known. We know the person not only by the open behavior, but to the extent of which the person discloses self to us and actively meets us in our approach to him or her. The explanation of this mode of thinking is used to explain God as a subject of God’s own disclosure not an object. Barth argues that revelation cannot be fully explored with a description of the discussion between God as both subject and object (Webster 2000:55).

According to Fackre’s understanding, revelation is the story of the Triune God’s self-disclosure (1997:15). He perceives revelation as the gift of the knowledge of God given to human beings in the history of God’s dealings with human beings. To him the doctrine of revelation explores why we turn to God when we have come to know who God is, and what God does among us from creation to consummation. Macquarrie (1966:85) says it is necessary to offer a careful description of what is meant by revelation, and the factors in which revelation is involved, the condition in which revelation takes place, and the condition that revelation has to be fulfilled. We are now going to look at other factors of the Scripture and revelation.

2.2.1. Scripture and Revelation

Macquarrie (1966:9) explains that the classic or primordial revelation as given at the origin of the community of faith is whereby the Scripture and tradition together mediate the primordial revelation to us. Scripture and tradition are not coordinating with revelation, but subordinate to it. This gives us a different dimension between the operation of Scripture and tradition within its communion in revelation. Macquarrie describes that Scripture is not itself revelation, but it is important way to the community of faith and its access is where the community of faith has been founded. He further emphasizes that the Scripture mediates primordial forms of revelation, and Scripture also authenticates this experience.

For Macquarrie, the Scripture comes alive and renews for us the disclosure of the holy as the content of the primordial revelation. He describes power of bringing again or representing the disclosure of the primordial revelation that it speaks to us in our present experience, he calls this ‘inspiration’ of Scripture. He argues that “it is a present experience within a community of faith that gives rise to theology and that enables us to recognize the primordial revelation as revelation” (1966:9).

Macquarrie continues to explain that theology is in danger of subjectivism and that it needs to be saved. He argues that “the varieties of experience within the community must be submitted to the relatively objective content of the classic revelation on which the community is founded” (1966:9). This argument leads us to further investigation of Macquarrie’s epistemological framework of the modes of thinking and knowing in his depth of approach of revelation and human experience.

2.2.2. Experience and Revelation

“Revelation is a mode of religious experience,” Macquarrie (1966:8) argues. He describes how our actions are involved as part of experiences of the ‘holy’ by judging, assisting, addressing, and the like, and that all have a revelatory element, which is the action of human beings. He also puts revelation into analysis in the area of human’s

general cognitive experience. Macquarrie (1966:90) says “the revelatory experience is not self-authenticating and might be illusory.” Nevertheless, “its trustworthiness would be supported if we found that it is not an experience utterly mysterious and isolated and if we were able to find something like parallels and connections in our more ordinary experience.”

Therefore, calculative thinking is introduced by Macquarrie (1966:93) in a manner that “our activities are observing, experimenting, measuring, and also deducing, demonstrating, and showing connections.” This experience has to do with being an ordinary being. He says “in the revelatory experience, the person who receives the revelation is utterly transcended by the holy being that reveals itself; and this utter one-sidedness again implies that a personal encounter could be only a very remote analogue.” This means that one has to elevate from being ordinary to a transcended state of receiving and experimenting.

Roberts (1993:115) perceives experience in the context of decision, action, and life as similar to Macquarrie. For Roberts, experience determines to a great extent the understanding and the appropriation of revelation. Cognitive knowledge is not the only form of knowledge. Knowledge is also experiential and this mode of knowledge defies rational explanations of things known, yet it cannot be discounted. The use of experience and rationality (reason) must be understood this way. Yet this experience requires confirmation. It must be confirmed by those who claim the same experience. This experience must also be confirmed through the primordial experiences of the founding community and through the link of the Scripture. This means revelation comes in need of thorough conceptuality first and then grasped into a personal experience in participation and still it needs to be tested by the Scripture.

Hence to Macquarrie (1966:9), the power of revelation becomes fruitful in the community of faith. And therefore, it implies that the power of revelation is also a power of benefit. Then primordial revelation continues in our present experience to be renewed as revelation to us and not just fixed revelation.

Again “personal knowledge and the related existential thinking bring us nearer to the revelatory experience than the objective knowledge that arises from calculative thinking,” says Macquarrie (1966:93), because “personal knowledge is made possible only by the active self-disclosure of the person known.” He says “we get something like a parallel to the initiative of the holy in revealed knowledge.” Furthermore, this kind of philosophical thinking provides a kind of paradigm for the understanding of what is meant by “revelation” and show where revelation is to be located in the range of humankind’s cognitive experience (1966:94). On the other hand Macquarrie also sees no distinction between revelation and experience.

According to Dulles (1983:85), Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, and several others, “developed a common approach often called ‘crisis theology’ or ‘dialectical theology.’” Profoundly conscious of the divine transcendence and of human sinfulness, they denied that God’s presence and activity could ever be discovered within the realms of historical fact, doctrinal statement, or religious experience. Besides, they were also convinced, in faith, that God was present and active in human history, language, and experience. Mikkelsen says that, “The reality or revelation cannot be fully explored with a description of the dialectic theology between God as both subject and object” (2010:4). He mentions that, “Revelation must be experienced as to have an impact on the individual.”

Dulles (1983:27-28) says, revelation as inner experience “is neither an impersonal body of objective truths nor a series of external historical events. Rather it is a privileged interior experience of grace or communion with God.” He says this perception of the divine is held to be immediate to each individual, some proponents of this position say that experience of grace depends on the mediation of Jesus Christ, who experienced the Father’s presence in a unique and exemplary way.

Therefore, Dulles says that dialectical thinkers hold that revelation takes place as an expansion of consciousness or shift of perspective when people join in the movements of secular history. God, for them, is not a direct object of experience but is mysteriously present as the transcendent dimension of human engagement in creative tasks (1983:28). Experiential as model of revelation for Dulles “is interpreted on the basis of

an immediate interior experience.” He says “God is viewed as the divine visitor, the guest of the soul, God communicates by his presence, to which the recipient must be prayerfully open” (Dulles 1983:33). He continues to say that revelation as inner experience together with its content is neither, information about the past nor abstract doctrinal truth. Rather, the content is God as God lovingly communicates self to the soul that is open to Him. Therefore, revelation imparts a blessed experience of union with God, which may be called “eternal life” (Dulles 1983:77).

Smith (1968:52) says any meaningful religious experience involves mediating elements, so that consequently “every alleged experience of God would also be experience of something else at the same time.” He says “specific disclosures such as the Biblical events can figure as revelation. Revelation represents a further development of the experiential matrix of religion, since experience is the only medium through which anything can be revealed to humankind.”

Schillebeeckx (1981:11-13) says “there can be no revelation without experience. It never exists without an interpretation.” He continues to assert that “every experience includes, and is modified by, but no others, pertain to Christian revelation.” He continues to say that “when the original experience is overlaid by alien interpretations extrinsically imposed upon it by subsequent reflection, the revelation can be obscured, so that the contemporary believer is hindered from finding salvation in Jesus” (1981:15-16).

Dulles says both the experience and the basic interpretation, enjoying the same privileged status, must be preserved (1983:82). He says according to Dupre (1982:30-51), “Neither the experience nor the interpretation should be understood as completely given in the initial encounters of the disciples with Jesus, or even in the Good Friday events. Schillebeeckx and Dulles’ argument of experience and interpretation of revelation in Jesus brings us into consideration of the discussion of experience and the holy as discussed above by Macquarrie.

2.2.3. Experience and Holiness

Macquarrie (1966:7) takes in the concept of holiness as a form of experience right from the beginning of his theology. He points out that the expression “holiness” is dimensional and it ‘breaks in’ toward humanity in revelatory experience. He describes “holiness” in the primitive religion that it is believed to manifest in natural phenomena whereby nature is replaced by history and personal relationships in which the “holy” discloses itself. For Macquarrie (1966:8), “In practice it is desirable to keep these two formative factors distinct in our theological thinking.”

Macquarrie (1966:7) also points out that the origin of religion has encountered this revelation where nature and history commune into the relation of holiness disclosure. The “holy” is encountered in depths of the human mind itself and experience. This means revelation and experience is communion, and also need to be identified in their operation with the holy. Consequently, the “holy” is able to interact with human being. But what does it mean when the “holy” is encountered in the depths of human being? Does this mean the “holy” is a belief which cannot be tested and fully grasped by human science? Or can it only be accessed through faith and reason? To these questions, Macquarrie says “a person, Jesus Christ, is the bearer of revelation.” He states that the human mind encounters the “holy” in a person of Jesus Christ.

According to Macquarrie’s (1966:8), a community of faith traces back in history to establish a ‘classic’ or ‘primordial’ form of revelation. He links this classic definition of revelation defining it as the “disclosive” of the “holy” as granted to the founder or founders of the community. Yet again, it is referred to the Messiah, the Christ who was to come as promised to the Israelites. On this account, Jesus Christ claimed to be He who was promised and prophesied with his disciples, because Macquarrie states that, this “holy” becomes as if it were the paradigm for experiences in the community of faith.

Macquarrie continues to say that; “We do not normally dignify our day-to-day experiences of the ‘holy’ by the name of ‘revelation,’ and no theology properly so called could be founded on private revelations, for theology expresses the faith of a community.” He does not see any philosophical theology being established on personal

revelation because theology expresses the faith of a specific community. Yet Macquarrie further says, “We would never believe that anyone had been the recipient of a revelation unless we ourselves had had some experience of the ‘holy’” (1966:8). This tells us that he never believed that any person can be a recipient of a revelation unless people can have an experience with the holy. Moreover, the confirmation of the individual revelation is in the community of those who have experienced the holy.

On behalf of personal knowledge, Macquarrie (1966:93-94) also explains that we do not subject the other or master, or transcend other, but we meet other on a footing of mutuality. His personal knowledge and related existential thinking, brings us nearer to the revelatory experience than the objective knowledge that arises from calculative thinking. He says that personal knowledge is made possible only by the active self-disclosure of the person known which is parallel to the initiative of the holy in revealed knowledge, which is Jesus.

2.2.3.1. Special revelation

Roberts (1993:114) says that Macquarrie is correct in his definition of theology that it begins with divine existence, or may begin with human existence. He extracts this from *logos of theos*. Roberts agrees that revelation is the process of unveiling, and is the divine self-manifestation or self-disclosure. He also agrees with Brunner that a person is addressable and for that fact, he says, “Revelation in order to complete its process must have a revealer and a ‘revealee’” (1993:114 - 115). Roberts perceives that a human being is free to respond to God’s revelation in terms of obedience or disobedience. This is a call to respond. However, he also comes to agree with Macquarrie in terms of experience because experience is the receptacle and the fountain of revelation.

For Macquarrie (1966:90), it is classic or primordial revelation that keeps coming alive in the ongoing life of the community of faith so that the original disclosure of the holy is being continually renewed. He believes that not all religious people will have a direct revelation of being. He extracts “repetitive” revelation, whereby the general description

of revelation is not meant to imply that every religious person has a direct revelation of being. For the great majority, it will be a case of reliving some classic revelation.

De Gruchy's theology (1987:54) begins with Jesus of Nazareth and the proclamation of the kingdom of God. He says, "Jesus not only enables us to see that God becomes known within specific historical contexts, but, in fact, defines who God is and what it means to 'know God.'" This is acknowledged by many scholars of theology that Jesus Christ is the special revelation of God although their theologies do not start from the same ground. De Gruchy explains that "the incarnation makes it possible for us to grasp the content of that revelation in a way that directly relates to our own specific situation". At this juncture De Gruchy comes to an agreement with Macquarrie when he states that we know the person not only by the open behaviour, but to the extent of which that person discloses self to us and actively meets us in our approach to the person.

Webster (2000:55) says, "For Barth, God's Word is never available in a straightforward way. It is not a deposit of truth upon which the church can draw, or a set of statements which can be consulted." Barth did not see any other forms of direct answers to God's word, and also realized there is no specific collection of withdrawing the truth even as the church, and the fact that there cannot be any historical setting that can be assessed.

According to Webster (2000:55), Barth saw the Word of God as an act to undertake, as he refers to the God who has spoken, the God who speaks, and the God who will speak. However, Barth's perspective on one event of the Word of God is that it is an act of revelation itself, its attestation in the prophetic and apostolic words, and the preaching of that testimony in the community of faith. Barth saw these in an understanding of the fact that there is nothing new except that which was revealed. He further describes that the innermost circle of the Word of God as divine speech-act is only approachable through the human speech-acts of Scripture and proclamation which are appointed by God to be its bearers and witnesses, and that they become God's Word by derivation.

For Barth, the fact that God is both objective and subjective is because of the main aim of the clarification which is to promote the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's reality and possibility of revelation. Webster further says according to Barth; revelation and its reception proceed alike from the Triune God, and so coming to understand how God is known involves nothing more than following the path which is already indicated by the doctrine of the revelation of God in Trinity (2000:62).

Roberts (1993:121) says, 'God reveals Himself within the Black experience,' in which this differs from Macquarrie's approach. Roberts gets inspiration from Cone that "to the Black man God reveals Himself as the God of the Exodus, of restoration, of prophecy, of the cross-resurrection event." Though Cone (1993:430) in response to Roberts says, "Roberts appears to be more concerned with presenting a theological perspective acceptable to the White church establishment than the Black community he claim to represent." What Cone argues, is that Roberts is claiming to represent the Black community while on the other hand he makes his theology acceptable to the White church. According to Cone you cannot represent the Black community and remain acceptable to the White church.

Cone (1993:429) finds it difficult with the oppressors that sociologically and theologically does not think that there is any reason to believe that oppressors can participate in the liberation of the people they hold in bondage. But the fact that to the Black man God reveals Himself as the God of the Exodus, of restoration, of prophecy, of the cross-resurrection event, it is not wrong and this also comes to the fact of the personal experience in Macquarrie's cognition that he excluded the Black people in view of his philosophy of revelation. However, we will further deal with Cone's approach of revelation later in the following chapters.

2.2.4. General Revelation

General revelation is the things that the bible says are adequate to make other believe that there is God. For generally the Scripture make sense that indeed there should be a God, or Creator or a transcendence being as others may call God so. For since the

creation of the world God's invincible attributes, God's eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (Rom 1:20).

For Macquarrie (1966:85-86), general revelation suggests some kind of unveiling, whereby what has yet been concealed from us is now opened up. He says revelation is the thought that is in the process, the initiative lies with that which is known. That which is known comes into light or better still, and provides the light by which it is known and by which we in turn know ourselves. This tells us that, nothing is new except that which is there but unrecognized in our understanding, what is discovered has been revealed before.

"General revelation" and its general and formal character should be borne in mind. Macquarrie says "any actual experience of revelation would be concrete, belonging to a particular person, at a particular place, in a particular situation, employing particular symbols" (1966:89). He gives the example of Moses at the burning bush and also the recognition of Jesus by the disciples as the messiah, saying revelation is always given in particular occasions. For Macquarrie, one can hardly speak of a general revelation. He says although there is a universal possibility of revelation, it is possible and desirable to delineate the general structure of a revelatory happening.

2.3. Conclusion

What I discussed here discloses Macquarrie's consideration of the formative factors, which forms part of experience with the holy. His philosophy on revelation states that these factors are revealed in the classic or primordial revelation to the founders in the community of faith. He uses calculative thinking as part of existentialism's explanation of his approach of revelation to say that the present experiences reflect that primordial revelation is revelation.

Again, the person who receives the revelation, according to Macquarrie (1966:89), sees the same things that otherwise escape notice but becomes aware of the being that is

present. He continues to say “the person sees the same things in a different way. Perhaps we should say that he or she notices features of the situation that otherwise escape notice, as if he or she saw an extra dimension in it.” This means that revelation is something that other people may not see in the same way as the one who claims revelation.

In conclusion, I find that Macquarrie’s (1996:92) outstanding approach of revelation is ‘existential thinking.’ It gives us a sound mind about how one may encounter another subject in participation as we think about, and also recognize thought about as another subject having the same kind of being as the person who does the thinking. However, I argue that in reality we may find it very challenging or difficult to be in a subject’s experience of being. And on that fact I argue that revelation cannot be fully explored with a description of the dialectics between God as both subject and object with human as Barth mentions. Therefore, revelation remains open and will not be closed in any method that will limit God in His Supremeness and that God is indescribable at all costs of human understanding but we may relate to His disclosure.

CHAPTER THREE

JAMES H. CONE'S APPROACH TO THE OF REVELATION

3.1. Introduction

James H. Cone engages existentialism, through the work of Cone who sees revelation in history particularly God's covenant with Israel and God's deliberate choice to side with the oppressed and the marginalized. Revelation is God's liberative acts in history.

Cone's influence and the nurturing support of his theology starts with the African Methodist Episcopal Church that gave him opportunity to stand from what he believed in his teenage years (2013:ix). His theological approach in 1969 burst forth with the publication of *Black Theology and Black Power*, when he first arrived at Union Theological Seminary to lecture on Black Liberation Theology, where he found his voice in the social, political religious, and cultural context of the civil rights and black power movements in the 1960s (Cone 2013:xvi).

Cone (1989: xi) perceived the challenges of mis-education in theology that is shown in the neo-orthodox theology, in the likes of Karl Barth. In response to neo-orthodoxy, Cone initiated an attempt to identify liberation as a motif that is at the heart of the Christian gospel and blackness as the primary mode of God's presence. He identifies Martin Luther King, Jr. and the other civil rights activists who contributed in the struggle of Blacks to rescue the gospel from the heresy of White churches as one pillar of his theological approach.

For Cone the activists demonstrated life-giving power in the Black freedom movement, but they did not liberate Christianity from its cultural bondage to Whites, or better, Euro-American values (1989:vii). Cone began his theology by looking at reconciling Christianity and Black Power. He states that he still believes that "Christianity ... is Black Power." In argument with the existentialism he describes theology as human

speech about God. And also says, “All attempts to speak about ultimate reality are limited by the social history of the speaker” (Cone 1989:ix).

Remembering that Macquarrie uses the philosophical category of existentialism as an explanation of revelation, I find the conversation with Cone important. Cone seems to insist that even the distinction between calculative rationality and experience does not make talk about God to cease from being human.

I will identify the elements that explain how Cone sees revelation. He discusses the whole notion of racism and oppression and the manner in which he sees God’s revelation. I shall expand a little on the following themes: Biblical revelation and social existence, the social context of divine revelation in the Old Testament and New Testament. I will also discuss the revelation and liberation, the blackness and special revelation, blackness and scripture and transcending and culture.

3.2. Biblical Revelation and Social Existence

Cone (1975:62) argues that “God’s revelation is inseparable from the social and political affairs of Israel.” He portrays God as the God of the Bible who is involved in history, meaning there is no history at all without God. Cone (1975:62) believes that to know Yahweh is to experience His revealed acts in the concrete affairs and relationship of people. According to him, Yahweh is concerned about liberating the weak and the helpless from pain and humiliation. He depicts God as the liberator of the weak and the helpless from humiliation, pain and from White supremacy and oppression.

Cone (1975:62) states that “there is no truth about Yahweh unless it is the truth of freedom.” He distinguishes the oppressed people from the oppressor in a struggle for justice. For Cone, whoever is in authority to speak of God and never speaks anything concerning the freedom of the oppressed, there is something wrong with the person. He believes that theologians must become interested in politics and economics in order to recognize the fact that the poor are oppressed. He calls the theologians and the society

to work together in order to abolish any governmental system of injustice to the oppressed.

Cone (1975:63-64) portrays God as the God of Old Testament, Yahweh, who revealed Himself as the Saviour of the oppressed people, the Israelites. He argues that the Exodus event revealed God by means of His acts on behalf of a weak and defenseless people from the Egyptians. He sees God's revelation in God's acts of liberation and God's covenant with Israel: "If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession" (Exodus 19:5a).

Macquarrie (1979:270) agrees that history has been the vehicle for revelation and that God's reconciling and saving work is seen in His historical providence in dealing with Israel, especially in the succession of covenants which He makes with them, from the covenant with Abraham onward. How then is Macquarrie's approach different? We need to keep this in mind. Cone (1984:65) argues that "God is known by His acts in history and that these acts are identical with the liberation of the weak and the poor." He makes a point that Macquarrie is silent around, specifically on the oppressed and revelation.

One of the black theologians in South Africa Sigqhibo Dwane (1989:62-63) says "Israel has no secular history, no economic life, and no political institutions which deal with human beings in isolation from religious belief and practice." For Dwane, Israel's history is the relationship with God, and God's justice governs the political and economic life of Israel. It is an emphasis that God is involved in the history of humankind. He also states that God calls Israel to be His people and there are special responsibilities assigned to individuals like Moses, Aaron, Joshua or David, for the benefit of the community. Reverting to Cone, let us look at what he says once again. He argues (1984:65);

- The Exodus is the point of departure of Israel's existence.
- The covenant is an invitation to Israel to enter into a responsible relationship with the God of the Exodus.
- This invitation places Israel in a situation of decision, because the covenant requires obedience to the will of Yahweh.

Cone places obedience as always a means of “going where we otherwise would not go, being what we would not be, doing what we would not do” (1989:150). Within the historical relationship of God’s participation in the struggle of the Israelites, they too had to enter into that relationship through obeying God. In that history, their understanding of who God is; is disclosed. In their social context of slavery, their obedience to the Covenant, their understanding of who God is, is revealed.

Cone argues that Yahweh as the God of history is revealed in Yahweh’s power to liberate the oppressed and also that there is no knowledge of Yahweh except through Yahweh’s political activity on behalf of the weak and helpless of the land (1975:65). As the Bible says, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. And whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (1 John 4:8,20).

Another South African, Allan Boesak (1984:23) writes that “the God of Exodus, the covenant, and the God of Jesus Christ, was different from the God of whom Whites were proclaiming.” He further mentions that Blacks were in search of a God who walks with feet among people who has hands to heal, a God who sees you - a God who loves and has compassion. Boesak is saying God’s presence or revelation among people must be concrete in history between Israel and the prophetic tradition.

Considering the covenant and its condition, Cone (1975:66-67) argues that it was the prophets who were messengers of Yahweh, who had to give God’s Word to the people and to remind them of God’s deliverance and the covenant they had which brought the community into existence. It is within this social and political context where Cone perceives the rise of prophecy as a starting point. He reveals how prophets proclaimed Yahweh’s future activity of judgment and renewal that was about to burst into the present. Cone (1975:66-67) portrays the tragedy of Israel that it is due to Israel’s failure to remember the Exodus-Sinai tradition.

- Israel failed to live on the basis of God’s saving event of the Exodus,

- Failed to understand the significance of Yahweh's forthcoming eschatological judgment,
- The people failed to recognize Yahweh's sovereignty in history.

According to Cone, Israel lost it within this perspective. They trusted in their own influence, and had the power of political alliances with other nations. Israel, therefore, began to oppress the weak and the poor in their own community.

Dwane (1989:5) says John Baillie wrote that Rabbis insisted that the law and the prophets represented the very words of God. He also writes that God takes away the mind of men and uses prophets as His ministers, in order that we who hear them may know that it is not they who utter these words of great price when they are out of their wits, but that God himself speaks and addresses us through them. In regard of the Israel's prophecy and the prophets, justice is a special concern for the poor and the widows. Cone emphasizes justice for the poor as the significant act of deliverance (1975:68). Surely, if it matters to God, the Creator, then it should matter to us as well.

Cone (2013:61) also portrays that prophets take risks and speak against society's treatment of the poor, looking to the martyrdom of Jesus and Martin King; this is out in righteous indignation. The relationship between the role of the prophets and the originating ideas of God's relationship with the Israelites as narrated in the history of Israel and the Exodus reveals God disclosure to us.

When Israel was in the midst of despair, prophecy would take place. The prophet Jeremiah began to speak of the new covenant (31:31-34) and Ezekiel spoke of a new heart and a new spirit (36:26). On the other hand, the rebuilding of the Temple and the rededication of the community gives Cone an understanding of the obedience of the Law as Israel returns to the homeland. Cone (1975:71-72) looks at the Old Testament's promise that pushes beyond itself to an expected future event of which Christians in the New Testament say it happened in Jesus Christ. Cone interprets Exodus as a narrative of God's disclosure in the social history of the Jews. As a founding epic of God's covenant with Israel, he also looks at the role of prophets in this light. Social context

disclosed God's revelation in God's acts and also pointed out to the expected future through the prophets and to the expected coming of the Messiah, the Christ.

3.3. The Social Context of Divine Revelation in the New Testament

Cone (1975:72) writes that "Christians believe that the Old Testament story of salvation is continued in the New Testament." Jesus speaks with final authority and his testimony regarding the Old Testament is loud and clear. Cone emphasizes the fact that Christians affirm the New Testament as the eye witnesses (2 Pet 1:16) to the fulfillment of God's drama of salvation starting from within Israel's liberation in Egypt.

For Macquarrie (1979:271) the New Testament claims that the climax of God's reconciling work did come with the historical revelation in Jesus Christ. The community of faith is founded in Jesus who determines its way of understanding the disclosure of God in Jesus Christ. He points out to Jesus Christ as the Logos (word) that became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He says that there are some events that stand out as events of God's action. These events have power to address humans at the deepest level of their existence, to seize them and bring them into the attitude of faith. Yet Macquarrie fails to mention the main purpose of Jesus' association with the poor in his view on reconciliation.

According to Cone (1975:72) the New Testament writers believe that God is present in Jesus and this is none other than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore through Jesus, the divine act in His person from Nazareth, something radically new has happened. He strongly believes that Jesus is the continuation of the Law and the prophets who addressed justice; he also sees Jesus as the inauguration of a completely new age, and that His words and deeds are signs of His forthcoming.

Dwane sees Jesus Christ as the unique revelation of God to all the promises made to Israel; he believes it to be the fulfillment in Jesus Christ as well as the highest hopes and aspiration of the human spirit (1989:4). Teresa Hinga (1992:190-192), perceives Jesus Christ as the personal Saviour and personal friend of those who believe in Him.

She writes that Christ demands their conquest - whether politically, socially or culturally and economically.

Many Africans have come to perceive that Jesus Christ desires to accept them as they are, and to meet their needs at a very personal level. Hinga also (1992:190-192) suggests that African women have come to accept Jesus as the friend of the lonely and healer of those who are sick, whether spiritually or physically. Therefore, this image of Christ is seen as the one who helps them to bear their grief, and accept their sufferings. Hinga does not contradict Cone. In this regard, Cone (1975:73-74) sees that through His words and deeds Jesus Christ became the inaugurator of the Kingdom; with this He discloses the qualities in His identification with the poor. In Jesus, God is at work, disclosing the divine plan of salvation and Cone calls this liberation.

Cone (1975:77) also says that God in Jesus brought liberation to the poor and the wretched of the land, and that liberation overthrows everything that is against the fulfillment of humanity. For Jesus saw the victory in hand after His disciples returned from the mission of the Seventy two. Therefore, Cone also perceives that God in Christ comes to the weak and the helpless, and becomes one with them, taking their condition of oppression as His own and therefore transforms their slave-existence into a liberated existence. In all, Cone looks at revelation in the Old Testament in the history of the Israelites with God, culminating in Jesus the Christ who in His mission to fulfill God's promise to Israel, does so by identifying with the poor.

It seems Cone emphasizes revelation in the historical experience of the quest for liberation. He interprets the Exodus and the prophets within the quest for justice thus oppression in history.

3.4. Revelation and Liberation

According to Boesak (1984:24) the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims the total liberation of all people, and that the God and Father of Jesus Christ is the God of the oppressed people. He further argues that the Whites, who have clearly committed themselves to

the struggle for liberation and who, through their commitment, have taken upon themselves the condition of Blackness in South Africa, in a real sense, they bear the marks of Christ, which is the mark of revelation of God. This tells that there were White people in South Africa who denied their comfort zones built by the apartheid regime and chose to fight together with the Black people who were oppressed. And it means that White people saw the light of the Word of God in doing justice to all; they saw the revelation of God being revealed to them that what the government was doing was not a good thing to do at all according to the will of God.

Nonetheless, I am basically presenting Cone's ideas of the relationship between revelation and liberation. I portray how black liberation scholars argue revelation in observing the history of God and humankind and how God is inseparable in the history and politics of Israel as revealed in Biblical history and through Cone's approach of revelation of God.

3.4.1. Blackness and Special Revelation

Cone (1989:35) states that Christians' knowledge of God is revealed in and through Jesus Christ only. The provisional significance can be any other talk about God, besides, the life of Jesus, death and resurrection which is the beginning and the end of Christianity. He is the Revelation, the special disclosure of God to humans, revealing who God is and what His purpose for humans is. According to Segundo (1993:132) the intention of God's revelation is not the fact that we know, because, this would be impossible or difficult for us to know, but is for us that we be different, and act better. This significance is that it is for our connection with the Lord, in order to respond in union with Him, for Jesus Christ came and related with humankind.

On the other hand, the cross is an ironic religious symbol because it *inverts* the world's value system. Cone says "hope comes by way of defeat, that suffering and death do not have the last word," (2013:2). Believing this paradox, an absurd claim of faith for Cone was only possible through God's amazing grace and the gift of faith, grounded in humility and repentance as a promised revelation and intervention (2013:2).

Hinga (1992:190-192) similarly perceives faith on women who draws close to Jesus Christ for being the victims of oppression and muteness in society, and the fact that they would no doubt find this image of Christ useful in their quest. Cone (2013:18) says African Americans embraced the story of Jesus Christ, the crucified, whose death they claimed ironically gave them life, just as God resurrected Him in the life of the earliest Christian community... the cross symbolized divine power and “Black life.” He continues to say that “God overcame the power of sin and death.” The African American came to grasp the revelation of God grounded in their sufferings and exploitation as they would strain about the progression of the Biblical truth and their time.

Cone (2013:21) says the phrase “nobody knows” is the source of hope in Jesus, for Jesus is a friend who knows about the trouble of the little ones. Jesus achieved salvation for the least through His solidarity with them even unto death. Boesak (1984:23) writes that Black Christians knew that the gospel of Jesus Christ does not deny the struggle for Black humanity, and it was with this light from God’s Word that they went into struggle, both within the church and outside it.

The mark of Christ according to Boesak is a mark of faith to Cone. Faith was one thing White people could not control or take away from the disadvantaged. For Cone Black people “stretched their hands to God,” because they had nowhere else to turn. He further mentions that if the God of Jesus’ cross is found among the least, the crucified people of the world, then God is also found among those lynched (2013:22-23). The meaning of the cross is intensely debated today, by secular and religious intellectuals who reject the absurd idea that a shameful, despicable death could “reveal” anything (2013:25).

Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:51) argues that you cannot have an encounter with Jesus Christ and remain the same, for when you enter into relationship with the Lord, definitely everything thus not in order is bound to be despoiled, for any tree that does not bear fruit in Him will be cut off. For him it universalizes our love for others and makes it complimentary too.

Cone writes that James Baldwin once said, “If God’s love was so great, and if He loved all His children, why were we, the Blacks, cast down so far?” According to him no one knows the answer to that question (2013:28). For Cone, the spirituals and the church, with Jesus’ cross at the heart of its faith gave birth to the Black freedom movement, and also portrays that the non-Christians played a role through the blues and prepared the people to fight the injustice by giving them a cultural identity that made them humans and thus ready to fight. It was in this light that when there was no meaning on the crucial consequences, the African Americans raised a union leadership that disclosed first into women and appointed men to head the movement which was a revelation of faith to fight against oppression.

According to Rhodes (1991:27) God in His righteousness is seen in action, delivering the oppressed from the oppressor. He explains that God is to be seen as immanent, among God’s people not in a transcendent way only as Greek philosophy has suggested. Rhodes says “God is *immanent* in the sense that God is met in concrete historical situations of liberation.” He depicts Cone’s view to be very close to the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth where Cone perceives that it is true; that the revelation of God is not the Bible, only Jesus Christ is. In a sense, God’s revelation is indispensable witness.

Rhodes (1991:27) perceives that Cone's intention is to stand in the Chalcedonian tradition in his understanding of Jesus Christ. The Chalcedonian creed (A.D. 451) affirmed that Christ is “truly God and truly man.” He continues to express that Cone agrees with this, but adds that the role of Jesus as God-Incarnate was to liberate the oppressed: Jesus Christ “is God himself coming into the very depths of human existence for the sole purpose of striking off the chains of slavery, thereby freeing human from ungodly principalities and powers that hinder his relationship with God.”

Rhodes (1991:27) argues that one of the most controversial aspect of Cone’s Christology is his view that Jesus was (is) black. For Whites to find him with big lips and kinky hair is as offensive as it was for the Pharisees to find him partying with tax-collectors. But whether Whites want to hear it or not, Christ is black, baby, with all of the features which are so detestable to White society. For Rhodes, Cone also believes that it is very important for Black people to view Jesus as Black: “It’s very important because

you've got a lot of White images of Christ. In reality, Christ was not White, not even European. That's important to the psychic and to the spiritual consciousness of Black people who live in a ghetto and in a White society in which their Lord and Savior looks just like people who victimize them. God is whatever colour God needs to be in order to let people know they are not nobodies." This also means that the revelation of God comes from every direction.

According to Slusser (1993:217) Jesus knows God, and makes God known, for the Father shows him all things, therefore, Jesus saves the universe by being the source of the given knowledge. He indicates that in the battle against adversary, Jesus exercises power in his ministry in exorcisms. This took place in the healings, raising the dead and even the nature miracles as they fulfil what was revealed in the primordial forms of revelation (1993:212).

Martin Luther's faith and courage for Cone (2013:84-85) express in a way that Luther sees Jesus' crucifixion as the supreme revelation of God's love. Cone explains that the cross is something that you bear and ultimately that you die on which is seen in the Blacks experience.

3.5. Blackness and Scripture

The meaning of Scripture according to Cone (1989:34) is not to be found in the words of Scripture, but only in its power to point to the reality of God's revelation, which he sees in God's liberating work among the oppressed. Cone's argument of Scripture reveals Jesus Christ as the revelation of God.

On the other hand Rhodes (1991:27) analyzes Black liberation theology on the *pre-understanding* which interprets Scripture through the eyeglasses of "blackness." He specifically addresses the question: Is it legitimate to make the Black experience the fundamental criterion for interpreting Scripture? Rhodes, by imposing the Black experience in any other experiences onto Scripture robs Scripture of its intrinsic authority and distorts its intended meaning.

For Cone, the Resurrection of the Black Jesus - a real event - symbolizes universal freedom for all who are bound. It is not just a future-oriented hope in a heavenly as some Whites imposed their “experience” as slave-masters onto Scripture in order to justify slavery; consequently some Blacks have imposed the “Blacks experience” onto Scripture to justify their radical views on liberation. Both positions have erred. For Blacks to use such an experience-oriented methodology is to condone the very kind of method used by those who enslaved them.

However, Rhodes quotes a Black theologian Anthony Evans who directly challenges Cone’s methodology by arguing that the Black experience must be seen as “real but not revelatory, important but not inspired.” He continues to say Black writer Tom Skinner agrees and argues that “like any theology, Black theology must have a frame of reference. There must be a moral frame of reference through which the Black experience can be judged. That frame of reference must be Scripture. To produce a biblical liberation theology, Scripture - not the “Black experience” must be the supreme authority in matters of faith and practice. By following this approach, a strong biblical case can be constructed against racism (Rhodes 1991:27).

Rhodes argues that “we should not conclude that the Bible is an infallible witness” (1991:27). Still, too much of a Christo-centric understanding of revelation might suggest that the Bible itself is not a medium of revelation as Rhodes as says.

I would like to say that Rhodes did not present the alternative as he critiqued Cone. I do not know what the meaning of pre-understanding to interpret Scripture is. How does blackness as a core experience read in the light of biblical revelation exclude Whites in Scripture? For in the place of Blacks as revelatory and inspirational categories there is no alternative by Evans and Rhodes.

There is no any tangible fact on Rhodes’ argument concerning the biblical authors’ intention on Scriptures. There are several Scriptures that refer to the poor, and those who were in power do not consider any equality but mistreat the poor and make fortune out of them and further tormented them. This is Cone’s argument of Scriptures. If one raises the question of biblical interpretation, one must state his or her method first and then engage other hermeneutical approaches to the Bible.

3.6. Transcending Culture

Rhodes (1991:27) quotes Anthony Evans' alerts to the significance of Jesus' response when the Samaritan woman asked Jesus about which cultural place of worship was valid, where the Samaritans built their temple on Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem where the Jews built theirs (John 4). However, Jesus directly let her know that the moment you speak about God, you speak about the truth no longer culture. Jesus answers that the question is not Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem, which it is not according to Samaritan tradition or Jewish tradition (v. 21). Jesus denounces her cultural heritage in relation to worship, for he told her, 'you worship what you do not know' (v. 22), when she began to impose her culture on sacred things, Jesus Christ invaded her cultural world to tell her she was spiritually ignorant."

Rhodes continues to say, Jesus acknowledged cultural distinctions, but disallowed them when they interfered in any way with truth about God. A principle we can derive from this is: Culture must always take back seat to the truth of God as revealed in Scripture. But what does this passage say to the relationship of Scripture to the Black experience and revelation? Rhodes (1991:27-31) portrays Evans' answers saying "we as Black people cannot base our relationship with God, or our understanding of God, on our cultural heritage." He continues to say, "Jesus is not asking Blacks to become Whites or Whites to become Jews, but he insists that all reflect God's truth as given in Scripture." He says "where culture does not infringe upon the Word of God, we are free to be what God created us to be, with all the uniqueness that accompanies our cultural heritage. The truth from Scripture places limits on our cultural experience."

Looking at Rhodes' critique to Cone and Black Theology, there are some points that need to straighten up, first, it is not only Black Theology that must be charged on this point. All theologies are culturally bound including the cultures of those who critique Cone and Black Theology of liberation. Second, here we must keep God's incarnation through Jesus Christ in mind, only the gospel of Jesus Christ must judge our cultures not anyone's culture is superior to other. At core therefore, is not the gospel of Jesus Christ that Cone exposes in Black Theology of liberation but the cultural traits of the Western Christianity that are equated to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Importantly, it is the

inability both intellectually and historically of these cultural lenses to accommodate and include others of different cultures in the promises of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The exclusion of other cultures by Black Theology of liberation is a myth as I said it above that their entry point is justice as revealed in the Scriptures without having to deny their cultural roots and disconfirm black cultural roots as all form part of the revelation of God.

3.7. Conclusion

Existentialism as a philosophical tool to explain revelation, whether through calculative or existentialist modes of knowledge remains human knowledge according to Cone. Essentially Cone sees revelation in the history of the liberation of the poor and the marginalized. He challenges orthodox thinking which elevates whiteness in Christian faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

E. BOLAJI IDOWU AND JOHN S. MBITI'S APPROACH ON THE BIBLICAL REVELATION AND AFRICAN BELIEFS

4.1. Introduction

E. Bolaji Idowu and John S. Mbiti argue for an interpretation of God and God's revelation within the framework of African indigenous knowledge systems. It essentially argues that Western forms of knowledge cannot be the monopoly to know God.

E. Bolaji Idowu was born in 1913 and received his education from the Anglican and Methodist schools in Ikorodu, Nigeria at an early age. There he met the Rev. A.T. Ola Olude and was converted to Christianity. He was ordained in 1942 and was posted in Germany in an effort to resolve some of the problems that were facing African and Asian students there after his studies at Wesley House, Cambridge from 1957 - 1958. He also served as the head of department in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Ibadan from 1963 - 1976.

In the process of preparing a doctoral thesis for the University of London in 1955, Idowu discovered that all the available material on African religion appeared to be inaccurate, condescending or simply ridiculous. As a result, he set out to describe the religious belief of his own Yoruba people according to universal theological concerns such as the nature of the Deity, morality and the ultimate destiny of humankind.

Another Biblical approach of revelation and African beliefs is John S. Mbiti, a Christian religious philosopher, born in 1931, in Kenya. Mbiti is an ordained Anglican priest who studied in Uganda and the United States, taking his doctorate in 1963 at the University of Cambridge, UK. He taught religion and theology in Makerere University, Uganda and was subsequently director of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute in Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland.

Mbiti held many visiting professorships at the universities of Bern and parish minister to the town of Burgdorf, Switzerland and as of 2005 a canon. In this chapter, I discuss the misconception of God by Westerners, God and the concept of God in Africa; will also discuss God's uniqueness, control and God's universality. We will look at African times, Christian times and African and Christian times: the connection.

The purpose here should be to discuss God's understanding with African knowledge systems as in the second chapter, the discussion on Macquarie's sought to show how God's revelations is understood from the perspective of Western Knowledge forms.

4.2. Misconception of God by Westerners

According to Idowu (1970:10), the explorer, Stanley, when he came to Africa he had given Africa the description of "'dark' and 'darkest,' a place governed by insensible fetish" which means he under-judged the Africans based on his traditional and cultural perception without any knowledge of the African tradition and culture. And as a result Stanley gave Berlin journal a wrong perception about the Africans.

For Idowu (1970:10), the European theological authors see a little or nothing that is of spiritual value in African culture and religion. Karl Barth was convinced that all other religions are 'sin'. If this is so, then "how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom 10:14). For Jesus said to his disciples "Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15), so that they may know about Him as the good news that has come. Therefore, the European theologians, who have wrong views about the Africans, missed their mark.

For Idowu (1970:11), the effect of God's action cannot be defined or depend on our advocacy, neither by theology nor evangelism in terms of what we think and what we want to say to the people, but with what God has done, what God is doing, and what God is saying to each people in their own native context. Idowu continues to say theologians need to distinguish "the action of God" and "the reaction of human." He

argues that Africans too have a say in their language and idiom to interpret God and therefore, God's revelation.

Idowu (1970:12) writes that if our faith is genuine in the Bible, we would admit that in God's self-disclosure the whole world races and each is required to have grasped something of the primary revelation according to its native capability. For Idowu, to deny this, is to approach theology with a cultural bias and be traitors to truth. For this reason it should be understood that Africans are capable in their own native tools to engage and explain their understanding of revelation. As a consequence we now look at some key aspects on African thought as presented by Idowu for our conservation on revelation.

Idowu (1970:12) argues that in all religions and all cultures, there is an idea of revelation. The fact that there is almost a universal urge to worship, from this point one can deduce that God is making Himself known, and also keeping a grip on humankind. Idowu (1970:16) believes that the Lord of history has been dealing with humankind at all times and in all parts of the world. He perceives that it is because of Jesus Christ as the revelation of God that we can discern what is truly of God in our pre-Christian heritage.

4.3. God

According to Idowu (1970:17), any people from any ethnic group can claim God as their own as long as God can be fitted into their ethnic group of their individual control in anyway be the same God whom Jesus Christ came to reveal. This is essential to Christian faith who regards Him as "The Lord...the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth."

Father Schmidt writes that the "High God" is found everywhere among the primitive peoples, he claims that the belief and worship of one Supreme Deity is universal among the primitives and that "High God" is held sufficiently prominently to make his position unquestionable. For that reason, God and God's knowledge is not a late development or traceable to missionary influences (in Idowu 1970:18).

This “belief has encircled the whole earth before the individual groups had separated from one another.” Every ethnic group that was formed during the primitive stages moved with a conception and knowledge of one Supreme God. The Supreme Being of the primitive culture is a genuinely monotheistic Deity, described as Father, Creator, eternal, completely generous, ethically holy, and creatively omnipotent.

Idowu (1970:18) writes that A.C. Bouquet doubts that primitive people could develop ideas that link to the Supreme Being as genuine monotheistic Deity unless they have contact with some group of monotheists. He continues to mention that Father Schmidt and other scholars emotionally resent and deliberately refuse to accept the facts that some European scholars have resulted in the erroneous theory of “the high gods of primitive people.” Well, irrespective of the fact that there is erroneous theory of the high gods of primitive, one thing I argue is that we cannot draw a line of the original truth about the primitive God or gods but we do agree that nature bear witness of the self-revelation of God.

For Idowu (1970:18-19), the “high god” is a figment of human’s imagination, he is only “academic invention, an intellectual marionette whose behavior depends upon the mental partiality of its creators. He continues to say this “primitive high god” is a product of ignorance and prejudice. Idowu continues to say “an essential property of ancient human culture and the belief in God that encircles the whole earthly like a girdle should not appear strange by Father Schmidt.” Well this happens if Christian theologians are committed to the facts that “in the beginning God created... and “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; the world and those who dwell therein” (Idowu 1970:19).

But there is something strange here, A.C. Bouquet doubts the primitive people on ideas that link to the Supreme Being as genuine monotheistic and suspecting that they must have contact with some group of monotheists, it means there is a knowledge of some sort that was transferred to the primitive people for generation to generation and I argue that when the Tower of Babel took place, there was a unity and the unity was dismantled into varieties of languages and there probably was one common knowledge of the one Supreme God for the whole world and had one language and common speech.

Idowu continues to say that the Creator set upon the primordial chaos and out of that chaos of non-existence brought forth orders, cohesion, meaning and life has certainly left the mark of His creative activity upon the created order (1970:19). He points out that the primary stage of revelation is seen through nature. He further cites that a human being as God's own created image, is "a rational being, intelligent will and as someone addressable and responsible" as he gave Adam order to cultivate the land and as someone to communicate His revelation through his appreciation of the created order.

According to Eliade (1961:138), the world always presents a supernatural chemistry for a religious human who reveals a relational mood of the sacred. For this reason, Eliade continues to mention that "every cosmic fragment is transparent; its own mode of existence shows a particular structure of being, and hence of the sacred." The sacred is referred by Macquarrie as "holy." Kegley (1962:183) on interpreting Brunner says, "God's essence is the will to self-communication." It is also in this sense to say that, it is in God's will to reveal Himself through several forms of His disclosure, such as nature, His Son Jesus and etc. De Wolf (1960:32-36) argues that, "A revelation must be made to a rational being...it is God who is directly made known rather than ideas about Him." I concur with De Wolf that God's disclosure is direct and I foresee that a line must be drawn between the philosophical ideas about God considering African perspective.

A human being has spirit, and only in spirit that the human being can be addressed by God. Therefore Idowu (1970:20) writes that "the human self is nothing which exists in its own right, no property of human but a relation to divine Thou." He further mentions that, it is God's concern that all peoples are His, and He primarily revealed Himself to them all according to their native capability and each race apprehending the revelation.

Therefore, for Idowu, it would not have been possible for the growth of religion if there had not been at least one fact - the personality of God (1970:20). On the knowledge of God, he further writes on the emphasis of the Bible that God cannot be fully known except He reveals Himself. The Bible says, "Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa 45:15); "Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?" (Job 11:7). However, for Idowu (1970:21) these

statements express a human being's baffling trouble in spiritual attempt to solve the riddle with which is challenged by God's being and nature.

According to Idowu (1970:21), there is confusion in the minds of the enlightened Westerner about God. The reason the masses of Westerners are losing the sense of God, is because God has become an intellectual concept, and Western theology is in conflict because it has also become too theoretical. This means, they drifted from the way of God and pursue their desires just like how Israelites missed the mark by disobeying Yahweh and follow their own desires. This blunder lead into missing the power to grasp from God's leading inspiration.

In quoting the words of Tillich, Idowu (1970:24) states that "where God is not the origin of everything, you can never reach Him, and if you do not start with Him, you can never reach Him." It is an obvious truth. It is God who reveals Himself first, and then humankind responds by taking initiative to follow.

4.4. The Concept of God in Africa

Idowu (1970:24) says, "God is real to Africans and that is why Africans call Him by names which are descriptive both of His nature and of His attributes." This tells us that right from the beginning all humankind have known God or heard about Him and it was communicated from generation to generation. However, foreign theological and philosophical theorists failed to see the basic unity of African linguistic and cultural variations and concluding wrong findings by over-emphasizing and exaggerating these elements of variation.

It is through the attributes of God according to African beliefs that we discover the wealth of meaning in the African conception of Him. For Idowu (1970:25-26) many African words or names for God mean that God is the "very Source of Being," some the "Immense, Overflowing Source of Being," etc. these names the essence of human personality, that which makes a person a person.

When looking at other names of God in African perception of God, God is also seen as Creator, according to Idowu (1970:26), the name means “He who is uninterrupted, infinitely and exclusively full of the manifold, namely, the interminable, eternally, universally filled entity.” It is these views about God, which refers to the book of Acts 17:28 “In Him we live and move and have our being...for we are indeed His offspring.”

Kwame Bediako (1995:93-95) proposes an African theological idiom based on the primal world view of the Africans. Howard W. Turner lists these six features as follows. First feature, is a sense of kinship with nature. Turner perceives that animals and plants are no less than human beings, because they had their own spiritual existence and place in the universe as interdependent parts of a whole. Ecological aspects of primal religions, Turner consider it to be a profoundly religious attitude to human’s cultural setting in the world.

Second features, is the deep sense that human is finite, weak, and impure or sinful and stands in need of a power not his own. For this feature what Turner saw, “is an authentic religious sensitivity, coupled with a realistic assessment of human’s condition, a sensibility and an assessment that have been hidden from people like ourselves (Westerners) by the proliferation of our technical and socio-political power” (Turner 1977:30-32).

Third features, is the conviction that human is not alone in the universe, for there is a spiritual world of powers or beings more powerful and ultimate than humankind. For Turner, human lives with an awareness of the presence of transcendent powers which, are ambivalent. He continue to say, not only is there the hierarchy of benevolent ancestors, and spirits, divinities and high gods, but there is also the range of evil spirits, of demons and malevolent divinities and the lesser, more earth-born occult powers of wizards and witches.

On the Fourth feature, there is a belief that human can enter into relationship with the benevolent spirit-world and so share in its powers and blessings and receive protection from evil forces by these transcendent helpers. According to Turner, this feature reveals the profound emphasis on the transcendent source of true life and practical salvation

goes contrary to all the neat projectionist theories that explain religions away as man-made and ignore the primary testimony of so much of the data about religions.

Fifth feature, is a conviction which explains the important place of ancestors or the living dead in many primal religions: In the majority of these religions, the ancestors, the living dead, remain united in affection and in mutual obligations with the living-living. And lastly, sixth feature, is the conviction that human lives in a sacramental universe where there is no sharp dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual.

According to Bediako (1995:96), the six feature, it seems to be important because it conveys the primal conception of the universe as unified cosmic system, essentially spiritual, which provides the real key to the entire structure. Bediako also point out that Turner did not state special relationship of primal religions with Christianity and the existence of affinities between the primal and Christian traditions could have far-reaching significance for our understanding of the nature of the Christian faith itself.

According to Masoga (2012:335), Setiloane argues that African theology diffused the line of thinking which inevitably came from the historical development of Western Christian theology. For Setiloane, African theology contributes a sense of the presence, “the here-ness” of God, in spite of God’s supremacy and otherness, because the God of the African have associated with, missionary teaching had to contest with numerous concepts of deities and divinities from the traditional African background.

Masoga (2012:336) says, behind African beliefs and actions, lies a fundamental experience, a feeling of the existence of “something” or “somebody” beyond oneself, a mysterious power which cannot be seen and is not fully understood, but which is at work in the world. For Masoga, various regional names exist for this phenomenon. Africans agree in the fact that they describe the same experience and reality. It is these names which, in the different places, the translators employed to denote the Biblical concept, God. He continues to say; the Deity the name described was placed far above and in control of the other deities who might belong to any particular people’s pantheon, hence its association with the Old Testament Yahweh.

Though the names may differ from group to group, for Masoga (2012:336) the qualities or attributes of this Supreme Deity overlap all over the continent. He say, “They ascribe to God the attributes of Almighty and Omnipresent; they believe God created the Universe.” God is known as “Creator, owner of breath and spirit, benefactor, merciful, living, Lord of glory, silent, but active, origins cannot be determined, who “interpenetrates and permeates all being; is Unknowable (an Enigma): source of being,” (in Setiloane 1976).

4.5. God is Unique

According to the Africans, the conception is universal throughout Africa. For Idowu (1970:26-27), this is expressed in several ways, the fact that He is incomparable, He surpasses all. God is distinguished in countless ways, He’s “Only Great Shining One” or “He who alone is of the Greatest Brightness.” He further expresses God’s uniqueness that includes also the conception of His transcendence.

Furthermore, he constructs that the meaning of “a shining living being is elevated above, beyond the ordinary reach of human, but manifest to them through His light that is visible even to a child” (1970:27). If a child can be able to recognize the visibility of invisible God, then people who say there is no God are hardening their hearts with arrogance to God. Again the uniqueness and transcendence of God is wrongly described by European investigators as a “withdrawn God,” because of how the Africans emphasize and practice their worship is partly reason why He is conceived by Africans.

4.6. God’s Control

As King, God is believed to be omnipotent. Idowu (1970:28) says Africans believe that “should you do anything that is beautiful, God has caused it to be beautiful; should you do anything evil, god has caused it to be evil.” However, I would like to believe that this goes hand in hand with being obedient or rebelling against God. For the Bible says, “I

form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am the Lord, who does all these things” (Isa 45:7).

As King, God is the Judge. Idowu (1970:28) mentions that “there is a retributive principle which He has set in operation and in consequence of which sinners will not go unpunished.” In Ezekiel 18:4, the prophet answer the plea made by the youth complaining from suffering for the sins of their parents by saying “every soul that sin, is the one that shall die.”

4.7. God is Universal

Another African perception of God’s name is “God who carries or sustains the Universe.” Idowu writes that He is the Creator who brought all things into being. He is considered and regarded as the centre of the earth, and the whole earth belongs to God. Heaven and earth are viewed as the beginning of God’s creation from which humankind lives in the entire universe, as formed in His image and likeness.

However, many parts of the Africans countries claim that some parts of their world in the cities are believed to be where the work of the creation began and from there, all the people of the earth originated and dispersed e.g. Ile-Ife is the sacred city of the Yoruba that has the same belief (Idowu 1972:29).

Let us also look at another African scholar, John Mbiti, who points out other perceptions of God’s revelation similar, but different to Idowu.

According to Mbiti’s (1970:180) approach of revelation is in terms like Heaven, Glory, Eternal Life, Resurrection, Judgment and etc. which are used and they must be understood both eschatologically and Christological in God’s revelation.

4.8. African Times

Africans are not concerned about time. To Africans, time is composition of events which are realized and those which are occurring simultaneously. Mbiti (1970:159) argues that “what has not been realized belongs in reality to no – Time.” This mean, time would be time when it is realized or be born in the realm of Time. For ancient Africans, time was considered seasonally. It was through seasons that they could relate to times. And they knew very well what seasonal approach nature was presenting. Seasons are God’s natural attributes of revelation which relate well to the Africans.

4.9. African and Christian Times: The Connection

Mbiti (1970:180) writes that “the assumption that many items in African traditional life, ideas and practices can and have to be taken as a preparation for evangelism.” Therefore, certain aspects of African times may be profitably being linked up with Christian times. According to Mbiti (1970:180), first, “The End” is lacking in African times. But in Christian times we find it centred, as it is in Jesus Christ. And the Lord Himself declares that He is “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending...” (Rev 1:8). Mbiti (1970:181) writes that African thinking both eternal realities and a future dimension of Time is in fact introduced. An African has times, but it has no teleology. Furthermore, it is in this area where Christian times can make a radical contribution to God’s natural revelation in Africans.

Second, the “African languages seem to lack a future dimension of Time, beyond a short distance,” said Mbiti (1970:181). He further perceives African people as the ones who penetrate into spirit world through offerings, libation and sacrifices, with the spirituals. This is also familiar to the Christological and eschatological sacraments they are not only spiritual but also eternal, infinitely and intimately bound up with the Person of and life of Jesus Christ.

Third, the hereafter in African thought is a natural form of immortality, but the hereafter of Christianity is a life of a Resurrection. Mbiti further depict that this Resurrection is not

natural, inevitable form of life and etc. but it is life resurrected to Life, real Life at its source, the Life whose nature and essential character is none other than “everlasting” and “eternal” (1970:182).

Fourth, in a sense of African thoughtfulness to the spiritual world dismissal background, Mbiti (1970:183) portrays that the spirit world’s realities that Jesus had encountered, is familiar to the African spirits. It is one of Jesus’ eschatological signs of His presence and ministry, and the exorcism of the spirits that relate to the Africans. Moreover, the Westerners placed the African’s practices on the background while promoting their culture combined in the Biblical revelations.

Lastly, Mbiti also point out in traditional life that there are many myths about the past period. He maintains the link between God and human, about death, and the separation between heaven and earth (1970:184). He says that there is no culmination of history, and therefore, there could not be myths about it, this is not a loss in natural revelation; it is simply an empty area in African thought which should be filled in with the Christian concepts of culmination of history. In Christ death is vanquished; the separation between God and human being is forever bridged in His Incarnation.

4.10. Conclusion

According to Idowu (1972:29), we take notice and appreciate that Africa is a very wealthy continent with a conception of God and God’s revelation. We should realize that Africans have their own distinctive concepts of God and that God is not a loan God from the missionaries. God’s concepts according to Africans are relational and traceable to the African fathers and mothers and they merge the Biblical references naturally as God’s primary revelation.

The African concept of time also shows a different way in which God is understood and how God is revealed in Africa.

CHAPTER FIVE

A PENTECOSTAL APPROACH TO REVELATION

5.1. Introduction

A brief background on the Pentecostal roots and its views on revelation are given. In this chapter various scholars of Pentecostal background have been engaged. We look at the following themes: Pentecostal background and its manifestation, the reflection of God's revelation in Pentecostal Generals, the traditioning process and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Great Commission, and approach towards a spirit-world, African tradition and holy living, and creation and Pentecostal.

The Black African scholars and ministers in the Pentecostal Assembly of God, Gregory Mvula and Enson Lwesya (2005:xi) say, the Pentecostals are the third movement in Christianity; Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are the first two. Despite a lack of appreciation of the Pentecostal rubric and cultural tapestry, Mvula and Lwesya perceive that the Christian church in general recognized the incredible and giant steps covered by the Pentecostals. They continue to mention that "the influx of Pentecostal missionaries on the continent of Africa became immediate in the wake of the Pentecostal awakening."

The British pastor and author from Presbyterian Church, Iain Hamish Murray (1998:7) says, we are a generation that lives in the days of the Pentecost and of the "last days". According to Amos Yong, a minister of a Pentecostal church in the Assemblies of God in Malaysia, took notice that there has been a shift of world Christianity, particularly in its evangelical, Pentecostal, and Charismatic forms (2008:12-13). He writes that mainline churches have been slowly revitalized. At the same time, a growing number of Independent Churches have also made their presence felt in terms of mobilizing local leadership, empowering the laity, and adopting indigenous forms and practices. According to Yong (2008:13), the reason for this rapid growth is because of the aggressiveness of the evangelistic methods the independent churches applied and

successes in gaining new converts, irrespective of publicized conversions and criticism thinking they are using unethical evangelizing tactics such as material inducements to increase their numbers.

Murray (1998:7) says, “The Old Testament church prayed for revival. God promised that He would revive His people by the outpouring of the Spirit in ‘the last days’ and these prayers and promises were permanently fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.” It is through the primordial revelation that the theology of Murray on the Pentecostal interpretation is extracted from, the written Word of God in Jesus’ promise to the disciples that “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14:16). So for this reason Murray sees the Holy Spirit as a part of the church’s present inheritance revelation.

On the foreword of Allan Anderson’s work, Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, an analyst and professor in the University of South Africa, takes our attention to the term ‘Pentecostal’ from Pentecost. “The term ‘Pentecostal’ for Maluleke, is a distinctive tag for a large number of Independent Churches moving away from typologies,” particularly on the Africans, as suggested by Sundkler and Daneel. However, the ‘Pentecostal’ “is indicative of the ‘spirit’ of this phase” (Anderson 2000:xii). For Maluleke “many Christians are dissatisfied with the faith diet provided by the so-called ‘historic mission churches.’ It is therefore, at the expenses of these established churches that African Independent Churches-type movements are emerging and growing all over the world” as seen as revelatory by the Independent Churches (in Anderson 2000:x).

5.2. Pentecostal Background and its Manifestation

The origin of the Pentecostal Movement in this generation is being traced back mainly in important places and events very early in the 20th century in the United States of America where most Pentecostal Churches inherit their tradition today. According to Mvula and Lwesya (2005:29), the survey of Pentecost and its ramifications over the centuries, and across the globe, is a historical phenomenon. For them, Neil Chadwick

recognizes the exercise of the spiritual gifts in the early church as the continuous Pentecostal manifestation of the revelation of God in the following ministers (2005:33):

- Montanus (AD 156) called upon his followers to live in a state of frequent “ecstasy and vision.” He started a movement of protests against laxness in discipline and looseness of living, insisting on the vital prophetic presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the churches. Furthermore, at his baptism Montanus “spoke with tongues’ and began prophesying declaring that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, promised in the Gospel according John, was finding utterance through him.”
- Chrysostom (AD 345-407) believed that speaking in association with a gift of languages was provided to missionaries like St. Francis Xaveir and others languages to be used in the missionary work among strange people.

For Mvula and Lwesya (2005:35), theology turned the miraculous more through the influence of the writings of Bishop Augustine, the prolific theologian of the early church, who continued to claim that the apostolic miracles were unnecessary and that the Holy Spirit was sign fitted to the apostles of Jesus at the time. Also Gary McGee (2001:2) says “the reformers, generally speaking, believed that miracles had vanished with the apostolic church.”

It is through the influential scholars that confusion is emancipated through. We need to remember that it is our experience that enables us to interpret any information we encounter. Our experience may limit us towards what we know. What we do not know and do not have, there would be no personal own experience except that of the other. Therefore, any interpretation that comes on the account of the lack of experience would be insufficient and can be twisted. And the experienced shared would spread wrong views and the result would be wrong expectations to its viewers.

But as for Mvula and Lwesya (2005:36), when the church institutionalized, challenged and at times controlled the states “histories of miracles grew more anecdotal, religious, with the slant of justifying ministerial authority.” And that is to make God cease to be

God at His ultimate revelation. Nevertheless, the incidents of speaking in tongues were reported, though by infrequently radical Anabaptists of Germany in AD 1400.

Mvula and Lwesya say that Vincent Ferrer (1351-1419) Itinerant Dominican preacher preached in the Western Mediterranean area and “had experiences like the modern Pentecostals and his reports include manifestation such as shaking and possible glossolalia, and healings. Unfortunately, he persecuted and tortured Jews, to force them to convert to Christianity.” Towards the end of 18th Century, the Methodist revival led by Wesley also had strong spiritual experiences in 1790.

For Mvula and Lwesya (2005:37), again, there was a lot of jerking, falling, fainting, shaking, and singing that took place in a Revival under Jonathan Edward in August 1801, with a lot of Pentecostal characteristics where preachers from many denominations called upon people to repent, and to put their sins behind them and commit themselves to Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, in 1825-1830, Margaret McDonald had a striking vision that matches with the Pentecostal beliefs about the End Times. In other words, the Pentecostal occurrences in Scotland were, shaking, fainting, and having fits followed by a period of extreme devotion. Scotland also experienced tongues and healings under the revival from Edward Irving who allowed speaking in tongues. In 1832 he began services in the exhibition hall and his followers believed that their “speaking in tongues” was the same as reported at the Day of Pentecost, and evidence of Spirit baptism in Acts 2, (in Mvula and Lwesya 2005:38). They continue to mention that;

In 1862, Charles Cullis encouraged the church to accept the healing theology after having read the work of Dorothea Trudel’s work in 1869. Cullis came to know the Lord under Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874) a Holiness speaker and publisher in her popular magazine, *Guide To Holiness* which spoke in terms of a new Pentecost and the Spirit at work in her era especially about the Holy Spirit’s work in sanctification, mission and prayer.

These manifestations are not only limited here but are the continuation of the lifestyle in the Pentecostals. Coming up towards the 21st century academically will continue to

observe the reflection of God's revelation in selected few of Pentecostals as the God's Generals who maintain to carry the banner of Pentecostal influence to this day.

5.2.1. Reflection of God's revelation: the God's Generals

According to Mvula and Lwesya, the rumour of speaking in other tongues increased during 1880-1890's and the Pentecostal movement attracted all class of people that in 1895 Benjamin Irwin, a former lawyer and Baptist convert to Holiness theology, had an experience of the "Baptism of Fire" and went on to form the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church.

Roberts Liardon (1996:21-22) says that John Alexander Dowie is one of the God's generals who was born in 1847, in Edinburg, Scotland. Dowie succeeded in shaking the world at the turn of the century. He brought to the forefront of society, the visible Church of the living God – primarily in the area of divine healing and repentance. Mvula and Lwesya (2005:40) also say Dowie's lifestyle was a man with eccentric, demonstrated through practice and teaching the belief of healing of diseases. According to Isak Burger and Marius Nel (2008:17) Dowie inspired Charles Fox Parham to start a healing Centre in Topeka in 1898 calling it Bethel Healing Home. In 1900, Parham encouraged students in his Bible school to study about the baptism of the Holy Spirit using only the Bible because they never had enough theological sources at the time. When Parham came back from his December holiday found the students thrusting their attention to seek the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Tongues of Fire."

Though, Agnes Ozman, a Methodist was the only lady in the group of students who spoke in tongues first after a laying on hands. Parham, later left the Methodist Church and accepted the theology of the Holiness Movement which was known as "conversion as a crisis experience, sanctification as 'second definite work of grace,' divine healing, and premillennialism." He contrasted the sterility of his own ministry with the power, signs, miracles, healings and missionary zeal portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul. He also started publishing a newsletter on a regular basis and called it "The Apostolic Faith" (Roberts Liardon 1996:21-22).

An African-American, William Joseph Seymour relocated to Texas and joined Holiness Church and the lady pastor, an African-American named Lucy Farrow advised William Seymour to contact Charles F. Parham to attend Parham's bible school in 1905 (Mvula and Lwesya 2005:45). It is said that the reception Seymour got at the school was a conflicting account because of the law that forbade Blacks to attend classes with Whites. According to Mvula and Lwesya, Seymour received Parham's lessons while sitting in the corridor. They further say "another records, suggests that Parham had racisms leanings and was dismayed by Seymour's presence at the school" (2005:46). Nevertheless, Seymour attended the school and accepted Parham's doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking with other tongues.

We learn that Seymour later started a congregation in 1906 at 312 Azusa Street Mission where the revival had broken; "it attracted both sympathizers and critics, yet, people reported the story, the revival continued unabated, attracting thousands of people from all over the world" (Mvula and Lwesya 2005:46). In addition, Pentecostal manifestations, as they were later known typified the meetings; spontaneous praying, preaching, alter calls for the sick, salvation, sanctification or baptism in the Holy Spirit. We also learn that they did not take up any offerings, though; a box was set at the door for those who wished to leave gifts. The Azusa Mission, in contrast to the prevailing racial opinions, was truly integrated. It had a mixture of Black and White people regularly in attendance (Mvula and Lwesya 2005:46-47). It is said that many of the Pentecostal movement today inherit the Pentecostal revival that began in Topeka, Kansas spread rapidly to the Missouri and Texas, then to California and elsewhere from Bethel Bible College.

Anderson (2000:59) agrees with Mvula and Lwesya about Parham's college but emphasizes that it was Seymour and not Parham who was the driving force behind the early Pentecostal movement. He further says "if anyone can be regarded as the founding father of Pentecostalism, it must sure be Seymour who is given pride of place." Azusa Mission lasted for a longer time, impacting different people across America and overseas. Moreover, Mvula and Lwesya mention that "reports of what was taking place were carried in scores of periodicals and other publications that sprang up within the

movement; spontaneous revivals also began to break out about the same time in other parts of the world and on various mission fields” (2005:47).

John G. Lake and other North American Pentecostal missionaries to South Africa had inherited the Pentecostal teaching of Spirit-baptism at Azuza Street. According to Anderson (2000:58), Lake visited Azuza Street on several occasions, and he described William Seymour as having “more of God in his life than any man I had ever met up to that time.” In 1907 a photograph is taken that display Lake and Hezmalhalch together with Seymour and other early Pentecostal leaders at Azuza Street.

Anderson quotes Gordon Lindsay who says “it was Letwaba more than any other person who has ‘carried on the great work started by John G. Lake in Africa and it is still going on today” (2000:66). Letwaba who was born in 1870 in the Northern Transvaal after his mother had received a remarkable revelation about his future. Lindsay (1972:43-45) writes with a Pentecostal flair that Letwaba was ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ that he spoke in tongues and was ‘overcome by the power of God until his whole being was aflame. For Anderson, Letwaba was one of the first African Pentecostals in South Africa mentioned in the Executive Council minutes of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in February 1909, and de Wet consider him to be ‘one of the most outstanding Black leaders in the history of the AFM.’ He became one of the first African preachers in the AFM from that time on, preaching the gospel of salvation, healing, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit (2000:65).

I would like to say God’s revelation is seen throughout the Pentecostal movement as a God who has disclosed Himself in the history of Pentecostal reflection and its theology of spiritual power and demonstration of miraculous signs. It is through God’s relationship with His servants who have done wonders throughout the history of humankind from the Day of the Pentecost up to this generation. God revealed in His people spiritual power to reach out to His people in a Pentecostal immersion and giving them a willpower in order to strengthen them as promised in the early church by Jesus Christ to His disciples that they will do what He did. Nevertheless, God Has not limited His disclosure in the Pentecostal reflection only but holistically.

5.3. The key themes of the Pentecostal theology

5.3.1. The Traditioning Process and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Stephenson Christopher Adam (2009:79) quote Chan Simon's preference for regulated spirituality that it is related to Chan's idea of traditioning process and Pentecostal theology. For Chan, "Traditioning" is derivative from traditio, in which the church must intentionally engage in order to perpetuate Christian faith to successive generations. According to Chan this is just a coherent spirituality that requires training in order to shape the Christian person. Therefore, traditioning process requires a disciplined effort to develop a coherent set of beliefs in order for the church to communicate its message clearly.

For Chan (2004:57-77) traditioning requires the integrative thinking of systematic theology, for traditioning hand on theological beliefs and the practices of faith exhibited in spiritual theology. The second is the situation of one's beliefs within the wider Christian theological perspective. Yet Chan writes that Pentecostals have been slow to do this as to develop systematic theology, to accentuate their distinctive beliefs and practices rather than to interpret them as existing within a larger theological pattern. Chan contends that it is precisely Pentecostals' failure to develop systematic theology and to interpret their beliefs in light of the larger sphere of Christian theology that leads to their inability to "tradition" their members properly, resulting in shallow theological accounts of certain Pentecostal beliefs, among the most significant of which are baptism in the Holy Spirit and glossolalia.

According to Chan (2004:57-77) "baptism in the Spirit" is the central doctrine in Pentecostal movement, and it is far richer in Pentecostal experience than in Pentecostal explanation. He says it is therefore, traditioning this experience and explanation has a serious consequences for Pentecostals. He continues that "when the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit is inadequately conceptualized, what is communicated to the next generation is a constricted concept of the experience, and this concept will in turn evoke an equally narrow experience."

Furthermore, “among second-generation Pentecostals, Spirit-baptism is received first as a doctrine before it is actualized in personal experience. But when the doctrine is poorly explained, the intended experience does not necessarily follow.” For Chan, “one may also have had an experience of glossolalia, but over time when questions begin to arise concerning the adequacy of the traditional Pentecostal explanation, one begins to cast doubts on one’s own experience” (Chan (2004:57-77). Meaning thus when an experiential revelation is doubted and confusion takes place in a form of cognitive hearsay. Chan continues to say “if Pentecostals hope to communicate the original reality to subsequent generations, they must come up with an explanation that encapsulates it adequately.”

Stephenson (2009:80-84) explains Chan’s analyses particularly on the beliefs of baptism in the Holy Spirit and glossolalia because Chan hopes to demonstrate that the most distinctive Pentecostal beliefs, which have the least support in the larger Christian tradition, can in fact be successfully situated specifically within Christian mysticism’s notion. In so doing, Chan (2004:57-77) argues that “the theology of glossolalia is the ‘initial evidence’ of baptism in the Holy Spirit as well as for a stronger than usual conceptual relationship.”

Chan observes that Pentecostals have relied primarily on Luke-Acts for the doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit and glossolalia, Chan states that a truly systematic theology requires the Pentecostals to consider the larger structure of Scripture and, therefore, other Biblical resources for pneumatology (2004:57-77).

Amos Yong (2008:52) argues that “if religious traditions as comprehensive ways of life and thought are in fact distinct as whole systems, then it would be inadequate for us to compare them as being equally.” Yet, in this case, “Christian theologies of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism all miss the mark because they do not engage other religious traditions on their own terms.” This tells us that, a thorough explanation is required from the whole system of systematic theologians to consider Christian theology holistically, for theology that is unite, is interconnected, and therefore, Pentecostal traditioning process promote to the Great Commission and also consider ecumenical approach as revealed by Jesus.

5.3.2. Great Commission

Christopher R. Little (2000:134) argues that “primarily and fundamentally, mission is a matter of obedience on the part of the church to the Great Commission.” Obedience is also mentioned by Cone that we go in the way we do not want, and do things we do not want to do but obedience to the Lord is ultimate. For Little, “The church has the right to abandon or ignore its God-given duty to disciple the nations” (Matt. 28:19-20). He says “until we have different marching orders, each soldier of Jesus is called upon to do all that is necessary at whatever personal sacrifice in order to fulfil the Great Commission as a revealed mission with a command or send out.

Second, “it is critical to maintain a balance between the doctrines of divine sovereignty and human responsibility when contemplating the modalities.” According to Packer (1961:98) “we must realize that when God sends us to evangelize, God sends us to act as vital links in the chain of God’s purpose for the salvation of His elect.” On the other hand for Little “we cannot presume that everything is left up to us in reaching the world for Jesus apart from God’s divine intervention and salvific activity” (2000:135).

Packer further notes that Okholm and Phillips says, “we are assured that those who respond in faith to the explicit preaching of the gospel will be saved.” They mention that we cannot draw that conclusion from this, however, that only those who thus respond will be saved. They say God’s revelation is not limited to the explicit human preaching of the good news, but extends beyond it. For Okholm and Phillips (1995:177-179), we must be prepared to be surprised at those whom we will meet in the kingdom of God. They say a human failure to evangelize cannot be transposed into God’s failure to save. In the end, salvation is not culturally conditioned or restricted human accomplishment; it is God’s boundless sovereign gift to humankind.

Furthermore, Okholm and Phillips (1995:177-179) say, Christians are asked to proclaim the good news of the love of God for God’s people in the sure knowledge that there are no barriers of culture, race, language, gender, or status to its acceptance. Yet we must never think that it is by preaching the gospel that we are somehow making salvation available or possible. It is God who makes salvation possible through the work of Christ

and who uses the preaching of the gospel as a means of actualizing that salvation. But it is not the only means. God's saving work must never be exclusively restricted to human preaching, as if the Holy Spirit was silent or inactive in God's world, or as if the actualization of God's saving purposes depended totally on human agencies. The Creator is not dependent on His creation in achieving His purpose.

Little (2000:136) says, God does what He desires according to His sovereign will established from the foundations of the world. We do what we have been called to do in view of our love for and dedication to Him. As a result, God's redemptive program is carried on and brought to fulfilment.

Third, the fact that God ordains and chooses to work through the various modalities of dreams, visions, angels, and so on, does not negate His ordination and intent to use the modality of human messengers. Little writes that God continues to entreat missionaries to reach the unevangelized who may be outside the influence of the church and beyond the spread of the Bible (2000:136). For Little, this perspective helps to explain Jesus' statement: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38). Little also perceives that the truth is we do need to pray fervently in this manner because this one of the ways that God has ordained to communicate special revelatory truth among the unevangelized.

Lastly, Little states that it is important to understand that the various modalities do not work in opposition or contradiction to each other but complement and support one another. He perceives that in a certain sense, each is an instrument in God's orchestra which has its own music to play, enhancing and reinforcing the other instruments in order to bring to fruition the divine masterpiece of redemption. His example of this; is when "an angel of the Lord" told Philip to go south which eventually led him to Ethiopian eunuch who was reading but not understanding the book of Isaiah (Acts 8:26-40). Therefore he believes that the modalities of angels, God's human messengers, and the written word of God operated in unison to bring the revealed salvation to this individual (2000:137), because people are spiritually intertwined.

5.4. An approach towards a spirit-world

5.4.1. Spirituality

A Pentecostal pastor and missiology lecturer in the AFM Bible College Agrippa Goodman Khathide (2007:396-397) writes that “Christian theology is still dominated by the Western paradigm which is largely scientific.” For Khathide “there is a need for shifting the focus of theology to the needs of people of the Third World, whose thinking is dominated by primal spirituality.” The spirit-level situation will remain with us for a long time. He therefore says, the invisible world needs to be taken seriously by the ministers of the Word of God in Africa.

According to Khathide “African Christians will continue to worship in churches on Sundays but during the week when they face crises, they will consult the shaman, diviners and mediums.” Khathide says “in the face of the lack of theological response to issues of the spirit world, people will continue to respond in their usual traditional ways, no matter how unchristian these methods are.” He mentions Hiebert who points out that the Western worldview has a blind spot that makes it difficult for many Western missionaries to understand.” This is true, the Western theology did not allow other traditions to temper with theirs, and they wanted every tradition to look at God in their own view to God. They have enforced their approach by making themselves superior to other traditions and by so doing; it closed doors for other experiences of God’s revelation and wisdom. These brought divisions among humankind to-this-date even to those who serve the Triune God have different set of principles values.

Yet, African’s experience of God’s revelation in Pentecostal manifestation and exorcism relate well to the life of Jesus in the Bible. Therefore, Khathide says “Christian theology must rediscover its rich legacy in dealing with the spirit world from Christians of the early church, who boldly engaged the spirit world to the benefit of those who were coming to the faith of Christian theology” (2007:397).

In order to address the spiritual needs of Africa holistically, for Khathide, it is necessary that Western missionaries “detach themselves from presuppositions, such as dualism, which sees everything in terms of secular and spiritual, profane and sacred” (Khathide

2007:397). He says it is important to realize that in Africa, reality is viewed holistically. He also perceives that Oduyoye reminds us that “in Africa, spiritual needs are as important for the body as bodily needs are for the soul” for this is in the Biblical revelation (Khathide 2007:397).

Primal spirituality, for Khathide, requires that the Christian message answers to the everyday needs of the people and not only on Sundays when people go to church. He says it is remarkable to consider the ministry of Jesus Christ for He was concerned with the needs of the ordinary people. He perceives this concern as for healing, deliverance from demonic, protection from the invisible powers of this world as perceived in the spirituality level but not limited to these only (2007:397).

Moreover, Khathide (2007:398) argues that the Jesus of the New Testament is what Africa needs. Africa requires that a holistic gospel that addresses all the spheres and demands of life be given to its people rather than just presenting dogmatic formulations and debates of the European past. He argues that it is comprehensive salvation that the Jesus of Luke-Acts offers, that it should be presented to Africa.

Africans have discovered a Jesus who heals the sick, which make the lame walk and restores sight to the blind in the Bible. The African have discovered a Jesus who drives out demons from people and confronted the power of Satan. For Khathide (2007:399), this is a spirituality that many African Christians are beginning to appropriate and actualize in their communities which the traditional church chose to ignore, of which I would say it embraced by the Pentecostals. It leads us to look at the tradition and the holy living for the African perspective in Pentecostal movement.

5.4.2. African Tradition and Holy Living

The holiness emphasis differed with the approach advocated by missionaries; the native’s pursuit of holiness was indeed a way of life more than a theological concept (Mvusa and Lweysa 2008:149). They further say Pentecostal movement rested on the pillars of God-fearing pioneers who strictly taught the doctrine of holiness. On African

traditions and way of life, they perceive that customs such as “cleansing” for married, ladies experiencing menstruations, and mothers after the birth of their children stand in the way of wholesome practice of Christianity. Mvusa and Lweysa mention that constantly, leaders perform acts of replacement. They replace the “unacceptable” customs with something closely related to it from Scripture.

Amos Yong (2011:74) says that Pentecostal theology affirm divine action, Pentecostal theology always sought to ground its beliefs and practices in the apostolic witness of the New Testament, which holiness is a living lifestyle. He writes that at the core of the Pentecostal experience it is a palpable, tangible, and kinaesthetic encounter with the living God. For Yong this foundational conviction is most clearly manifest in the various spiritual or charismatic gifts of the Spirit prevalent in Pentecostal worship: tongues and prophecies, healings, and miracles, for we must present ourselves before God as living sacrifice just as Jesus is. Yong (2011:74) says that Pentecostal Christians expect God’s ongoing intervention in the same manner as such divine action was displayed in the lives of the earliest Christians. Holiness is highly perceived and emphasized by Pentecostals; it is the depth of the day to day lifestyle and practice to the believers. This brings us to the Pentecostal view of creation.

5.5. The Creation and Pentecostal

Yong (2011:17) quote George S. Hendry, saying, theology of nature begins from the standpoint of faith and then seeks to “read” the world or nature through that lens. According to Yong, theologians of nature base their work on the following premises: that the posture of faith does lead one to view, understand, and interact with the world and to engage in the scientific enterprise distinctively, at least in terms of the types of problems or questions one may choose to pursue. This tells us that Pentecostal view acknowledge the attributes of the theology nature as revealed in Scripture.

For Yong (2011:17) continue to say the idea of “creation” is inherently Biblical and therefore distinctively theological, one that assumes a creator of the world (which for Christians and Pentecostals is the God of Jesus Christ and of His Holy Spirit).

Moreover, I would to add that Pentecostal believes that “The earth is Lord’s and everything in it” (Ps 24:1). And therefore, it is our call to take care of what is the Lord and holistically.

5.6. Conclusion

I conclude by looking at Chan’s (2004:57-77), highlight of the Pentecostals’ failure to develop systematic theology and to interpret their beliefs in light of the larger sphere of Christian theology that leads to their inability to “tradition” their members properly, and with the fact that it result in shallow theological accounts of certain Pentecostal beliefs.

The most significant views are baptism in the Holy Spirit and glossolalia. When the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit is inadequately conceptualized, what is communicated to the next generation is a constricted concept of the experience. I would also recommend that all systematic theologians to reconsider the theology holistically, particularly the Pentecostals to reexamine the gap of poor explanation in its doctrine of Pneumatology. It is a call throughout the theologians to examine the theology of Pentecostals because it is not for specific societies but all the believers.

Little (2000:134) mentioned that the church has the right to abandon or ignore its God-given duty to disciple the nations. However, each soldier of Jesus is called upon to do all that is necessary at whatever personal sacrifice in order to fulfil the Great Commission as a revealed mission with a command or send out (in Matt. 28:19-20). Again, Great Commission is also for all the believers not necessarily for the Pentecostals. Little is pointing out the revelation of God as revealed and with a command that all believers have to follow. Africans consider the ministry of Jesus Christ for He was concerned with the needs of the ordinary people. Khathide (2007:398) argues that the Jesus of the New Testament is what Africa needs.

Yong (2011:74) says Pentecostal Christians expect God’s ongoing intervention in the same manner as such divine action was displayed in the lives of the earliest Christians. This should not slip out of hand to the Christians who cherish it.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In chapter two I discussed Revelation and philosophy by Macquarrie from the Western theology. I argued that revelation could be explained philosophically, Macquarrie being an example that I have chosen. He argued his philosophy from existentialism to explain the revelation of God.

Macquarrie's philosophical category alone cannot fully explain the revelation of God, but can point out other means of God's revelation as God reveals Himself in parts so that we may recognize God. I have pointed out most important views of Macquarrie's approach on revelation.

In chapter three I engaged existentialism through the work of Cone looking at Revelation and Liberation. For Cone sees revelation in history, particularly God's covenant with Israel and God's deliberate choice to side with the oppressed and the marginalized, revelation as God's liberative acts in history. I argued Cone's approach on the revelation of God based on God's covenant that requires obedience even to this generation of governance, to live a well-balanced and adjusted lifestyle without exploiting on others.

Chapter four dealt with African knowledge as a legitimate framework to expand and explain revelation where Idowu and Mbiti defend the African beliefs from Western misconceptions. This chapter argued the interpretation of God and God's revelation within the framework of African indigenous knowledge systems. It essentially argued that Western forms of knowledge cannot be the monopoly to know God. I argued that African understanding of God and its value systems is an equal tool that can be used for revelation. Mbiti as the example between the African and Western, therefore, Africans must not be excluded from the interpretations of revelation.

Lastly, chapter five is a brief background on my Pentecostal roots and its views on revelation. Here I displayed how Pentecostals are influenced by existentialists from the West and how African traits have form part in its views.

Looking at the elements of philosophical systems used in this thesis, I would like to propose a further research questions: why do the orthodox and other systematic beliefs excludes the Pentecostal view in their theology? I am aware of its most emphasizes on its view but should not Pentecostals and all other practiced theologies supposed to be unified holistically? Because all that I found is a divided theology and within its theology every compartment is focusing on its own belief and ignore the others and God's revelation is for all though in God reveals Himself in parts, for we cannot fully grasp to know God.

If all can perceive and agree in God's revelation within the primordial forms of revelation, and also include the African framework in interpreting the revelation of God, then all theologians can come up together and holistically work on unit towards that God, the Creator, Yahweh intended from the beginning than working against each other for we all form part of the body of Christ.

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