

REFORMED SOTERIOLOGY AND
THE MALAWIAN CONTEXT

BY

HANDWELL YOTAMU HARA 1988

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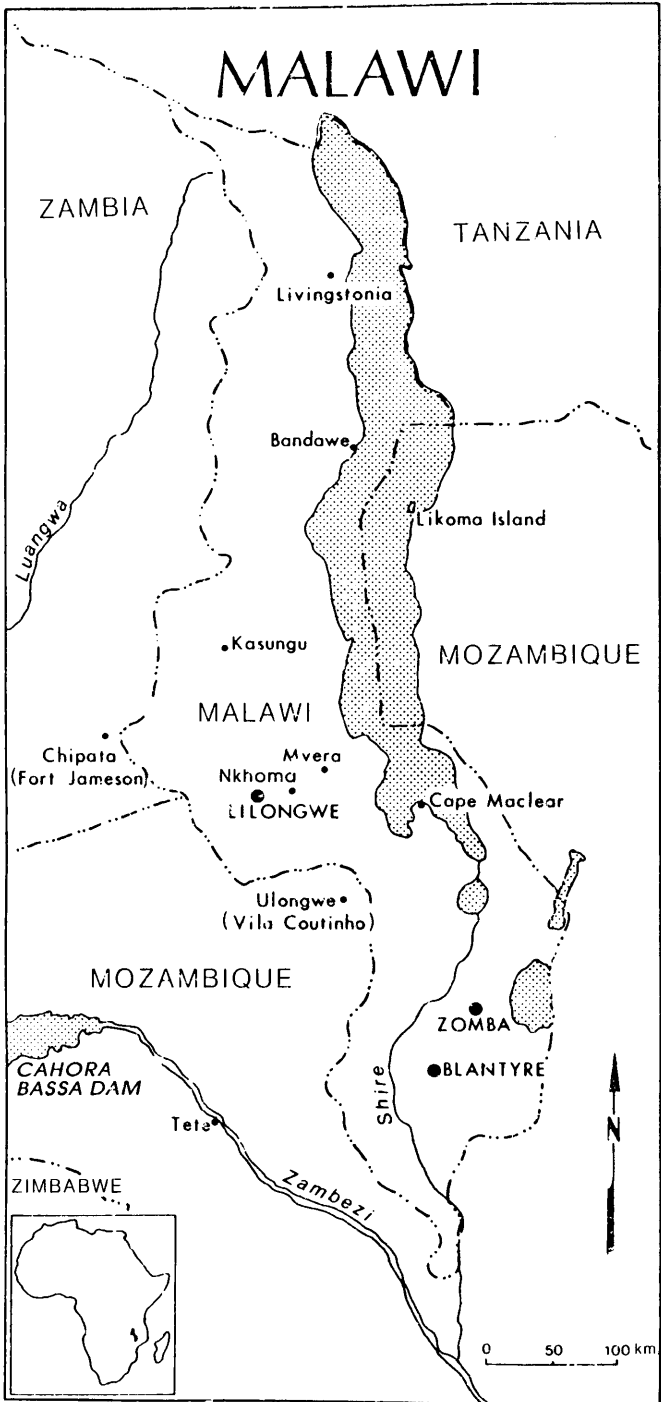
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TO MY WIFE LOTASI

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INTRODUCTION

Today the notion of salvation tends to be dealt with in terms of one of two extreme approaches. For some people it means the salvation of the soul apart from the body. Some Western churches are prone to such a view of salvation because they come from a religious background that had been heavily influenced by Platonic philosophy.

For others, salvation means delivering man from physical dangers and oppressive situations that threaten to terminate his life. The African churches came from such a religious background where salvation is considered as involving only the physical aspect of man: since after death there is no punishment from which the spirit can be saved. "We believe in survival after death, when the spirits of the dead enter into a land of peace where there is no trouble, or, as we often call it, 'a land where the good have gone.' We do not believe in a future hell of any kind, nor do we believe a man's earthly works survive with him after death to be reckoned with in the spirit world. Man is amply punished for his sins in this world." (1)

Some think of salvation as wholly futuristic in nature and as something which is realised only after death or after the resurrection of the body. This view is cherished by some Christians from both the Western and African Churches. They concentrate on the second coming of Christ as the time of realisation of salvation. There

(1) Levi Mumba (Through Thomas Cullen Young), "The religion of my fathers" in : International Review of Mission, 1930, p.336

is little consideration in this concept that salvation can be experienced by believers now through the Holy Spirit who works as a guarantee that its fulness lies ahead.

The purpose of this thesis is to show that the Reformed View of Salvation is able to obviate all these extreme positions. Reformed soteriology focuses on the salvation of the whole man encompassing both his physical and spiritual aspects. It involves man's past, present and future life culminating in the resurrection of the body as the completion of salvation. " For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied."

(1 Cor. 15 : 16 - 19)

Reformed soteriology has its basis in Scripture and it agrees with the teaching of the Ecumenical Creeds - the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed. Since it is based on Scripture and since it reflects the biblical teaching, it is transcultural and it can be taught in Malawi where the cultural background is different from the West where it was first taught. There is reason to believe that there may be some differences in the interpretation of certain aspects of Reformed soteriology among Christians of different countries owing to their different religious background and cultural traditions. However, the basic meaning that salvation involves the whole man and that it is acquired only by grace through faith can be preached and applied anywhere irrespective of people's cultural differences because of

its being grounded in Scripture. "For the Gospel of Jesus Christ is transcultural, that is, it reaches men of different cultures, the Word of God being sovereign to judge and purify any culture of the impurities of sin. The Gospel can then go through all cultures without being enslaved to any of them, without being corrupted by any of them and without giving superiority to any of them."
(2)

Reformed soteriology emphasises that salvation is acquired by grace through faith in Christ and that apart from Christ there is no salvation. In maintaining this view, salvation based on a synthesis of divine and human actions is totally rejected since it robs God of His prerogative and glory and it devaluates grace because a believer's conversion is due to God's grace alone. For it can be said of the believer in all circumstances and at all times that he has nothing that he did not receive and that he is what he is by the grace of God.
(1 Cor. 4 : 7; 15 : 10)

Three theologians have been chosen as representatives for the teaching of the Reformed concept of salvation. These are John Calvin, the classical proponent of Reformed theology, Karl Barth and G C Berkouwer. Calvin has been chosen as a founder of the Reformed doctrine of salvation; Barth and Berkouwer as well known 20th century interpreters of the Reformed position. An analysis of these three Reformed views is presented in Section A of this thesis.

(2) Ma Djongwe Daidanso, "An African Critique of African Theology" in : Evangelical Review of Theology, 7 1983
p69

The Reformed view of soteriology in the first three chapters is presented in subdivisions which have been used to clarify the view of the three theologians on what I think are the the main aspects of Reformed soteriology. These are - the role of faith in salvation; the function of Word and Spirit in man's salvation; justification and sanctification; election, the basis of man's salvation; and the eschatological nature of man's salvation. At the end of these chapters an evaluation of the teaching of Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer is given. I have taken the Reformed view of soteriology according to Calvin whom I regard as a faithful interpreter of Scripture as a classical example. Barth and Berkouwer's soteriological views are judged against Calvin's teaching and that of the Reformed tradition.

Section E deals with salvation in African traditional religion with special reference to the Malawian context. This is done to show the traditional culture from which the Malawian Christians come and to see what influence the traditional beliefs have had on Christians converted from African traditional religion.

In discussing the notion of salvation in African traditional religion I have mainly referred to the views of two African theologians namely S S Maimela from the University of South Africa and P A Kalilombe, former bishop of Lilongwe diocese in Malawi. The former represents the protestant African theologians who think that African traditional religion mediates salvation and the latter stands for the Roman Catholic view on the matter under discussion.

Their views are included to show the influence African traditional religion has on African Christians. My conclusion is that there are certain shortcomings in traditional views of salvation and that African Christians, particularly Malawians, can appreciate the Reformed teaching of salvation as a correction of their traditional beliefs.

In chapter six, an analysis is given of the soteriological views of Christians who have been converted from African traditional religion to Christianity. In this respect I am mainly concentrating on the views of John Mbiti. Reference is made to other African theologians on the matter, but they more or less follow his views.

In Section C a Christian soteriology developed in an African context with special reference to Malawi is discussed as a Reformed response to the position taken by the African Christians. This view of salvation takes the physical and spiritual aspects of life into consideration and is suggested as an adequate biblical response to the one-sided positions mentioned above.

SECTION A

CHAPTER 1 : SOTERIOLOGY ACCORDING TO JOHN CALVIN

John Calvin does not deal with soteriology in the way the later reformed theologians do. Nowhere in his theology will someone find Calvin dealing with the order of salvation in a series of chronological sequence (1). However, he deals with the complex richness of the Lord's work in man's salvation. Faith in Christ is the focal point in his soteriology because Christ is our salvation and all other related aspects of salvation such as conversion, regeneration, justification, sanctification and perseverance are never dealt with apart from faith.

The aspects of salvation are not taken in order of origin one taking place after another. They are so related that we cannot tell where each begins and ends. "When we attempt to separate sanctification from justification we are in fact seeking to break up the unity of the one Christ" (2). I think the same is true if we separate regeneration from conversion or perseverance from sanctification.

1. The role of faith in salvation.

John Calvin views soteriology as having its basis in Christology because nowhere does he discuss man's salvation apart from Christ, for to have Christ is to have salvation. But no-one can have Christ as one's own

(1) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, Grand Rapids, MI : Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972, p29.

(2) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, (tr, Harlod Knight) London : Lutterworth Press, 1956, p136.

saviour apart from faith. Calvin defines faith as knowledge of God, His divine will as well as knowledge of Christ. By knowledge however, he does not mean comprehension of the sort that commonly refers to things which fall under man's sense of perception. Faith is above sense perception and is attained through the Holy Spirit. "Faith rests not on ignorance, but on knowledge. And this is, indeed, knowledge not only of God, but of the divine will. We do not obtain salvation either because we are prepared to embrace as true whatever the church has prescribed, or because we turn over to it the task of inquiring and knowing. But we do so when we know that God is our merciful Father, because of reconciliation effected through Christ (2 Cor.5 : 18 -19) and that Christ has been given to us as righteousness, sanctification and life." (3)

Indeed faith consists in the knowledge of God and Christ. This faith binds all believers together incorporating them into the body of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Although faith is very important in Calvin's soteriology, he does not treat it as effecting man's salvation in itself apart from Christ. What he exalts above everything is Christ. "Faith in itself has no value, no meaning for salvation. It is nothing more than an empty vessel. It acquires a saving significance only in relation to its context : Jesus Christ. In the life of faith we have all that is necessary to us, we have in faith communion with the saviour Jesus Christ. But in no

(3) Calvin, John. Institutes of the Christian Religion, Philadelphia : (tr. F Battles, ed. J McNeil) Westminster, 1973, 3:2:2. (From now onwards I shall refer to them as "Institutes".)

case must we entertain the error that faith is the matter of salvation itself." (4)

Calvin's definition of faith does not imply in any way that it has a saving efficacy or that man in his own power is able to believe in Christ. His definition of faith as "a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ (Inst. 3:2:7) had been accepted and adopted by the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism who, however, add to this the idea of confidence. "True faith is not only a sure knowledge whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a firm confidence which the Holy Spirit works in my heart by the Gospel, that not to others, but to me also, remission of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." (Q.21)

Calvin regards faith as a means of getting hold of what God has given in the merits of Christ. It is God's gift and becomes man's activity only in dependence on God. However, this does not mean that Calvin separates faith from salvation, because nowhere else does he deal with salvation without reference to faith. Man's faith by God's grace indissolubly unites the believer with Christ and through this union he receives the benefits Christ has acquired for the faithful. (5)

Calvin does not speak of faith in salvation without at

(4) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p124.

(5) F Wendel, Calvin, (tr. Philip Mairret) London: : Collins 1974, p241.

the same time pointing to Christ. It is in believing in Him that man has grace for being reconciled to God through Christ's righteousness. Man's union with Christ results in having Christ's holiness and innocence of life which Wendel refers to as justification and regeneration.(6)

Faith does not belong to man in the sense that he produces it although it is he himself who believes in Christ. It is a gift of God wrought in man by the Holy Spirit. For this reason man cannot boast of his believing in Christ as though he did it by his own efforts. It is the work of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both the Father and the Son. So faith is the work of God himself. "But faith is the principle work of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the terms commonly employed to express his power and working are, in large measure, referred to it because by faith alone he leads us into the light of the gospel, as John teaches : to believers in Christ is given the privilege of becoming children of God who are born not of flesh and blood, but of God (John 1 : 12 - 13)(7).

a.Faith and Word: Calvin says that faith rests on God's Word which comes to man through the Scriptures and preaching and he shows the unity of faith and the gospel when he says, "This, then, is the true knowledge of Christ, if we receive him as he is offered by the Father : namely, clothed with his gospel. For just as he has been appointed as the goal of our faith, so we cannot take the right road to him unless the gospel goes before

(6) F Wendel, op.cit. p242

(7) Inst. 3:1:4

us."(8) Since faith comes by hearing the gospel, Calvin finds it hard to see faith coming without the Word. He says there is a permanent relationship between faith and the Word and he compares this relationship with that which exists between the sun and its rays.

Faith has its basis in and gets its support from the Word. It cannot exist on its own otherwise it loses its own nature when it turns away from the Word. "The same Word is the basis whereby faith is supported and sustained; if it turns away from the Word, it falls. Therefore, take away the Word and no faith will then remain."(9)

The relationship between faith and the Word is such that Calvin does not hesitate to say that the former is produced by the latter. "Moreover, faith is produced by the Word of God, but the Word of God is nowhere preached, except through God's special providence and appointment." (10) Man's conversion to Christ therefore is something that involves both the Word of God that is preached and faith by which man believes the gospel. The Word itself without faith produces no conversion and faith itself apart from the Word does not exist.

The Word, through the work of the Holy Spirit, does not only produce faith, but it also acts as its shield and protects it from faltering. The Word of the Lord fortifies faith against various attacks that may weaken it. Its strength is found in the promises of God

(8) Inst. 3:2:6

(9) Inst. 3:2:6

(10) Calvin's Comm. on Romans 10 : 14.

revealed in the Word. "To bear these attacks faith arms and fortifies itself with the Word of the Lord. And when any sort of temptation assails - suggesting that God is our enemy because he is unfavourable toward us - faith, on the other hand, replies that while he afflicts us he is also merciful because his chastisement arises out of love rather than wrath"(11).

Believers cannot stand in the midst of evil forces without the Word just as they cannot be believers without it. Calvin says that the Word on which faith is rooted is an incorruptible seed having power that never dries up and dies. The Word having produced faith by the operation of the Holy Spirit does not wither and die, but remains strong acting as a shield of faith (12).

Faith in turn while being supported by the Word acts as a shield of believers from the dangers of the Evil one. Calvin, quoting Paul says, "Faith, then, as Paul teaches, serves as our shield (Eph. 6 : 16). When held up against weapons it so receives their force that it either completely turns them aside or at least weakens their thrust, so that they cannot penetrate to our vitals."(13)

All that has been said above emphasises Calvin's view of the relation of faith to the Word, not that the Word produces faith but that by the object of faith - Jesus Christ - faith is effected. "Hence, we again infer what had been explained before : that faith needs the Word as much as fruit needs the living root of a tree. For no

(11) Inst. 3:2:21

(12) Inst. 3:2:21

(13) Inst. 3:2:21

others, as David witnesses, can hope in God, but those who know his name (Ps. 9 : 10). But this knowledge does not arise out of anyone's imagination, but only so far as God himself is witness to his goodness. This the prophet confirms in another place : 'Thy salvation according to thy Word' (Ps. 119 : 41). Likewise, 'I have hoped in thy Word; make me safe' (Ps. 119 : 42,40,94). Here we must first note the relation of faith to the Word, then its consequences, salvation."(14)

Whatever happens to man is of no value with regard to his salvation unless that comes to him by the testimony of God's grace through the Word which illumines man. "But because whatever we conceive concerning God's might and works is fleeting without the Word, we declare with good reason that there is no faith until God illumines it by the testimony of his grace"(15).

Calvin says that through the Word of God faith is kept alive in man although he may continually meet various temptations. True faith is never extinguished by doubts of any kind. He gives the example of David who met a lot of temptations in his life and he did not always live in peace and a happy state but the Word of God kept his faith alive and he could still say, "The Lord is our protection, our help in tribulation. Therefore we will not fear while the earth shakes, and the mountains leap into the heart of the sea" (Ps. 46 : 2 - 3, cf. Comm.) (16).

(14) Inst. 3:2:31

(15) Inst. 3:2:31

(16) Inst.3:2:37

b. Faith, love and good works. Faith which is the work of God is productive, it produces love which is manifested in good works. James says, "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2 : 17). Calvin understands James as saying that there is no faith that is unproductive. In this way he does not separate faith from good works. "We hence conclude that it is indeed no faith, for when dead, it does not properly retain the name. The Sophists plead this expression and say, that some sort of faith is found by itself; but this frivolous cavilling is easily refuted; for it is sufficiently evident that the Apostle reasons from what is impossible. as Paul calls an angel anathema, if he attempted to subvert the gospel (Gal. 1 : 8)."(17)

Calvin says that faith produces love and refutes the schoolmen that treat love as prior to faith and hope. "For the teaching of the schoolmen, that love is prior to faith and hope, is mere madness, for it is faith alone that first engenders love in us."(18) This agrees with what James says of faith and in no way does it disagree with what Paul says about love as the greatest gift of God (1 Cor. 13 : 13). Calvin in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 13 : 13 says that love is treated as the greatest because it will remain even in perfection while faith and hope belong to a state of imperfection. When we shall see what we wait for faith and hope will vanish

(17) Calvin, Comm. on James 2 : 17; Grand Rapids, Michigan : Baker Book House Company, Reprinted 1979 (All references to Calvin commentaries refer to 22 Volume set reprinted 1979 by Baker Book House Company.)

(18) Inst. 3:2:4

away but love will remain. Calvin maintains, even in reference to 1 Corinthians 13 : 13 where love is treated as the greatest, that faith is superior to love. "Nay, even love itself, according to testimony of the same Apostle (1 Thess. 1 : 3), is an effect of faith. Now the effect is, undoubtedly, inferior to its cause. Besides, there is bestowed upon faith a signal commendation, which does not apply to love, when John declares that it is our victory, which overcometh the world (1 John 5 : 4). In fine, it is by faith that we are born again - that we become the sons of God - that we obtain eternal life and that Christ dwells in us (Eph. 3 : 17). Innumerable other things I pass over; but these few are sufficient to prove what I have in view - that faith is, in many of its effects superior to love."(19)

Calvin does not separate faith from love and good works just as he does not separate it from God's Word. As faith is not the work of man but of God, so love too is a gift from God. Good works flow from love which is the product of faith. It is for this reason that he says love is not prior to faith and denies it the power to justify man.(20)

c.Faith and the Holy Spirit.As already stated in this chapter, faith comes from God by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word. Though it is said that the Word is the basis of faith but by itself it can do nothing without the Holy Spirit. Calvin says that our mind has such an inclination to vanity that it can never cleave fast to the truth of God, and that it is always blind to the light of God's truth. He says that without the illumination of the

(19) Calvin, Comm. on 1 Cor. 13 : 13; cf. Inst. 3:18:8

(20) Inst. 3:18:8

Holy Spirit the Word can do nothing.(21)

God himself through the Holy Spirit strengthens and supports the heart in such a way that when the Word is read and preached faith is initiated. By supporting the heart the Spirit increases faith until the believer is led to the Kingdom of God. "For the Spirit is not only the initiator of faith, but increases it by degrees, until by it he leads us to the Kingdom of Heaven."(22)

The Bible tells us clearly that the understanding of the mysteries of God does not depend on man's wisdom but on the support of the Holy Spirit. "This, indeed, is considered most paradoxical : when it is said that no-one, unless faith be granted to him, can believe in Christ (John 6 : 65)."(23)

Calvin says that without the Holy Spirit man is incapable of faith. For man to believe in Christ, he has to be drawn by God's power. This shows us clearly that faith is inseparable from the Holy Spirit. No matter how clever a person may be in himself, he cannot believe the Word of God. With reference to Paul he says that the apostle denies that man himself initiates faith, but that it is manifested by God's power. It does not depend upon man's wisdom because it is founded upon the might of the Spirit.(24)

What is emphasised here is that faith is a gift of God to

(21) Inst. 3:2:33

(22) Inst. 3:2:33

(23) Inst. 3:2:33

(24) Inst. 3:2:35

whoever believes in Christ. This rules out boasting completely. If anyone believes in Christ, it is not his own doing; it is granted him by God. Calvin, to emphasise his point that faith is not initiated by man, refers to Augustine as a faithful interpreter of the testimonies of Scripture he has cited in his work. "Augustine, the faithful interpreter of them, exclaims : "Our Saviour, to teach us that belief comes as a gift and not from merit, says : 'no-one comes to me, unless my father ... draw him' (John 6 : 65)."(25)

Christ himself saves us by engrafting us into His body through the Holy Spirit by faith. Man believes in Christ in such a way that he becomes the partaker of every good from Him. In this way every believer has the Holy Spirit since no-one believes in Christ without Him. Christ by the Word and Holy Spirit through faith gathers together all believers from every race into His body, and to separate faith from the Holy Spirit is to do Him harm. "What else is it, then, than to do injury to the Holy Spirit if we separate faith, which is his particular work, from him?"(26)

Faith is sustained by the Holy Spirit in the believer and it endures to the end of man's earthly life and no doubts and temptations will smother it. Man who is really called by Christ and is united to Him by faith through the Holy Spirit will never totally fall away because those that have received Christ in true faith will never perish. It is by faith through the Holy Spirit that man is united with Christ and is saved.(27)

(25) Inst. 3:2:35

(26) Inst. 3:2:39

(27) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p123 - 124;cf.

Inst. 3:24:7

2. THE FUNCTION OF WORD AND SPIRIT IN MAN'S SALVATION.

a. Word. Calvin says that although the creation was there through which man would recognise God, yet because of the fall there was still need for God to utter His Word in order that man should recognise Him as his Creator and Redeemer. God has ever since creation shown Himself to man through it, but true knowledge of Him could not and cannot be obtained from creation. Man would have to be in his original state of integrity in which he was before the fall, in order to know God through His external works. The means of acquiring true knowledge of God through creation is destroyed by the fall and the "seed of religion" that may still be in man is so corrupted that it does not lead him to the recognition of the true God. (28)

Since there was no other means for man of knowing God it was necessary that God should reveal Himself to man. What God had spoken to the patriarchs through visions had to be recorded to ensure its preservation for later generations. Without the written Word of God people go astray in regard to the Lord's will and for this reason Calvin says, "It is, therefore, clear that God has provided the assistance of the Word for the sake of all those to whom he has been pleased to give useful instruction because he foreknew that his likeness imprinted upon the most beautiful form of the universe

(28) F Wendel, Calvin, p163; cf. H Henry Meeter.

Calvinism; Grand Rapids, Michigan : Zondervan Publishing House, 1939, p41; cf. B B Warfield, Calvin and Calvinism, New York : Oxford University Press, 1931, p32

would be insufficiently effective, we must strive onward by this straight path if we seriously aspire to the pure contemplation of God."(29)

The Word of God is confirmed and is animated by God Himself who speaks in it. Its power does not come from prophets or apostles but from God Himself who is also its author. "Thus, the highest proof of Scripture derives in general from the fact that God in person speaks in it. The prophets and apostles do not boast either of their keenness or of anything that obtains credit for them as they speak; nor do they dwell upon rational proofs."(30)

Man knows God not by merely acknowledging that He exists but by understanding what is right for man to understand of Him and what is conducive to His glory. The Knowledge of God should be accompanied by religion or piety and should teach man to fear and revere God. It should induce him to look to God for all good and to praise Him in return. Calvin is not interested in an abstract knowledge of God but in the knowledge that induces man to worship. This knowledge is acquired from Holy Scripture when it is read by faith.(31)

God is known by reading the Scriptures with the firm intention of finding Jesus Christ in them.(32) This is so because Christ is the only mediator through whom God makes Himself known to man. This is the only way God can

(29) Inst. 1:6:3

(30) Inst. 1:7:1

(31) F Wendel, Calvin; pp152 and 153

(32) F Wendel, op.cit. p154 (Wendel also refers to Calvin's commentary on John 5 : 39)

be known and has been known even in the old covenant. "The saints of the past have never known God otherwise than by looking to him in his Son, as in a mirror. When I say this I mean that God has never manifested himself to men except by his Son; that is by his unique truth, wisdom and light. From that fount, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jaccb drew all that they had of spiritual knowledge. From that same source the prophets derived all the teaching that they gave or left to us in writing."(33)

God is clearly mirrored for man in God's works when man reads the Bible because no-one can understand the smallest true and saving doctrine unless he studies Holy Scripture. However, he still remains in darkness for he "must be given eyes and ears to register the truth of the Bible" if he is to recognise and grasp it. God must effect the change in man through the Holy Spirit for He alone is the true interpreter of Scripture.(34)

b.Relationship between Word and Spirit.The term "Word" here does not refer to Jesus Christ who is indeed also called the Word of God (John 1:14), but it refers to Scripture. In this section the relationship between the Word and the Holy Spirit is emphasised.

It is wrong to say that the Word is more important in man's salvation than the Holy Spirit or vice versa, for they are both essential to man just as his two legs are essential to him to walk properly.

(33) F Wendel, op.cit. p154; cf. B B Warfield, op.cit. p68

(34) W Niesel, op.cit. p24

The Word of God that is read or preached cannot be effective unless the Holy Spirit is involved. "It is the Holy Spirit who makes use of the Bible writings to put us in contact with the Word of God, and who at the same time works within us so that we may discover this word in the Scripture and accept it as coming from God."(35)

Many people may be present when the Word of God is read or preached but not all may be convicted of their sins or be moved to repentance. Psychologically we may say that this is due to their ability of understanding things, but, the comprehension of the gospel depends on the help of the Holy Spirit. "And Luke doth not assign that for the cause why this one woman did not show herself apt to be taught, because she was more witty than the rest, or because she had some preparations of herself; but he saith that the Lord opened her heart that she might give ear and take heed to the speech of Paul. He had of late commended her godliness; and yet he showeth that she could not comprehend the doctrine of the gospel, save only through the illumination of the Spirit."(36)

The Holy Spirit that moved the authors of Scripture to write down what they heard should enlighten those that read it in order that it may be helpful to them. Calvin understands Luke saying that man cannot gain anything from hearing the Word of God without the grace of the Spirit. "For we must note the temperance or moderation which Luke setteth down here, that we can have or obtain nothing by the hearing of the word alone, without the grace of the Spirit; and that the Spirit is given us,

(35) F Wendel, Calvin p156

(36) Calvin, Commentary on Acts 16 : 14

not that he may bring contempt of the word, but rather that he may dip (instill) into our minds, and write in our hearts the faith thereof."(37)

Salvation belongs to the Lord, therefore praise should not be given to man when he is converted to Christianity. It is always God through the Holy Spirit that is at work in the heart of men in their conversion. The Word of God will never be accepted by men without the witness of the Spirit. "The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded."(38)

God is the author of both Scripture and nature and He does not only give the Word but with it He also gives the Spirit." . . . My spirit is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, and the mouths of your offspring, shall never fail"(Isa. 59 : 21)(39). Calvin does not agree with those who exalt the Holy Spirit above the Word because the Spirit of God who is also the author of Scripture never despises the Word. "For of late, certain giddy men have arisen who, with haughtiness exalting the teaching office of the Spirit, despise all reading and laugh at the simplicity of those who, as they express it, still follow the dead and killing letter. But I should like to know from them what this spirit is by whose inspiration they are borne up so high that they dare despise the scriptural doctrine as childish and mean. For if they

(37) Calvin, Commentary on Acts 16 : 14

(38) Inst. 1:7:4

(39) Inst. 1:7:4

answer that it is the Spirit of Christ, such assurance is utterly ridiculous."(40)

Calvin opposes anyone who despises the Word of God and thinks that he can be led to salvation by the Spirit alone. The Spirit does not speak of Himself neither does He invent new ways of saving man, but He bears witness to the Word of God already spoken through the prophets. "Therefore, the Spirit, promised to us, has not the task of inventing new and unheard-of revelations, or of forging a new kind of doctrine, to lead us away from the received doctrine of the gospel, but of sealing our minds with that very doctrine which is commanded by the Gospel."(41)

A spirit that disregards Scripture is not the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God and the Author of the Word that honours the Scriptures and the Lord Jesus Christ. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come". (John 16 : 13) (42)

We should not understand Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 : 6 to say that Scripture should be ignored and emphasis should be laid on the Spirit as though the two are separate. It is clear that Paul there (2 Cor. 3 : 6) is against the false apostles who were misleading people by commending the law apart from Christ and so deprive them of the benefits of the New Testament. "The letter, therefore, is dead, and the law of the Lord slays its readers where it both is cut off from

(40) Inst. 1:9:1

(41) Inst. 1:9:1

(42) Cf. Inst. 1:9:1

Christ's grace (2 Cor. 3 : 6) and, leaving the heart untouched, sounds in the ear alone. But if through the Spirit it is really branded upon the hearts, if it shows forth Christ, it is the word of life.... "(43)

It is the Lord Himself who has joined the Word and the Spirit for the benefit of man. The Spirit works in and through the Word of God preached or read so that the Word may abide in a man's mind. "For by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that the perfect religion of the Word may abide in our minds when the Spirit, who causes us to contemplate God's face, shines; and that we in turn may embrace the Spirit with no fear of being deceived when we recognise him in his own image, namely in the Word."(44)

The preacher has no power in himself no matter how eloquent and versed in Scripture he may be, for the power does not come from man's speech, but from the Holy Spirit. "I indeed admit that the power does not proceed from the tongue of man, nor exists in mere sound, but that the whole power is to be ascribed altogether to the Holy Spirit; there is, however, nothing in this to hinder the Spirit from putting forth his power in the word preached. For God, as he speaks not by himself, but by men dwells carefully on this point, so that his truth may not be objected to in contempt, because men are its

(43) Inst. 1:9:3

(44) Inst. 1:9:3; cf. B E Warfield, Calvin and Calvinism
p88

ministers."(45)

c. Word, Spirit and Faith. Word and Spirit work together to lead man to salvation. We have already seen the importance of faith for man's salvation. Faith of course comes by the hearing of the gospel but unless the Spirit comes in, man does not recognise Jesus as the Redeemer. This shows that the Word becomes efficacious for our faith through the Holy Spirit. "But our mind has such an inclination to vanity that it can never cleave fast to the truth of God; and it has such a dullness that it is always blind to the light of God's truth. Accordingly without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Word can do nothing."(46)

Both the Word and the Spirit are said to be the initiator or basis of faith because faith will never come about in the absence of them. "The same Word is the basis whereby faith is supported and sustained; if it turns away from the Word, it falls. Therefore, take away the Word and no faith will remain."(47)

Calvin says that the Word is the basis whereby faith is supported and sustained, and he also says that the Spirit is the initiator of faith. Here we see clearly the unity of Word and Spirit in Calvin's soteriology. "For the

(45) Calvin, Comm. on Hebrews 4 : 12;

cf. Richard B Gaffin, Jr. "The Holy Spirit".

Westminster Theological Journal 43, (1980) p60

(46) Inst. 3:2:33; cf. W Stanford Reid, "Justification by faith According to John Calvin", Westminster Theological Journal 42, 1979/80, p296

(47) Inst. 3:2:6

Spirit is not only the initiator of faith, but increases it by degrees until by it he leads us to the Kingdom of Heaven,"(48)

According to Calvin's soteriology the Holy Spirit continues His work until man's salvation is complete. Faith finishes its work at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ when He will come to judge the living and the dead. For the joy, happiness and glory of the Kingdom of God we hear is hidden from us until when Christ comes to reveal to us His glory that we may see it face to face (1 Cor. 13 : 12)(49)

The Holy Spirit will abide with the believers even in the eschaton for it is He who will raise them from the dead. God who by the power of the Holy Spirit raised His Son from the dead as an example of His power, will also by the same Spirit that dwells in believers raise them at the end (Romans 8 : 11).(50) The Holy Spirit is at work in man's salvation from his time of conversion to his final glorification since without Him man cannot experience sanctification and cannot grow in his spiritual life. (51)

(48) Inst. 3:2:33

(49) Inst. 3:25:10; cf. Richard B Gaffin, Jr.

"The Holy Spirit" in Westminster Theological Journal
43, 1988, p61

(50) Inst. 3:25:3

(51) W Stenford Reid, Art. cit. p303; cf. Richard Gaffin,
Jr. Art. cit. p76

3. SANCTIFICATION AND JUSTIFICATION.

Calvin finds the union with Christ as the basis of justification and sanctification and it is for this reason that he treats them together. Sanctification is not the cause of justification and although they come from the same source the former is distinct from the latter. They are bound together by their existence and nature, however, justification is described as the principle of the whole teaching of salvation and the foundation of all religion.(52)

When Calvin deals with sanctification he also uses several theological terms such as regeneration, penitence, renewal or conversion, and when he speaks of rebirth he is particularly speaking of sanctification.(53)

Although justification and sanctification are joined together as by a perpetual bond yet their functions are different. Justification is the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer, while sanctification refers to the mortification of the old man and participation in the new life. Man does not do away with sin in the progress of sanctification because it does not mean that sin becomes less and less as man is sanctified and reaches death sinless. In spite of sanctification man remains a sinner until his death. On the other hand justification is perfect on the basis of Christ's righteousness which is imputed to the believer as his sins are forgiven. God looks at the

(52) F Wendel, Calvin. p256

(53) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p127

justified man as holy because he is covered by Christ's righteousness.(54)

Sometimes Calvin treats justification as if it were sanctification in extending the former as the latter up to one's death, and the distinction between the two becomes extinct. However, his treatment of justification in that way is based on the forgiveness of sin which does not take place only once in a person's life. Therefore, justification, though perfect, is carried on throughout one's life operating together with sanctification as righteousness and holiness are inseparable in God.(55)

The notion of the equivalence existing between justification and pardon makes it incorrect to say that justification is a once for all event covering all man's sins even those of the future that are not yet committed. The meritorious basis of all justification depends on the once for all sacrifice of Christ. Since sin is not forgiven unless it is committed and repented of, man cannot be justified in advance and to insist on the idea that the past justification covers future sins is to misunderstand the legal metaphor used by Paul in the Epistle to the Romans.(56) This may be the reason why Calvin does not treat justification as a once for all

(54) Op.cit. p127; cf. T H L Parker, "Calvin's Doctrine of Justification" in :

Evangelical Quarterly, April 15, 1952, p103

(55) Pierre G Marcel, "The relation between Justification and Sanctification in Calvin's thought" in :

Evangelical Quarterly 27, 1955, p135

(56) Alan C Clifford, "The Gospel and Justification" in :

The Evangelical Quarterly 57 1985, pp258 and 266

event in a man's life.

a. Unity of Justification and Sanctification.

Justification and sanctification are not seen as stages through which one passes to reach salvation, since salvation is not received in piecemeal, but as a whole when Jesus Christ is bestowed upon men. Justification and sanctification are a reality in Jesus Christ and form in Him a living unity. Any attempt at separating the two gifts is trying to separate them by breaking up the unity of one Christ.(57)

The result of a believer's union with Christ is twofold - justification and sanctification. These two graces are appropriated when one is in fellowship with Christ and not apart from Him. This union with Christ is effected by the Holy Spirit through faith. The forgiveness of sin and the reconciliation with God is experienced as a result of Christ's sinlessness. And as the believer undergoes sanctification through the work of the Holy Spirit, he aspires for an innocent and pure life.(58)

Calvin sees justification and sanctification as never being appropriated by believers apart from Christ, because they are neither obtained by man's work, nor by any other external means outside Christ, but they are the result of man's communion with Him. Christ by His obedience, sufferings and death has procured not only the forgiveness of sin for believers but also holiness through which believers are declared righteous as Christ

(57) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p136

(58) W Niesel, op.cit. p130

consecrates them to God the Father and cleanses them from the dirt of sin. Through Christ's fulfilment of the law, the power of sin is broken in principle and the believer is free to live in righteousness and holiness.(59)

On the objective aspect, sanctification is treated by Calvin as justification in that it does not take place in us but in Christ and we appropriate His holiness by faith. "The death of the old man and the resurrection of the new is realisable only in the reality of the living Christ. It is not we who die and it is not we who are renewed, it is only in Christ that that can happen to us."(60)

It is not difficult to see why Calvin treats man's sanctification in Christ as justification, although the former does not involve the forgiveness of sins, but Christ their common source applies them in such a way that sometimes they function as if they were one, doing one work. This is clearly seen where Calvin says that Christ does not only justify a man without at the same time also sanctifying him. His emphasis on the co-operation of sanctification and justification results from the fact that the two benefits are permanently joined together.(61)

Calvin maintains the distinction between justification and sanctification, however, he lays so much emphasis on their unity that one benefit is never appropriated without the other. This is so because Christ is at the

(59) Pierre C Marcel, Evangelical Quarterly 27,1955 p135

(60) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p128

(61) Inst. 3:16:1

centre of his soteriology and that without possessing Him one is unable to attain both sanctification and justification. Anyone who possesses Christ will have these benefits flow to him automatically and since they are inseparable no-one will have one without the other.(62)

b. Justification and Sanctification Accomplished through Christ.

Both justification and sanctification are accomplished in our communion with Christ and we cannot say that one takes place with and the other without Christ. To say so would mean that one part of salvation is done by Christ and the other by man. However, this is not the case; sanctification like justification is accomplished by Christ. Through Christ man becomes aware of his sins and realises that he is incapable to advance forward on his own. This prevents him from becoming proud and makes him depend more and more on God's grace. He recognises that the source of the power of his new life is not his own and that the security of attaining perfection is solely in the hands of Christ.(63)

As people cannot be sanctified when they remain outside Christ, so too they cannot be justified apart from Him. The forgiveness of sin is conferred only upon those who are in communion with Him through faith and are at the same time imputed His righteousness. Although they do not cease to be sinners yet because of His righteousness

(62) Inst. 3:16:1

(63) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p129 cf. F Wendel, Calvin, p259

they are reckoned just before God. A believer through union with Christ in faith possesses Christ with His blessings. He is no longer disobedient to God because Christ's obedience, holiness and righteousness are all imputed to him. Christ has taken the believer's sin and condemnation upon himself setting the believer free and is thus no longer regarded as a sinner before God.(64)

Calvin gives Christ the central position in both justification and sanctification and he emphasises justification by faith alone only in opposition to the Roman Catholic emphasis on works. He neither speaks of justification nor of sanctification apart from Christ by only referring to faith, because faith is just an instrument with which to receive Christ the Saviour of man. Faith does not replace Christ in Calvin's description of justification because in itself it is weak and would therefore fail to justify man, and even if it justified him, it would give him partial salvation. Faith does not justify itself but it brings man and unites him with Christ. If faith justified man regardless of its failures and weakness, it would be regarded as work and man would be justified by works.(65)

Calvin knows that without Christ no-one is saved, since

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- (64) T H L Parker, Evangelical Quarterly, 15 April 1952 p106; cf. Institutes 3:11:3; cf. H Jackson Forstman, Word and Spirit, Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority, California, Stanford, 1962, p67
- (65) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin. p136; cf. T H L Parker, "Calvin's Doctrine of Justification" in : Evangelical Quarterly April 15 1952, p236

"There is no other name under heaven given to men in which we must be saved" (Acts 4 : 12). (66) He thinks that man's forgiveness of sin and his righteousness are both accomplished by Christ and to ignore Him is to ignore one's own salvation and righteousness. Man is righteous because Christ has taken man's sins away from him upon Christ Himself and died for them. It is only in that way that man is righteous. Man himself does not satisfy the judgment of God through his works but by Christ's righteousness which is appropriated by faith. (67)

Calvin sees Christ as man's justification and sanctification and treats these two benefits as being accomplished by Him. No man's observance of the law, his faith apart from Christ or his works are able to justify or sanctify man. According to Calvin, justification and sanctification are only realisable in communion with Christ and no-one can appropriate them when cut off from the Son of God.

c. Justification and Sanctification not the Result of good works.

The fact that justification and sanctification are accomplished through Christ means that man's works are ruled out in man's salvation. Not that a justified man should not do good works or does not do them, but that they have no part in man's justification because even our best works are not exempted from sin. Therefore, good works no matter with what intention we do them cannot justify us nor co-operate with God in the work of

(66) Inst. 2:16:1

(67) F Wendel, Calvin, p259

justification. However, a justified man's works are regarded by God just, not in themselves, but because of Christ's righteousness. Even these works do not sustain or increase man's justification but they, like the person that does them, are justified by faith alone.(68)

Calvin says that works, no matter how good they may seem to be, cannot be the cause of man's righteousness and holiness. Not only because they lack real goodness, but because whatever good there may be in them, is due to God's work. Calvin would treat good works as the result rather than the foundation of man's justification and sanctification. The work which God sees as good in man is God's own work and not man's, because man apart from God's help is incapable of doing anything good. There is no good work done by man which is not full of sins under the scrutiny of God.(69)

Since Calvin sees sanctification as the restoration of God's image in man which means the mortification of the flesh and the vivification of the spirit, man cannot sanctify himself apart from Christ. He cannot restore this image of God in himself and only Christ can. Therefore, sanctification is not man's works.(70) The image of God is restored in man as Christ takes the whole possession of him and effects sanctification in him which is the doing away with the old life and the participation in the new one. This is possible only when one is in

(68) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p136; T H L Parker "Calvin's Doctrine of Justification", Evangelical Quarterly, 15 1952, p105; cf. Inst. 3:17:8

(69) Inst. 3:14:20 and 3:17:9

(70) Inst. 3:3:9

union with Christ.(71)

Justification and sanctification is the work of God alone through Jesus Christ, and to say that good works merit man the forgiveness of sin, is to cheapen salvation and to rob God of His glory. Calvin sees sin as so horrible that it cannot be forgiven by means of actions such as fasting or observance of the law or anything else man can do because all man's works are not of sufficient value to satisfy God's judgement. In opposition to the Roman Catholic view on the merits of works, Calvin says that God can never be appeased by man's wretched satisfactions because man's guilt of sin is of such a nature that it cannot be atoned for by worthless man's satisfactions. Forgiveness of sin is the prerogative of God alone through Christ's blood. The only thing that man can do to be freed of sin is to resort to God's mercy and not to try to gain righteousness by doing good works.(72)

It would be misinterpreting Calvin to say that he encourages people to live in sin because he says that they are justified without works. His definition of justification by faith alone does not mean man should continue living in the old way of life as if nothing has happened to him, but it involves his acquiring a desire for an innocent life. His emphasis is that "...justification is withdrawn from works, not that no good works may be done, or that what is done may be denied to be good, but that we may not rely upon them or ascribe salvation to them.(73) Man's assurance and his

(71) F Wendel, Calvin, p. 242

(72) Inst.3:16:4

(73) Inst. 3:17:1

only anchor of salvation is Christ through whom man appropriates God's eternal blessedness.

So Calvin rules out good works from justification and sanctification because salvation is by the grace and this grace would be null and void if works had a part to play. God sees nothing good in us, since there is none, that prompts Him to save us. God's grace through Christ is the only basis to eternal life. " So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace" (Romans 11 : 5 - 6).(74)

4. ELECTION, THE BASIS OF MAN'S SALVATION.

In the previous section I have shown that Calvin rules out man's worthiness as the basis of justification and sanctification and that these are accomplished by and through Christ alone. Works of any kind have completely been denied as the means of getting salvation and God's grace has been shown as the only way of man's redemption.

Calvin's teaching on election is a continuation of the denial of man's worthiness as the basis of his justification and sanctification and this is done by ascribing salvation to God's eternal election. He shows that election does not depend on man's work by giving the example of how God has chosen Jacob and rejected Esau. Before the twin brothers were born and had done neither good nor bad, God chose the younger and rejected the elder; something which shows that election depends on

(74) Inst. 3:21:1

God and not on man's work.(75)

Calvin arrives at the doctrine of election through the reading of Scripture which to him is the inspired and inerrant Word of God.(76) As he wishes to be obedient and honest to God, he develops his teaching as his conclusion of what he understands from Scripture. He says that the Word of God is not preached to all people in the same way and even those who hear it are not all moved to repentance. He says the reason why people respond to the Word of God differently is because of God's eternal decree of election.(77)

a)Election not based on foreknowledge and man's worthiness:

Man's election to eternal life is not based on his faith neither on God's foreknowledge of what his future obedience and faith will be, rather his works and faith are conditioned by his being elected because election goes with the assurance of salvation. Calvin says that man's election conditions providence which prepares the ways and means of the elect to attain salvation. God does not leave the elect alone to find their own way to the end because "Election envelops the whole redemptive process from the eternal decree to its final

(75) Inst. 3:22:5; cf. F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Book House, 1977 p38

(76) (76) F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p21

(77) F Klooster, op.cit. pp15 and 16; cf. Inst. 3:21:1

accomplishment in glory".(78)

Although God foreknows what man's future life will be, the foreknowledge itself has nothing to do with man's election. Calvin does not see how the former may influence the latter because he emphatically denies foreknowledge to be the basis of election. Although many persons did not agree with him on the free election of believers,(79) he remained firm on his teaching and did not accept that God adopts as His sons those whom He foreknew would be worthy of His grace and rejects those that would be inclined to do evil deeds. He does not accept this teaching because it does not base election on God's sovereign will.

Foreknowledge is denied as the cause of election because it makes God an observer waiting to award eternal life to the one who merits it. In fact to base election on foreknowledge is to make man earn salvation by works. Loraine Boettner expresses the mind of Calvin well in his reference to those that oppose free election of believers, when he says that a conditional election based on the foreseen faith and obedience of man destroys the sound doctrine of election and reduces it to God's mere recognition of what certain persons will do in future, God is seen as electing those who through their ability to do well deserve salvation.(80) If this is the case,

(78) F Klooster, op.cit. p44; cf. F Wendel. Calvin, p267 - 268

(79) Inst. 3:22:1

(80) L Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination
Grand Rapids, MI:Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company
1954, pp91 and 92

then salvation is no more by grace but is attained through man's works.

Calvin objects against man's merits which include faith, obedience, holiness and whatever may be thought as coming from man as the cause of election. Man is not elected because of his holiness but because of election he becomes holy. Calvin therefore says "... if he chose us that we should be holy, he did not choose us because he foresaw that we would be so. For those two notions disagree: that the godly have their holiness from election and that they arrive at election by reason of works."(81)

In Calvin's teaching, election is unconditional in that it does not depend on any other thing outside God. It does not try to answer the question why some people are elected and others not. Calvin says that just as it pleased God to create His opponents men and not dogs, with the same freedom, He elects some people to eternal life and rejects others.(82) God shows favour to His elect because He so wills and no other reason is given; and to emphasise God's freedom in election, Calvin refers to Exodus 33:19 where it is written "... and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."(83)

(81) Inst. 3:22:3

(82) Inst., 3:22:1: cf. F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p39

(83) Inst. 3:22:8 (quotation nine from RSV).

b) Election and Perseverance in Christ.

Calvin directs us to Christ in whom we may see man's election. Since man is unworthy for salvation, his only hope lies in Christ in whom God's love and mercy is manifested. Calvin says that election is in Christ through whom God has adopted as His sons all those that had been chosen before the foundation of the world. If God could not love the elect in Christ, He could not elect them for the inheritance of His kingdom because they could not qualify for it in themselves. Believers have an assurance of salvation because they are chosen in Christ and not in themselves and not even in God the Father if He is considered as cut off from the Son.(84)

Election is not found anywhere else apart from Christ. As justification and sanctification are accomplished by God in Christ, election too finds its basis through God's will in Christ. Calvin does not hesitate to call Christ the author of our election because it is in Him that man is elected. Election comes from God's sovereign will but is grounded in Christ because it is in Him that all the elect are chosen (Eph.1.4).(85)

Jesus Christ is the ground for both the assurance of our election and salvation. He is the only true way to life and to possess Him is to possess life itself. To look for the ground of election and salvation elsewhere is to go astray because God's love in its deepest expression is manifested in Christ who died for us on the cross to reconcile us to God. For this reason Calvin points us to Christ as the assurance

(84) Inst. 3:24:5.

(85) F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination
p41;cf. v Nielson, The theology of Calvin, p146

of our election because God's grace is in Him. "Seeing then that we are elected in Christ, we cannot find the assurance of our election in ourselves nor even in God the Father in so far as we see Him in Himself apart from the Son. Hence Christ is the mirror in which we must and certainly behold the fact of our election"(86)

Man's election and the assurance of his salvation are both in Christ. This means that election and perseverance of the elect go hand in hand. When we speak of one we are also speaking of the other, whether we may refer to the one or the other directly or not. This is so because all the elect will never lose the salvation that is promised to them. Francois Wendel says that whether Calvin speaks of union with Christ or the doctrine of immutability of God's will or of the Church, he always comes to the idea that the elect cannot lose salvation. The reason given for this is: that election includes the gift of perseverance(87)

Calvin emphasises that election itself embodies the certainty of salvation and that the elect will never lose their salvation no matter what happens to them. God who elects people in Christ also by His providence takes care of them in such a way that they will never perish. Those that fall away and never come back are not the elect. Calvin says that Paul's statement that nothing would separate the faithful from the love of God in Christ, emphasises the certainty of believers' salvation, and Paul's "boasting must be grounded upon the gift of perseverance"(88)

(86) W Nielson, op.cit. p163

(87) F Wendel, Calvin, p277

(88) Inst. 3:24:6

Man's call to faith in Christ, his justification and perseverance in faith are dependent on God's eternal election. Man is not able to say 'yes' to God's call by himself without the divine help, neither can he resist God's call indefinitely if he was elected. "In the face of God, man is in such a lost condition that he possesses neither the power to say 'yes' to the gospel which has been preached to him, nor to utter a defiant 'no' to it. The independence of man is crushed into the dust in the presence of the majesty of God."(89)

Election in Calvin's view of soteriology is not discussed separately from perseverance because it is only the elect that persevere in their faith to the end. Election puts man on a sure and firm foundation of his salvation because with it there comes effectual calling and the true faith that depends on God's grace for man's justification. It is impossible for those who really belong to the elect people of God to fall finally into perdition because their salvation is founded on a sure and strong ground that "even if the whole structure of the world tottered, that certainty itself could not dissolve."(90)

Believers persevere in their faith because they are elect and since this election is in Christ, their perseverance also is in Christ for it is He who keeps them from falling away. Calvin says it is Christ's prayer that keeps believers in constant godliness and gives them protection from the danger of falling away from their

(89) W Nielson, The Theology of Calvin, p167

(90) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p167

faith.(91) God's acceptance of Christ's prayer for Peter's faith to remain firm (Luke 22 : 32) is an indication that Christ's prayer for all the elect is the source of their firm faith.

Christ keeps safe all those that are given to Him by the Father and He makes sure that none of them is lost. So all those that remain firm in their faith do so because they are in the hands of Christ.(92) It is the will of God the Father that whatever is put in the custody of His Son is never lost. This shows that the beginning of the surety and protection of the elect is in God the Father.

c. Election and Reprobation.

Calvin's teaching on eternal election finds its expression in reprobation in that God who elects people to eternal life also rejects others. Both election and reprobation in Calvin's view take place by God's will.(93) Although Calvin says that election in itself implies reprobation it does not mean that he arrived at the latter as a logical deduction from the doctrine of the former, because it is his conviction that both doctrines came from the teaching of Scripture.(94)

Calvin by looking at election in its dual aspect, says that those who deny the gospel message when it is preached to them do so because they are predestined to

(91) Inst. 3:22:7

(92) Inst. 3:22:7

(93) F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, pp56 and 57

(94) F Klocster, op.cit. p55; cf. F Wendel, Calvin p280

destruction. Man left to himself does not have the ability of accepting or refusing the gospel message and for this reason Calvin attributes man's refusal of the gospel message to the divine will. It is a fact that the real cause of man's reaction to the gospel message is rooted in the divine will of God.(95)

The reprobate are not worse than the elect since both of them are worthy of condemnation. The elect therefore have no reason for boasting before the reprobate because election to eternal life and rejection to destruction are from God's good pleasure. In reference to the gospel message it is said, "The reason why some accept and others reject it is to be sought only in God, in a decision of his will which is incomprehensible to us and which we must not even seek to penetrate."(96)

Calvin does not base reprobation on man's sin or on God's foreknowledge that such and such men on certain times in their lives would sin and therefore be predestined for destruction. Things happen according to God's determination and bidding and Calvin makes this clear in his comment on Proverbs 16:4 that the decision of salvation or of death rests in God's power and that "Both life and death are acts of God's will more than of his foreknowledge."(97)

Calvin refrains as much as he can from accusing God for predestining people to damnation although he does not

(95) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p167

(96) F Wendell, Calvin, p281

(97) F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, pp61 and 62

understand why God does that. His only conclusion he makes from both election and reprobation is that they serve God's glory and righteousness. "The first man fell because God had judged that to be expedient. But of why he had so judged, we know nothing. Yet it is nevertheless certain that he had not done so had he not seen that this would redound to the glory of his name. But when mention is made of the glory of God, let us think also of his righteousness, for that which deserves praise must necessarily be equitable."(98)

So both salvation and reprobation are not dependent on man's actions, but on God's free election. Election inevitably comes out with reprobation and as the former is executed by God's will so also is the latter. Charles Partee in expressing Calvin's view on this point says that the gracious mercy of God in salvation and His righteous judgment in reprobation both flow from God's free election.(99) God does not owe man anything and is therefore free to show mercy to whomever He pleases. Mercy as well as justice is shown in God's decretive work which is the cause of both election and reprobation.

So reprobation, like election, takes place by the decree of God and is not caused by man's sin or God's foreknowledge of man's future evil deeds. The creation of men in different conditions counts for both eternal life for some and eternal damnation for others. God in His eternal decree has decided what He would do for each man and Calvin frequently returned to this teaching even in

(98) F Wendel, Calvin p281

(99) Charles Partee, Calvin and Classical Philosophy,
Leiden: E J Brill, 1977, p143

his sermons in order to show that election is absolutely gratuitous in its nature.(100)

Calvin's view of dual aspect of election was criticised by certain theologians of his time and this included even some of Calvin's friends and some fellow Reformers.(101) For this reason one notices in the 1559 edition of the Institutes Calvin's polemic defensive reactions in showing his opponents that reprobation, like election, finds its existence in God's will alone. He calls his critics ignorant and childish in accepting election but denying reprobation for "election itself could not stand except as set over against reprobation."(102)

God set apart those He adopts into salvation before the foundation of the world and no-one obtains election by chance or effort. God passes over some whom He condemns to exclude them from the inheritance prepared for the elect. The rejected go to perdition because of their own sin. Here sin becomes the proximate cause of reprobation while God's sovereign decree remains the ultimate cause.(103)

Although both election and reprobation come from the decretive work of God and are said to be equally ultimate, yet they are not parallel to each other in

(100) F Wendel, Calvin, p272; cf. F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p27

(101) F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p55; cf. F Wendel, Calvin, p269

(102) Inst. 3:23:1

(103) F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, pp71 and 72

every aspect. Reprobation has both ultimate and proximate causes while election has only the ultimate cause. Man is condemned for his own sin which is the proximate cause of his condemnation but no-one is elected for his own good works because man's election is only in Christ. Election is "gratuitous" while reprobation is "just."(104)

Calvin, by stating that some people are predestined to eternal death does not excuse the reprobate of their evil actions. The reprobate should not under any circumstances complain against God that they are being unjustly treated. God is not indebted to any one and since all men are vitiated by sin and are repulsive to God it is fair to condemn the sinner for his own fault. God does not inflict man with a tyrannical cruelty when he is condemned for his own sins.(105)

d. Distinction between the elect and the reprobate.

Calvin teaches that a person should count himself elect when he embraces Christ in faith as his Saviour. The acceptance of Christ as Lord and Saviour during the proclamation of the gospel should serve as a testimony on one's election. There is no need that a person should seek assurance of his election elsewhere when he firmly believes in Christ who is the mirror of man's election. When man receives the message of salvation through the gospel he is assured that God has elected him in Christ.(106)

(104) F Klooster, op.cit. pp27 and 75

(105) Inst. 3:23:3

(106) F Wendel, Calvin, p274

Calvin says that although sometimes there is a great similarity between the elect and the reprobate one should always treat oneself as the elect provided one calls upon God heartily as one's Father. God regenerates only the elect and takes care of them. Through the Holy Spirit He adopts them as His children and they recognise God as Father in a special way. Whatever God begins in the hearts of the elect will be finalised and the believers' invoking "God heartily as Father, is in full vigour only among the elect."(107)

Calvin does not say much about the reprobate as he does about the elect. No-one should treat the other a reprobate neither should regard oneself as one. Although we may see signs that show us who the reprobate are, the judgment of distinguishing them from the elect does not lie in our hands; it is the prerogative of God alone.(108) Man's judgment is prone to error and he cannot give a final right judgment on this matter. It is impossible for man to distinguish clearly the elect from the reprobate. What men should do is to regard as the elect all those that profess Christ, by their words and conduct, as their Lord and Saviour.

Calvin points people to the positive side of predestination rather than to the negative one. Although there may be sure signs through which people may judge and identify the reprobate, he is reluctant to place the judgment in the hands of men. This is so because people do not have the criterion with which to distinguish the

(107) F Wendel, op.cit. p283

(108) F Wendel, op.cit. p266; cf. F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p59

reprobate from the elect. "No sure means are at our disposal which would enable us to discern the reprobate. At the most, reprobation manifests itself by signs which may authorise us, in a certain measure, to assume the presence of that eternal decree of God. Even then, such an inference is possible only in the eyes of faith, and therefore is not within the power of the reprobate themselves."(109)

On practical point of view Calvin shows that eternal election does not encourage people to a reckless life, because one does not know whether he is elected or not. The fact that one lives an evil life does not necessarily mean that he is a reprobate because the judgment that is in the hands of God may possibly at the end of his life show that he belongs to the elect. Even the disciplinary action exercised within the church against those who seemingly hold views contrary to the sound teaching of the church, should not be taken as a judgment that they are reprobate. "We have to believe, in these cases, that the signs of reprobation present unchallengeable evidence; and in fact, the church must separate itself from these rotten members by excommunicating them. But even then, the disciplinary sentence of the church in no way forestalls the definite judgment of God."(110)

It is clear that Calvin here shows that as salvation belongs to God so too judgment of who the reprobate are, belongs to God alone, because His ways are not our ways and His judgment is beyond our human comprehension. "This

(109) F Wendel, Calvin, pp282 and 283

(110) F Wendel, op.cit. pp283 - 284; cf. F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p60

is no more than an application of the principle that the judgments of God are incomprehensible and unfathomable to us, and that it is therefore impossible, in spite of all the 'signs' that may be given, for us at the present time to distinguish the elect from the reprobate."(111)

As far as Calvin's view of eternal election is concerned the question of who are the elect is settled because whoever professes Christ as his personal Saviour by words and conduct and has joined himself to the church, which is the body of Christ should regard himself as belonging to the elect. But the question of who the reprobate are remains unanswered and we have to wait for the Day of Judgment for the answer. So salvation in its real sense is not complete until the resurrection of the body takes place and God's judgment of the living and the dead is completed.

5. ESCHATOLOGICAL NATURE OF MAN'S SALVATION.

a. Present salvation experienced only in the Holy Spirit

Salvation is not attained in this life if salvation means being with the Lord and being free from all temptations, sin and trouble, since there is no-one living that is free from them. Faith brings man in union with Christ through the Spirit by whose power he is sanctified but his union with Christ does not exempt him from both temptations and sin. Man's renewal takes place slowly and his fight against temptations and sin continues until death. "From this, at the same time, we conclude that in this life we are to seek and hope for nothing but

(111) F Wendel, op.cit. p284

struggle; when we think of our crown, we are to raise our eyes to heaven. For this we must believe : that the mind is never seriously aroused to desire and ponder the life to come unless it be previously imbued with contempt for the present life."(112)

Despite the miseries that may be experienced in this life, the divine benefits that are conferred upon believers serve as a token that God cares for His people as a Father. This care that God gives His people also serves as a testimony that there is an inheritance of eternal glory ahead of them. Through the work of the Holy Spirit believers begin in this life to taste the goodness of the Lord's gifts whose fulness is in the future. "Their meditation upon the future life makes them even now in some measure, partakers in the heavenly life by hope and faith."(113) The faithful are not barred from tasting the future life even now for faith works as a bridge through the Spirit between this life and that which is to come.

Calvin does not deny that people experience salvation in this life, but he does not accept the fulness of it because complete freedom from temptations and sin is an impossible reality. God's image in man that was disfigured by Adam's transgression is not fully restored in him and unless this takes place salvation remains a foretaste. Man's present salvation is only by hope which is enlivened by the Holy Spirit so that although the believer has not yet put aside the corruptible body, he is uplifted and aspire for the new life without doubting that he will attain it because Jesus Christ his Lord will

(112) Inst. 3:9:1

reveal it one day.(114)

The believer acquires salvation in his union with Christ through the Holy Spirit, but this salvation has both the present and the future dimension. Its present enjoyment is experienced by the believer through the Holy Spirit who at the same time works as a guarantee of its full revelation in the future.(115) "In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1 : 13 - 14).(116)

Calvin does not say that salvation is a present reality, at least in its comprehensive sense, for its present existence is just a foretaste of its future revelation. In the present life the Holy Spirit is the only access by which the believer now participates in it. Calvin views salvation as an eschatological reality that will be fully revealed by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Richard B Caffin Jr. does not only express Paul's view but also Calvin's when he says, "The gift of the Spirit, in which all believers share, is an essential aspect of salvation in Christ (cf. Acts 2 : 38; 11 : 18, where it is associated with repentance into life). It is an actual

(113) F Wendel, Calvin, p285; cf. Inst. 3:9:3

(114) F Wendel, op.cit., pp285 and 286

(115) Cf. J K Parrat, "The Witness of the Holy Spirit : Calvin, The Puritans and St Paul" in The Evangelical Quarterly, XL1(3,1969) p162; and Inst. 3:1:3

(116) Inst. 3:2:12 (Quotation mine from RSV)

foretaste of the eternal life of the future. It is an eschatological gift", and Paul expresses this foretaste of the future life in two well-known figures of speech to emphasise his point. He refers to the Spirit at work in all believers as the "first fruits" in the process of renewal to be completed in the resurrection of the body at the second coming of Christ (Rom. 8 : 23). He also speaks of the Spirit as the "guarantee", or "first installment" of what is to be fully received when Christ returns (2 Cor. 1 : 22; 5 : 5; Eph. 1 : 13,14).(117)

Even at death salvation is not complete for Calvin, since death only brings an end to man's sufferings, temptations and sin, and his union with Christ is partial for it is still spiritual although perhaps in a higher degree than before death. Death brings one to be with Christ but what is with Christ is the soul of the dead that retains its essence and is not the whole man as such. "And if souls when divested of their bodies did not still retain their essence, and have capacity of blessed glory, Christ would not have said to the thief : 'Today you will be with me in paradise' (Luke 23 : 43). Relying on such clear testimonies, in dying let us not hesitate, after Christ's examples, to entrust our souls to God (Luke 23 : 46) or, after Stephen's example, to commit them into Christ's keeping (Acts 7 : 58), who is called with good reason their faithful 'Shepherd and Bishop' (1 Peter 2 : 25)." (118)

(117) Richard B Gaffin, "The Holy Spirit", Westminster Theological Journal, 43 (1980), p74

(118) Inst. 3:25:6

Man does not reach his final destiny at death. The believer is with Christ in paradise and the reprobate suffers torments when dead but this state of affairs is not final, for being with the Lord and in torments without the body is not complete. The future dimension of salvation is for the whole man after God's image in him is fully restored. "Scripture goes no farther than to say that Christ is present with them, and receives them into paradise (cf. John 12 : 32) that they may obtain consolation, while the souls of the reprobate suffer such torments as they deserve."(119)

The reunion of body and soul is necessary for man in order that he may enjoy the presence of the Lord fully and this reunion requires the resurrection of the body. Calvin says that it is the same body reunited with its soul that will rise. The fact that the body may be involved in unclean activities in this life, does not mean that it is unfit for resurrection. And it would be absurd that God could dedicate bodies as His temples and then deny them of resurrection.(120)

Calvin bases his view of the bodily resurrection of the dead on Holy Scripture where he finds twofold aid for faith in resurrection - the resurrection of Christ and the infinite power of God. Although it is difficult from a human point of view to believe in the bodily resurrection because after death bodies decompose, Calvin's dependence on the witness of Scripture for Christ's resurrection is so strong that he remains unshaken and he takes it as an assurance of the later

(119) Inst. 3:25:6

(120) Inst. 3:25:7

resurrection of all people. "In the nature which he took from us he so completed the course of mortal life that now, having obtained immortality, he is the pledge of our coming resurrection. For in the miseries that beset us (cf. 2 Cor. 4 : 8 - 9) , 'we carry in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may ... be manifested in us' (2 Cor. 4 : 10). And to separate him from ourselves is not permissible and not even possible, without tearing him apart."(121)

Christ's resurrection in the same body He assumed from man confirms for Calvin the resurrection of the rest of the people in the same bodies, with the exception that they will change in quality, but will never be replaced by new different ones. Scripture does not say more than that man will rise with the same flesh that now he bears. Paul says that the present perishable nature will put on immortality (1 Cor. 15 : 53). This shows clearly that God will not form new bodies because of the change that will take place in the present body. Christ's reference to the present bodies that encompass us and His promising them incorruption is an indication that new bodies are not meant in Paul's statement.(122)

Christ's bodily resurrection is irrefutable since there was enough evidence of its having taken place, because at the time of its occurrence, it had been so adequately proved that the disciples' opponents remained silent. His appearance to His disciples at a number of occasions and at a certain time to more than five hundred people (1 Cor. 15 : 6) makes these evidences for Calvin

(121) Inst. 3:25:3

(122) Inst. 3:25:7

authentic to be believed by all except those who are both obstinate and insane. "The tomb is sealed, watch men guard it (Mat. 27 : 66), but on the third day the body is not found (cf. Luke 24 : 3; Mat. 28 : 12 - 13,18;27 : 24) Bribed soldiers spread the rumour that he has been stolen away by his disciples (Mat. 28 : 12 - 13,15). As if they were capable of overpowering a troop, or were supplied with weapons, or even had sufficient experience to dare to commit such a deed! But if the soldiers had not enough courage to drive them away, why did they not pursue them, that, with the people's help, they might catch some of them?"(123)

God's power is so great that we should not doubt the possibility of the bodily resurrection of the dead. What is required of us is to direct our minds to the infinite power of God, believe in the resurrection of the dead and honour Him as God who is able to do miraculous things. It should be remembered that no-one truly believes in the coming resurrection of the dead except the one who is gripped with awe, and ascribe to God His due power and glory.(124)

(123) Inst. 3:25:3

(124) Inst. 3:25:4

b. Salvation as a future reality.

Resurrection of the dead is important because it comes with the transformation of the present lowly and inglorious bodies of the believers to enable them to have fellowship with the resurrected Christ. The reality of the future salvation demands the renewal of the whole man because it is impossible to have fellowship with the resurrected Christ in the new life without the transformation of the present body. Christ rose from the dead to be a companion with the believers in the life to come and as He is head of the church "the Father in no way allows him to be severed. He was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Quickener of us in common with him. Finally, he was raised that he might be the 'resurrection and the life' (John 11 : 25)."(125)

Redemption, for Calvin, is just begun in this life. Its final completion will be realised in the second coming of Christ when sin and death will be completely destroyed. "To prick us more sharply, Paul calls the final coming of Christ 'our redemption' (cf. Rom. 8 : 23). It is true indeed that all the facts of our resurrection have already been completed; but because Christ was once for all offered for sins (Heb. 10 : 2), 'he shall appear a second time, apart from sin unto salvation' (Heb. 9 : 28). Whatever hardship distress us, let this 'redemption' sustain us until its completion."(126)

(125) Inst. 3:25:3

(126) Inst. 3:25:2

For Calvin the bodily resurrection of the dead is the most serious matter of all and is the crown of salvation planned to show the end of Christ's redemptive work. This is so because its reality is hidden from us now to be revealed in the future after resurrection which seems as the bridge to pass on into eternal bliss. He wants his readers to learn that when they have received Christ, the Author of perfect salvation, they should rise higher and know that He is clothed in the heavenly immortality and glory and that they may all be conformed to Him.(127) The Holy Spirit often shows the resurrection of Christ as the example of the people's future resurrection.

Calvin does not spiritualise salvation although it is through the Spirit that it is foretasted. His demand for the reunion of body and soul in resurrection should be understood as his pressing for the realisation of salvation for the whole man. His denial of perfection in this life and at death and that it is granted to the faithful only after judgment, means that Calvin understands the reality of salvation as eschatological. "Death certainly frees us from sinful flesh. It signifies an important episode. After death we are released from struggle. Yet perfection is only granted to the faithful at the Last Judgment. After their bodily death they wait and watch for the return of their Lord who will consummate their communion with Himself and thus will bestow upon them the perfect life of heaven. Both the beginning and the ending of the new life are at His disposal."(128)

(127) F Wendel, Calvin, p284; cf. Inst. 3:25:3

(128) W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, pp129 and 130

The being with Christ of the souls of the elect does not mean the full enjoyment of the glory of eternal life promised to the God's elect. Calvin's soteriology is complete only with the second coming of Christ when there will be the resurrection of the body and the judgment of the living and the dead. Only after judgment is full enjoyment of the promised glory granted to the elect, and the full punishment of the reprobate is given.

The souls of the elect are gathered into rest when the time of struggle and suffering in this life is over. They await with joy the Lord's promised glory, but all things are kept in suspense until Christ returns. The rest Calvin refers to is not a sleep but a conscious one in which the elect share in the Kingdom of God, but they will enter the final glory only after the resurrection and the judgment have taken place. The reprobate suffer punishment the fulness of which will be given after the resurrection.(129)

The intermediate state is regarded as a time of awaiting the full revelation of eternal glory for the elect and torments for the reprobate, but one which enables each group to foresee what is coming. Calvin is reluctant to speculate about the fate that awaits both the elect and the reprobate and he regards the scriptural description of the joys and torments as figures of speech trying to explain something incomprehensible. "Concerning the fate that awaits the elect and the reprobate after judgment, Calvin observes great discretion and is very careful not to go beyond the Scriptural indications."(130)

(129) F Wendel, Calvin, p287

(130) F Wendel, *op.cit.* p289, cf. Inst. 3:25:10

However, Calvin in his sermon on Daniel 12 : 2 - 4 does not hesitate to say that God will bestow His gifts upon the elect differently, some will have more glory than the others, but the degrees of glory will not be conditioned by human merits. All the elect will be granted eternal life but there is a special reward for each which will vary from person to person. "God will make one walk before and another walk behind, but we see that the one will be gifted with a greater excellence than the other, we shall see in one of them a greater perfection and saintliness of life than in the other : just as God works in this world in his faithful, so will he glorify them at the last day : that is why it is said, in particular of those who will have shown the way to others, that they will have a special glory."(131)

In reference to the reprobate Calvin does not say that some will be subjected to more severe torment than others or that they will all receive the same amount of torment regardless of whether one commits more sins or not; he just states that the reprobate will be tormented and remains silent where Scripture is silent.

(131) F Wendel, op.cit. p289

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II : SOTERIOLOGY IN KARL BARTH'S VIEW

In an attempt to analyse the basic features of a Reformed soteriology I will now focus on the views of Karl Barth. It will be necessary to deal with more or less the same issues as was the case in my description of Calvin's position.

1. THE ROLE OF FAITH IN SALVATION

Karl Barth calls faith " the basis of the Christian existence of the individual,"(1) because without it, it is impossible for someone to become a Christian. So right from the beginning of a Christian life Barth sees the importance of faith in the salvation of man. But this faith which Barth speaks about does not exist in isolation, but in a relationship to its object. We can see that faith does not realise anything new, but it points to something which is there for both the believer and the unbeliever.

A Christian is distinguished from others in the community in that he has faith in Jesus Christ and in this way he brings himself to the knowledge of his salvation. Through this faith he depends upon Christ, his Lord, for his life and he is not in control of himself and of his situation. "In faith man ceases to be in control. He can be this only when he is not orientated on Jesus Christ, at any rate decisively, at

(1) Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/I, tr. G W Bromiley, Edinburgh : T and T Clark, 1956 p740

the very center of his being, with what the Bible calls 'his heart.'"(2)

Christian faith prevents man from fixing his heart on other things or on persons for his salvation, no matter how important they may be, not even on the dearest and on the most indispensable ones. His whole mind is fixed on Jesus Christ and that for his existence he must cling to Him and depend on Him. He realises that he does not belong to himself but to his Lord and Saviour. "It means that he has found in Him the true centre of himself which is outside himself. It means that he must now cling to Him, and depend on Him, that he finds that he belongs to Him."(3)

Jesus Christ helps man by making him free to believe for he does not have the freedom unless the Son of God makes him free. The Christian, like all other men, is a sinner and is unable on his own to believe in Jesus Christ. Sin has made him a slave and has blinded him in such a way that he does not recognise his Saviour. "He may make the laborious and profoundly dishonest attempt to regard as true something which he cannot regard as true because it is too high for him. He may even make the further and still more painful effort to persuade himself that this convulsive acceptance is redemptive. But a self-fabricated faith is the climax of unbelief."(4)

Man by forcing himself to believe something as true, moves himself away from it because faith is not a matter

(2) C D IV/1, p743

(3) C D IV/1, p744

(4) C D IV/1, p745

of proposing and doing something for oneself. Christian faith is of such a nature that man by his own reason and strength cannot believe or recognise his saviour. Faith is neither a ground nor an alternative to works. It is not a matter of choice or a means of self-destruction. It rejects all works because it is like an empty hand, a vacuum. Everything is complete in Christ and man only receives.(5)

Barth says that man does not decide for himself whether to believe or not believe.(6) The necessity of faith is not found in man or in his nature, neither in faith himself. It is found in Christ who works on man, and who is the basis of man's faith.(7) Sin, the sinner and unbelief are rejected, destroyed and put aside through Jesus Christ and man becomes a new man of obedience. The destroying and renewing of man takes place in Jesus Christ through whom consists the necessity for faith.

Barth describes faith as a gift which awakens man from unbelief to faith and in this awakening he discovers his weakness and he begins to see things in their true colours. Only in Jesus Christ does man, through faith, discover the reality and truth of things. Now he knows that there is peace between him and God through the death and resurrection of Jesus and that truth and salvation is available to everyone who believes.

(5) G W Bromiley, "The Doctrine of the Atonement: A survey of Barth's Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/1" in: Scottish Journal of Theology 8,1955 p184.

(6) C D IV/1,p746

(7) C D IV/1,p74

In reference to Holy Scripture, Barth elaborates the basis and origin of the Christian existence and emphasises that the Christian comes into being through the work of Christ and that he is His creation. A Christian does not just come into existence by chance, but he is made such by Christ. In stressing this point Barth refers to king Agrippa's statement, "And Agrippa said to Paul, 'In a short time you think to make me a Christian.'"(8) To make one a Christian is to make him believe that Jesus Christ is his Lord and Saviour. The Christian experience involves faith from first to last and this faith comes from Scripture which through preaching shows God's will, purpose and love. The divine promises which are mediated through Scripture in which Christ speaks, are regarded by Barth as the foundation of faith and what is said by Christ does not need witness apart from the Holy Spirit and faith.(9)

Barth says that faith as a human action consists in acknowledgement, recognition and confession of what is there and it does not have a creative character. It only attests what is already there and it does not change anything. "As a human act it is simply the confirmation of a change which has already taken place, the change in the whole human situation which took place in the death of Jesus Christ and was revealed in His resurrection and attested by the Christian community."(10)

(8) Acts 26 : 28 (RSV); cf. Karl Barth, C D IV/I, p749

(9) Timothy Corrigan, "In defence of the Identification: Scripture as Word of God." in: Scottish Journal of Theology, 33 (1979), p305

(10) C D IV/1 p751

Barth does not deny the creative character of faith completely but he denies it only in regard to it as a human act. In view of how men believe and become Christians in the midst of all other men, he detects in faith a certain creative character.(11) However, he does not regard it as a man's own making, but he attributes it to Jesus Christ.

Faith does not dissolve the individual characteristics of man. He remains an individual person despite what he has in common with the Christian community. While still a sinful and proud man, Jesus is his Mediator, Saviour and Lord. He recognises that Jesus dies for him and for his sin and that in his place He was raised from the dead. As he acknowledges Christ as his Saviour, he recognises that his sin has been overcome in Him and his new life has begun in Him. He recognises that whatever has happened to Jesus is for his good.

Faith through its creative act makes a sinful man aware of his needs and he acknowledges, recognises and confesses that Jesus Christ is for him. When a man has reached this stage he is at the point of new birth. "The first thing is that Jesus Christ is, in fact, just for me, that I myself am just the subject for whom He is. That is the point. That is the newness of being, the new creation, the new birth of the Christian." (12)

Through the individuals the Christian community acknowledges, recognises and confesses Christ as Saviour. Even when the Christian community gathers, its

(11) C D IV/1 p753

(12) C D IV/1 p755

confession of faith is never spoken in plural but is always spoken in singular. An individual believer represents the Christian community in his confession of faith and whatever God does for man he takes it as done for him by acknowledging it through faith.(13)

Barth takes faith as a most inward, central and decisive act of a believer's heart. It is an act which marks a believer out as a Christian. If a man does things in faith then he is a Christian for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.(14)

Faith involves an active acknowledgement whereby recognition and confession of Jesus Christ are included. In this active acknowledgement the believers obey the biblical proclamation of Christ as the Lord who cannot be replaced by anyone else. Although it is man who acknowledges Christ, faith which enables him to do so remains the gift from Christ Himself. Faith comes by hearing and hearing brings an initial knowledge of what is proclaimed by the Christian community. There cannot be an initial faith without knowledge. Barth agrees with Calvin who says, "Faith rests not on ignorance, but on knowledge. And this is, indeed, knowledge not only of God but of the divine will."(15)

The fact that the recognition of faith is an active knowledge of Jesus Christ results in the believer's

(13) C D IV/1 p756

(14) C D IV/1 p758; cf. Romans 14 : 23

(15) Inst. 3:2:2; cf. Timothy Gorringe, "In defence of the Identification: Scripture as Word of God", Scottish Journal of Theology, vol 32, 1979 p305

change of understanding of his existence and of his attitude to himself and to the world. "..... he has to model himself in conformity with the One in whom he believes that he can and will be man only in the likeness of Jesus Christ as the One who died and rose again for him."(16) The believer cannot remain unchanged in his views of himself and of the world around him after the recognition of faith grasps him, because in this event there takes place in him an inward mortification and verification.(17)

In the recognition aspect of faith the believer recognises what Christ has done for him. He discovers that himself, the man, is overcome in Christ. His proud thoughts, words and works, as they flow from the proud heart, are destroyed. The believer recognises that that is what Christ has done for him in His death and resurrection, but he does not regard himself as perfect. He sees himself as still a sinner who owes his life to Christ.(18) .

The other thing that the believer discovers in recognition is that a restoration of his being has taken place in Christ. Man denied and forfeited his right outside Christ but now in faith he sees himself restored. The believer is now obedient and righteous before God. Here Barth cautions the reader not to misunderstand him. The restoration of the believer has taken place in Christ and not in the believer himself

(16) C D IV/1 p769

(17) C D IV/1, p769

(18) C D IV/1, p770

and for this reason boasting is ruled out.(19)

It should be noted here that Barth emphasises the objective type of faith and what is important for him is what Christ has done for all the people in His death and resurrection. Man's faith in Christ as a means of appropriating salvation is of less significance and a preacher's work is to let people know that salvation is now available to all people and is not restricted to a few. The significance of the subjective decision of faith in men's salvation is almost absent in Barth's soteriology.(20)

The believer should demonstrate what has happened for him in Christ. He should be at peace with God, with himself and with others. He should feel and recognise himself as a reconciled man and he should relate what has happened for him in Christ to the community and to the world. In this event of faith man experiences, what Barth calls, "...little renovations and provisional sanctifications and reassurances..."(21) He clings to Christ in whom he knows that his pride and fall is overcome and this restoration of his right and life has taken place.

Barth "does justice to the objective reality and efficacy of Christ's work of atonement" but he seems to over do it and gives less attention to the decisive role

(19) C D IV/1, p773

(20) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, London: Paternoster Press, 1956, p264

21) C D IV/1, p775

of faith in soteriology. Man is not involved in his own salvation but he remains idle because the work of salvation takes place outside him. In this way Barth neglects the relationship between faith and salvation which was vigorously upheld by the Reformers.(22)

A man's zeal to witness for Christ to the community is aroused by the recognition that Christ has achieved salvation for him on the cross. He cannot remain silent but he has to stand for his faith for the One in whom he believes. He should show his faith and confess Christ publicly. "Confessing as the act of faith in Jesus Christ means 'to confess Him before men'(Matt.10:32), not to conceal the fact that we belong to Him, and the involved alteration of our attitude which would be to deny Him, since both negatively and positively it is a matter of the attitude of the whole man, to be that altered man who belongs to Him in our whole being and therefore outwardly as well"(23). He confesses Christ not from his own will but from the compulsion of the nature of his faith he has received from Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Confession of what Christ has done for man in His death and resurrection is part of the Christian faith which will always manifest itself in a believer. Although the confession proceeds from the believer's deeds, the power to stimulate it is from the object and origin of his faith. Wherever he is, he reflects the work and the life

(22) Donald Bloesch, "Soteriology in Contemporary Christian Thought" in :Interpretation (35) 1981
p134

(23) C D IV/1, p777

of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Because he is a little light reflecting the Great Light, without especially willing to do so, and without in any way helping to do so."(24)

Although it is true that Jesus Christ is the object and the origin of faith, we cannot deny that it is brought in man through the Word and the operation of the Holy Spirit. So in the next section I shall deal with what Barth says is the role of the Word and Spirit in soteriology.

2. THE FUNCTION OF WORD AND SPIRIT IN MAN'S SALVATION

Although Barth frequently equated the term 'Word of God' with Jesus Christ,(25) this term in this section refers only to Holy Scripture.

My main concern here is the view of Barth in regard to the function of Scripture and the Holy Spirit in the redemption of man. It will become clear that Barth as a reformed theologian stresses the unity of Scripture and the Spirit in his soteriology.

a) Word and Spirit in Holy Scripture

Scripture by itself as it is read or preached is not the Word of God; it is the word of man. As the word of man

(24) C D IV/1. p778

(25) Timothy Gorringer, "In the defence of the identification: Scripture as Word of God" in : Scottish Journal of Theology, 32 (1977), p304.

therefore, it is not different from what we read in other books. Scripture is the Word of God only in union with the Spirit. When the Spirit is involved in reading or preaching from Scripture, there and only there is Scripture the Word of God.(26)

The status of the Bible as the Word of God apart from the Holy Spirit is denied by Barth, because he cannot imagine the Word of God being separated from His Spirit. He understands 2 Corinthians 3 : 6 to mean that Scripture that is read without the aid of the Holy Spirit kills and is of no help to anyone. In the reference to this text he says, "This is said in favour of the Spirit but not against Scripture, or only against a Scripture received and read without the Spirit"(27)

Barth says that for the hearers and readers of Scripture to understand the Word of God, it is required that the same Spirit that used the prophets and apostles in the writing of Scripture should help them. He refers to Martin Luther who insisted that the word of Scripture given by the Spirit can be recognised as the Word of God only if the same Spirit takes place in Scripture again so that it becomes an event for the hearers or readers.(28) He says that this should be so because God can be recognised only by God Himself and without the help of the Spirit man cannot understand Scripture as the Word of God.

(26) Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics 1/2, 2nd edition,
Tr. Thomas and Knight, Edinburgh: T and T Clark
1960, p514

(27) C D I/2 p514

(28) C D I/2 p521

Scripture does not work independently from the Holy Spirit. This is so because by the power of the latter the former came into being and is able to mediate Christ to man. " The witness of the Holy Scripture is therefore the witness of the Holy Spirit. He is indeed the power of the matter of Holy Scripture; by Him and only by Him it speaks as such. In doing so it mediates revelation; it presents Jesus Christ; in the servant form of a human word it speaks the Word of God."(29)

Although Barth frequently equates the term Word of God with Jesus Christ, he does not mean that Scripture becomes Christ even where he explicitly says that it becomes the Word of God. His "doctrine of Scripture is a function of his doctrine of God's being in becoming."(30) Scripture becomes the Word of God for the reader because God reveals Himself in it. However, Christ speaks in and through Scripture by means of the Holy Spirit and apart from the latter He does not need any other witness.

Christ is the Saviour, and unless this Saviour is mediated to man in Scripture through faith by the Holy Spirit, man has no hope of salvation. He cannot come to Christ on his own, but God should draw him through Scripture. However, Barth does not say that there is power inherent in Scripture, because it is the Word of God efficacious for man's salvation only when the Spirit is involved.

(29) C D I/2 p538

(30) Timothy Gorringe, "In defence of the Identification :Scripture as Word of God" in: Scottish Journal of Theolog: 32 (1979) p305

Scripture, according to Barth, is not always the Word of God that has power to bring Christ to man, because the Holy Spirit is not always present and operative when it is read or preached or used. Scripture is the Word of God only when the Spirit is at work in it.(31)

b. Word and Spirit in the preacher.

Despite human failures and weaknesses, man is used by God through preaching to bring men to Christ for salvation. The power is neither in man nor in Scripture but it is from God who uses it at His own choosing. "In and through the preached Word God speaks - but only in an event of God's choosing does the proclamation become real proclamation."(32)

The proclamation has a function in bring'ng man to Christ because in it the Saviour is mediated to man and the Lordship of the triune God is brought before us. However, neither the Church nor its members are able to grasp the Bible and use it for man's benefit. The Holy Spirit is constantly required in order that the preacher may manage to bring Christ to his listeners in preaching. The Church and its members depend on the Holy Spirit that the Bible may be the Word of God when it is used in proclamation.(33)

(31) Robert D Preus, "The Word of God in the Theology of Karl Barth" in: Concordia Theological Monthly, 1960, p112

(32) Robert D Preus, op.cit. p115

(33) Klaas Runia, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture, W B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI 1962, p134

The Church has no power over the work of the Holy Spirit and the preacher has no control over Scripture and he cannot use it in the way he likes neither can he boast of the result of what Scripture achieves. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2 : 8 - 9). Klaas Runia maintains that Barth has fully understood the message of Scripture when he says that God has full control of the Word. If God has full control of the Word, who converts man in the proclamation? Is it not the preacher or the person that reads the Word aloud to people? Barth says, No! It is God Himself through the Holy Spirit that converts man in the preaching of the Word. The Church lives by the Bible because in it Christ is revealed and is mediated to the people through the work of the Holy Spirit.(34)

c. Word and Spirit in the reader or listener

Barth does not regard the Bible as the Word of God unless it inspires the reader. It is in the inspiration that the Bible becomes the Word of God and as such it ceases to be like any other book. The reader or listener does not make Scripture become the Word of God. He looks up to God to help him through the Spirit to hear God's Word in it. "No, we can only come to the texts with a praying heart realizing that to hear His voice is not in our power, but has to be given to us by Him, in His free grace."(35)

When, where and how to hear God's Word in Scripture does

(34) C D I/2 p513

(35) Klaas Runia, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture, p121

not depend on one's ability nor on one's education, but on God Himself. According to Barth the reader or listener cannot decide when to hear the Word of God in Scripture because he has no power to do so. Although he may read Scripture he cannot hear the Word until God decides that the reader should hear it and He does this by the Holy Spirit who confirms and renews in the reader the inspiring event experienced by the authors of Scripture. (36)

In all respects Barth does not attribute any competence to the reader or listener in the grasping of the Word of God. God in His Spirit encounters man in Scripture thus leaving the initiative of man's salvation in the hands of God. "That the Word of God is not under our control or foresight is proved by the fact that its content - and not only its content, but its reality as such - is the grace of God, which we have not deserved, the occurrence of which we cannot claim or bring about, which we can only accept because God is pleased to be gracious to us." (37)

The Spirit has a threefold work in its relation to Scripture in the salvation of man. His power covers Scripture, the preacher and the listener or the reader. He does not only aid the preacher but the listener or reader as well. The listener accepts what is preached as the Word of God only when he is illumined by the Holy Spirit.

There are similarities between Barth and Calvin in their

(36) Karl Barth C D I/2 pp530 - 531

(37) Op.cit. C D I/2 p528

views concerning the relationship of the Word and Spirit in man's salvation. Barth agrees with Calvin that man can obtain nothing by the hearing of the Word alone without the grace of the Spirit.(38) The Spirit is important for both theologians for the Word to convict man of his sin and to point him to Christ.

Both Calvin and Barth say that from the beginning to the end the Word and the Holy Spirit work together in the conversion of man. Runia, in appreciation of Barth's treatment of the relation of Word and Spirit, says, "We particularly appreciate his emphasis on the permanent need of the operation of the Holy Spirit for reading and recognising, believing and obeying the Bible as the Word of God."(39)

Unlike Barth, Calvin takes Scripture as such as the Word of God while the former treats it as the Word of God at certain given times, "For any given saga in the Bible will only contain the Word of God when and where God wills it to do so. God's presence in His Word cannot be pinned down or restricted by anything, least of all by man's verification or falsification procedures. For : 'Revelation is nothing but the freedom of God's grace.'"(40)

(38) Klaas Runia, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture, p140

(39) Klaas Runia, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture, p141

(40) J C Thomas, "Faith and History: A Critique of Recent Dogmatics" Religious Studies 18, (1982), p330.

Calvin insists that Scripture and the Holy Spirit are bound together and that they always work together. He opposes the appeal to Scripture apart from the Holy Spirit and vice versa. In this way he avoids both the unfavourable literalism and the unwanted fanaticism which would result from the appeal to either

Scripture or Spirit respectively.(41) When Scripture does not affect man, Calvin does not stop to call it the Word of God because of that, as does Barth. However, on the unity of Scripture and the Holy Spirit the two are in agreement because both of them say that no one will recognise one's sinfulness without Scripture and the Holy Spirit working together.

3. JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

Justification is one aspect of reconciliation in the theology of Barth and one should not mistake the former for the latter because they are not identical. But justification which is a vital part of reconciliation in Barth embodies sanctification as we shall see later. "Justification in reconciliation and reconciliation in justification- and yet reconciliation is not simply identical with justification. Barth regards the all-encompassing event, which includes justification too, as reconciliation - the central work of God, standing between creation and consummation. Justification is only one aspect, if a vital one, of reconciliation.(42)

Barth's view of justification is not totally like that of the Reformers, not in the sense that he is against the forensic view, but in that he possibly takes it more seriously than the Reformers. "There is no room for any fears that in the justification of man we are dealing only with a verbal action, with a kind of bracketed 'as

(41) Charles Partee, Calvin and Classical Philology

Leiden: E J Brill, 1977, p14

(42) Hans Kung, Justification, London: Burns and Oats,

1964,p24

if' as though what is pronounced were not the whole truth about man. Certainly we have to do with a declaring righteous, but it is a declaration about man which is fulfilled and therefore effective in this event, which corresponds to actuality because it creates and therefore reveals the actuality. It is declaring righteous which without any reserve can be called a making righteous"(43).

Barth takes justification and sanctification inclusive as achieved objectively by Christ in His death and resurrection. And this justification is for all people, and not only for a selected few. "There is not one for whose sin and death He did not die, whose sin and death He did not remove and obliterate on the cross, for whom He did not positively do the right, whose right He has not established. There is not one to whom this was not addressed as His justification in His resurrection from the dead. There is not one whose man He is not, who is not justified in Him"(44)

This justification is appropriated by faith and thus man has to believe what Christ has done for him. However this believing should not be regarded as an act of man by which he is justified, because even in that act of faith he is still a sinner. Man's every attempt to justify himself only makes him more deeply entangled in sin. Only through God's work is man justified.

In this respect we have to note that there are two

(43) Karl Barth, C D IV/1, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, Tr. G W Bromiley, 1956, p95

(44) C D IV/1, p630

aspects in sanctification namely the objective aspect as well as the subjective one. This means that our sanctification is objectively that of Christ. It is He who is the Holy One of God and we become holy in our participation in Him. This means that with His sanctification we are sanctified and what remains for us to do is just to recognise and respect this sanctification with gratitude.(45)

But this sanctification, like justification, though objectively achieved for us by Christ, has to be accepted by man and be taken as his by faith. Faith however, does not sanctify us because in itself it is not redemptive and therefore we should not glory in it. "Faith in itself is not the redemptive act of God but the awakening to the significance of this act. It is also obedience in the light of this act. Faith is a gift of grace in that man on his own cannot believe or assent to the truth of the biblical revelation."(46)

Since faith is obedience in humility, the believer will have to live to that standard required by his sanctification not to get it but because it is already his in Christ. And a man who is being sanctified will by all means manifest this sanctification by works of love because faith by which he acquires it would lose its strength if it had no works. "And faith itself would not be faith if it did not work by love, if it were not as

(45) C D IV/1, p616

(46) Donald G Bloesch, Jesus Is Victor!, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation; Nashville, Tennessee :Abingdon, 1976 p35

Luther put it, 'a living, active, busy thing!'"(47)

Having explained what justification and sanctification is for Barth, let me say what he thinks their relation to reconciliation is, because they are one aspect of it. After that I shall explain their relation to each other and lastly I shall show their relation to faith, because both justification and sanctification are appropriated by man as his through faith in Jesus Christ. In all Barth's theology of salvation Jesus Christ is the centre.

a. Justification (and Sanctification) in relationship to Reconciliation.

Since justification is the fulfilment of the covenant, reconciliation too is such in general for man will never be reconciled to God without being pronounced not guilty, without being justified. Justification is required for reconciliation. "The justification required for reconciliation is a reaction against sin, a 'nevertheless'. But this does not alter the fact that the justification involved in reconciliation is a fulfilling of the covenant."(48)

From the reading of 2 Corinthians 5 : 18 - 19 (RSV) which says "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of

(47) Karl Barth, C D IV/2 p627

(48) Hans Kung, Justification, p23

reconciliation," the relationship between justification and reconciliation comes out clearly, although the stress is on reconciliation, the phrase "not counting their trespasses against them" refers to their being justified. However, this is not their identification but their unity in man's salvation.(49) Justification and reconciliation are included in each other yet they are not the same. However, they are both the central work of God standing between creation and consummation. Justification is a vital aspect of reconciliation in the doctrine of salvation.(50)

The relationship of justification and reconciliation in Barth is seen in the way in which God saves the sinful man. The judgment and death which God imposed on Christ and Christ's resurrection from the dead involve God's way of both justifying and reconciling man to God Himself. "Reconciliation in its first phase is found in God's judgment upon the sinner. This judgment is achieved in the death of Jesus on the cross, and the verdict of this judgment is revealed in the resurrection of Christ. This is the process by which man is justified."(51)

The relationship of justification to reconciliation automatically involves that of sanctification too because sanctification and justification work together inseparably. They are one divine act having two quite distinct aspects. Reconciliation is achieved by God through Jesus Christ who conquers sin in man whose

(49) Karl Barth, IV/I, pp70 - 78

(50) Hans Kung, Justification, p24

(51) Op.cit., p33

pride is opposed by God's judgment. At the same time man's inactivity is opposed by God's discipline. All this involves both justification and sanctification. "To counter sin there comes the achievement of reconciliation in Jesus Christ : The pride of man is countered by God's verdict. This happens in man's justification. The indolence of man is countered by God's discipline. This happens in man's sanctification."(52)

Barth treats justification, which simultaneously takes place together with sanctification, within the concept of reconciliation as is seen in Church Dogmatics IV/I and IV/2, because christology and soteriology should not be separated. "On the one side, then, our task is so to present the doctrine of reconciliation that it is always clear that it has to do wholly and utterly with Jesus Christ, that He is the active subject (and not simply a means or predicate of its happening). This means that we have to develop and present the doctrine of reconciliation in the light of definite christological perceptions and prepositions, focussing attention upon Jesus Christ as the beginning and the middle and the end."(53)

b. Relationship between Justification and Sanctification

I have shown that Barth treats justification and sanctification within the concept of reconciliation for the sake of keeping unity between christology and soteriology. And since this unity must be maintained throughout man's salvation, justification and sanctification are also treated as one divine act because they are both achieved in Jesus

(52) Op.cit., p26

(53) Karl Barth, c.IV/1, p125

Christ simultaneously. "The action of God in His reconciliation of the world with Himself in Jesus Christ is unitary. It consists of different 'moments' with a different bearing. It accomplishes both the justification and sanctification of man, for it is itself both the condescension of God and the exaltation of man in Jesus Christ. But it accomplishes the two together. The one is done wholly and immediately with the other.(54)

Barth bases the unity of justification and sanctification in Christ's atonement which involves the humiliation of God on the one hand and the exaltation of man on the other. It is in reference to this that he says, "It does not consist, therefore, only in the justification of man. It consists also in the sanctification which is indissolubly bound up with his justification, i.e. in the fact that as He turns to man in defiance of his sin He also, in defiance of his sin, turns man to Himself."(55)

Justification and sanctification have to deal with the new relationship between God and man that takes place through Jesus Christ. Apart from Him there is no reconciliation and hence no justification and sanctification. "The reconciliation of man with God takes place also in the form that He introduces as a new man the one in relation to whom He has set Himself in the right and whom He has set in the right in relation to Himself. He has introduced him in the new form of existence of a faithful covenant-partner who is

(54) Hans Kung, Justification, p70

(55) Karl Barth, C D IV/2, p499

well-pleasing to Him and blessed by Him. 'I will be your God' is the justification of man. 'Ye shall be my people' is his sanctification."(56)

The way Barth explains the meaning of sanctification as to be described by the terms of regeneration, or renewal, or conversion, or penitence, shows that he is in agreement with Calvin on its meaning.(57) He says that it was Calvin who explained with particular clarity the unity and relationship between justification and sanctification and this expression shows his deep appreciation for Calvin on this point. "It was Calvin who saw and expressed this point with particular clarity. There is hardly a passage in which we have any doubt whether the reference is to justifying or sanctifying grace, and yet he everywhere brings out the mutual relationship of the two moments and aspects."(58) Barth also says that he is in agreement with Berkouwer in his treatment of the relationship between justification and sanctification as it has been shown in G C Berkouwer's book "Faith and Sanctification," 1952.(59)

However, Barth does not identify justification with sanctification on account that the two moments and aspects of one and the same divine act belong inseparably together. No separation is allowed between the two, but distinction is accepted. "Justification is not sanctification and does not merge into it. Thus,

(56) C D IV/2, p499

(57) C D IV/2, p500; cf. Inst. 3:11:6

(58) C D IV/2, p506

(59) C D IV/2, p501

although the two belong indissolubly together, the one cannot be explained by the other."(60)

Their distinction does not lead to their order of operation, importance or superiority - one coming first before the other. Although it seems that justification should be given priority in the structure of occurrence that man is justified before he is sanctified, Barth refuses the *ordo salutis* vehemently and says, "In the simul of the one divine will and action justification is first as basis second as presupposition, sanctification first as aim and second as consequence; and therefore both are superior and both subordinate. Embracing the distinctness and unity of the two moments and aspects, the one grace of the one Jesus Christ is at work, and it is both justifying and sanctifying grace, and both to the glory of God and the salvation of man."(61)

So justification and sanctification should be seen in their unity although they are distinct. They should be regarded as one divine act within the doctrine of reconciliation. When we speak about the one, we should not do so at the sacrifice of the other for both of them find their unity in Jesus Christ. It is true that justification and sanctification find their unity in Christ but this is so because of faith. For this reason the next issue that has to be discussed is their relationship to faith. It should be clear that without faith man will never be justified nor sanctified.

(60) C D IV/?, p305

(61) C D IV/2, pp508 - 509

c. Justification and Sanctification in their relationship to Faith.

Both justification and sanctification are achieved by God in Christ through faith. Neither is justification nor sanctification accomplished without Christ. Although they are one divine act they take place simultaneously, but for the sake of clarity let me explain what Barth says their relation to faith is. I shall first discuss the relationship between justification and faith and then between faith and sanctification.

d. Justification in relation to Faith.

Karl Barth says that man is justified by faith alone, although he knows very well that "alone" is not found in the Pauline text. He agrees with Martin Luther that since man is justified by faith apart from works of the law, the insertion of "alone" in the text is an appropriate interpretation of Paul. "The sola fide does not actually occur in the Pauline texts. Yet it was not an importation into the texts, but a genuine interpretation of what Paul himself said without using the word sola, when Luther translated Romans 3 : 28: 'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law.'"(62) The fact that man is justified by faith apart from works means that faith opposes any kind of work to have something to do with justification. Both works of law and works of faith even in their best intention do not justify man.

Works are ruled out of justification because Christ has

(62) C D IV/1, p622

done everything for the salvation of man. No man's thoughts, words and achievements can be contributed to justification, otherwise Christ might have died in vain. "Justification comes about in Jesus Christ in the judgement on the cross where the Judge Himself is judged and killed. The verdict of God revealed in the resurrection proclaims deliverance from death to life."
(63)

Man should not look at his faith by which he is justified as a kind of his work. Faith in itself has nothing to offer by which it can justify man. It is God's own will that He has chosen to accept man as righteous on the basis of his faith. "It is the good pleasure of God which singles out from all others this particular human action. But by that good pleasure it is, of course, radically singled out from all others. The election and calling of Abraham are manifested in the fact that he believes, and that his faith is imputed to him for righteousness."
(64)

Faith in Christ, according to Barth, is humility in obedience and as such it has value only in Him and not apart from Him. It clings to Christ from whom man receives his salvation. It must exclude any co-operation of human action in the matter of justification. It has to be alone in this matter for if it tried to base itself on any human action which takes place either before faith or in faith or as an outcome of faith, obedience would be lost together with humility that accompanies it.

(63) Hans Kung, Justification, p41

(64) Karl Barth, C D IV/1, p615

Faith in Christ is true and alive and because of this man is justified by it alone. It is not produced by man although it is his, and all that a man has in regard to his salvation belongs to Christ. It is Christ who gives meaning to this faith otherwise it is nothing. "For because it is faith in Jesus Christ, it can be true and living faith only as the humility of obedience; it has to be an empty hand, an empty vessel, a vacuum. It can be said of the believer at all times and in all circumstances: 'what has thou that thou didst not receive?' (1 Cor. 4 : 7), and : 'By the grace of God I am what I am' (1 Cor. 15 : 10)"(65)

Barth says again and again that man's justification is dependent on Christ and it is for this reason that no type of work is required. What man should do is to accept the fact that by His death and resurrection Christ has paid for his sins once and for all. It is the accepting of what Christ has done for the sinner that involves the justifying of faith.

So far I have shown that justification is related to faith in such a way that without it man is not justified. I have also pointed out that it is indeed faith in Christ alone by which man is justified. Since justification and sanctification form one divine act, the latter is also achieved by Christ through faith. This brings me to the explanation of the relationship of sanctification to faith.

(65) C D IV/1, p 631

e) Sanctification in relation to Faith

First of all it should be pointed out that what is true justification in its achievement is also true for sanctification. As a man is justified by Christ he is also sanctified by Him. It is the holiness of Christ with which believers are holy and they appropriate that holiness through faith in Him. Only Christ sanctifies Himself and those that believe in Him. "And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth"(John 17:19). This means that man's sanctification is achieved by Christ and man should accept it as his by faith. So faith is as related to sanctification as it is to justification. "As we are asked to justify ourselves, we are not asked to sanctify ourselves. Our sanctification consists in our participation in His sanctification as grounded in the efficacy and revelation of the grace of Jesus Christ"(66)

Barth's view of sanctification is not different from his view of justification because the two are one divine act and one aspect in the doctrine of reconciliation. Since faith is always related to reconciliation, its relation to sanctification is inevitable. Barth's view is supported by Jan Milic Lochman who says "We must keep that formulation in mind; deliverance is not something which happens automatically, but is inseparable from faith. But this faith always relates reconciliation to the world and never exclusively to itself"(67) Barth

(66) C D IV/1, p517

(67) Jan Milic Lochman, Reconciliation and Liberation, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980, p81

emphasises the relationship between justification and sanctification by looking at them objectively and then he relates faith to both for man's salvation. His reference to 1 Corinthians 1:30, where Christ is depicted as man's righteousness, sanctification and redemption, heightens the relationship between sanctification and faith because these according to Barth, refer to the regeneration and conversion. So man's sanctification is his on the basis of faith in Christ. "The sanctification of man which has taken place in this One is their sanctification. But originally and properly it is the sanctification of Him and not of them. Their sanctification is originally and properly His and not theirs."(68)

The significance of faith in sanctification is that man by believing in Christ, the holy One of God he is justified and through or with this justification he is sanctified. God in Christ has taken man's sins away and now in Him he is holy and this holiness calls for the believer's faith and love. "They know that the sanctification of man, of all men, is already fulfilled (like justification) in the one man Jesus, that it is effectively and authoritatively fulfilled in Him, and that it calls for their faith and love."(69)

Sanctification is emphasised as having been achieved for us by Christ. Although it takes place in us it has already taken place in Christ and for this reason we are holy, yet sinners. We are converted but we have to be converted again. "And conversion is the transition, the

(68) Karl Barth, C D IV/2, p 514

(69) C D IV/2, p 514

movement, in which man is still, in fact wholly the old and already wholly the new man."(70) So both justification and sanctification are related to faith in that it is by faith that man is both justified and sanctified. Without faith in Christ no one is either justified or sanctified. Indeed without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6)

4. ELECTION, THE BASIS OF MAN'S SALVATION

Karl Barth wants to remain a reformed theologian. This is evident in his attack against the Roman Catholic view on justification. The meaning of justification seems to be the deepest difference between the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. "The first assembly of the World Council of Churches recognised that the aspect of the Roman Catholic - Protestant division which constitutes 'our deepest difference' was the question of justification"(71)

When we come to the question of election we must ask whether Barth still remains faithful to the teaching of the Reformed tradition or not. In order to follow his views on election, it is better to approach him differently from Calvin although both of them claim to see election in the light of Scripture. "Barth observes that also Reformed theology has appreciated the deep connection between election and Christ, and particularly has it done this in connection with Eph 1:4, which

(70) C D IV/2, p 566

(71) A E Mc Grath, "Justification: Barth, Trent and Kung
in Scottish Journal of theology, vol 34, 1981, p517

speaks of Christ as the 'mirror of election'. It is this that had led pastoral practice again and again to urge believers to seek refuge in Jesus Christ in order to come to the certainty of salvation and of election. This is a marked emphasis especially in Calvin."(72)

In looking at Barth's view of election it is good to show that he bases its foundation, who, he thinks, are the elect and reprobate and what relation he shows to exist between election and perseverance. Comparison between Barth and Calvin is also made especially to where the former departs from the latter and the reasons for his departure are given. Although reference is made to Calvin here and there to show where Barth agrees with him and where he does not, the focus is on Barth's view of election in his soteriology.

a) The Foundation of Election

Barth bases the doctrine of election in the revealed good-pleasure, also called the eternal decree, secret plan or will of God. This eternal decree of God, according to Barth, is Jesus Christ the Word, who in the beginning was with God and is God (John 1:1-2). So man's election is founded in Jesus Christ in whom man was elected before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). "And how could we receive anything before times eternal, we, the creatures of time, who did not exist, unless the grace appointed for us had already been deposited in Christ (cf Mat 25:34)... But how, or in whom, could this Kingdom be prepared for us before our existence, unless

(72) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, London: Paternoster Press, 1956, p94

it were in the Lord who laid the foundation of it before the world."(73)

The foundation of election is in Jesus Christ according to Eph 1:4 and since man was non-existent before the creation of the world, God's election should be the electing of Jesus Christ in whom the Father was gracious towards man taking him to Himself. Here Barth parts company with the teaching of the Reformed tradition on the basis of election, and with Calvin who says "We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with Himself what He willed to become of each man."(74)

It is true that both Calvin and Barth say that the election of man is in Jesus Christ, but the object of election in Barth before the foundation of the world cannot be, and is not man but Jesus Christ, while in Calvin it is man. "Accordingly, those whom God has adopted as his sons are said to have been chosen not in themselves but in Christ (Eph.1 : 4); for unless he could love them in him, he could not honour them with the inheritance of his Kingdom if they had not previously become partakers of him."(75) Barth differs from Calvin in that he emphasises Jesus Christ as both the subject and the object of election, "Starting from John 1 : 1 f, we have laid down and developed two statements concerning the election of Jesus Christ. The first is that Jesus Christ is the electing God. This

(73) Karl Barth, C D II/2, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, Editors
G W Bromiley and T F Torrance, 1957.p109

(74) Inst. 3:21:5

(75) Inst. 3:24:5

statement answers the question of the subject of the eternal election of grace. And the second is that Jesus Christ is elected man. This statement answers the question of the object of the eternal election of grace. Strictly speaking, the whole dogma of predestination is contained in these two statements."(76)

Barth says that he does not agree with the traditional Reformed doctrine of election partly because its foundation is not Jesus Christ but the hidden absolute decree of God, and partly because the doctrine has been formed in such a way that it makes people feel uncertain of their salvation and it robs them of the comfort election brings. "In the doctrine of election everything depends on the relationship between predestination and Christology. This relationship we must see correctly. When we do, we shall no longer find the traditional doctrine of predestination acceptable with its conception of a hidden decree of God which could not but cast men into uncertainty when they regard their own relationship to God."(77)

For Barth the mystery of election is revealed and it is no longer right to say " ... that God by his secret plan freely choosez whom he pleases, rejecting others ..."(78), because this secret plan or will of God is Jesus Christ. The efficient cause of election which is obscure in Calvin and in the Reformed tradition is laid bare in Barth.; it is Jesus Christ, the free grace of

(76) Karl Barth, C D II/2 p145

(77) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, pp103 - 104

(78) Inst. 3:21:7

God. He is the foundation of election and apart from Him there is no election at all. "He, Jesus Christ, is the free grace of God as not content simply to remain identical with the inward and eternal being of God, but operating ad extra in the ways and works of God. And for this reason, before Him and above Him and beside Him and apart from Him there is no election, no beginning, no decree, no Word of God. Free grace is the only basis and meaning of all God's ways and works ad extra."(79)

Barth is against the absolute decree of God as the foundation of election because it leaves people in the dark not knowing what this absolute decree of God is. Although Calvin speaks of Jesus Christ as the mirror of election, he does not identify Him with this decree of God and this is where Barth differs from him. He says that the notion of a decretum absolutum should be excluded from the doctrine of election because Jesus Christ is the eternal choice and decision of God. It is improper to start with a discussion of an electing God or with elected man in abstract. He prefers to start the discussion of election with Jesus Christ as the electing God and the elected man. Since Jesus Christ is God he does not see a need to look for the basis of election elsewhere in the decretum absolutum.(80)

To speak of the absolute decree of God as the basis of election while Christ is revealed to us as that decree and will of God, is to obscure the doctrine of predestination and Barth does not want to follow such a

(79) Karl Barth C D II/2, p95

(80) A E McGrath, Justification : Barth, Trent and Kung,
in: Scottish Journal of Theology vol 34, 1981, p523

teaching but prefers to abandon it and concentrate on Jesus Christ as the electing God in company with the Father and the Holy Spirit. "How can the doctrine of predestination be anything but 'dark' and obscure if in its very tenet, the tenet which determines all the rest, it can speak only of a decretum absolutum? In trying to understand Jesus Christ as the electing God we abandon this tradition, but we hold fast by John 1 : 1 - 2"(81)

Although Barth lays much emphasis on Jesus Christ as the basis of election or the electing God, he does not ignore the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is the triune God who does the election. Christ comes uppermost only as the eternal decree of election who in election of man becomes God's elect Himself while not ceasing being the electing God. "It is also true that He does not elect alone, but in company with the electing of the Father and the Holy Spirit. But He does elect."(82) Through Jesus Christ we know the Father and the Holy Spirit and it is also in Him that the knowledge of predestination is known to us. "So much depends upon our acknowledgement of the Son, of the Son of God as the Subject of this predestination, because it is only in the Son that it is revealed to us as the predestination of God, and therefore of the Father and the Holy Spirit, because it is only as we believe in the Son that we can also believe in the Father and the Holy Spirit, and therefore in the one divine election."(83)

(81) Karl Barth C D II/2, p104

(82) C D II/2, p105

(83) C D II/2, p105

There is a difference on the basis of election between Calvin and Barth. The fact is that Barth has departed from both Calvin and the Reformed tradition here, and the difference now made between them cannot be reconciled because in Barth the object of election is Jesus Christ while in Calvin it is man himself. In the former, Jesus Christ is both the elect and the rejected man, while in the latter the elect and the reprobate are men and not Jesus Christ. Election comes from God in His hidden will in Calvin,(84), while in Barth it comes from Jesus Christ, the revealed will of God.

Despite this difference Barth is completely in agreement with Calvin on the free grace of God in election. God does not elect man because of what he is in himself or what he will be in the future. Foreknowledge is denied as the reason for electing man. He appreciates the Reformed tradition for opposing the Remonstrants who find the cause of election outside God's will. He emphasises God's free grace in election and he refuses to connect it with meritorious work of faith, prayer or anything else apart from Christ.(85)

God's ways and works in election are Jesus Christ and not the foreseen faith or works of man. This Jesus Christ is the free will of God and the only reason for man's election. Apart from Him there is no election because God has always and definitely from all eternity moved freely towards man in Him. Jesus Christ is the One "who in the will of God was to be, is, and will be both

(84) Fred H Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p30

(85) Karl Barth C D II/2, p112

very man and very God."(86)

b. The Elect and the Reprobate.

Although there may be some differences in interpretation of Eph. 1 : 4 among other Reformed theologians, Calvin understands the text to mean that man's election to salvation is in the past before creation of the world (Matt. 25 : 34). Barth agrees with Calvin here, but when the question of who these elect are is posed, he gives an answer which is mostly not welcomed by the Reformed tradition. According to Barth the object of election are not individual people, but it is Jesus Christ and in His election all mankind is elect because of the human nature He assumed from man. "In view of the election of Jesus Christ all mankind is elect, because of the union of divine and human nature in Him."(87)

In Barth's view election does not affect man directly because it comes via Christ. He is elected not through Christ as a mediator but via Christ's election because of Christ's human nature. In Calvin it is different; man is individually and directly elected in Christ before the creation of the world. Christ is our mirror through whom we receive our election, but He is not regarded as the object of this election on our behalf. "Now if they are elect in Christ, it follows that not only is each man elected without respect to his own person but also certain ones are separated from others, since we see

(86) C D II/2, p92

(87) Colin Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message,
London: Tyndale Press, 1967, p124

that not all are members of Christ."(88)

On the question of the elect Barth goes quite contrary to the Reformed view by basing and limiting man's election in Jesus Christ. All men are elect in Christ before the creation of the world and now there is no fear of damnation or judgment. Election to Barth means a message of comfort because there is no-one that is not elected. God is love and He knows all people in Christ. "It is not true that there is some mysterious background of election which creates a message of bad news next to the message of good news. On the contrary, election is the content of the gospel, it is 'a good report, a happy, useful, comforting, helpful message'. It is in every respect improper and unwarranted to think that this doctrine announces 'in the same breath, good and evil, help and destruction, life and death.'"(89)

Barth speaks of election in Christ to mean that God has from eternity been gracious to all men in the act of election. There is only a book of life because no-one is rejected in Christ, and to speak of divine election and divine rejection as two equally ultimate divine acts is to stray from the truth.(90)

With this point of view of election, Barth generally meets with great opposition from both the Reformed and the Roman Catholic theologians. To many Barth seems to

(88) Inst. 3:22:2; cf. Fred H Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p34

(89) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p91

(90) Op.cit., p91

have missed the object of election and has mistaken the subject for the object and has left man uninvolved in the matter that concerns him most. His emphasis on the election of everyone in Christ, leaves people wondering whether he has any room of reprobation in his soteriology. "Where Barth's soteriology stands in obvious tension with that of historical evangelical orthodoxy is in its objectivism. He affirms that men are elected by God and adopted into sonship in his eternal decree that comes to historical realisation in Jesus Christ. All are predestined to salvation in Christ even before the dawning of history, even before the primordial fall of man."(91)

Having heard of who are the elect, there seems to be no reprobation in Barth's view of election since all people are elect in Christ. However, Barth, like Calvin, speaks about election and reprobation, the difference between them is on who the elect and the reprobate are in each case. After Barth has established that Jesus Christ is the object of election, he also speaks of Him as the reprobate. So Barth's predestination is double as in the Reformed tradition. "This predestination is double because 'in the election of Jesus Christ ... God has ascribed to man election, salvation and life; and to himself he has ascribed ... reprobation, perdition and death. It is God Himself who is condemned and rejected by his own judgment, and not those whom he elected in Christ.' God elected as his own portion the negative side of the divine predestination, the reckoning with man's weakness and sin and inevitable

(91) Donald G Bloesch, Jesus Is Victor! Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation, Abingdon, 1976, p32

punishment. Thus there is no sense in which predestination can be man's rejection, since predestination means that 'from all eternity God has determined upon man's acquittal at his own cost.'"(92)

In both election and reprobation man is not directly involved. For Barth election means that before man lay life and death and man's choice because of sin was death, but God through His love elected life for man in Christ leaving rejection and death for God Himself. God through Christ took death, that was meant for man, upon Himself and set man free. This for Barth means the justification of the sinner which is connected with his predestination. Man's rejection is no more his because on the cross the exchange took place once for all - life for man and death for God in Christ.(93)

Reprobation, for Barth, really means setting man free on the one hand and Christ meeting sufferings and death on the other. Man's rejection and damnation in reprobation is borne by Christ and is past. It is not for man any more and this is why election to him is good news. "The rejection which all men incurred, the wrath of God under which all men lie, the death which all men must die, God in His love for men transfers from all eternity to Him in whom He loves and elects them, and whom He elects at their head and in their place,"(94)

Although reprobation may be implied by the eternal

(92) A E McGrath, "Justification:Barth, Trent and Kung"
in: Scottish Journal of Theology, vol 34,1981, p523

(93) Karl Barth C D II/2, p167

(94) Colin Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message,
p125

election that took place in Christ before the foundation of the world, its demonstration is at the cross where Christ died in the place of everyone. Barth's view of reprobation opposes the Reformed doctrine of double predestination of electing some people to life and leaving others into damnation. "Double predestination means election and rejection, life and death. There is no question here of a distribution of election and reprobation over such and such people, but it is a question of double predestination in and concerning Christ."(95)

In Barth's soteriology the rejection of man is discussed in such a way that it has lost its power in Christ. When man's reprobation is preached, the message arouses gratitude for Christ because He has taken it away from men. So rejection of man in Barth's doctrine of predestination has a place only in the sense that it is taken and destroyed by Christ. It is in this sense that double predestination is seen in Barth's doctrine.(96)

In all that is said so far in Barth's view of election one would conclude that Barth champions universal salvation. But this conclusion would not be right although he would be alone in making such a conclusion because Barth does not accept the validity of such a doctrine himself. "Yet there is a self-damnation in which man resists and thwarts the love of God, in which he swims against the stream of divine grace. 'But if we will what God does not will,' Barth says, 'we ... have

(95) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p106

(96) Op.cit., p107

God against us, and therefore we hurry and run and stumble and fall in eternal perdition."(97)

One of the people that accuse Barth of being a universalist is Emil Brunner. He is convinced that Barth is one of the most thoroughgoing universalists because he insists that all mankind has already been saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.(98)

Although Barth says that all are elect in Christ and man's rejection is no more his but Christ's, he hesitates to accept universalism in his teaching. For this reason some have regarded his teaching as ambiguous while others imagine him standing at the cross-roads hesitating which way to take either that of universalism or that of particularism. "But on the other hand, Barth shrinks from compromising the sovereign freedom of God by coming himself either to the universal salvation of all mankind or to limited atonement for an elect number. Hence a certain air of ambiguity surrounds his teaching."(99)

So in Barth's soteriology election and reprobation are focussed on Christ and not on men, however, universalism is denied and the salvation of all people is left as an open possibility for God. "We are confronted by the

(97) Donald G Bloesch, Jesus Is Victor! Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation, p64

(98) Op.cit. p62; cf. G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, pp264 - 265

(99) Colin Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message, p132; cf. G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p290

indisputable fact that Barth has himself emphatically rejected the doctrine of the apokatastasis. This raises the question whether, in presenting Barth's doctrine of election as we have, we have understood him correctly."(100)

c. Election and Perseverance.

The relationship between election and perseverance is that he who is elected is assured of salvation and will persevere in faith to the end no matter what happens to him in this life. There is no such thing as being elected to eternal life and then finally perish. Perseverance of the elect in Calvin is brought about by the Holy Spirit who generates and sustains man's faith so that his life is secure in Christ. Communion with Christ is the proof of man's election for whoever finds himself in Christ by being a member of His body through faith, is assured of his salvation. There is no need that one should look for assurance of one's election elsewhere.(101)

Barth, like Calvin, also connects election with the perseverance of the elect and the assurance of salvation because he says election is the message of joy and of the certainty of salvation. When one hears about it he should not be silent because of its importance. "When we understand election as God's gracious election, we shall not dare to be silent about it. Particularly shall we not be silent about it out of pastoral considerations,

(100) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p113

(101) Francis Wendel, Calvin, p274

for election is precisely the shining centre of the whole message of salvation."(102)

The assurance of salvation for the elect in Barth has nothing to do with man's faith, for his salvation is taken care of by Christ objectively through His death on the cross. Whether one knows about it or not, he is elected in Christ and with this election his salvation is secure for no-one can take it away from Christ. "Rejection cannot again become the portion or affair of man 'There is no condemnation - literally none - for those that are in Christ Jesus.'"(103)

Barth speaks of man's election and salvation as being assured in Christ, but the difference with Calvin here is that Barth ignores faith which works in the believer as a result of his election. Faith plays a great role in Calvin's view of election because it is God's instrument by which man through the Holy Spirit appropriates God's gifts to himself. However, concerning the assurance of salvation, Barth stands in the protestant tradition that dates back from Luther and Calvin to the present day, but the assurance of salvation for everyone because of Christ's death and resurrection without faith does not tally with the Reformed teaching.(104)

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- (102) G G Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p92
- (103) Donald G Bloesch, Jesus Is Victor! Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation, p63
- (104) A E McGrath, "Justification : Barth, Trent and Kung"; in : Scottish Journal of Theology, vol 34 1981, p524

Rejection of the elect is cancelled and every man is exempted from this rejection and now there should be a proclamation of salvation for all the people. Rejection is not cancelled because people have accepted Christ by faith as their Lord and personal Saviour, but because He had been rejected by God on the cross (Mark 15 : 34) on their behalf, they cannot, under any circumstances, be rejected again because God has taken their rejection away from them. This is Barth's assurance of election and salvation for the elect. "Our rejection is borne in His and thereby it is borne away. This is God's mercy, that the sinner in Christ lies enclosed in His own heart and that He has taken the rejection upon Himself. The content of Golgotha is therefore identical with the great exchange negotiated at Golgotha, an exchange which cannot be undone through all eternity for it is God's eternal decision."(105)

However, the assurance of salvation in Barth's view of election is not as consistent as that which we find in Calvin because that of Calvin, though also based on Christ is through faith and we speak of perseverance of the elect in reference to their faith being steady or stable in time of trials and difficulties. Barth's assurance is based on what Christ has done, not in man, but for man, on the cross as that which is irrevocable. God has elected man in Christ and since no-one can reject or cancel it, his salvation is assured. "Man cannot accept or reject whatever God has elected for him. Thus there is no way that man can avoid election, if that is what God has elected for him. Whether all men

(105) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p106

know it or not, they are saved - whether they like it or not. The only decision possible is God's decision, not man's."(106)

Barth's comprehensive election in which all mankind is elected fails, to maintain consistent perseverance of the elect, because in fearing to assert apokatastasis (restoration of all people to God) he gives room to the falling away of the elect which is not ever suggested in Calvin's doctrine of election. Both Calvin and Barth maintain that the Christian can have assurance of his election and salvation. However, Barth's position that the Christian can be certain only of Christ's faithfulness to him but not of his faithfulness to Christ, tends to conflict with the Calvinist doctrine of eternal security. Although Barth would not say that people can fall out of the sphere of God's grace and goodness, "he does affirm the ever present but incomprehensible possibility of falling away from the path marked out by grace"(107).

For Calvin the elect may stumble and even fall but total and final falling away is impossible, but for Barth's view of the elect, though the chance may be small, there is a possibility for the elect to fall totally and finally into perdition. This is so because of his assertion of the election of all mankind. "In this theology there is no final rejection of men by God, no

(106) A E McGrath, "Justification : Barth, Trent and Kung", in : Scottish Journal of Theology, vol 34 1981, pp523 - 524

(107) Donald G Bloesch, Jesus Is Victor! Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation, p70

irrevocable condemnation. Wrath is the penultimate word, but love is the ultimate word (cf. Is. 54:8; Mic. 7:18). Yet there is a self-damnation in which man resists and thwarts the love of God, in which he swims against the stream of divine grace. 'But if we will what God does not will' Barth says, 'we ... have God against us and therefore we hurry and run and stumble and fall into eternal perdition.'"(108)

So Barth does not only depart from Calvin on who are the elect and the reprobate, but also on the perseverance of elect and on their assurance of salvation. His ignoring the work of faith in individuals concerning their election and his objectivistic slant in this doctrine makes his soteriology stand in tension with much of the Reformed tradition. However, his view of salvation agrees with Calvin in the fact that it is not only past in what Christ has done for the elect but there is a future dimension in it when it will be fully manifested.(109)

5. ESCHATOLOGICAL NATURE OF MAN'S SALVATION

It has been shown in his treatment of the doctrine of election that Barth speaks of man's decisive event of salvation to have been achieved in the past in the death and resurrection of Christ, yet its full manifestation lies in the future. Man's salvation is not complete in this life that moves towards death, which is still man's enemy, although for a believer it has lost its power.

(108) Op.cit., p33

(109) Op.cit., p66

Barth says that man is saved in principle because he still has to struggle against temptations and in fact he still sins against God. When he is freed from temptations, sins and death, he will be totally saved. "This is why Barth can at times portray mankind as liberated and redeemed in actuality and then again as redeemed only in principle and not in fact. There is an 'already' but also a 'not yet' in Barth's doctrine of salvation."(110)

Barth does not hesitate to call man's salvation completed in the past in the death and resurrection of Christ. Barth however, is confronted with the future where man is heading for both death and judgment. For this reason man still lives in the old life of sin and still struggles with temptations which reflect that he is not yet free and therefore not completely saved. Barth speaks of God's future fair judgment waiting for all people. "One thing is for sure; the judgment then will be divine and not human any longer; the separation, the decision and the sentence will be carried out according to divine and not human wisdom and justice"(111)

One would expect to hear Barth speak about a person's intermediate state after death and the manner of resurrection before he comes to judgment. But he leaves all this out and comes to judgment. Even here, however, he does not speak of the judgment which we read in the Bible and in the Church Confession. The judgment he

(110) Op.cit., p66

(111) Karl Barth, Call for God, New Sermons from Basel Prison tr. by A T Mackay, London: SCM, 1967, p90

speaks about and is projected into the future is that which has already taken place in Christ at the cross. "The future comforts the church in all affliction and persecution because it knows the Judge. It knows that the judgment has already been executed in such a way that this Judge 'has already submitted himself to the judgment of God for me.' The Judge is one who was judged for us. Through him we have been acquitted and from him we can now look forward to joy and glory."(112)

Barth's view of the judgment of God on man does not wait for his resurrection from the dead because it meets him in Christ on the cross and instead of himself being judged, it is Christ that is judged and he is free; in fact all men are free because of Christ's judgment - both believers and non-believers, yet he does not say thus all are saved. If he does not say that all are saved, one would expect that he would say some are cast into eternal damnation, but on the contrary he says, "We shall be up before the highest judge. It will be the final, the 'Last', definitive, the eternal judgment to which we shall then come. Life will just no longer go on after that."(113)

If after we all appear before the judge, then life no longer goes on for all of us, it may be concluded that we are all condemned. Barth does not want to link himself with those whom he calls the old type of

(112) Karl Barth, The Heidelberg Catechism for Today.

Tr. by Shirley C Guthrie Jr. Richmond, Virginia:
John Knox Press, 1964, p81

(113) Karl Barth, Call for God, New Sermons from Basel Prison, (24 Feb. 1963), p91

theologians who speak of eternal life and eternal damnation after judgement. The blessed, in Barth's opinion, cannot rejoice when they look at the damned neither can they feel that God is honoured in the sight of their suffering.(114)

Although Barth speaks of resurrection of the dead and the eternal life with God, he presents death in such a way that the resurrection of the dead is denied in the presentation. He speaks of death as the end of this life from the Old Testament point of view, and as sleeping in Christ from the New Testament perspective. But in both cases death gives the last blow to life. "Death at any rate means being deprived of all prospects for the future. It means being deprived of the capacity of living any longer. Death therefore overshadows even a long and full life. We must die, and according to 2 Sam. 14 : 14 this means that we 'are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.'"(115)

Barth says that life really ends with death and there is no continuation after that. Man's only eternal life and his beyond is God since it is He who is eternal in respect to time. To speak of life after death in Barth's eschatology is to go contrary to his thoughts for he does not see the purpose of life after death. Berkouwer refers to Barth's eschatology view as having no antecedent in the history of Christian doctrine and as a central problem to the Christian understanding of

(114) Karl Barth, Heidelberg Catechism for Today, p82,
Comm. on qs. 52

(115) Karl Barth, C D III/2; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960,
p589

eschatology. "This exposition has brought us face to face with the central problem of Barth's eschatology. Continually Barth repeats the polemic against the idea of 'continuation' and emphasises man's existence on this side of death. In the totality of this existence, 'besides' which and after which he has no other, man is grateful to God as his merciful Saviour from death."(116)

Man's participation in eternal life is in the eternal life of God who knows that he will have lived in His presence, and this is man's hope he expects of a future and is also his resurrection of the dead. Man's glory is experienced in this life in its ending and dying. "This hope of a believer is not a kind of endless prolongation of his existence in time. It is that he is in his finiteness (and thus already only the man that has been) will meet with God in the 'moment' of resurrection (1 Cor 15:51) and will have a share in His eternity, which is essentially different from existence in time."(117)

Barth sometimes speaks as if he is serious that there will be a resurrection of the dead followed by judgment, but since he does not want to speak about the judgment that involves condemnation of some people to damnation and because of his anthropological view of man as inevitably heading for death, he sees all man's hopes

(116) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p160

(117) H B Soucek, "Man in the light of the Humanity of Jesus," in: Scottish Journal of theology, March 1949, p81

swallowed up by death. Finite life does not have hope extending beyond the time limit allotted to it. "Man is given only this limited and finite time to live and to reach a decision about his eternal existence. He is not given any prospect of a continuation and prolongation of this unique temporal existence."(118)

It is true that this life that leads to death does not go over to another side of the new life unchanged, for it cannot fit in that new realm. But this is not what Barth says. Life after Christ's second coming will cease and only God will remain. Any hope of a future life after death is called man's 'eternalizing' of the finite life. Barth does not have any solution of the problem concerning the end of time and eternal life. One thing that is clear is that he strongly opposes any idea that suggests an extension of human life after death. After Christ ushers in the last day God shall be all in all and there will be, what Barth calls, a 'present without an afterward.'(119)

The resurrection of the dead to which he refers is the present life in communion with God which, he says, points to the everlasting life. He gives a very bright picture of the future where perfect blessedness exists but which has already begun now through the work of the Holy Spirit. But that perfect blessed future is only God's eternal life.

Barth is so Christ-centric in his soteriology that most

(118) Op.cit.,p81

(119) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p 158

of what he says as future events have already taken place in Christ. Death as God's judgment upon us and our resurrection from the dead are both already accomplished for us by Christ.(120) So the death that we now die is just a sign of judgement. Since God is with us in death and delivers us from it, He lives for us when we die. This living for us is what Barth calls our not being lost. Here we pass from death to life, but in fact it is God's life.(121)

If there is any comfort in man's future beyond death, it is hidden in God and it is God's. There is nothing that belongs to man who ends in death as a sign of God's judgment. Although the nature of things is such, that only God will live after man, man should rejoice that he will have lived this life and face death as something assigned to him by God who will be with him in death as his hope. "As He is our hope, even in death we are already out of its clutches and victorious over it. Even as we suffer it, it is already behind and beneath us. We do not boast of an immortality which is ours when we say this. We do not glory in anything on our own. With our death as the sign of God's judgment it is decided that nothing at all belongs to us, not even grace, let alone a righteousness which can only mean our condemnation."(122)

God is man's consolation in death because its bitterness was done away with for him in Christ who had it in its worse nature. Man should not think what will happen to

(120) Karl Barth, C D III/2, p615

(121) C D III/2, pp610 and 611

(122) C D III/2, p611

him after death, because God is his future who will live for him forever. "Man as such, therefore, has no beyond. Nor does he need one, for God is his beyond. Man's beyond is that God as his Creator Covenant - partner, Judge and Saviour, was and is and will be his true Counterpart in life, and finally and exclusive and totally in death. Man as such, however, belongs to this world. He is thus finite and mortal. One day he will only have been, as once he was not. His divinely given promise and hope and confidence in this confrontation with God is that even as this one who has been he will share the eternal life of God himself."(123)

Barth's eschatology, especially in its relation to the limited life of man in death, is drawn from anthropology rather than from Christology. This is why he draws the conclusion of man's natural ending because anthropology assigns man a limited time of life. The view that man's life is limited is hardly christological because Christ is not only the crucified but also the risen Lord. It is the man Jesus Christ who said "I died, and behold I am alive forevermore"(Rev. 1 : 18)/(124)

The eschatology of Barth does not agree with Scripture, Calvin and the Church's confession that speak about life everlasting after resurrection and judgment. Therefore, to try to reconcile Barth's eschatology with that of Calvin would mean interpreting Barth's view wrongly or misunderstanding Calvin's view of life after death. Here Barth has departed, not only from Calvin, but also from

(123) C D III/2, pp632 and 633

(124) G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p336

the Reformed view of eschatology. Much anthropology has been incorporated in his eschatology at the expense of the biblical witness on the subject. "It cannot be denied that precisely at this point the eschatological triumph in the theology of Barth is obscured by the phenomenological idea of 'limitation'. When the parallel between 'not yet' and 'no longer' begins to play a role in eschatology it becomes necessary to confront Barth critically with the Church's confession of eternal life and with the scriptural conception of eschatology."(125)

Scripture does not deny the continuation of this life after death as Barth asserts. If there is any denial at all it is the denial of the manner in which it is presented and is not the denial of the eternal life. Man's judgment that is borne by Christ on the cross is only for the believer and not for everyone, however, even the believer has to be justified through Christ at the judgment day before he passes into eternal blessedness. Therefore, a believer's judgment is past (Rom. 8 : 1) and yet to come (Heb. 9 : 27). "This parallel, in the definite sense in which Barth posits it, is precisely the thing that Scripture deries us. It is not the idea of continuity that Scripture opposes but the denial of it. This becomes very clear when Jesus speaks against the Sadducees who repudiated the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead (Matt. 22 : 23)."(126)

The fact that Barth does not accept the biblical teaching of the resurrection of the dead is seen in his view of interpreting Christ's teaching on the subject.

(125) Op.cit., 337

(126) Op.cit., 338

He says that the dead are before God as such since he is the God of only the living. In other words, the dead are dead even before God but God knows them as people who lived in their time. No intermediate state and no life after death as we learn it from Scripture is taught by Barth. ".... arising from the dead and a continued life of the dead after death is definitely not the positive form of the resurrection. This consists rather in this that they who lived in their time are as such before God who is not a God of the dead but of the living."(127)

(127) Karl Barth C D III/2, p754; cf. G C Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p339, Footnote

CHAPTER III : SOTERIOLOGY AS UNDERSTOOD BYG C BERKOUWER1. THE ROLE OF FAITH IN SALVATION.

Faith plays a big role in the Reformed view of soteriology and the best way to judge a book on salvation whether it is from the hand of a Reformed author or not, is to enquire after the significance it gives to faith while maintaining that Christ is the Saviour of man.

G C Berkouwer gives a big role to faith in man's salvation and he frequently refers to it in dealing with various aspects in the theology of salvation. However, in all this he shows clearly that faith does not save but functions as an instrument and that salvation itself is from Christ. In this way he is subjecting faith to Christ.

He says that faith has to do not with itself, but with Christ. The significance of faith, therefore, is that it helps man to recognise his Saviour. The Belgic Confession speaks of faith as an instrument with which believers embrace Christ who is our justification (Art.22). Although faith does not justify man, its value is that no man is justified by Christ without it, because divine grace must be accepted in faith and not otherwise.(1) The description of faith as an instrument does not add a new element to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The Belgic Confession

(1) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, Grand Rapids Michigan: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company 1955 p185

agrees with John Calvin that strictly speaking it is God alone who justifies man through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.(2)

Berkouwer says that faith has value in the salvation of man because Scripture exhorts him to have faith and warns him against unbelief. Part of the scriptural basis of Berkouwer's teaching is Mark 16 : 16 where it is written "He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned", and John 3 : 36 where we read "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests on him." Berkouwer continues to speak on how Scripture values faith by also citing some examples from the Old Testament where he shows that the lives of the patriarchs were characterised as lived in and through faith. Through faith wonderful things happened such as the conquering of kingdoms, the shutting up of lions' mouths, the prevailing of justice and the refusal of the fiery flames to consume the faithful servants of Jehovah.(3)

We do not ascribe to faith the power to save man as an autonomous power that lies beside that of God. The power of faith exists only because faith is completely directed to the power and mercy of God. Faith does not compete with grace, but sovereign grace is confirmed by it because the way of salvation is the way of grace in Christ. Faith and piety should not be regarded as share-holders in grace because faith as such by its

(2) Belgic Confession Art.23; Inst. 3:11:3

(3) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, pp186 -187

nature does not administer salvation.(4)

Berkouwer does not see faith as an autonomous and self-sufficient instrument to put man completely under the grace of God. Repentance and obedience are essential to faith in man's surrender to God's will. He sees faith and grace as a help to man to find his true way and leads him into the right relation between faith and sanctification. "Sola Fide - sola gratia is not a threat; it helps us to find the true way. It leads us into the right relation between faith and sanctification."(5)

When Berkouwer says that man appropriates salvation by faith, he does not mean that man co-operates with God in salvation. Co-operation between God and man is far away from the thinking of Berkouwer because faith is directed to Christ whose righteousness and acts alone make man recognise that it is God alone, through grace and without his merit, who imputes to him perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ who on man's behalf has accomplished all the obedience required by God the Father.(6)

Berkouwer, in accordance with the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordt which are the Reformed confessions, writes that justification by faith alone apart from works is the heart of the Reformed confession and is shown as the highest and most important article of faith.

(4) Op.cit., p88

(5) Op.cit., p201

(6) Op.cit., p42

The significance of faith in salvation as taught by Reformers seems to be minimised by James 2 : 24 where works seem to co-operate with faith. At first glance of this text the Reformed teaching is simply set aside and salvation by grace through "faith alone" is clearly refuted. But Berkouwer following the Reformed teaching does not accept the co-operation of works in salvation in the teaching of James. He solves this problem by saying that James does not oppose Paul but he opposes an antinomian misconstrual of Paul's teaching on justification through faith.

He suggest that the letter of Paul and that of James are concerned with different problems and are not opposing each other. He understands James as fighting against the divorce of faith from works. "James specifies a necessary marriage of works to faith and that concurs with Paul's insistence on the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5 : 22) on faith working through love (Gal. 5 : 6) on the work of faith (1 Thess. 2 : 13), and the impossibility that those who have died to sin could live in it any longer (Rom. 6 : 2)."(7)

From the Reformed point of view it is understood that Paul and James look at the matter from two different angles. James opposes the assertion of faith that does not produce work. "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead"(James 2:26). James should be understood to mean that there is no true faith apart from works.

Berkouwer has shown clearly the significance of faith in

(7) Op.cit., p133

salvation by ruling out man's worthiness, works of the law and man's good works. He has also shown that even faith in itself without God's grace has no power to save. He emphasises that the significance of faith lies in that it points man to Christ his Saviour and that it should not be turned into a condition that supplements to complete man's salvation.

2. THE FUNCTION OF WORD AND SPIRIT IN MAN'S SALVATION.

a. Unity of Word and Spirit.

The work of the Word and the Spirit is one, namely to direct man to his Saviour Jesus Christ through faith. Faith is important in soteriology since it is the only means for man of appropriating salvation in Christ, but this faith is the work of the Spirit who prepares man in such a way that when the Word is heard it becomes acceptable to him. "Only God himself is a sufficient witness to himself. The Word of God finds no acceptance until it is sealed by the inward witness of the Spirit, and the heart finds its rest in Scripture only through this inward teaching."(8)

Berkouwer sees the unity between the Word and the Spirit as the basis of the power of Holy Scripture that binds the people to Jesus Christ the object of their faith and the center of the gospel. The Spirit works in and through the Word showing man the way of being delivered from sin. "When one is in contact with Holy Scripture, the testimony of the Spirit shows him as the sinner and

(8) G C Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, Grand Rapids; Michigan. Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975,p41

shows the marvellous way of deliverance. It is in this way that the Spirit witnesses concerning the Word, as 'Holy Scripture in divine splendour commences to scintillate before our eyes.'"(9)

Scripture as God-breathed deals with words as message for salvation to God's people. The Word, through the operation of the Spirit, is the means of man's appropriating eternal life in Christ and the trustworthiness of Scripture is due to the work of the Spirit. Scripture deals with 'words' in connection with the message of salvation. Peter testifies that Christ as the Holy One of God has words of eternal life and therefore, he and his colleagues have nowhere to go for salvation apart from Christ (John 6 : 68 - 69). Although there seems to be greater objectivity of Scripture, the formalising of the testimony and certainty breaks its true meaning and intent.(10) Scripture is not the object of the testimony of the Spirit apart from its message; were this the case, it would mean praising a book without reading it.

Man accepts the Word by the help of the Holy Spirit. Although man is said to believe the gospel, Berkouwer says that it is only the Holy Spirit that removes all doubts in man and directs him into the truth of the Lord. If man is given credit for believing the Word it does not mean that he creates faith in himself. "Only the Holy Spirit himself can give certainty and conquer all doubts; even though man himself is directly involved in every aspect of his life, the *auctoritas divina* is

(9) Op.cit., p45

(10) Op.cit., p46

all-pervasive."(11)

Faith in the believer is the result of not only the Word or only the Spirit, but the Spirit working through the Word. Man believes the Word and is certain that God speaks to him in it because the Spirit is at work in both Scripture and man simultaneously. Man cannot say on his own that Jesus is Lord unless the Spirit reveals it to him. Berkouwer acknowledges what Paul says that to understand spiritual things it has to be through the Spirit. According to the testimony of the New Testament certainty can never be achieved by the human heart because it does not have the capacity to reassure itself and convince itself of the truth.(12)

The Holy Spirit does not work independently of man against his will and reason, but through Scripture and in and with man, so that man does not feel working against his own will. In this way man experiences faith in Christ as the source of his salvation. Faith does not come as an irrational event in man, but in a natural convincing way the Spirit guides him into all truth. "The powerful operation of the testimony of the Spirit centers in the salvation that has appeared in Christ. It is impressive how the New Testament speaks of the way that leads to faith and certainty as a testimony of Christ bearing witness to him (John 8 : 18 - 19)."(13)

Man realises that he is a child of God through the Word

(11) Op.cit. pp47 and 48; cf. G C Berkouwer, Divine Election, pp283 - 284

(12) Op.cit., p48

(13) Op.cit., p49

either in reading it or by hearing its proclamation, but this is not done by the Word alone for the Spirit of God has to testify and confirm that what man reads or hears is true. So the Spirit works in man who has to express his own conviction that he is a child of God.

Berkouwer says that it is the same testimony of the Spirit that is found in both the Word and man. This is why after reading Scripture or hearing the proclamation of the Word man is convinced that he is a child of God. This should be so because there is only one Spirit of the Father and the Son and He that works in testifying the certainty of Scripture also works in testifying that the believer is God's child. "There can be no splitting of the testimonium into two separate testimonies, namely one regarding our sonship and another concerning the truth of Scripture. In the light of the New Testament we clearly see the victorious nature of the Spirit's witness. It is a witness concerning Christ and His salvation that reaches to the depths of the heart in the face of all former estrangements, bondage, doubt and uncertainty."(14)

The power of the Holy Spirit is seen in the power of the Word and whenever the Spirit is thought of as working apart from Scripture the latter loses its power and cannot arouse faith and its certainty in man. Berkouwer agrees with the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism that it is the Holy Spirit that works faith in a believer through the hearing of the gospel. "Central to this question is the meaning of 'faith' in the expression 'faith in Scripture' especially as it comes

(14) Op.cit., p52

to a head in question 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism :
 'What is the true faith?' The Catechism then speaks of
 holding for truth all that God has revealed in his Word
 - which is a sure knowledge - and it speaks of a 'firm
 confidence which the Holy Spirit works in my heart by
 the gospel.'"(15)

Berkouwer emphasises the unity of the Word and the Holy
 Spirit as the basis of faith in man. He does not support
 the view isolating faith in Christ from faith in
 Scripture as if the source and power of this faith was
 different in each of them. He agrees with the Reformed
 confessions which point out that faith in Scripture
 points the believer to Christ and to his salvation. It
 is of great significance to note that the Reformed
 confessions connect faith in Scripture with the
 testimony of the Holy Spirit. They do full justice to
 the profound biblical concept of faith since this means
 that faith in Scripture is possible and true only in
 relation to the witness of the Spirit to Christ and His
 salvation.(16)

The unity of the Word and Spirit through faith which
 testifies that Scripture is the Word of God and Christ
 is the Saviour shows that the Word is always used by the
 Spirit to work faith in man. The Word on its own without
 the Holy Spirit does not touch the heart. "The Reformers
 linked the confession of the Spirit's testimony
 harmoniously with a great concentration on the witness
 of Holy Scripture. They did so because they were fully
 convinced that the testimony of Scripture, which

(15) Op.cit., p53

(16) Op.cit., p55

addressed itself to faith, did automatically evoke faith by way of a natural self-evidence of the written Word. In this connection Calvin writes that the Word can at best touch the ears but not the heart (Inst. III, i, 4)." (17) Here Calvin says that there cannot be a single thing that can convince man of the truth of the gospel message apart from God himself.

Berkouwer agrees with Calvin that the Spirit works secretly in the hearts of men enlightening them of the truth that they should decide for Christ. Such a decision does not come from the mind but from the heart. The testimony that the Spirit is at work in man is shown by his faith in the Lord. "But our mind has such an inclination to vanity that it can never cleave fast to the truth of God.: and it has such a dullness that it is always blind to the light of God's truth. Accordingly, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Word can do nothing."(18)

He does not say that the Spirit is more important than Scripture to man and that the gospel message from the Word is of less value to him. For this reason Berkouwer like Calvin rejects a spiritualism that elevates the Spirit above the reading of Scripture. A spiritualism that shows great display of the superiority of the Spirit to all the reading of Scripture is rejected simply because it means tearing apart what is indissolubly joined in union. The Spirit does not give new revelations that differ from Scripture, but He confirms the teaching of the gospel in the hearts of men.(19)

(17) Op.cit., pp55 and 56

(18) Inst. 3:2:33; cf. G C Berkouwer, Holy Scripture p56

(19) G C Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, p57

The Spirit should not be treated as working in Scripture and then in the hearts of men giving an impression of the existence, as it were, of two kinds of witness - one the outer, working in Scripture and the other the inner, working in the hearts of men. Berkouwer rejects this dualistic view of the testimony of the Spirit and would like to follow Calvin in affirming a simultaneous work of the Spirit covering both man and the Word.(20)

The nature of the unity between the Word and the Spirit is difficult to explain because one cannot say how faith originates from them. It is accepted and not disputed that the Word and the Spirit work together in directing man to Christ. Berkouwer says that in order to ascribe the true part the Word plays in relating man to Christ it is right to say that the Spirit works with and through the word in expressing the mysterious work of the Word and Spirit in man. "When confronted with the Word, we cannot by means of a solution or technique trace or circumscribe the way from the Word to faith. Every attempt to somehow clarify the mystery remains revealingly unsatisfactory. This becomes evident as soon as we try to express this mystery in all kinds of exclusive terminology, and to express the operation, power and conviction of the Spirit as with the Word or through the Word."(21) However, he observes that in the history of the Reformed churches theologians expressed the mystery by using the terms 'with' and 'through' in explaining the work of the Word and the Spirit in man. They thought that this expression did not do injustice either to the Spirit or the Word because they emphasised

(20) Op.cit., p58

(21) Op.cit., p59

the significance and power of both of them. Berkouwer accepts this expression and adopts it in his teaching.

Berkouwer follows the Reformed tradition in his view of the relation between the Word and the Spirit. He does not separate the Spirit from the Word and he treats faith as being wrought in man by the Spirit through the hearing of the Word. "We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit, regenerates him and makes him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin." (22)

The self-authentication of Scripture does not replace the testimony of the Spirit but through it Scripture retains its power in the proclamation of the Word. Berkouwer refers to the fact that the self-authentication of Scripture lies in its message to the people and that this message of Scripture and the testimony of the Spirit are not separate in the Belgic Confession Article 5.

Berkouwer agrees with Barth about the nature of Scripture that it is God's Word through human words and he thinks that an over-emphasis of its divine nature leads to docetism in the doctrine of Scripture in which the human nature is absorbed by the divine. However, he does not use Barth's words that the Bible is like an ordinary book and it becomes the Word of God only when and where God wills it, depending on the freedom of

(22) Belgic Confession, Article 24

God's grace.(23) The human element of Scripture should be taken into consideration because God's ways of communicating to us is in human words. "The human element of Scripture does not receive the attention it deserves if certainty of faith can only be grounded in the divine testimony, for then it can no longer be maintained that God's Word came to us in the form of human witness."(24)

We go astray and become docetic if we suppose that we disqualify Scripture as God's Word when we speak of both its divine and human origin. We should not reject the God-ordained means in which Scripture came to us. If we think that the value of Scripture is preserved by means of a docetic view of it, it means that we have a wrong concept of Scripture.(25)

This view of Scripture is to a certain extent similar to that of Barth. Like Barth, Berkouwer also sees a parallel between incarnation and inscripturation in the nature of Scripture which leads him inevitably to calling the Word of God being heard through the words of men. In this case Barth can call the Bible the literary human document which Berkouwer avoids to say. "There is even a parallel between the incarnation and inscripturation. Just as Jesus Christ is God and man and not a mixture of the two, so the Bible is also God and man, that is, it is a witness of revelation which itself belongs to revelation, and it is historically a human

(23) Karl Barth, C D I/1, p127; cf. Klaas Runia, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture, p22

(24) G C Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, p18

(25) Op.cit., p19

literary document."(26)

Berkouwer, like Barth, wants to see Scripture in its true perspective - it is not the words of men in which they try to speak and express their views about God, neither is it the Word of God that has miraculously come down from Heaven, but it is the true and real Word of God coming to us in the words of fallible men. This, according to them, is being honest in describing the nature of Scripture. Berkouwer in opposing those who over-emphasise the divine nature of Scripture says that they forget that Scripture is written in human words and as a result men have a right to examine these words and try to understand them. Those that cherish a docetic view of Scripture can never completely ignore or deny the fact that God's Word has come to us through human translations. One should not think that we are attempting to attest the vox Dei by human reason in examining Scripture, but the aim is that man should understand it according to his historical development.(27)

b.The Word and Spirit in Preaching.

Berkouwer treats Scripture as the Word of God in its message of salvation to people and it is for this reason that he included a chapter of Holy Scripture and Preaching in his book, "Holy Scripture", to show the power of the Word of God in proclamation. "It is not our purpose to deal extensively with particular aspects of

(26) Klaas Runia, Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Scripture, p58

(27) G C Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, p20

the preaching of the gospel in this chapter. But the question of the relationship between Scripture and preaching is not a superfluous one. For in dealing with it we touch on an essential aspect of the reflection concerning Scripture as God's Word: that Word, the message of Scripture, enters history in search of the entire world. It enters the wide context of time and space that embraces all generations."(28)

Scripture is not devalued in its preached message because of human words. Its power that can be felt in reading it is still maintained in preaching, and the testimony of the Spirit is still at work in human words. Since the Spirit is at work in preaching, the preachers are even said to be co-workers of God. "However, we also sense something of this same powerful event when he speaks through human words. It has not escaped notice that when speaking of the cross, Paul describes the word of the cross in terms of the power of God and not in terms of a word that by itself is powerless (1 Cor. 1 : 18). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1 : 16) and a sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6 : 17). The proclaimed Word is at work (1 Thess. 2 : 13), and preachers are co-workers with God (1 Cor. 3 : 9; 2 Cor. 6 : 1)."(29)

Scripture as the written Word and as the gospel of the Lord's message of salvation in preaching, should not be separated from each other. The written Word is just as good as the preached Word only that the former should not be left to remain as such without using it in

(28) Op.cit., p327

(29) Op.cit., p331

preaching; otherwise it is reduced to mere letters. The preaching is very important in keeping Scripture the living instrument for man's salvation. Through the preaching of the Word Scripture is expressed in a living form. It is possible to live with Scripture only when its message is understood, and is not regarded 'a metaphysical document', but a living instrument used by God through man for the proclamation of the message of salvation.(30)

Berkouwer says that the difference between the spoken and written Word occurs when Scripture is taken out of its context and treated as an item in isolation. This should be seen as mistreating Scripture as the Word of God. The written and spoken Word of God is animated by the same Spirit and the former is never discussed anywhere in Scripture in an abstract form. "There is no isolated reflection on the difference between the written and the spoken Word, for one is always immediately referred to the meaning of Scripture. For instance, the reading of a letter from one of the apostles fills the heart with joy (Acts 15 : 30 -31). There is a writing, reading and understanding (1 Cor. 1 : 12 - 14) in the light of God's grace." In citing Paul as an example of the apostles, Berkouwer says that Scripture was written with the aim that people must read it and understand the insight into the divine mystery.(31)

There is unity between Scripture and preaching, and this unity is maintained by the Spirit that works in both.

(30) Op.cit., p333

(31) Op.cit., p334 - 335

Berkouwer goes as far as suggesting the identification of the words of men with the Word of God in preaching. This identification does not rob Scripture of its divine nature but it shows that Scripture has always been used in this way by God in saving people's lives. "In order to get the problem into clear focus, it is best to ask whether we may perhaps speak of an identification such as Paul ascribed to the Thessalonians. For he thanks God that they received his word 'not as the word of men but as what it really is, the Word of God'(1 Thess. 2 : 13). There is no hint here of a 'problem'. The Thessalonians recognised and accepted the real nature of the message brought to them, and Paul's gratitude in turn shows that this was the very intent of his word. This reference to the recognition of God's Word in human preaching is of primary and ultimate importance for the reflection on all preaching."(32)

The unity between Scripture and preaching should not be treated as secondary and trivial because faith is produced thereby by the secret work of the Word and Spirit. Berkouwer would like to see Scripture and preaching treated as inseparable since the latter is the message of the former. He says that we cannot separate form and content because the inner unity of Scripture and preaching lies in the relevance of the message to its form of appeal. He gives an example from the gospel according to John where we read " but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20 : 31). The true confession of the God-breathed character of Scripture is under the rule of

(32) Op.cit., p335

the Spirit because he witnesses to Christ, convincing the world of sin and righteousness.(33)

Preaching is God's Word because both the Word and the preacher are from God and Berkouwer does not rule out the human element in the Word when God uses the preacher for He uses him with his human element. God has ordained that He should use man in the proclamation of His Word and for this reason God's speaking in human words is real and should be honoured. "God does not override but works through the human and this involves taking account of Israel's historical circumstances. Substantially this is the same thing as the recognition of the humanity of Scripture, except that thinking of the humanity of Scripture also draws attention to the possibility of all forms of error in Scripture."(34)

Christ valued the preaching of His disciples as His Word (Luke 10 : 16) and He did not despise their words as human as long as they proclaimed His true teaching. True preaching of the Word of God is the speaking of God through men for the Holy Spirit is at work in the proclamation. "God's speaking is so emphatically in human words that believing Scripture is placed alongside believing the Word that Jesus had spoken. (John 2 : 22). The rebuke of Christ to the Emmaus travellers is likewise focussed on their slowness to believe 'all that the prophets have spoken' (Luke 24 : 25)."(35)

(33) Op.cit., p338

(34) Timothy Gorringer, In Defence of the Identification: Scripture as Word of God" in : Scottish Journal of Theology 32,1979, p313; cf. G C Berkouwer, Holy Scripture

(35) G C Berkouwer, Holy Scripture, p148

It should be borne in mind that the preached Word was written and is now Scripture for the sake of preserving what was then preached. Both the preached and the written Word bear witness to Christ for the salvation of man. The power of the written Word is both in its written form when it is read and in its proclamation when it is heard, and for this reason it is not right to isolate the written Word from the preached Word. "By its nature the written Word can never be formally isolated, because precisely that written Scripture testifies of salvation and is directed toward that salvation. And in that context words can become living words (Acts 7 : 38), full of authority. In 'it is written' lies the perspective of God's speaking and the power and blessings of the written Word."(36)

In spite of human weakness God has used and uses men in writing down His Word in proclamation respectively, and people have not avoided calling men God's instruments. God's word in a written or in its proclamation form comes to us via man. In both aspects the Spirit of God is at work to move and direct the authors and the preachers. Berkouwer refers to Augustine who discusses the function of the Holy Spirit in Scripture and the relationship involved between God and man in its authorship. God is seen as the principal author while the Bible writers are regarded as instrumental authors. Berkouwer says that this was thought to be right because the double aspect of Scripture was preserved.(37)

Berkouwer looking at Scripture in its salvific form says

(36) Op.cit. p149

(37) Op.cit. p153

that the witness of Scripture to Christ, which it does through the work of the Holy Spirit, makes Scripture the Word of God. Scripture cannot be called the Word of God either in its written or in its proclaimed form without bearing witness to Christ. "This Scripture finds its origin in the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of Christ and witness of him through the human witness (1 John 5 : 9). It is therefore meaningful and necessary to keep in mind that we do not need in Scripture a revelation of a divine truth (or truths), which we could discuss apart from these words within their nature as witness. Every word about the God-breathed character of Scripture is meaningless if Holy Scripture is not understood as the witness concerning Christ."(38)

Berkouwer and Barth are generally in agreement that the Holy Spirit has a function in relationship to Scripture in directing man through faith to Christ. Scripture is the Word of God because the Holy Spirit is at work in it. None of them takes Scripture as God's Word apart from the Spirit.

3. JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

a. Unity of the two doctrines

Justification and sanctification are united together in Christ, Man cannot be either justified or sanctified unless he believes that Jesus Christ is his personal Saviour who died for him on the cross to take away his sins. Faith is so central in these gifts that they

(38) Op.cit., p166

cannot be appropriated by any other means. Apart from faith in Christ no one is justified and sanctified. Berkouwer is of the opinion that here is a general feeling among people of separating these benefits from each other and that once this is done the church would be in a danger of moving into moralism." one of the complaints that assail us constantly is that sanctification is "being cut loose, or abstracted, from justification. And if this is true that a wedge has been driven between them, the church is certainly in mortal danger of slipping into moralism, with its attendant self-conscious pride or its nagging uncertainties."(39)

Berkouwer is in agreement with both Calvin and Barth that justification and sanctification are inseparably united. The notion that justification is appropriated by faith in Christ and sanctification is achieved by man's own doing does not belong to the Reformed tradition and its suggestion is abhorred by the the three Reformed theologians. Both Berkouwer and Barth refer to Calvin as the one who saw clearly that justification and sanctification are mutually related to each other. "It was Calvin who saw and expressed this point with particular clarity. There is hardly a passage in which we have any doubt whether the reference is to justifying or sanctifying grace, and yet he everywhere brings out the mutual relationship of the two moments and aspects."(40)

(39) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company 1972, p20

(40) Karl Barth, C D IV/2, p. 506

Berkouwer, like Barth, notes the distinction that exists between justification and sanctification and that this distinction is not the invention of the theologians but is based on the witness of Scripture. Their unity as well as their distinction should be honoured and there should not be an over emphasis of either of them because of their distinction. In maintaining the unity of justification and sanctification it is not to evade the sovereign divine grace but it is to do justice to the testimony of Scripture. It is always in answer to the scriptural message that students see the need to differentiate these doctrines and then enquire into the relation between them. For it is clear that his distinction is based on Scripture. (41)

Both justification and sanctification are achieved by faith alone in Christ. It is right according to the Reformed tradition to say that sanctification is attained by faith alone apart from the works just as we say of justification. In emphasising the point, Berkouwer has written two books, one on justification and the other on sanctification and in these books he has not left out faith. They are entitled "Faith and Justification" and "Faith and Sanctification". He emphasise that the Reformed tradition maintains the unity between justification and sanctification and that neither of them is achieved by works. "The conclusion we may infer from all these data is that we can, according to Reformed belief, speak truly of sanctification only when we have understood the exceptionally great significance of the bond between sola fide and sanctification. We may never speak of sanctification as

(41) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, p18

if we are entering - having gone through the gate of justification - upon a new, independent field of operation; sanctification does not come about by the interaction of dynamic impulses already present. We might, of course, speak of the 'dunamis' of the Holy Spirit but this divine power comes to us only via our faith and may not be separated from it."(42)

b. The Source of Justification and Sanctification.

Berkouwer seems to emphasise faith in justification and sanctification as if it were their source. This would be the understanding of someone who has not made a serious study of Berkouwer's view of these doctrines. He does not emphasise faith in such a manner as to create the impression that it is their source. Man is not justified by faith, but it is always by faith in Christ that he is justified. The object of faith in Berkouwer and in fact in Reformed theology is Jesus Christ. "If we wish to say what faith is, then we must put all the emphasis upon its object. For faith has to do not with itself, but with Christ.(43)

The source of man's justification and sanctification is not faith but Jesus Christ who is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14 : 6). The importance of faith is to point man to Christ because in itself it is empty, and has no value. Berkouwer says that Calvin speaks

(42) Op.cit., p42

(43) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, Grand Rapids, Michigan:Eerdmans Publishing Company 1972, p20

about the emptiness of faith not that it has no place within soteriology, but that in itself it does not have power to save man. He also notes that Calvin's assertion that faith looks away from itself to Christ stresses his opposition to every possible idea that might arise to suggest a human merit as a cause of justification. His formulation of the correlation of faith and justification is appreciated by Berkouwer, because Calvin does not disqualify faith but he defines it in a manner that it lives and moves completely from and in grace.(44)

Although faith plays a big role in salvation, it does not work apart from Christ. It is used by God that man may have communion with Christ the Saviour. The Reformed tradition which Berkouwer follows through Calvin's teaching and the Reformed Confessions, are in unanimous agreement that faith is not the source of man's justification and sanctification but that it works as God's instrument in man. "The description of faith as an instrument does not add a new element to sola fide; it only gives expression to this keynote of the Reformation. The Belgic Confession is in general agreement with Calvin's declaration that, 'strictly speaking', it is God alone who justifies. Calvin aptly compares faith to an empty vessel, for 'unless we come empty, with the mouth of our soul open, to implore the grace of Christ, we cannot receive Christ.'"(45)

The source of man's justification and sanctification is God in Christ, but he uses faith in effecting them.

(44) Op.cit., 175

(45) Op.cit., p177; cf. Inst. 3:11:7

Faith as a human act is used by God through the Holy Spirit in order to direct man to God's grace. Therefore faith is a helpful instrument in man's appropriation of God's righteousness and holiness. Berkouwer says that by speaking of faith as an instrument he does not mean to deny it of activity. "Faith in the correlation bespeaks the working of the Holy Spirit directing man to God's grace. Thus understood, faith can never make God's justifying act of grace relative; it is faith, true faith, which honours the sovereignty of grace. And this is what the Reformers and the confessions meant by speaking of faith as an instrument, as well as by the emptiness, the vanity, the passivity of faith. Such concepts in no way deny the activity of faith, its grasp of its object, or its working itself out in love."(46)

Faith as well as man's obedience and righteousness are ruled out as the source or cause of justification and sanctification. In this way the exaltation of Christ is maintained as the only source of these benefits through God's gracious love. Justification happens through the righteousness of Christ which man takes as his own through faith. God pronounces him justified in looking at that righteousness of Christ that covers him. Faith does not cause the believer's righteousness but it works as a means of accepting the righteousness of Christ.(47) The idea that love and obedience to Christ's commands are the cause of man's justification is rejected making justification to be the work of God alone.

Sanctification, like justification, does not have its source in man or in his faith. Its source is Christ

(46) Op.cit., p178

whose blood cleanses us from all sin, "but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1 : 7). However, although sanctification has its source in Christ, it has often been associated with the Holy Spirit. This means the same thing that it is not faith that sanctifies but God through the work of the Holy Spirit. Man does not achieve his own sanctification through good works. It is in being sanctified by the Holy Spirit that man's works can reflect any goodness in them. "In full view here is the connection between the operation of the Holy Spirit and sanctification. Good works are spoken of as fruits of a good tree. It would be hard to maintain that the Canons view the believer in the light of his own achievement."(48)

The reference to the Holy Spirit in sanctification does not mean that the notion that Christ is the source of man's sanctification should be rejected. All three theologians - Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer - speak about Christ as our sanctification because it is in communion with Him that we are sanctified. Calvin takes justification and sanctification as being carried out by Christ simultaneously. He says that Christ does not justify a person whom He does not at the same time also sanctify. He looks at these benefits as joined together permanently in an indissoluble bond. He says that those whom Christ illumines by His wisdom, He redeems; those whom He redeems, He justifies; those whom He justifies

(47) Op.cit., p178

(48) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, p79

He also sanctifies.(49)

Barth who among them all is the most Christ-centric in his theology looks at sanctification as primarily belonging to Christ. He speaks about the believers' sanctification in a secondary sense, not that they are not sanctified but their sanctification belongs to Christ and it is theirs only by faith. "The sanctification of man which has taken place in this One is their sanctification. But originally and properly it is the sanctification of Him and not of them. Their sanctification is originally and properly His and not theirs."(50)

Berkouwer, too, in speaking of the Holy Spirit as always associated with the work of sanctification, stresses the communion with Christ as the source of this sanctification. For man's communion with Christ from which flows sanctification excludes the vain glorious concentration on man as being the source of his own sanctification.(51)

c.The Time of Justification and Sanctification.

It is clear that the source of these two benefits of God to man is Christ and it has been pointed out above that apart from Him these benefits cannot be appropriated at all. The means of appropriating them is only faith in Christ. But before I discuss when these benefits are secured for man's salvation, I should point out that

(49) Inst. 3:16:1

(50) Karl Barth, C D IV/2, p514

(51) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, p84

Berkouwer emphasises their working together and he rejects from the beginning the idea that each benefit follows another in a chronological order. "It is well to note that the Reformed Confessions never teach that believers, having gone through the gate of justification, now enter upon a new territory where they must, without help, take their sanctification in hand. It is not true that sanctification simply succeeds justification."(52)

He is of the opinion that justification should not be taken as occurring before sanctification, because they are so united that separation from each other is not possible. Therefore, they occur together in man. It can also be said that justification embodies sanctification within itself. The one that is justified is also sanctified because justification means the forgiveness of sin. "Our justification lies in free forgiveness (Art.23). The obedience of the crucified Christ - this is the alpha and the omega of our justification. He covers our disobedience, our unrighteousness with his righteousness. He gives us courage, frees us from the torments of a guilty conscience, dissolves our dread of standing alone before God."(53)

Justification and sanctification occur not in eternity but in time. This means that a sinner before conversion should be regarded as lost and not under the salvific grace of God. This should not be taken as in conflict with the eternal election but because eternal justification is not found anywhere in the Bible.

(52) Op.cit., p77

(53) G G Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, p45

Justification in time is biblical and it takes place through faith which also occurs in time. Berkouwer says that Kuyper, the exponent of justification from eternity, is refuted by Reformed theology which teaches that justification occurs in time. In agreement with Reformed teaching he says "Galatians 3 : 8 was quoted against Kuyper. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel before hand unto Abraham, saying, 'In thee shall all the nations be blessed.' The Gentiles, then, were not yet justified; they were yet to be made righteous. That is to say, justification was yet to take place in time through faith. Justification as an act of God has always been exhibited among His historical works. Eternal justification, therefore cannot be a dogma of the Church."(54)

Justification and sanctification occur only through the presence of faith. Without it, it is impossible for man to attain them. This is why Berkouwer speaks of sola fide as the heart of both justification and sanctification.(55)

Berkouwer is not alone in treating faith as the means of justification. Scripture and the Reformed tradition take faith as the only means of one's justification and sanctification. On this point he follows the teaching of Scripture and of the Reformed tradition. It is clearly said in the Heidelberg Catechism that man cannot receive Christ's righteousness in any other way rather than by faith. "It is not because of any value my faith has that

(54) Op.cit., p146

(55) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, p33

God is pleased with me. Only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness and holiness make me right with God. And I can receive this righteousness and make it mine in no other way than by faith alone."(56)

Man is justified whenever he believes Christ. "For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved" (Romans 10:10).

Justification is very important for man for it means the forgiveness of his sins and an introduction into various of God's benefits, in fact it means salvation itself. "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God" (Romans 5 : 1 - 5).

Berkouwer does not accept that justification occurs once and for all and sanctification rising from it goes on through one's life. If he did, there would be separation between the two and he would be contradicting himself to say that the two doctrines are inseparable. He says that justification goes on as long as sanctification is at work, since both of them are achieved through faith in Christ. Christ is man's justification as well as his sanctification. He does not see where there could be a break between these doctrines because only the relationship in which the grace of God admonishing the progressing believer is observed.(57) He refers to the Heidelberg Catechism which teaches that the kingdom is

(56) Heidelberg Catechism Answer to qs. 61

(57) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, p108

opened and shut by proclaiming that whenever believers receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them. He says 'whenever' points to the continuing relevance of the correlation between faith and justification.(58)

Since he takes justification as the forgiveness of sin, a once for all justification could not fit in with his view because it would mean that man's future sins have already been forgiven in the past in his justification, and there would be no need for repentance. For this reason justification like sanctification is a life long continuous event as Clifford asserts in his article on Gospel and Justification. "Justification is a complete, life-long continuum, not a single, instantaneous event. In view of the equivalence between 'justification' and 'pardon' it is arguably incorrect to suggest that justification, unlike the 'new birth', is a once for all event in the Christian's life. It is true that, at conversion, all sins hitherto committed are forgiven immediately. However, to say that such an instantaneous justification is a valid ticket for every sin thereafter is to 'overdo' the legal metaphor of the Epistle to the Romans."(59)

Berkouwer follows Calvin's view of justification because Calvin does not treat justification differently from sanctification in reference to both time and faith. A person does not need forgiveness only once for the past and future sins, because committed sins should be confessed and forgiven and it is in their having been forgiven that justification

(58) Op.cit., p77

(59) Allan C Clifford, "Gospel and Justification" in :
Evangelical Quarterly, 57, 1985, p258

takes place and this for Calvin inseparably goes with sanctification. "Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also. For he 'is given unto us for righteousness, wisdom, sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor. 1 : 30)."(60)

However, Berkouwer speaks more on sanctification as taking place in the whole of one's life, but he does not accept the idea that progress in sanctification means becoming more and more holy as days go on and that at death a person is perfectly holy. The only progress in sanctification which he accepts, is that the believer becomes more dependent on Christ as he realises how sinful he is. He compares progress in sanctification to a fruitbearing branch of vine which if broken from the vine cannot bear fruit. His emphasis here is that a believer is sanctified in his communion with Christ. "The progress that is here meant is like the fruitbearing of branches in the vine. The branch, if broken from the vine, cannot bear fruit. 'So neither can ye, except ye abide in me'. 'He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing.'"(61)

d. The Result of Justification and Sanctification.

(1) Good Works: Justification and sanctification serve

(60) Inst. 3:16:1;3:11:3; cf. Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, p100

(61) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, p107

as the result of eternal election and he that is justified by faith in Christ is reconciled to God and saved. All this happens because of what Christ has done for man. Berkouwer says, in reference to the Heidelberg Catechism, question 60, that God grants and credits to man the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, as if he had never sinned nor been a sinner, as if he had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for him.

The result of these benefits which flow from union with Christ, makes man have a new attitude towards his fellowmen. He no longer strives to do good works to get right with God because he is already righteous before Him through the righteousness of Christ, but through this righteousness he finds that God requires him to do the works of mercy. These works are no longer the works of law but they are the works of faith which flow from the love of God. "Paul's eye is on the work of faith and the toil of love in the sense in which he portrays the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1 : 3). There is no dualism between faith and these works, though there is a dualism here and everywhere between faith and works of the law.

The relation between faith and works is so intimate that Paul can say that all which is not of faith is sin (Romans 14 : 23).(62)

Justification and sanctification by faith in Christ makes a believer realise that he is under the control of his Saviour, Jesus Christ, who as the object of his faith would like him to express it in action. Berkouwer emphasises

(62) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, p108;
cf. Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, p40

the marriage between faith and works which should be done by those who claim to be justified by faith. Faith is not void but full of works of love. "With this marriage of faith and works in view, it is clear that all works in this life are subjected to God's judgment, and, that everything hinges on whether they are done in faith. The human situation is not a contest between fruitless faith and moral striving; it is defined by the distinction between the 'works of faith' and the 'works of the law.'"(63)

The justified by faith express justification in good works and are engaged in helping others through love and not by any compulsion of law. They are Christ's possession and in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit, they have a feeling of sympathy towards their fellowmen and they do not keep record of the good works they do for others. "The works of the law and these works of faith have really nothing in common. It is remarkable that the 'justified' of Matthew 25 ask in amazement, 'Lord, when did we see the hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and gave thee to drink? And when have we seen you a stranger and took thee in or naked and clothed thee?' The questions suggest a forgetfulness of good works, and the answer says that, at bottom, what was done for the miserable and destitute was a deed done to Christ."(64)

Judgment according to works at the Last Day does not mean that justification and sanctification are achieved by works. The works spoken about by which people will be

(63) Op.cit., p108

(64) Op.cit., p.109

judged are the works of faith. Good works are the result and not the cause of justification and sanctification. Berkouwer emphasises that judgment according to works refer to a judgment concerning faith and unbelief. "And since the intimacy between faith and grace, between faith and its possession, from the background of all warning and exhortation, the judgment according to works is, in the most profound sense, a judgment concerning faith and unbelief. This is always the measuring rod in the judgment according to works. Christ speaks of the hypocrites of whom Isaiah prophesied: 'This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me' (Matt 15:7). The words of people are put under the critical norm of Him who knows the inner recesses of the heart." (65)

To think of the judgment according to works as the cause and not the result of justification and sanctification is to go astray to the Roman Catholic camp. There is no alternative way of salvation apart from that of faith in Christ. "And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household' (Acts 16:31)" The biblical picture of the judgment according to works never indicate the existence of an alternative way of salvation, another way than sola fide. The payment on the basis of works is definitely in conflict with all antinomianism, but not at all with justification by faith." (66)

(65) Op.cit., p.109

(66) Op.cit., p.111

(ii) Humility and obedience of the Law: Man having been justified by faith does not do away with the law but looks at it from a new perspective in his sanctification. As a child of God he desires to obey Him not out of fear but out of love for the gracious Father. The believers do not live by the law but by the Spirit who works in them to obey the Lord God and to conform to His will. A delight in the law is the result of justification and the obedience to it is a sign of sanctification. Berkouwer with approval refers to Calvin who speaks of the law as an excellent instrument for believers in guiding them to the conformity of God's will. " Calvin brings this out with great clarity in his discussion of the third use of the law. He talks about the faithful 'in whose hearts the law of God is inscribed by the finger of God so that they are inclined by the direction of the Spirit to obey Him, these, says Calvin, 'find the law an excellent instrument to give them day to day, a better and more certain understanding of the divine will to which they aspire and to confirm them in the knowledge of it.'"(67)

It is the Holy Spirit in man during his sanctification that aids him to obey God's law. Without justification and sanctification in which the Holy Spirit is at work, man cannot have an inclination to obey God's law. The pursuit of holiness and the conformity to God's will in aspiring to obey God's commandments are the result of justification. Berkouwer says that Calvin believes that the inward promptitude to obey the law is inspired by the Holy Spirit making a believer incline to listen to the commandments of God and help him to get a better

(67) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, p166

understanding of the divine will.(68)

The justified man does not now look at the law as something which may get him to heaven, but as a guide to God's will. His justification by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law opens his eyes to see the true work of the law for a believer. In his obedience to the law he does not depend on his own efforts but on the gracious mercy of the Lord because he knows for certain that he cannot get anywhere on his own. "The believer no longer tries to sail heavenwards on clouds of self-righteousness. Having found anchorage in the righteousness of Christ, he has every reason to render obedience to God's laws. In this new obedience the law receives again its original function, a function no longer conceivable in abstraction from the grace of God. For now the commandments are to the believer the gracious guidance of the saviour - God."(69)

Justification and sanctification are not enemies of the law, for the observance of the law by a believer results from his relationship with Christ. He who is redeemed from the misery and works of the Devil, in gratitude to the Lord God, conducts himself in a manner relevant to God's love. "Calvin stresses that the words 'I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage' must be considered as a preface to the whole law. He exhibits a promise of grace, to allure them by its charms to the pursuit of holiness. He reminds the Israelites of his favour, to convict them of ingratitude if they do not conduct

(68) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, p166

(69) Op.cit., p175

themselves in a manner correspondent to his goodness."(70)

Love for the neighbour is never against the law but is its fulfilment, and a justified man exhibits his sanctification in living in love for God and for his fellow man. The gospel of Christ is the gospel of love and Berkouwer maintains that a believer is not above the law but is "under the law of Christ"(1 Cor. 9 : 21) and has to fulfil it in love because the gospel does not militate against the law but it does oppose all the nomistic interpretations given to the law by the Jews. It always insists that love fulfils the law.(Rom. 13:10) and not that the believers are exempt from it. Paul opposed the Jewish abstraction of the law by which it was made a doorway to salvation.(71)

Justification and sanctification by faith in Christ puts man in the right perspective of life. He is a man who lives in love for others and takes life seriously and the inner and outer aspect of his life are unitedly developed. Justification by faith makes a man different. "In true faith the inner and outer aspect of life are harmoniously developed. The law drives the believer out into the world - to his neighbours, to his poor brother and sister (James 2 : 25), to his enemy, to his brother in prison, to the hungry and thirsty ones; and thrusts him into contact, for good or for ill, with earthly gods, marriage, and civil authority."(72)

(70) Op.cit., p167

(71) Op.cit., p173

(72) Op.cit., p192

The knowledge that a justified man has that he has been freely justified by God through faith in Christ, keeps him humble before God for self-praise and pride do not belong to justification and sanctification. The saints treat themselves unworthy of the gracious love of God and they do not despise others who are different from them. "This sense of unworthiness is genuine; it does not spring from a humility induced by divine grace. It is the humility of the returning prodigal: 'I am not worthy to be called thy son'. One is struck everywhere by the powerful sense of present unworthiness. Truly these men, who would glory, gloried in the Lord."(73)

Humility is definitely one of the results of justification and sanctification. Anyone that is justified by faith realises through the work of the Holy Spirit in him, that he is nothing on his own. This humility works as a sign of man's sanctification. He does not treat himself free from sin but on the contrary, he confesses that he is a sinner. "The believer, who understands his justification and views his life against the backdrop of Divine grace, will gain a deeper knowledge of his own sinfulness. When Peter, stupified by the wonderful catch of fish, confronts the goodness of his Master, he cries out : "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord! (Luke 5 : 8)".(74)

Every success in life a justified man experiences is attributed to the Lord and he gives him thanks for it and in this we see that it is impossible to separate humility from true justification and sanctification.

(73) Op.cit., p129

(74) Op.cit., p67

4. ELECTION, THE BASIS OF MAN'S SALVATION.

The doctrine of election has been approached differently by Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer. Calvin approaches it through the divine decree while Barth, criticising Calvin of approaching election through the decretum absolutum(75) and robbing it of the message of comfort, has approached it through Jesus Christ as both the electing God and the elected man. His doctrine of election is objective throughout. Berkouwer is more Calvinistic in his doctrine of election than Barth, but he too avoids approaching the doctrine through God's decree as separate from Christ.

Berkouwer's view of election will be discussed here, and the problem of rejection or of the non-elect will also be discussed and the solution Berkouwer comes up with will be shown. The perseverance of the elect and the certainty of salvation as connected with election will be dealt with as a conclusion of the doctrine of election.

a. Election in Christ.

Berkouwer first deals with election without reference to rejection and his election is said to have been due to God's love for people which he has shown them in Christ. Election is founded in God but it is shown and executed by and in Christ. It is wrong to take Christ as the foundation and cause of election because this would contradict Scripture which explicitly says that God acts in Christ in reconciling the world to himself

(75) Karl Barth, C D II/2. p158

(2 Cor. 5 : 19). "However, we are confronted with the fact that especially from the Reformed side sharp criticism has arisen against the idea that Christ is the foundation of election, although these men certainly do not want to disparage the Scriptural testimonies regarding God's election in Christ. The motivation for this criticism is clear. The concern of the Reformed view is that Christ should not be called the 'foundation' and the cause of election as if divine election were motivated by Christ's act."(76)

Another reason Berkouwer gives for refusing to take Christ as a foundation of election is that Christ did not come from heaven to save people on his own, but He was given to them by God to show them God's gracious love. The Reformed theologians regard Christ as a gift of love from the Father and this love precedes the sending of the Son. Since the Son did not move the Father to forgiveness, He cannot be the foundation of election.(77)

Berkouwer does not agree with Barth that Calvin speaks of an abstract decree of God detached from history because by the phrase 'mirror of election' he is referring to Christ as the certainty of salvation. Calvin does not speak of an abstract, merciless and lifeless decree. It is a decree connected with the love of God which He has shown in Christ. "Calvin did not humanise God's counsel, and thereby render unintelligible the Scriptural declaration that Herod and

(76) G C Berkouwer, The Divine Election. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960, p135
 (77) Op.cit., p136

Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel did 'whatever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass' (Acts 4 : 28)."(78)

The election in Christ which is by God's decree, does not depend on works of man, but rules out all man's merits. It is not even based on faith since it goes back to before the foundation of the world when man was not there. "Even though the exegesis of Ephesians 1 : 4 emphasises the exclusion of all merit by mentioning the name of Christ, that certainly does not mean that His name is mentioned only to illustrate and accentuate the merciful election of God. Rather, election in Christ rules out all merit because it is election in Christ, so that also this passage confronts us with the electing counsel of God which is not based on works (cf. Rom. 9 : 11)."(79)

Election in Christ is an election not based on what man will do or be like. It does not mean that the elect are already saints and neither is their future faith taken into consideration here. In dealing with election in Christ with reference to Ephesians 1 : 4 and to the Canons of Dort, Berkouwer emphasises the sovereign decree of election as associated with the Mediator. He does not see an abstract decree of election in the Canons of Dort but instead he finds out that the Canons speak of election in connection with Christ who was appointed from eternity the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation of salvation.(80)

(78) Op.cit., p140

(79) Op.cit., p143

(80) Op.cit., p145

There is no separation between God's decree and Christ in the doctrine of election because God's decision for man is revealed in Christ. The salvation that God has decreed for man is fixed in Christ since man was elected in Him before the foundation of the world. Berkouwer here agrees with both Calvin and Barth with some correction of Barth's view towards Calvin. "All salvation is anchored in Christ. There is not a separate, sovereign decree followed by the love of God as the way of its realisation because one cannot say anything regarding this decree without speaking of Jesus Christ."(81)

The importance of election in Christ is so great that from the foundation of the world to the day of judgment Christ is at the centre of man's plan in Christ, and Berkouwer, siding with Calvin, accuses Barth of misinterpreting Calvin that he cuts Christ off from election and treats Him merely as a mirror. Calvin takes Christ seriously and he does not isolate Him from God's election. "The situation, then, is quite different from that presented by Barth, and we must conclude that his objection stems from his own opinion regarding Christ as the basis for the realisation of election. Therefore we ought not to conclude our discussion of Barth's view with a defence of an abstract sovereignty-decree - without the divine love - but with a closer reflection on the relation between Christ and the election of God."(82)

(81) Op.cit. p147; cf. Karl Barth, C D II/2, pp191 - 192

(82) G C Berkouwer, The Divine Election, p156; cf.

Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, p96

God's eternal decree is linked with Christ and it is not possible to speak of the decree of God without at the same time looking at Christ as the mirror of election that gives people the certainty of their salvation. Berkouwer does not hesitate to say that God has carried out His election decree in Christ. He says that he would agree with Barth if he had warned against the separation of God from election. "We ourselves have pointed out the abstraction and rejected it because it is contrary to Scripture especially to Eph. 1 : 4. If Barth had intended to warn exclusively against that abstraction, we could have no objection whatsoever. Pointing at the mirror of election cannot be a pastoral escape; it must be founded in the revelation of God's election."(83)

Berkouwer works out his doctrine of election in such a way that he defends both Calvin and the Reformed tradition from the accusation of Barth. In Barth's opinion Calvin and the Reformed tradition have left out Christ in the doctrine of election. As a result they have left the concrete means of election and have clung to the abstract decree of God leaving out that which matters most. For this reason they have depreciated the scriptural testimony in election. "Evidently, therefore, the discussion of Barth's doctrine of election cannot be concerned with a defence of the abstract over against the concrete, of the sovereignty of God over against love; rather, we suggest that classical Reformed theology has been aware that this interpretation of election depreciates Biblical testimony. To be sure, in the historical situation the sovereignty of election was

(83) G C Berkouwer, The Divine Election, p154

repeatedly - and correctly - emphasised."(84)

Christ as the mirror of election, election in Christ and election according to God's eternal decree means one thing to Berkouwer. For this reason Barth's criticism against Calvin's mirror of election as not taking Christ seriously in man's election is denied. He does not think Barth is right to say the mirror of election cannot bring a comforting message to the people because the mirror points to Jesus Christ, the way of salvation. "The confession that Christ is speculum electionis is a glorious and inviolable objective reality, but it is a confession which does not render that way of belief superfluous; rather it points at that way so that we can follow it. If Barth's argument is that the consoling pastoral message misses its ontic foundation, we must reply that it is rather Barth's doctrine of election with its universality that evokes the problem which Barth thinks the Reformation left unanswered."(85)

Berkouwer, like Barth and Calvin, stresses God's free election as based on God's sovereign grace. This election is of the triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He speaks of the election of the triune God to avoid the notion that election was decreed by God apart from Christ and to show that the Holy Spirit is as much involved in man's salvation as is the Father and the Son. He refers to this teaching in the well-known Latin phrase as the pactum salutis. "The doctrine of the pactum salutis points to the eternal and solid foundation of salvation in the trinitarian love of God

(84) Op.cit., pp154 - 155

(85) Op.cit., p161

for man. The concept of the pactum salutis indicates an analogy which underlies the absolutely harmonious economy of salvation."(86)

He thinks that the teaching of eternal election through the participation of the triune God reflects the riches of God's full love and the phrase pactum salutis should be stripped off of all human analogy to avoid humanising the counsel of God. "Speaking dogmatically, we must delimit the boundaries of the analogy in order to indicate in the concept of the pactum that reality of the work of redemption which has its foundation in the union of Father, Son and Holy Spirit: the mystery of the Servant of the Lord."(87)

Although Berkouwer does not accept Barth's criticism against Calvin and the Reformed tradition of presenting an abstract view of God's decree of election, he accepts this abstraction to have taken place in history. He too, like Barth, regards the abstraction as a continuous danger to election and he would like it to be avoided. However, he is of the opinion that man's election in Christ by the triune God does not show a decree to be abstract.(88)

b. Election and Rejection.

Berkouwer does not speak of man's rejection as coming inevitably from God's decree. He tries as much as possible not to place it in an equal position side by

(86) Op.cit., p161

(87) Op.cit., pp169 - 170

(88) Op.cit., p171

side with election because he thinks rejection is man's own making. God is love and he rejects no-one except on the ground of man's own sin and unbelief. Rejection does not arise until unbelief arises in man. If there is unbelief and God rejects man because of it, it is man's own fault. "For all preparation for damnation comes from the devil and from man, from sin and not at all from God who does not want one person to be damned: how, then, would He prepare a man for damnation."(89)

Interpreting election by placing it side by side with rejection as a double predestination is dangerous to the life of the Church for it may end up in losing its members. Berkouwer does not think that double predestination speaks of parallelism between life and death. He says that the Reformed teaching does not place side by side election and rejection on an equal basis. He, like Barth, feels that the gospel is devalued when rejection is put side by side with election.(90)

Berkouwer, unlike Calvin whom he follows, bases rejection on sin and unbelief. Therefore reprobation comes from man and the devil. He refuses to put election and reprobation on the same level as both coming from God's decree as does Calvin.(91) One sees that Berkouwer's definition of the comprehensiveness of God's decree comes into conflict with the views of his orthodox colleagues. He departs from Calvin and the Reformed tradition here because he wants to purge the

(89) Op.cit., p39

(90) Op.cit., p174; see also p173

(91) Fred H Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p57

confession of election from deterministic connotations such as those implied or contained in the concept of reprobation. "Berkouwer does not believe that sin or the destiny of the reprobate can be placed in the will of God in any causative sense. This conviction has caused Berkouwer to become increasingly more antagonistic to the traditional doctrine of reprobation."(92)

Berkouwer says that the Canons of Dordt are right to differentiate election from rejection and to regard sin and unbelief as the cause of man's rejection and to regard faith and salvation as God's gift to man. He says that it is important to note that the Canons reinforce the point of view of the epilogue in the body of the text when they say that the cause or guilt of this unbelief and all other sins, is not in God, but in man himself. They unhesitatingly treat faith and salvation as the free gift of God.(93)

Man is the cause of his own rejection while God is the source of election because all men have sinned and plunge themselves into damnation, but God because of His gracious love has picked out some for salvation from the mass of perdition. He refers to the Canons of Dordt 1,6 for support which he thinks should be interpreted in an infralapsarian way. "But when we read 1,6, we see that it directs our attention to the acts of God in the life of man. He softens man's heart and bends it to faith, but other hearts He leaves in their sin and

(92) Alvin L Baker, Berkouwer's Doctrine of Election, Balance or Imbalance?, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1981, p115

(93) G C Berlouwer, The Divine Election, p180

stubbornness. Unless we want to interpret the Canons in a supralapsarian manner - which is impossible - we shall have to interpret this as a connection which is laid between sinfulness and stubbornness on the one hand, and the judicial acts of God on the other hand, not in the sense that either belief or unbelief become an independent and autonomous power over against the counsel of God, but in the sense that the non-granting is evidently meant as the judicial act of God towards man in sin."(94)

In this way Berkouwer finds the cause of reprobation outside God and he sounds more Augustinian although Calvin sometimes speaks in such a way as to imply the absence of double predestination. After all people fell; God through His mercy rescued some leaving others in their sin and stubbornness for destruction.(95) He denies that God has predestined some people to damnation without reference to their sins. He says that in the Canons the thought is rejected that God by a mere arbitrary act of His will, without the least reference to any sin, has foreordained the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation and that He had created them for that reason.(96)

Berkouwer has seen that Calvin too struggles with the problem of the cause of God's rejection of man, but the conclusion he makes does not agree with Calvin who does not avoid saying that rejection (reprobation) has been decreed by God. Calvin now and again points to the

(94) Op.cit., pp180 - 181

(95) Inst. 3:23:3

(96) G G Berkouwer, The Divine Election, p182; cf. p214

actual situation of sinful man before God. We see that God's predestination does not take away man's responsibility for sin. However, Calvin recognises God's absolute predestination and Berkouwer is quite aware of it.(97)

Berkouwer knows that according to Calvin, man's rejection is from both God and man and that Calvin does not hesitate to say that God predestined some to election and others to damnation, but he does not want to follow Calvin that far and he chooses his own way. The ultimate cause of rejection in Calvin is God's sovereign will while the approximate cause of man's condemnation aspect of rejection (reprobation) is man's own sin.(98) In this way both election and reprobation are equally ultimate and are both predestined by God.

Berkouwer thinks that by denying the equality of rejection and election he is in agreement with the Reformed tradition as far as Calvin and the Reformed Confessions are concerned. He does not deny the real existence of rejection but he pays more attention to election rather than to rejection. "We are confronted with the same questions when we consider that in the Confessions of the Reformed churches by far the greatest attention is paid to the election of God. There is not a trace of possibility that here election and rejection are placed parallel to each other as a twofoldness of the one divine causality. What Jacobs says of Calvin (that in his preaching and commentaries the election of

(97) Op.cit., p186

(98) Fred H Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p75

God is repeatedly discussed, while rejection is not mentioned), can be said with as much validity of the Reformed Confessions."(99)

Reprobation which is man's cause, is revealed in God's election which is free, without any slightest cause coming from man's merits. All those that do not believe in Christ, are left in their own sins for eternal damnation while those that believe in Christ have eternal life. Faith and obedience are not the cause of election but they are the means of salvation foreordained by God. Reprobation which is connected with unbelief and disobedience is not, according to Berkouwer, foreordained by God, but is foreseen and permitted in the reprobate as the meritorious cause of their desertion and damnation.(100)

Berkouwer says that God should not be charged of being the cause of rejection simply because of what is read in Romans 9 - 11. What is said there should not lead one to the conclusion that man's actions are no longer of significance and take God as the cause of all things. Romans 9 - 11 is misunderstood when one explains these chapters deterministically for that would be reading into them a system of cosmology whereby every activity is deduced from God as the prime cause. This would result in making human activity of no significance. Paul does not try to give us such a concept of God in the epistle to the Romans.(101)

(99) G C Berkouwer, Divine Election, p195

(100) Op.cit., p197

(101) Op.cit., p211

Berkouwer wants to make Calvin agree with him in taking man's rejection as not coming from God's decree. He regards God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart as Pharaoh's own hardening and God's act serves only as a permission of Pharaoh's self-hardening. Hence God's rejection of Pharaoh is the result of Pharaoh's self rejection.(102) Berkouwer having failed to take Calvin to his side on reprobation, he concludes that many people, him inclusive, no longer agree with Calvin's exegesis of Romans 9 : 22. Here he refers mainly to the phrase "fitted unto destruction" which are often mentioned in connection with the problem of symmetry and parallelism.(103)

c.Election and Certainty of Salvation.

Election and certainty of salvation go hand in hand because the elect is taken out of the mass of perdition and is therefore saved. The problem here is how one knows for certain that he is elected and therefore saved. Berkouwer says that there are signs by which one may recognise one's election. He emphasises that wherever salvation happens, there should be signs which are not separated from the salvific work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. "For a correct insight into salvation we need not only a Christological, but also a pneumatological point of view, especially in connection with the matter of certainty. Precisely in this connection the significance of the signs come at once to

(102) Alvin L Baker, Berkouwer's Doctrine of Election, Balance or Imbalance?, p147

(103) G C Berkouwer, Divine Election, pp213 - 214

the foreground."(104)

He thinks that man's good works may serve as signs for the certainty of one's election provided they are connected with faith. He refers to the Heidelberg Catechism where he finds the teaching that one's assurance of election is expressed in good works. The Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 32) speaks of the necessity of good works. In addition to the motives of gratitude and of winning others for Christ in doing good works, it mentions one's assurance of his faith by the fruits thereof.(105)

Man may be able to reach the certainty of election through faith in Christ. His love for God and a godly sorrow for sin are positive signs. He is able to find out the assurance of his election because it has fruits which man may be able to observe. Berkouwer refers to the Canons of Dordt 12 where infallible fruits of election are pointed out to be "true faith in Christ, filiar fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc."(106)

Niesel rejects that Calvin teaches that the certainty of election comes from man's works, although they may be works of faith. However, Berkouwer with reference to Barth for support accuses Niesel of misinterpreting Calvin.(107) He wants the support of Calvin in his teaching the syllogismus practicus as the assurance of

(104) Op.cit., p284

(105) Op.cit., p284

(106) Op.cit., p285

(107) Op.cit., pp289 - 290

one's election and he gets it since Calvin rejects an incorrect application of the syllogismus practicus as it later came to be called. "Berkouwer does not substitute the syllogismus practicus for faith in Christ as the foundation for certainty of salvation. He, like Calvin, is committed to Christ as the 'mirror of election'. He believes that a sound understanding of the syllogismus practicus does not imply a second foundation but, instead, implies the realisation of sanctification in everyday life."(108)

The aim of Berkouwer is to combine good works, as a result of faith, and witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers to be the assurance of election. He denies good works by themselves to be the sign of one's election. However, he does not want to go this way as departing from Calvin's teaching. Therefore he emphasises that the certainty of man's salvation is in Christ but the man in Christ undergoing sanctification cannot live a fruitless life and his salvation has to be manifested through good works. With Barth beside and Calvin in front, Berkouwer goes ahead with the syllogismus practicus as a sign of one's election. He says that Barth maintains the coherence between man's election in Christ and the reality of Christ's work in man through the Holy Spirit to be the syllogismus practicus. Thus Berkouwer should be understood to distinguish the meaning of the term from any form of man's self-analysis outside of faith.(109)

(108) Alvin L Baker, Berkouwer's Doctrine of Election, Balance or Imbalance?, pp162 - 163

(109) G C Berkouwer, Divine Election, p164

This shows that Berkouwer does not emphasise good works though associated with faith as the assurance of man's election. He finds that the real assurance of one's election is the Holy Spirit, and the assurance of election through good works comes in only as the result of the Holy Spirit working in man. ".... the whole problem of the syllogismus practicus is connected with and originates from the Biblical connection between justification and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. We really need not be divided regarding the connection between the Christological and the pneumatological point of view."(110)

Both the Heidelberg Gatechism and the Canons of Dordt refer to the Holy Spirit and to good works as the assurance of one's election. So Berkouwer here with reference to the Bible, to Calvin, Barth and to the Reformed tradition, is standing on strong ground in his understanding of the syllogismus practicus as the assurance of one's election and of one's certainty of salvation. He also refers to the Canons of Dordt V,10 where we read that the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God and that this is manifested in the performance of good works.(111)

Justification and sanctification by faith does not lead one to pride and self-praise, which is the case with the syllogismus practicus since the work performed by man is due to grace and power of the Holy Spirit.(112) The

(110) Op.cit. p295; cf. Alvin L Baker, Berkouwer's Doctrine of Election, Balance or Imbalance?, p164

(111) Op.cit., p301

(112) Op.cit., p303

sylogismus practicus Berkouwer speaks about, refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Election, justification and sanctification are connected with man's assurance of election and this is testified by the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. Since salvation is by faith, good works which are its fruits are signs of man's election but not apart from the assurance obtained from the Spirit. The Holy Spirit acts as a pledge that a believer's full salvation due to him through election is assured.

5. ESCHATOLOGICAL NATURE OF MAN'S SALVATION

Man's salvation begins when he believes in Jesus Christ (Acts 16 : 31), although he is already elected for eternal life before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1 : 4). This salvation involves man's past, present and future and is not limited only to one part of time. This does not mean that one should speak of half salvation but in man's salvation there is always room for its future aspect because although one is saved from temptations, he is still tempted, of sin, he still sins and of death, he will still die although that death is an entrance into eternal life (Heidelberg Catechism Q.42). Salvation is not begun and completed at once. "Here is an ultimate goal to which the dealings of God are directed. Through the riches of salvation already given it is possible to speak of fulness; yet in this fulness there is room for a broad future-perspective. According to God's plan (oikonomia - Eph. 1 : 10), there

is a final fulfilment, a completion of salvation."(113)

Berkouwer speaks of the present salvation as lived through the power of the Holy Spirit who keeps the believer as the child of God. This present salvation is imperfect and is full of tension because as man is still in this body, he is away from the Lord (2 Cor. 5 : 6) and he is saved only in hope (Rom. 8 : 24). Such type of salvation requires fulfilment and before the Lord comes there is still lack of its wholeness in the experience of the believer. "The community of believers is in a constant state of activity, a proceeding toward a goal, a pilgrimage full of tension and imperfection, all of which is summed up by the phrase 'not yet'. To be sure, the community is graced by the presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6 : 19) who has brought renewal (Titus 3 : 5), freedom (2 Cor. 3 : 17), and sonship (Rom. 8 : 14). But this fulfilment is not a conclusion in itself; it is a perspective on the future, a house with open windows."(114)

In the soteriology of Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer the Holy Spirit plays a big role not only in the relationship between Word and Spirit but also in justification and sanctification and in the eschatological nature of salvation. Berkouwer, like Calvin, refers to the believer's calling 'Abba, Father' through the Holy Spirit who testifies with the believer's spirit that the Christian is the child of

(113) G C Berkouwer, The Return of Christ, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co. tr. James van Oosterom 1972, p111

(114) Op.cit., p113

God. Although the believer is saved and thus called the child of God yet he is not like Christ at present. He will be like Him in the future and for this reason he is still on the way of his salvation (1 John 3 : 2). It is through the Holy Spirit that believers recognise God as Father and therefore they become heirs of God through Christ (Gal. 4 : 17). Paul is understood by Berkouwer as being very emphatic in saying that sonship is not something fragmentary, but rather something indissolubly bound up with the eschatological inheritance of the saints. The unbreakable bond of believers with Christ is the fruit of God's grace to which faith is oriented both now and for the future.(115)

Berkouwer says that the believer lives in communion with the Lord through the Holy Spirit who acts as a pledge that his salvation, which has begun to live now will certainly be fully lived in future. However, the Spirit does not make the believer satisfied with this foretaste of salvation but instead he makes him desire more for the coming of the Lord. The future aspect of salvation is not a denial of the present one but the two are interrelated. "We have, says Paul, the first fruits of the Spirit and therefore we groan within ourselves, waiting for an adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8 : 23). These first fruits reveal to us the partial and temporary nature of our present condition. The adoption of the future is not a denial of the adoption of the present; the two are twins."(116)

(115) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Perseverance, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1958, p207

(116) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, p110

The believer expects his full salvation when Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, when "he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25 : 32). Before that day comes salvation is not complete. The Church throughout its history has spoken of the present and future salvation of man and its fulness to be after the return of Christ. The present believer lives in conflict not only with temptations and sin but also with suffering of different kinds. Before death, resurrection and judgment salvation remains partial. The Christian Church basing its teaching on both the Apostles and Nicene Creeds, confesses that Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. This gives a true reflection of the teaching of the New Testament. Paul has written that Christ will judge the living and the dead (2 Tim. 4 : 1) (117)

Death marks a boundary between this life of tension and the life to come. This makes the believer who is dead different from the living believer. The difference is that the former is now free from temptations, sin and suffering, although he too like the living believer still waits for the fulness of salvation because he has not risen from the dead and passed through judgment. "In death, as well as in life, the individual's expectation is still typified by the 'not yet' of the unfulfilled condition. But these two unfulfilled conditions are not identical : the earthly one is filled with sorrow and struggle, guilt and the threats characteristic of life on earth."(118)

(117) G C Berkouwer, The Return of Christ, p155

(118) Op.cit., p62

What Berkouwer says agrees with Calvin's teaching that once a believer dies he is not any more identical with the living for he experiences bliss and salvation which the living hopes to see. However, he does not enjoy God's full blessedness before resurrection. Calvin does not identify the expectation in the intermediate state with that of the believer on earth. The believer on earth lives by faith and not by sight seeing dimly what is ahead of him, whereas in death, the believer sees what he has long expected. Full rest and salvation are inseparably connected to resurrection.(119)

Berkouwer refuses to speak of a believer's full salvation after death. Although death releases one from the struggle with sin and suffering, it does not bring one to the fulness of salvation because the time between death and resurrection is still a time of waiting. One can speak of bliss and salvation as does Calvin in his teaching of the intermediate state, but there is something lacking in this state that one cannot speak of complete blessedness. "Calvin's stress on the bliss and salvation does not contradict his description of what was lacking. He prefers to connect these two themes of salvation and expectation. After death one sees the goal one expects, though this has not yet been achieved."(120)

One should not speak of full salvation after one's death because this notion conflicts with both the biblical teaching and the Church's Confession of experiencing full salvation after the resurrection of the body.

(119) Op.cit., p50

(120) Op.cit., p50

However, Berkouwer notes that the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of death as the entrance into eternal life (Q.42), but he says this does not mean that eternal life is had in full before the resurrection of the body. He emphasises that in the intermediate state there is still a tension of the 'already' and the 'not yet' of salvation. "Apparently, there is also a kind of precursoryness in the doctrine of the intermediate state. As in life, so in death, there is tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. At the same time we must recognise that the precursory element of the intermediate state differs from that of earthly life, since with respect to the intermediate state, we explicitly speak of 'salvation' which will be obtained only in the hereafter."(121)

The believers that are dead experience peace and rest which the living do not experience. Therefore, even if there is a tension of the 'already' and 'not yet' of salvation the experience of the believers that are dead is not the same as that of the living believers although both await the return of the Lord. "Thus for Calvin the whole intermediate state is focussed on the expectation of what is to come - Christ's coming. His position on the intermediate state may be summed up as being concentrated in blessedness, and expectation. There is no irreconcilable tension or dualism in Calvin's presentation, He speaks of blessedness, salvation and peace, but only in dependence upon the final resurrection of the dead, in anticipation of 'the happiest thing of all' (Inst. 3:9:5)."(122)

(121) Op.cit., p47

(122) Op.cit., p49

Salvation is complete after all the enemies of man are defeated including death itself and this will be seen in the resurrection of the body which will publicly demonstrate the powerlessness of death over man. Full salvation lies in the future in the final triumph when death as the last enemy will be dethroned, when the mortal will become immortal, the perishable imperishable (1 Cor. 15 : 26,53). Only then when death will be swallowed up in victory will salvation be complete.(123)

The present heavens and earth will be renewed for the habitation of the new man. Man will no longer have the corruptible quality of his body for it will be swallowed up by the incorruptible one. His body will be ruled by the Spirit and is thus called spiritual. "This spiritual body of the future is a matter of the gift and power of the resurrection of Christ. It involves a perspective concerning reality that is wholly dominated by the Spirit - the pneuma. In Rom. 8 : 11 Paul makes a direct parallel between the resurrection of the mortal body and the Spirit who dwells in the believers. The expectation is directed to glorification through the Spirit of Christ. The 'spiritual body' does not have to do with what we sometimes call 'spiritualizing.'"(124)

The Reformed teaching is that there will not be a totally new earth and new heavens but that the present ones will undergo cleansing in order to be fit for the coming Kingdom of Christ. New earth and heaven and the new man point to a complete salvation but until then man is still on a pilgrimage towards the eternal life.

(123) Op.cit., p192

(124) Op.cit., p192

"Reformed theology has been particularly inclined to walk this way. Calvin, for example, in his commentary on 2 Peter 3 : 10, distinguishes between substance and quality. The cleansing of heavens and earth 'so that they may be fit for the Kingdom of Christ' is not a matter of annihilation, but a judgment in which something will remain. The things will be consumed 'only in order to receive a new quality while their substance remain the same.'"(125)

Berkouwer says that when all will be renewed man will experience the unique realm of peace and righteousness and God will be all in all. The complete absence of the focus of evil and the domination of the power of light is a witness of the presence of man's salvation. The realm of peace that will exist in the new heavens and the new earth will be in complete contrast to what presently exists on this earth. What disrupts life in this age will not exist there, for justice will prevail and replace the forces and spiritual powers that now manage the affairs on earth.(126)

The absence of the evil forces will be due to God's judgment and Christ's presence and after judgment will be passed, all evil will be condemned. There will not be any evil forces at all in the new earth and the new heavens, for salvation means absence of man's enemies. "The hour and day of the parousia is not an event unrelated to life on earth: it is the hour of giving account (1 Peter 4 : 5). On that occasion what really happened on earth will become manifest. We might refer

(125) Op.cit., p192

(126) Op.cit., p212

to it as an eschatological crisis, in which the deepest reality and ultimate direction of mankind will be revealed, for man, revealed before Christ's judgment seat, will 'receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body' (2 Cor. 5 : 10)."(127)

Berkouwer's view on the eschatological nature of salvation does not agree with that of Barth in many respects. The latter's view of man's future judgment is that which Christ has already experienced on the cross. Man will not face future judgment because Christ has borne it for him. His view of the resurrection of the body is verbal and not real and there is no continuation of life after death except in that God lives man's eternal life.(128) Berkouwer agrees with Barth only in that the believer experiences everlasting life in the present through the Holy Spirit. "The everlasting life points to the goal of the resurrection. Man is promised 'perfect blessedness.' But the 'beginning' of eternal joy is already given him here, because in the Holy Spirit he is bound to Jesus Christ and may live united with him."(129)

Berkouwer, as it has already been shown in this section, follows Calvin and the Reformed tradition in his concept of the eschatological nature of salvation and he does not quote Barth either to support or clarify his ideas on man's attainment of full salvation. For any clarification or support for his ideas he refers to the Bible, Calvin and the Reformed Confessions. This may imply that he does not agree with Barth on the subject.

(127) Op.cit., p156

(128) Karl Barth, C D III/2, p632

(129) Karl Barth, Heidelberg Catechism for Today, p89

CHAPTER IV : AN EVALUATION OF THE SOTERIOLOGICAL VIEWS
OF CALVIN, BARTH AND BERKOUWER.

1. Common objectives in the soteriological views of
Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer.

Although Barth and Berkouwer are not contemporaries of Calvin, they have the same ideas in some aspects of soteriology with them. They, like Calvin, take Scripture as the source for the doctrine of salvation. They emphasise that the source of salvation is God through Jesus Christ and that man is saved by grace through faith. They and Calvin speak strongly against the Roman Catholic teaching that man co-operates with God in attaining salvation because man is incapable of saving himself.(1) Their emphasis on the teaching that salvation is appropriated by grace through faith alone, is the teaching of the Reformers against the Roman Catholic Church. The latter teaches that salvation is obtained by grace plus man's works. Grace alone does not effect salvation.(2)

The main and common object of the three theologians is to maintain the Reformed teaching of salvation. Any student of Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer will detect that these theologians in preserving and fostering Reformed soteriology are strongly opposing the Roman Catholic

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- (1) Inst.3:14:5; Karl Barth, G D II/2,p95; G C Berkouwer Faith and Sanctification,p27
- (2) Creeds of the Churches, Editor John H Leith,Atlanta John Knox press, Revised edition 1973 421:cf L G Muller. "Purgatory" in Theology Digest 34:1 Spring,1987),p34

view of salvation at the same time. The main area of their teaching where one will notice that these theologians oppose the Roman Catholic view of salvation, is on the doctrine of justification which the first assembly of the World Council of Churches recognised as the aspect that constitutes the deepest difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches.(3)

Calvin Barth and Berkouwer concentrate their opposition against the Roman Catholic view of salvation in rejecting that works have a part to play in man's salvation. Man does not contribute anything towards his salvation because it is obtained by grace apart from works. Man's good works are not done with an intention to win God's favour so that by seeing man's good works salvation may be meted out. Salvation is not paid out as a payment for works done. No man prepares himself to receive God's grace and man's genuine movement towards God's Word or to do good is initiated by God, and cannot for this reason be called man's preparation for God's justifying grace,(4)

The three theologians insist that man in his fallen state is incapable of doing anything good that would contribute towards his salvation. However, Calvin and Berkouwer (Barth's view of man's judgment is passed) say that at the Last Day God will judge man according to his works. The biblical teaching of judgment according to

(3) A E Mc Grath, "Justification: Barth, Trent and King" in: Scottish Journal of theology, vol134,1981,p517

(4) Inst 2:3:5; Karl Barth, C D IV/1 1746; G C Berkouwer Faith and Justification, p42.

works is accepted because man will not be judged according to his works in themselves apart from faith. "Judgment according to works, then, is not an analytical ethical judgment, but an infallible perception of works in their relation to faith."(5) This notion agrees with the definition of good works in the Heidelberg Catechism where it is stated that only those works which rise from true faith and aim at the honour of God are called good.

Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer do not understand the epistle of James as teaching that works have a role to play in man's salvation. Although James 2:24, which says "you see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone", is seen as ammunition for those who seek to demonstrate from Scripture that the Reformed teaching of faith alone is one-sided and partial, Barth and Berkouwer agree with Calvin in rejecting justification by works.(6)

The three theologians agree that love is greater than faith because it endures forever, while faith functions only temporarily in that when the Lord appears it will give way to sight. However, they assert that the excellence of love does not lie in that it justifies man, but in that it endures for ever(1Cor 13:8). If love justified, man would be justified by works rather than by God's grace through faith. When Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer speak about being justified by faith they do not mean that it merits righteousness for man by its

(5) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, p110; Irst 3:17:1

(6) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, p79 cf Karl Barth, IV/1, p631

worth, but because it works as an instrument by which people obtain free righteousness of Christ. Faith in itself apart from Christ has no value and cannot justify.(7)

2. Barth's and Berkouwer's views on election

The teaching of eternal election by Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer also emphasises the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ. Although justification occurs in time, it is rooted in the eternal election of God which does not depend on man's works but on God's grace alone.(8) The three theologians completely reject justification by works and highly exalt the grace of God in their teaching of eternal election. However, Barth and Berkouwer do not agree with Calvin on every aspect on the doctrine of election.

Barth and Berkouwer depart from Calvin on the doctrine of election on the aspect of reprobation. In Barth's view no one is rejected because rejection does not refer to individual people as such but to Christ. Christ suffered and died on the cross for all people and there is no reason that they should be rejected for their sins for which Christ has already suffered. Man's rejection is removed by Christ's rejection on the cross. Christ has taken rejection(reprobation) upon Himself which was meant for man and man is set free.(9)

(7) Inst 3:11:7; Karl Barth. C D IV/I,p74; G C

Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, p177

(8) G C Berkouwer, Divine Election, p140;Inst 3-22:5;

Karl Barth, C D II/2, p109

(9) Karl Barth, C D II/2, p167

Although Barth rejects universalism, his teaching of election reflects a universalistic trend. His doctrine of election is rejected by most Reformed theologians and the Roman Catholic Church because of his universalistic tendency towards man's salvation. It is for this reason that Barth's doctrine of salvation cannot be taken as a typical representation of Reformed theology. Barth's universalistic tendency is due to being so objectivistic in man's election that he ignores the subjective side. There is, if any, very little balance between the objective and the subjective view in his doctrine of election.(10) His emphasis on Jesus Christ as both the elect and the reprobate means that Barth's doctrine of election is not taught by the Reformed Church which regards election and reprobation as involving individual persons.

Berkouwer, unlike Barth, speaks of reprobation for all unbelievers as arising in time due to sin and unbelief and not arising from God's decree. His view of reprobation is not like that of Barth because while Barth says that it is removed for mankind by Christ's suffering and death on the cross, Berkouwer sees man as rejected because of his own sin and unbelief. Therefore reprobation in Berkouwer is man's own making. This fact is emphasised on the ground that God is love and does not condemn anyone except on the ground of sin and unbelief.(11) Berkouwer, therefore, joins hands with Barth on the rejection of double predestination as taught by Calvin who sees election lying side by side

(10) Donald G Bloesch, Jesus is Victor! Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation, pp10 and 32

(11) G C Berkouwer, Divine Election, p39

with reprobation in the decree of God. Although Berkouwer insists that the Reformed teaching bases reprobation on man's unbelief and sin and not on God's decree, his view is not acceptable because the Reformed doctrine of election, according to Calvin, is that eternal life and eternal damnation both arise from God's decree and are, therefore, predestined by God.(12)

Berkouwer is of the opinion that the concept of putting election side by side with reprobation arises from misunderstanding of Romans 9 - 11 where God is conceived as the prime cause of every activity. Berkouwer's refusal to put election side by side with reprobation is not justified and his appeal for support from the Reformed teaching should be rejected. Although the Canons of Dordt, First Head of Doctrine Article V, says that "The cause of guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins is no wise in God but in man himself", we read in Article VI "that some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree." The Canons of Dordt generally agree with the Reformed tradition and with Calvin who says "For all are not created in equal condition; rather eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or death."(13)

Since election took place before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1 : 4) and is not based on foreseen faith,

(12) Inst. 3:21:5; cf. F Klooster, Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination, p57

(13) Inst. 3:21:4

unbelief and sin that take place in time cannot be the cause of reprobation. The Reformed tradition is opposed to the teaching of Barth and Berkouwer on the doctrine of reprobation. Reprobation originating in time as God's reaction to sin and its not lying side by side with election in God's eternal decree, does not agree with the rejection of Esau before his birth. Whatever sin and unbelief Esau had in his life could not have influenced God before the foundation of the world to reject him. If God rejected Esau on the ground of sin and unbelief which took place in Esau's life, election could not be grounded in God's eternal decree and grace would not have that central position in election which all the three theologians give. The rejection of Esau before his birth has no connection with his sin and unbelief and to say that reprobation is often related to sin and unbelief apart from God's eternal decree, as Berkouwer asserts, is wrong.

3. THE STRANGE CONCEPT OF BARTH ABOUT THE ESCHATOLOGICAL NATURE OF SALVATION.

Barth's view of salvation does not only differ from Calvin and Berkouwer but, in fact, it differs from the teaching of the whole Christian Church. His view of the eschatological nature of salvation is quite strange. Although he speaks of man's salvation as begun in this life to be completed in the future at the coming of Christ, life for him does not continue after death. (14) The only future for man after death is that God will remember man as having lived in his God given time. It is man's being remembered before God as having lived

(14) Karl Barth, C D III/2, p589

what Barth calls man's eternal life. This means that man's eternal life is hidden in the eternal life of God because it is only God that is eternal.(15)

When a man dies that is the end of him and there is no hope of resurrection after death. Since Barth does not speak of any kind of life after death, that means both the physical and spiritual life of man ends with death. Man's only time of life is now and once he is dead, he is finished forever except that God will know that he had lived in his time.

It is doubtful whether Barth takes the second coming of Christ seriously. The belief that is cherished by the Christian Church that Christ will come to judge the living and the dead, is not applicable to Barth's faith because for him the judgment of man is already past. Although he speaks of Christ's second coming we should not understand him to mean what he says because if life after death does not continue and the resurrection of the dead and man's judgment are past, Christ's second coming has no meaning.(16)

Barth's view on the eschatological nature of salvation is not only strange to the Christian Church but it is also dangerous. The fact that there is no eternal life and eternal damnation for man and life after death does not continue, means that whatever evil goes unpunished in this life has escaped punishment forever. This notion of the eschatological nature of salvation of Barth, which in truth is no salvation for man but his

(15) C D III/2, pp632 and 633

(16) Karl Barth, C D III/2, p615

annihilation, opposes the notion that regards salvation as man's restoration to his primitive original state.

His view of salvation is neither based on, nor confirmed by Scripture, Church Confession or the Reformed teaching. His belief that life does not go beyond death does not even have parallel in the African traditional beliefs. Although African traditional religion would agree with Barth's view that there is no resurrection of the dead and judgment after death, it would not accept Barth's view that life ends with death. According to African traditional religious belief life does not end with death. The dead man continues to live in the world of the spirits with his brothers and sisters that had gone before him. Barth's view that only God lives eternal life for man and that the latter is annihilated by death cannot be accepted by most religions in the world.

Although other people may understand Barth differently, the truth that Barth denies the continuation of this life after death cannot be refuted.(17) Man's living in the eternal life of God not as an individual being but only in God's memory is not different from not living at all and it is wrong to equate this view of man's life after death with annihilation. Since there is no life after death for Barth, there is no salvation for man in his teaching as far as salvation means the restoration of man to his original state after the resurrection of the dead and judgment.

(17) J B Soucek, "Man in the Light of the Humanity of Jesus" in: Scottish Journal of Theology, March 1949, p81

Conclusion : Generally speaking the teaching of Barth does not agree with the Reformed tradition - on the nature and authority of Scripture, on the doctrine of election and on the eschatological nature of salvation for man. However, his teaching on justification by faith alone, the relation of Word and Spirit and his emphasis on Jesus Christ as the Saviour generally agrees with the teaching of Calvin and Berkouwer.

I appreciate the soteriology of Calvin and Berkouwer as it is based on Scripture and the Church tradition. Berkouwer, as has already been pointed out, is in agreement with the teaching of the Reformed Confessions which are based on Scripture and follow the teaching of Calvin.

The two theologians regard salvation as already begun in this life and is being experienced through the work of the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit that mediates salvation to man works as a pledge to all believers that the future fulfilment of this salvation is true

They both speak of the intermediate state after death which Barth does not refer to in his description of the eschatological nature of salvation for man. Those who die believing in Christ, enjoy blessedness but not in the manner they will enjoy it after the resurrection when the souls will be reunited with their bodies.

They reject the sleeping of the soul after death where life has no experience of joy. They also regard all that is said in Scripture concerning life after resurrection for both believers and unbelievers as described in symbols. Since their teaching of salvation is biblical

it should be regarded as representing the Reformed doctrine of salvation.

SECTION B

CHAPTER V: SALVATION IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE MALAWIAN CONTEXT

1. Belief in God

Religion, defined as a "belief in the existence of a supernatural ruling power, the creator and controller of the universe, who has given to man a spiritual nature which continues to exist after death of the body." (1) has existed amongst the Malawians from time immemorial. For this reason the missionaries that came to evangelise the Malawians did not introduce God to them as the supreme being, simply because they already knew about Him. However their knowledge before the missionaries came into the country was not clear and it was hard for a stranger to know whether there was a difference between the ancestral spirits and God in the mind of the Malawians.

The early missionaries did not have an easy job in finding out the difference between the spirits of the dead and God among the Malawians because the spirit of the dead man was called mulungu and the Great Spirit was also called Mulungu. The prayers and offerings were given to the spirits of the dead who were looked upon as those that could help them in time of need. Duff Macdonald one of the first missionaries says " In all our translations of Scripture where we found the word God we used Mulungu, but this word is chiefly used by the natives as a general name for spirit. The spirit of a deceased man is called his mulungu, and all the

(1) Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English,
 London; Oxford University press, 1963

prayers and offerings of the living are presented to such spirits of the dead. It is here that we find the great centre of the native religion. The spirits of the dead are the gods of the living."(2)

It is difficult to say whether Malawians were monotheistic, polytheistic or pantheistic because they seemed at one time to be either one of the three. Since they could not address God directly but had to send their request through the spirits of their immediate ancestors, their worship was called practical polytheism. Because of their religious consciousness everywhere they went in they were regarded pantheistic. However, it was noted that despite of the acknowledgement of the existence of many spirits through which they could offer their prayers, they felt that there was a Great Spirit above them all and for this reason they were also known to be monotheistic.(3)

Some first missionaries are not agreed as to whether Malawians already knew the Christian God or not. Dr Walter Angus Elmslie, who worked for a long time among the Ngoni and Tumbuka in the North since 1885, was convinced that the people among whom he worked had already known about God and the Christian worship, although they approached Him only during the times of disaster. While Dr Thomas Cullen Young, who worked in Mzimba and later in Kasungu among the Chewa, refused to associate the Tumbuka God (Chiuta) with the Christian God. He says "Far from being a loving figure, he takes

(2) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, voll, London: Simpkin Marshall, 1862, p59

(3) Op. cit; p67

people when they die, but does not dwell with them in the after-life. He is responsible for disasters such as earthquakes and eclipses; he can be called upon for rain, but only after the ancestors have been involved first."(4)

Young does not associate the God the Malawians worshipped before the missionaries came with the Christian God. The former has no contacts with the people at all and it is hard to know whether he is interested in their affairs, " The God of the animist is very hard to find, and when we do glimpse Him it is to recognise a being so remote from any human contacts, and therefore so removed from the God and Father of Jesus, that one almost feels as if the God of the African had to be put wholly out of sight before the other can come in."(5)

It is difficult to regard God, in the traditional Malawian concept, as Father because He is far away from the people and He seems to have no dealings with them. However, He is looked upon as the owner of everything that exists. The death of infants, and the occurrence of miscarriages are associated with the act of God.(6) When

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- (4) Peter G Forster, *Missionaries and Anthropology: The Case of the Scots of Northern Malawi* in: Journal of Religion in Africa, 16, 2 (1986), pp106 and 112
- (5) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom. A contribution towards understanding, London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1937, p44
- (6) Peter G Forster, *Missionaries and Anthropology: The Case of the Scots of Northern Malawi* in: Journal of Religion in Africa, 16, 2 (1986), pp115

and where people fail to explain the cause of an incident, they associate it with the act of God. When it is said that God is the cause of a certain incident, then accusation of witchcraft or sorcery does not arise.

God who is known as Chiuta in the North and as Mulungu in the Centre and South, was not directly worshipped or prayed to by the traditional Malawians even in time of great need. According to traditional beliefs it is unthinkable that one would dare to by-pass the ancestral spirits and speak to God. God is believed to have left the charge of the land of the living in the power of the spirits who look after the affairs of the people. "They knew him as the nourisher of the earth, sending rain and all good things, but they thought that he had little knowledge of his people. Nor could his people know much of him, so they did not worship him himself or speak with him. His character they did not know and so they were not able to praise or glorify him as they were the spirits of their ancestors, whom they knew thoroughly. They knew him from afar and so they could not pray or speak to him."(7)

The traditional Malawians believe that God, the Great Spirit, created the world and all that is in it. However, He separated Himself from men because they were disobedient to Him. There are many myths in Africa that state that God and the original man or men lived together in a family-like relationship. The former acting as a Father to the latter. One myth says that God commanded men not to eat eggs but they disobeyed and ate

(7) Margaret Read, The Ngoni of Nyasaland, London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p191

them, then God became angry and left for the sky where He is up to now. (8)

Man's disobedience to God also accounts for the beginning of death. Man was created to live forever and even if he died he would rise again from the dead. The popular traditional belief in Malawi was that after God had withdrawn from men he sent two animals, a chameleon and a lizard. The former was given a message to tell the people that when they die they would rise again, while the latter was given the message to tell them that once they die they should remain dead forever. Unfortunately the lizard delivered the bad message first before the good one came with a chameleon. As a result the notion of immortality and resurrection of the dead is lost forever.

According to traditional Malawian beliefs there is no thought that God restores man to life after death. Once he is dead he remains as such forever. The dead continue to live in the form of the spirit either underground, in the rivers, mountains or in the vicinity of the village. The type of life they live is not different from that which they lived when they were alive and they do not live with God although they are said to be nearer to Him than the living. Young, who worked among the Malawians for 27 years, says "The people whom I know have the picture of a future life in a place which some describe as 'underground', but where there is everything to which you were accustomed to on earth. Cattle if you kept cattle, but not otherwise. Fishable water if your clan

(8) John Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, London: S.P.K.C., 1970, p173

is a fishing group. The accustomed food supplies, and so on."(9)

The belief in God among the traditional Malawians is of help only while they are alive. In time of need, as it has already been stated above, they go to address their ancestral spirits to request help from God on their behalf. However, in their address they rarely mention the name of God and it is frequently the names of their ancestors that are on their lips. "Today, to the animist, the ancestors are sufficient. Life, in constant conclave with them, is, on the whole, understandable and dependable. The group looks after the group, here and yonder."(10)

When people get ill they are cured by the medicine men but this is only possible if the ancestral spirits are in favour of the recovery of the sick. That is why in the old days when someone was ill the relatives used to go to consult the diviner to find out who caused the illness. No medicine man could cure someone whose illness was caused by the ancestral spirits, until they were appeased by offering them beer or meat depending on what the diviner said. After that the diviner or medicine man would use medicine to cure the sick. After recovery, the offering was made again as a thanks-offering.(11) In all this God was not mentioned and it is difficult to say that the belief in God was

(9) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, pp57 and 58

(10) Op.cit., p64

(11) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, pp87 and 88

salvific in the traditional Malawian concept of God. If the Great Spirit (Mulungu) was believed to save people from their illness, it was only through the ancestors, diviners and medicine men.

Among the ancient Malawians the belief in God as Saviour of men in this life or in the spiritual worlds was not generally uppermost in their thinking. They did not need Him for their ancestral spirits were sufficient to help them with whatever they needed, although it is said that if their problem continued after they tried to get help through their ancestors, they could direct their prayers to Him. However, much help was viewed as coming from the ancestors, medicine men and diviners because God was seen as a being having many powerful servants working on His behalf while He kept Himself beyond the view of earthly affairs. (12)

However, the traditional Malawian of today looks upon God as his Saviour providing him with rain, good health and comfort during bereavement without mediation of the ancestral spirits. Much emphasis is laid now on the help of God in the use of African medicine instead of on the ancestral spirits. The latter are moving to the background giving room to the former. Whenever the ancestral spirits are mentioned in connection with certain beliefs emphasis is laid on their acting as mediators between the living and God. Although one can see a kind of reformation in the modern traditional Malawian in his belief of God, his view of salvation in such a belief does not accommodate the thoughts that men will one day be restored to fellowship with God and gain

(12) Op.cit., p67

the resurrection of the dead and immortality.

2. THE ANCESTOR CULT AND ITS MEANING FOR SALVATION.

The traditional Malawians find their power in the bond of their clan. They are solidly united to each other in life and in death. Death does not separate them from each other in their bond, at least spiritually. What they do for each other in this life they continue to do even if the other is dead, " ... the Ngoni often used the phrase : 'Death cannot cut life.' They believed that human spirits had a continued existence after death, and that this existence was related to the place where they had dwelt, the people who were of their family and clan, and the cattle which belonged to their house and village." (13)

Young does not like to call worship that communion which the traditional Malawians held with their ancestral spirits whereby they shared beer or meat with them in a form of an offering or sacrifice. The reason why he refuses to call that worship is that it was a continuation of what they used to do to each other when they were alive and together in the village. "Animist worship, therefore, is really family conclave, and when we miscall it 'ancestor-worship', let us at any rate read into the phrase the idea or picture of conference, always preceded, accompanied, or followed by symbolism of one sort or another in which may be observed the

(13) Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p161; cf. Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom. A Contribution Towards Understanding, p54.

figure of the common meal."(14)

The missionaries who had been in Malawi earlier than Young and had observed how the Malawians lived, did not hesitate to call 'worship' what Young calls a family conclave. They thought that Malawians had many gods. The spirits of the dead grandfathers were worshipped by their descendants. Prayers and offerings were presented to them.(15)

Every time a traditional Malawian wanted to do something of significance or to make a journey he had to pray, not to God (Mulungu), but to the spirit of his closest relative, or he could go to the chief of the village for prayer. However, the chief did not pray to the man's closest relative's spirit but to the spirit of his predecessor. During illness prayers were again offered to one's closest relative or the chief was asked to pray for the sick to the spirits of his predecessor. When the sick recovered, prayers and offerings of thanksgiving were offered to the ancestral spirits.(16)

The early missionaries viewed the traditional Malawians as having many gods and they could not call their religious acts as family conclave but worship of the gods. The spirit of the great remote ancestor was sometimes associated with the river or the mountain and when people experienced some droughts they went to his

(14) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, p45

(15) Duff Macdonald, Africana or the Heart of Heathen Africa, p59

(16) Op.cit., pp76, 87 and 88

spirit at the mountain or river to ask him for rain. Kangomba, chief of the Nyanja people, died in the cave of Mount Sochi in Blantyre. His spirit was worshipped and prayers and sacrifices were offered to it long after he had died. "The god of Mount Sochi is Kangomba. One tradition regarding him is this - when the Wayao were driving the Waryasa out of the country, Kangomba, a Wanyasa chief, saw the defence was hopeless, and entered a great cave on the mountain side. Out of this cave he never returned; 'he died unconquered in his own land.' The Wayao made the old tribe retire before them, but the chief Kangomba kept his place, and the newcomers are glad to invoke his aid to this day. Their supplication for rain takes this form: (Ku Sochi, Kwa Kangomba ula jijise) 'oh, Kangomba of Sochi, send us rain'." (17)

The life of the living is controlled mainly by the ancestors rather than by God, for they could go to them for help for nearly everything that troubled them. Very often they could not approach the ancestors empty-handed. They offered them flour, beer, meat etc. during prayers. In 1919 the father of Levi Mumba caught influenza and one evening he called upon the ancestral spirits to cure him of the disease and in his prayer his son heard him saying, "Oh, what is the matter .. see, all the people in your village are sick; there is not one who is able to give water to another". He took a sip of beer from the cup and ejected it, first to the right and then to the left. He grew grave, and then, looking to one side as if he saw the spirits with human eyes, he said, 'Why have you forsaken us? Here is beer; we give you; look on us compassionately; let the sick get

(17) Op.cit. p70

better; peace be on us and the live stock.'(18) The prayers were rendered with eyes open and ended without an Amen and could be given either while standing or sitting. In certain cases, especially when praying for the rains, the prayers were given while dancing, clapping hands, singing and throwing water into the air. The singing itself was the prayer, although in other places the dance was conducted after the supplication.(19)

When someone died in the village and some relatives were far away from home, prayers were given to the ancestors for their safety in order that they should not meet with accidents or that people should not rise up against them because of the death that had occurred in their village. The relatives really got worried and had to pray, however, this kind of prayer seems to have been offered to both the spirits of those who were alive and away from home as well as to the spirits of the ancestors. While the one who prayed was beating the axe-heads, and facing the direction where the relatives went, he said in his prayers: "Here one of the clan has died, may all be well with you; may people not rise up against you; though you may not hear of it, may you travel well wherever you go; may the ancestors be kind to you; may there be no darkness before you."(20) This prayer was

(18) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, p52

(19) Duff Macdonald, Africana or the Heart of Heathen Africa, pp88 and 89; cf Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p159

(20) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, a Contribution Towards Understanding, p56

addressed to those who were away so that their spirits and those of their ancestors would look after them and clear any darkness (chidima, masoka) before them. A person's spirit, which was then called mulungu or mzimu, was believed to act as his guardian. Macdonald and other early missionaries understood the word mulungu to refer to the two beings as I have already pointed out. It referred to the spirit of the living or dead person and sometimes it referred to the Great Spirit. So the person who prayed for the safety of those who were away from the village during a relative's funeral, was understood to be addressing both the spirit of the living and of the ancestors in the prayer.

Prayers and offerings for thanksgiving were as frequent as the peoples' prayers were answered positively. The hunter went hunting after praying to his ancestor and when he had killed game he offered part of the meat to the spirit. It did not matter even if the meat was small, the most important thing was that a portion was given to the spirits that had made the hunt successful. (21) Before eating food, the people or the cook dropped a portion on the floor or ground for the ancestors and before people drank beer they dropped a little down for them, then they could drink the rest.

The spirits of the great chiefs were regarded stronger than the spirits of the ordinary chiefs and people. The great chiefs' spirits were not usually consulted or prayed to for they were responsible for big affairs that concerned the nation rather than the families. So people

(21) Duff Macdonald, Africana or the Heart of Heathen Africa, p61

could not address them for petty matters such as making a journey or going for a hunt. "The spirits of the dead Paramounts were the guardians of the whole nation. The amadlozi stood between Umkulumqango and the people. They were never worshipped at times of plenty and prosperity, but at the time of crisis and danger."(22)

The Malawian in the past did not consult the ancestral spirits just for fellowship but because they were more powerful than he was and they could do what is humanly impossible. It has already been pointed out above that the spirits of the dead chiefs were addressed to request them for rain during drought. The main purpose in ancestral cult was to solicit help rather than to seek fellowship.

The help sought from them was physical that had to do with people's good health. I never came across any literature that speaks about people asking the ancestors to prepare them a room in the spiritual world where they could stay when they died. All that the people were concerned with was their welfare here on earth when they were alive. Even when someone was seriously ill they were concerned with his recovery and once he died they feared him and they had to bury him according to the burial rites for fear that his spirit would come and trouble them. The ancestor cult was carried out not merely for the sake of homage but because of fear. Whenever a person dreamed about a dead man, he was likely to give the man's spirit an offering the

(22) Margaret Read, The Ngoni of Nyasaland, p159; cf Duff Macdonald, Africana or the Heart of Heathen Africa pp60 and 65

following day for fear lest he died.(23)

According to traditional Malawian beliefs, ancestors were able to save a man from illness and death but once he was dead they were not able to restore him to life. It is believed that the ancestors had more power than the diviners and medicine men. The latter could not succeed in curing man of his illness if the former were against it. For this reason when a chief was ill, the people suspected that the ancestral spirits were angry with him and a diviner was consulted to find out whose spirit was angry so that they could pray and give it an offering. The prayer that was just given without naming the spirit was ineffective because it was too general. "In praying for rain or the recovery from illness of someone of the royal clan, the diviner had to be consulted about which of the ancestors of the Paramount should be addressed. The ancestor indicated by the diviner had to be named in the ritual, his genealogy given and, as a rule, his particular attributes and his praise names mentioned,"(24)

The spirits (amadlozi,azimu) could stop rain, could bring disease in the village upon livestock and people. So the living were at the mercy of the spirits and care had to be taken that they were not offended at any time, and if they were angry they had to be appeased quickly by prayer and offering. The survival of the nation and consequently of the individuals against attack by enemies, depended entirely on the spirits of the

(23) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, p110

(24) Margaret Read, The Ngoni of Nyasaland, p159

paramount chiefs. " ... in the northern kingdom, the spirit of Zwangendaba Jere was addressed in Ekwendeni; of Hlaczego, his father, in Elangeni; and of Magangata, his grandfather, in Hoho. In the central kingdom the spirit of Mputa was addressed in Mcakhatha and also in Lizulu; and of his father, Ngwaua, in a village in Portuguese territory."(25)

Although the spirits were believed to answer prayers of the people, it seems that some prayers, if not all, could not be answered by the spirits until they were brought to the Great Spirit (Mulungu) who could say yes, wait or no. Among Ngoni and Chewa people and even among the Nyanja in the south, there were a number of spirits in an ascending order according to their ranks through which the request had to pass either for approval or for just formality before it reached the Great Spirit. "The Ngoni believed that each family had its own line of spirits (amadlozi) dating back to the origin of that family, and that these in succession carried the messages until they reached the unknown ancestors, who in turn had the right to carry the message to Umkulumqango."(26)

Salvation of the individual and the nation on a physical level was indeed dependent on the ancestor cult according to the traditional Malawian beliefs. To remove the cult from them and leave them without a substitute, they could not survive. For example, they could not enjoy drinking beer which had not first of all been

(25) Op.cit., p160

(26) Op.cit., p160; cf. Duff Macdonald, African or the Heart of Heathen Africa, pp71 and 88

blessed by the spirit that it should be sweet, and there were many things that could not be done without first addressing the spirits, for religion is part and parcel of life to a traditional African.(27)

Therefore, the ancestor cult was the heart of life for a traditional Malawian and his good health and that of his livestock depended on it. The belief that the ancestral spirits were in control of the affairs of the living brought him joy and thus he lived happily. This type of life could not be experienced by someone who thought that the spirits were angry against him. "An absolute belief in ancestral-control ought to result in ready laughter and the frequent dance. It is only the man or woman who is carrying in secret the knowledge of disobedience that will be depressed or furtive. The moment that anything occurs known to signalise the wrath of the ancestors, such a person will leap at any proper chance for confession as is offered, say, by the ritual of communal gathering and mutual questioning. The wrath is known to be appeasable and, once appeased, is done with. Life is again carefree."(28)

After all that is said one would without hesitation say that the ancestor cult had meaning for the survival of the Malawian and he could not neglect the cult without endangering his life. Sin for him was the wrong done to his neighbour, but mainly against the ancestors who once angry against him, he would never experience peace.

(27) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, p93

(28) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom. A Contribution Towards Understanding, pp62 and 63

3. THE RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS IN A MALAWIAN SOCIETY.

a. Rites de Passage. Man passes different stages of life until old age and death. The stages through which one passes are called by anthropologists passage-periods or rites de passage. It is a period of a person's development which one passes from one classification into another. (29) Some of the stages of one's life are given remarkable rites whereby instructions and medicine are given to the initiate.

In old days when a baby was born, in the case of Nyanja women the birth took place in the bush, it was brought to the village by a female friend while the mother followed on foot. If it was the first-born, it was met by a group of singing and dancing relatives, the grandmother of the baby took a prominent part. Then it was brought into the house and from that time the husband did not sleep in the same house with his wife. (30)

The baby was kept in the house for a week or a month and during this period the mother was declared ritually unclean. She did not cook food for herself neither could she apply salt to her food. In other areas she could be in such a state for a month. At the end of that period

(29) Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p149; cf. Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, p66

(30) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, p112; cf. Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, p66

the child was brought out of the house, its hair was shaven and that of the mother and then the mother bathed in medicine water and the child also was bathed in a medicinal wash. After this rite, the husband returned to his house.

The child was usually given a name at the time when its first hair was cut and was bathed in medicinal wash. The names usually were regarded to be of great importance and they always had meanings. Sometimes they were regarded as having protective power against witchcraft. In the family where children usually died in infancy, the name given to the newly-born baby was suggestive that it would also die immediately after birth. Sometimes the name would be an indirect accusation of a witch to tell the witch in the village the parents knew that their children were being killed by the witch. The name usually made the witch refrain from bewitching the child bearing such a name as Mwatitha (you have finished us). Some of these protective names are Misozi (tears), Kumanda (to the graveyard), Mabvuto (troubles) and Msupadothi.

The great-passage period was, and in many areas is still, marked at puberty stage when a person enters the period that leads into married life. This stage is more remarkable for girls than for boys throughout the country except among the Yawo people. Among the Chewa, the girl remains confined in the house for a week with her instructress, when it is known that she has experienced her first menses. Her instructress (phungu) conducts her through her rite. She is instructed all that is necessary for a mature woman to know and what she should often do when she is under menstrual period.

At the end of her confinement she must have sexual intercourse "with a man, usually a relative, hired by her family for the purpose." If she does not do it, she is told that she will die.(31)

Later on when there are many girls in the villages around that have reached puberty there is another rite called Chiramwali which takes place for several days. Some instructions are given to the girls at this time which mostly deal with the taboos that are related to married life. If there is negligence in the observance of the taboos the result is always fatal. It may lead to illness, barrenness or death of the one that does not observe them.(32) After this rite is passed, there is another one called Chinamwali chachikulu. This rite takes place when the married young woman becomes pregnant. This rite is usually for three days. The instructresses gather at the house of the chief and dance. After that they proceed to instruct both the wife and the husband how they should live during the wife's pregnancy. The husband is advised not to have sexual intercourse with any other woman during his wife's pregnancy, for fear that she would die at giving birth.

For boys puberty was not much marked as it is still today. However, in the old days among the Ngoni, young boys slept with their grandparents and at the age of six

(31) Pauline Pretorius, "An attempt at Christian Initiation in Nyasaland" in: International Review of Missions, 39, 1950, p286; cf. Duff Macdonald, Africana, or The Heart of Heathen Africa, p126

(32) Op.cit. p287; cf. Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p147

they joined the older boys who slept in their own house known as laweni. When a boy experienced his first nocturnal emission his friends informed an older boy who instructed him to go to the river early in the morning to wash, and instructed him that he should always do that after an emission. He was also instructed the right way of behaviour among his equals and before the old people. When the old people noticed that the boy had reached puberty they prepared ululengele medicine which was mixed up with some unchewed cud from a goat's stomach. The goat was killed by the father for that purpose. The boy used the medicine according to traditional custom in the presence of the father and his relatives. After the rite the boy belonged to the grownup group.(33)

Marriage is not taken as a passage-rite period and is not associated with religious acts as birth, puberty and death rites. Marriage is treated as a matter of routine and domestic events. "There is - at least so far as I can speak of the East Central Africans that I know a little - no appeal whatever to the ancestors in marriage arrangements, and the medicine-man does not appear. Marriage has no attendant 'religious' sanction. Marriage is not a passage-period. Puberty is."(34)

When a man was ill his relatives tried all they could do to save his life. Usually they consulted the oracle-man to find out the cause of the illness in order that the right medicine would be applied or in case where the

(33) Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p146

(34) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom. A Contribution Towards Understanding, p67

spirits were angry, the right procedure would be taken to appease. The herbalist too would try his part when consulted, and if all this failed the man died. Among the Yawo people death was not announced quickly and the attendants of the sick would go out telling people and the slaves that the man was getting better. Suddenly they would capture the slaves, tie them up in order that they could bury them together with the dead. After capturing the slaves death was then announced. (35)

Where this custom was practised a chief who had many slaves would be buried with as many as ten of them. A poor man would be buried with only a few. The belief was that the dead man would need them in the spirit world. "Kapeni, a chief that belongs to the Abanda family, told me that he was going to give up the custom now because of the English; but not a few of the slave refugees at Blantyre have run away from his dominions to escape the dreadful fate." (36)

When a person died where there was not a custom of burying the dead with slaves, death was announced as quickly as it occurred. It was usually known by the wailing of the wife who was in attendance of the sick. A lot of people would come and messages were sent to nearby villages. Many mourners would gather, some

(35) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, p100; cf Peter G Forster, "Missionaries and Anthropology: The case of the Scots of Northern Malawi" in: Journal of Religion in Africa, 16, 2 (1986), p112

(36) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, p101

drumming, some chanting and others dancing. The mourning would take about two days but if it was a chief it would take even a month.

Before burial took place the undertakers washed the body, but the body of a female was washed by women, with the water from the river. After the washing they wrapped it in calico leaving the face uncovered. They covered it when carrying the body to the grave for burial. All those who washed the body or touched it, washed their hands in medicine water to keep off the spirit of the dead.(37)

The closely related to the deceased were not allowed to go to the grave. A father would not go to the funeral of his child, nor a husband to that of his wife, however in certain circumstances the closely related had to go and attend the burial.(38) The way the dead were buried differed from clan to clan. The Yawo were buried with the legs bent, the Chewa with the legs straight while the Ngoni, the legs were bent, the arms folded crossing each side of the neck and the corpse seemed to be sitting and was then wrapped in the skin of cattle(39)

In burying the dead, his articles of property were buried together with him and before the people left for home, they placed food at the grave as an offering to the dead man's spirit that he should share with the ancestors. The dishes in which food was brought were left there, but they were damaged so that the witches and

(37) Op. cit., p103

(38) Op. cit., p105

(39) Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p161

wizards would not use them.(40)

The following day after the burial the dead man's house was pulled down and burned. The ground on which it was built was levelled and burned. The ground on which it was built was levelled in such a way that it was hardly recognised that there was a house. The house of the deceased was always destroyed regardless of whether he lived in it or not. In the case where the deceased had more than one wife, it was the house of the first wife that was destroyed. "No-one will live in that house on any consideration. The spirit (Mulungu) of the deceased would be very angry with the man who did so, and would say, 'This man is glad that I died that he might enter my house.'"(41)

In the Ngoni tradition, the second day after the burial the people would assemble together to have their hair shaven. (The shaving of hair after burial was and is still common in Malawi; the difference lies in the time of shaving.) After five or six months the people would assemble again for a second shaving. This shaving was accompanied by a feast of beer. After a year the people gathered together again for a ceremony called "bringing back the spirit" to the village because until then it was thought to be in the bush. A beast was killed and people feasted again. At this ceremony, if it was the man who had died, the widow was inherited by the brother

(40) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, pp107 and 108

(41) Op.cit., pp108 and 109

of the deceased.(42) The spirit of the dead was not angry because it was invited to witness the occasion.

It should also be mentioned here that the death of a married woman, in other parts of Malawi, caused a great worry and problem to the husband and his relatives. The husband had to remain with the putrefying corpse in the house while people discussed the cause of the wife's death outside. The burial never took place until the case was settled.(43) The husband was often accused of his wife's death especially when she died while she was pregnant, because he was suspected of having lived an immoral life during that time.

The funeral of a child was not different from that of the adult except when the child died before the ceremony of introducing it into the world was held. If the child died before the mentioned rite was conducted, it did not receive mourning and the relatives would not cut their hair on its account and neither present food offering to it.(44)

Having discussed death and how the burial rites were conducted in the past, although some are not completely extinct, it is right that now I discuss the traditional Malawians beliefs on the causes of death and the

(42) Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p163; cf. Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, p112

(43) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, p72

(44) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, p114

measures that are taken to avoid its occurrence in man's life. Most of these beliefs are in existence among the traditional Malawians today.

b. The Traditional Malawian Beliefs on the Causes of Death and Measures taken to prevent its Early Occurrence.

Among all peoples in the world it is believed, and rightly so, that behind every death there is a cause. However, the way people find out the causes of death differ from people to people. Today the work is left in the hands of the medical doctors and where the cause is not easily found, a post-mortem is used and usually the matter is settled. A traditional Malawian will resort to divination for an answer to the cause of death. Although death may be clearly seen to have been caused, for example, by man's own carelessness in cutting down a tree that when he cut it, it fell over and killed him. Some people, like the traditional Malawian, will not find cause of death in man's carelessness but in what made that man to be so careless that the tree he cut fell over and killed him. With such thinking he will go to the diviner to find out the cause of the man's death. Usually the diviner tells him that his brother, if he was his brother, had been bewitched by so and so.

Traditional Malawians believe that deaths are caused mainly by evil spirits, ancestors, magic, sorcery and witchcraft. Even in deaths that occur through a car accident on the road due to careless driving in the vehicle or even due to mechanical fault, one hears reference to magic or witchcraft in such funerals. In this case the Malawians are not different from the rest

of Africans because it is believed that magic, sorcery and witchcraft are the commonest causes of death in every African society.(45) Although people talk that God looks after them they feel that they should do something to protect themselves from the enemies which for the Malawians come to them as evil forces in the form of wizards, witches, magicians, sorcerers, evil spirits and the like.

One of the means of avoiding the dangers that threaten to terminate peoples' lives prematurely is to observe the traditions of the forefathers. These comprise certain rules which refer to what is believed to be impossible for people to do without bad results. These deterrent rules are called taboos. "What have been named tabu took their origin from the fact that people discerned that there were certain things which were morally approved or disapproved by the Deity."(46) In African life there are certain things that are forbidden to be done or said and the only explanation given is that once a person says or does them an evil thing will happen to him.

There are many taboos that are observed by certain Malawians who follow the traditions of their forefathers. These taboos are part and parcel of the traditional customs (miyambo) of the people and the

(45) Tokunboh Adeyemo, Salvation in African Tradition, Nairobi Evangel Publishing House, 1979, p76; cf. Catechism for the Council of Reformed Churches in Central Africa, Malawi, CIAIM, 1966, p298

(46) E Bloajf Idowu, Oloqumare God in Yoruba Belief, London: Cloves and Sons, 1962, p146

adherents have to see to it that everything stipulated in these customs is observed as stated. They think it is necessary to observe all the rules literally to avert death. However, the number of people that literally follow these traditions is now diminishing because of Christianity and education.(47)

The traditional custom that a pregnant woman should not close the door when going to bed at night is still held by some Malawians. The fear is that if she closes the door, she will experience difficulties in giving birth and the baby will have to be delivered through a surgical operation, otherwise she will die. If the husband is away from home she has to sleep with someone in the house to close the door for her otherwise she sleeps with an open door. Another traditional custom similar to this one is that a man should avoid having sexual intercourse outside marriage when his wife is pregnant. If he does not observe this rule, his wife will die at giving birth.

It should be noted here with sorrow that a lot of men have been fined or troubled in one way or another while they have been innocent. There have been many such cases among the Chewa people in Central Malawi up to the late 1960's. Cases of this nature were dealt with by the local village leaders, especially village headmen, because nearly every village headman is a repository of the traditions of the forefathers.

(47) Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p157; cf.

Pauline Pretorius, "An Attempt at Christian Initiation in Nyasaland", International Review of Missions, 39, 1950 p286

The other way of preventing evil forces from claiming the lives of people is to get rid of them or to stop them from occurring. In order to prevent witchcraft, sorcery or magic, people consult medicine men to give them medicine for defence against evil forces. Medicine men are liked by the people and are regarded the friends of African societies, because their duty is to cure people of various diseases inflicted on them by wizards and witches.(48)

The notion that God gives the people medicine men and diviners to help them is not cherished by the Turkana people only, but the Zulu, Malawians and many other people. Witches and sorcerers are regarded as the great enemies of the people and some measures are taken to expose or even kill them so that people should live in peace. However, many innocent people have suffered and even been killed because of being falsely accused as wizards, witches, sorcerers or magicians.(49) It is well-known in the medical field that a person suffering from cancer is not cured. In the villages among people that adhere to traditional beliefs this knowledge has no place in their way of life and often they will accuse someone as a witch or wizard. Dying from heart failure is not known and if one dies from such a case there is always a false accusation and since often during such deaths diviners are consulted, innocent people suffer, especially those who might have quarrelled with the

(48) Thomas Gullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, p82

(49) Duff Macdonald, Africana or the Heart of Heathen Africa, pp78 and 79

deceased in the past.(50)

J C Chakanza from the University of Malawi gives a list of 21 names of well-known medicine men/women and diviners in Malawi from 1850 - 1980. He calls the diviner m'bisalira (hide in wait for), which means that the diviner does not really find out witches and wizards but he hides somewhere in the village listening to all the conversations of the people and he detects the accused of witchcraft.(51) When he comes publicly for witch finding he picks out from the people those that had been suspected of witchcraft. What Chakanza says is true, but not for all diviners and the name m'bisalira is not appropriate as a general term to cover all the diviners he lists in his articles for there had been and still are some diviners who were and are honest in their profession.(52)

The diviners are called by the village headmen or a group of people led by the village headmen goes to consult the diviner especially when someone dies suddenly in a village, for example, of heart failure. The man who is pointed out as a wizard is usually driven out of the village and the vicinity as an enemy of the society. In the past, according to Chakanza, the exposed witches were either killed or died from drinking mwabvi poison, exiled or sold as slaves to passing traders.

(50) Op.cit., p207

(51) Fr. J C Chakanza, "Provisional Annotated Chronological List of Witch-finding Movements in Malawi, 1850 - 1980" in: Journal of Religion in Africa, 15, 3, (1985), p227

(52) Margaret Read, Ngoni in Nyasaland, ppi'9 - 18C

The aim of witch-finding is to eradicate witchcraft in the region, but in spite of all that has been done about it, witchcraft persists to be a menace among the people and the only option for the people is to resort to anti-witchcraft or witchcraft protective medicine (mtsiliko). It is said people use anti-witchcraft medicine to protect their bodies, their livestock, their houses and their crops.(53)

The Presbyterian Church suspends any member from membership when he is found in possession of anti-witchcraft medicine. The Church says that the one who believes in Christ should not fear witchcraft because he is born anew and that those living in the old ways cannot see the Kingdom of God. The matter is difficult. Although those who use anti-witchcraft medicine are threatened of being suspended from Church membership, no suspension of such people is heard of. It is difficult to find out who use such medicine. However, it is recorded in the Livingstonia Presbytery minutes of 22nd October, 1932 that the Rev. Yaphet Mkandawire was defrocked because he was accused that he had taken phemba medicine(54). Whether this medicine is connected with anti-witchcraft medicine I am not sure, but it serves to show that African medicine which was used by Malawians before Christianity came into the country, was later on regarded as evil and was prohibited by

(53) Catechism for CRCCA, p299; Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, p85

(54) John Parratt, "Y Z Mwasu and The Origins of the Blackman's Church" in: Journal of Religion in Africa, vol. 9, 3, 1978, p202

missionaries.

In the Central region there is a traditional dance which is believed to be much connected with evil beliefs of sorcery and magic. It is believed that the dancers cause the despisers of their dance to become lame, and if the despiser is a woman, she may give birth to an abnormal child. There are a lot of sorcery acts that are connected with this dance. It is popularly known as nyawu and because of its secret and strict rules not much of it is known by an outsider. However, it is regarded as the most evil and secular type of dance among the Chewa people and it is looked upon as a religion in the sense that through the dance they communicate with the spirits of the dead.

The Nyawu dance members believe in the communion with the spirits of the dead. The dance is performed in, or out of, the village but the dancers have their base at the graveyard where it is often bushy or surrounded by a thick strip of trees. They stay there night and day until the dancing period is over. The Nyawu members are the most conservative people with regard to the observation of the traditional customs and they do not want to be influenced by any teaching and they hate Christianity.(55)

Although it is true that the Nyawu dance is the most evil secular dance among the Chewa people, at least the evil practices are now reduced and it is hardly heard that the dancers have killed someone for either despising them or intruding into their base. However, it

(55) Cf. Catechism for CRCCA, p299

is still heard that those who intrude into their base (dambwi) are beaten, arrested and released after paying a fine, usually in the form of chickens. Since the country's independence from British rule the dance has often been performed at the independence anniversary celebrations and dancers at such occasions are not as fierce as those that dance after or at traditional leaders' funeral ceremonies. In the case of the latter where the dance is performed after the funeral ceremony, the ritual dances are staged to appease the angry spirits of the dead who might be angry because the burial rites were badly conducted. This dance is held to avoid the disaster or death that might follow if the spirits are not put at rest. To mark the end of the dance there is usually a party where beer and other kinds of food are served, speeches are made in reference to the deceased and the bereaved but no prayers and offerings are made to the spirit of the dead.

The Presbyterian Church suspends a Christian that joins or watches the dance. Many Christians in rural areas are suspended from membership owing to watching or participating in the dance in areas where dances are held. This involves mostly the youth who do not go to school and are not busy enough during summer, which is also the time when the dances are performed. However, Christians who watch the dance or participate in it during the independence anniversary celebrations, are not suspended from Church membership, because the dance at this time is not performed in connection with the dead and the base of the dancers is not the graveyard.

In all that is said above one could ask whether the traditional Malawian beliefs have any meaning for

salvation. A review of what is discussed above is necessary in this case to see what the meaning of salvation is in the traditional Malawian beliefs.

4. THE MEANING OF SALVATION IN THE TRADITIONAL MALAWIAN BELIEFS.

The traditional belief in God was mainly used to account for creation and for incidents whose cause was too difficult to find out, and it was therefore, beyond man's solution. (56) God was not viewed as a protector of people because He had left the peoples' affairs in the hands of the ancestors. He did not heal the people when they became ill neither did He send them the rains when requested during time of drought without the mediation of the ancestors. The belief in God in the traditional Malawian context had less to do with man's physical and nothing at all with his spiritual needs. (57)

Today the traditional Malawian thinks of God as the One who provides him with all his necessities of life. He does not attribute his recovery from illness to the ancestors, but to the medicine men while still acknowledging that it is God who works through medicine men and diviners. He believes that the cure cannot be effected without God's help. Although the medicine men sometimes claim that they are shown medicine in a dream by the spirits of the dead relatives, still the traditional Malawian believes that it is God who uses

(56) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, p45

(57) Op.cit., p58; cf. Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, pp198 - 199

them to do that work on His behalf.

In the old days stress was laid on the appearing of the spirits so that the people lived in peace. Salvation meant security or freedom from the troubles caused by these spirits. In this case salvation had no connection with sin and man's reconciliation to God. It referred to man's relationship with his fellowmen and with ancestral spirits. Every person who was at peace with his fellowmen and with his ancestors lived a happy life.(58)

Salvation also meant living free from illness and worry of witchcraft, magic and sorcery. Much energy and time was spent in finding means of being free from these evil forces that work in the dark. Some people took long journeys to find out what killed their relative and how they could protect themselves from any danger from these evil forces. Exposing the witches and killing them in order that people would live long and die naturally in old age was the most longed for thing among all traditional Malawians. This notion is still strong among most Malawians today. Little thought is given on what will happen to them when they die and effort is made to preserve this physical life. The preservation of this life and the solution of any problem that would lead to its loss is the most important thing on earth that man desires. It is in itself the salvation that a traditional Malawian seeks.

When a traditional Malawian is at peace with his fellowmen and with his ancestors, he struggles to be

(58) Thomas Gullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, pp62 and 63

free from the evil forces of witchcraft, magic and sorcery. But these are not the only evil forces that bother man. If a man does not have enough food or his goods are being stolen, he does not have peace of mind. In the old days the people had to go to the ancestors to ask for rain in time of drought. When rain was given they rejoiced greatly for good rain meant salvation from famine.(59) They also used protective medicine to protect their foodstuff, so that they had enough food to last them until the next harvest season. All this had to do with man's preservation of his physical life. If anyone seeks to find the notion of salvation in the traditional Malawian (religion) beliefs, he will find that it is man's safety from physical danger and the security of all that keep him alive, no more and no less. Even today some Malawians use protective medicine to keep their foodstuffs and articles of property safe.

All the beliefs that are connected with the taboos are grounded on keeping man free from danger. They have nothing to do with life after death or the worship of God, but to prevent the occurrence of death. They are anthropocentric rather than theocentric and earthly rather than heavenly. Since there is no mention of punishment after death in traditional beliefs, man avoids committing adultery when his wife is pregnant to save her from death when giving birth but not to avoid sinning against God. Again a person is forced into committing adultery in order to avoid death, in the case of a girl who is told to have sexual intercourse after

(59) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, pp88 and 89

her first menstrual period.(60)

The conclusion that one can make here is that the traditional beliefs are cherished because they are regarded as providing people with security in their lives. The relief that people receive, though in some cases it is a false one and does not give the desired security, is looked upon as salvation. So salvation in traditional Malawians' beliefs is man's security from temporary dangers to his physical life.

Since this is the meaning of salvation in traditional Malawian beliefs, I should now discuss what some African theologians say about salvation in African traditional religion. Although reference is made to several African theologians I am concentrating on the views of Patrick Kalilombe and Simon S Maimela who to a large extent may represent the Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians respectively of all those who discern salvation in African traditional religion.

5. SOME AFRICAN THEOLOGIANS' VIEW ON SALVATION IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION.

The word "salvation" in the Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English is defined as "the act of saving, the state of having been saved, from sin and its consequences." The verb "save" in current English means to make or keep safe from loss, injury or death and destruction, while in the Christian religion it means to set free from the power of the eternal punishment and from sin. The word has also been defined to mean a

(60) Op.cit., p126

restoration of man to his original state. "Many salvation words begin with the prefix re-, such as redemption, restoration, reconciliation, renewal, regeneration (literally "a new genesis"). Even the Greek word for salvation, soteria, has at its root the idea of health after sickness, and wholeness after danger. The implication is that salvation restores creation, it does not junk it."(61)

Salvation defined as the restoration of man to his original state refers to the whole man and to all of life. It is not restricted either to the physical or spiritual life only. God speaks of saving his people from physical death that would be brought upon them by the magicians (Ezekiel 13 : 20 - 21). We also hear of people's salvation from spiritual death where it is said " when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is lawful and right, he shall save his life." (Ezekiel 18 : 27). Therefore, any definition of salvation in the religious context that restricts the term either to the physical or the spiritual life only, does not do justice to Scripture and makes the teaching of the resurrection of the body irrelevant in theology.

Although other people may come up with a different definition of salvation, I think it is right, now having given the definition of the word, to continue the discussion on some African theologians' views on salvation in African traditional religion.

(61) Mark R Shaw, "Developing an African Christian Worldview" in: East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology, vol. 5, 1986, p53

The Malawians, like other Africans, hold certain beliefs because they cannot live without them because these beliefs help them to look at life and define its meaning. As long as they do not have other beliefs to replace the present ones, they will live with them forever. Life without them will collapse and that is why these beliefs are collectively referred to as religion.

Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, formerly Bishop of Lilongwe diocese, has stated that there is salvation in the African traditional religion and that those people who seriously worship God will be saved. He does not see why God should condemn people who live a good life. It should be pointed out here that the Roman Catholic Church does not reject whatever is regarded by them as good and holy in other religions. In reference to Vatican II declaration on relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to non-Christian religions Kalilombe says "The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sits for, nevertheless often reflect a ray of Truth which enlightens all men."(62)

However, one should not get the impression that Kalilombe says the Catholic Church teaches that the African traditional religion mediates salvation. His argument, he says, is from biblical and, also I detect, sympathetic grounds. He does not base it on faith in

(62) P Kalilombe, "The Salvific value of African Traditional Religions" in: AFER (21) 1979, p144

Christ as the only way of attaining salvation and it is difficult to see how he arrives at such a teaching. He says that even Paul does not suggest to limit salvation through faith in Christ because in face of the many Jews who did not believe in Christ during His time, Paul would still maintain that they would not be entirely lost. Paul, because of love for his fellow Jews, was forced to go back to Scripture to study it again to find out the solution of the theological problem he faced. As a result of his new deep study of Scripture Paul came up with a solution that states that God has not rejected His people.(63)

Those who deny that people who hold traditional beliefs can be saved are limited and one-sided in their reading of Scripture. He says this has often been the case with the missionaries that came to evangelise the Africans. They came with a mentality that they were to bring true faith to pagans to save the souls that were in darkness and fought hard to eradicate what they called false religions, African traditional customs and practices.

They restricted themselves to certain biblical texts for the sake of promoting their own desires.(64) Kalilombe cannot imagine a merciful and loving God condemning people who are doing all the best they can and besides that these people are living in the beliefs and customs given by God and through which He revealed Himself. Since these beliefs are not childish superstitions in Kalilombe's view, he cannot look down upon them as if

(63) Op.cit., p155

(64) Op.cit., p155

they were mere primitive ways of worshipping God.(65)

Kalilombe's notion that those who seriously search for God through their culture will be saved, should not surprise one, given the fact that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that those who live a good life are saved through baptism of desire, although they may not believe in Christ because they have not heard of Him, or because of other reasons not of their own.(66) So those who adhere to African traditional beliefs as their religion and live a good life, whatever that means to the Roman Catholic understanding, have the same chance of being saved just as the Christians have, if I understand Kalilomba correctly. Though that should be the case, he does not say that those who hold the traditional beliefs should not be evangelised. I hope he does not say so because he is speaking of those people who lived in the past before Christianity was introduced rather of those of the present generation, for he says, "The African Bible reader will thus not fear to state that the religious systems of his ancestors were not just tolerated by God. They were the results of the efforts of our cultures wherein the Spirit of God was an active agent. And therefore, there would be no fear in me to assert that as long as these religions were the serious searchings of our cultures for the deity, they are to be respected as the normal divinely-given means for salvation, put by God in his will for the salvation of

(65) Op.cit., p147

(66) Christopher Butle, The Theology of Vatican II,
London: The Anchor Press, Revised 1981, p112

all people."(67)

African traditional religion as is known in other African countries, for example the Godianism and Aruosa in Nigeria or the Herero Church in Namibia, does not exist in Malawi, except a small group of people in the South known as the Church of the Ancestors (Mpingo wa Makolo) which is said to have begun in 1859 as a reaction against the mission churches which were then associated with colonialism.(68) However, not much of it is heard today and it is probably extinct. For this reason I assume that Kalilombe speaks of the past and does not refer to those who hold traditional beliefs in themselves and do not practise religious rituals publicly.

Another African theologian who says that the African traditional beliefs and practices are channels of God's redeeming activity, is S S Maimela an associate professor at the University of South Africa. He begins by saying that God should be seen as the basis of the traditional beliefs of the Africans and that these religious systems should be examined whether they are salvific. However, he is of the opinion that an outsider to this religion who is again conditioned by Christianity, cannot give the right answer to the question. Christianity holds a monopoly of salvation and the Church has always taught in the past and has

(67) P Kalilombe, The Salvific Value of African Religions, p156

(68) H W Turner, "A Typology for African Religious Movements" in: Journal of Religion in Africa, vol. 1, 1968, p7

conditioned the Christians to think and believe that there is no salvation outside the Church. For this reason a Christian is not qualified to examine the African traditional religions to see whether they are salvific.(69)

He is convinced that it is wrong to hold the views that there is no salvation in the African traditional religions and he regrets that he had shared such wrong views in the past, "As someone who carries along with me the effects of my belonging to the Christian Church, I wish to plead guilty to the violence that my spiritual forebears have done to African Traditional Religions in the name of Christianity when they condemned those religions as the work of Satan without any salvation value."(70)

Maimela agrees wholeheartedly with Kalilombe that God's intention in His divine election is the salvation of the whole humankind. God is not partial and has no favourites. For this reason salvation cannot be denied in the African traditional religions. He, like Kalilombe, accuses those that deny salvation to traditional beliefs as being partial in their reading of the Bible. In reference to the missionaries who condemned the African traditional religions as pagan and satanic, he says, "As children of their time, their reading of the Scriptures was far from being neutral, because they approached the Bible with presuppositions, shaped and informed by their culture and class; these

(69) S S Maimela, "Salvation in African Traditional Religions: in: Missionalia (13) No. 2 1985, p5

(70) Op.cit., p64

influenced what they found in the Scriptures in support of their belief that other religious traditions were not adequate vehicles of salvation for their adherents."(71)

One should listen carefully to what Maimela says about salvation. Salvation to him is not limited to the Christian understanding of the word where one has sin in view, from which one has to be saved. He says the meaning of the word salvation varies from religion to religion according to the different views people have in solving their problems in life. He says "It will therefore not do to try to understand what sin and salvation are in African Religions from a purely Christian perspective in which salvation is usually understood to be an individualistic unburdening of personal sin through what has happened to Jesus Christ on the cross."(72)

Salvation in the African traditional religious context, according to Maimela, means the getting rid of the problems that endanger the lives of the people such as magic and witchcraft. To escape from them and from other problematic and oppressive forces that threaten one's life, is to have salvation. When the disappointments or frustrations, failures and prolonged illness of a relative are got rid of, one is relieved and is saved from the worries and frustrations.

All that Africans use to avert trouble is connected with the means of attaining one's salvation. He thinks that the sacrifices that are offered in African traditional

(71) Op.cit., p65

(72) Op.cit., p66

religions to avert sickness, or that help man to recover from illness or prevent the occurrence of a misfortune, are means of mediating salvation. The diviners and medicine men that are involved to mediate between the spiritual world and the African community, are also very helpful in bringing salvation or relief to those who are victims of illness. Maimela does not differentiate salvation from relief. Sometimes he puts relief in brackets after salvation or he uses both.(73)

According to Maimela sin in African traditional religions is anything that disturbs the welfare of the community and anything that makes life here and now miserable or any cause of pain. Hence African traditional religions are an adequate means of mediating salvation. "The provision of ritual resources with which to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and the community thus clearly means that their own traditional religions are adequate media by which relevant and effective salvation has been made available to them and their forefathers over the years."(74) The whole argument of Maimela is that African traditional religions are a means by which God saves the Africans.

The focal point in all African traditional religions is the preservation of peoples in good health and they are concerned with this life as it is lived now. There is no worry about what will happen after death because there are no punishments to be avoided and no rewards to be expected. In fact Maimela is not alone in holding such views of salvation in African traditional religion. John

(73) Op.cit., p68

(74) Cp.cit., p71

Mbiti seems to be one of the African theologians who has discerned that African traditional religions' view of salvation is restricted to saving man from physical danger, affliction, distress and trouble.(75) And Maimela is strongly influenced by Mbiti's views as his article shows.

E Bolaji Idowu discusses how God (Olodumare) in Yoruba traditional beliefs is worshipped and although he is of the opinion that that kind of worship offered to God by the Yoruba people is true, he does not explicitly say, in Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief, that their traditional religion has salvific value. He refers to the religion in disapproval of its true salvific value. "In effect, man has unwittingly devised his own means of salvation and seeks by them to evade the consequences of his shortcomings or the violations of moral values."(76)

However, Tokunboh Adeyemo understands Idowu as saying that African traditional religions mediate salvation in the same way Christianity does. In fact Idowu is understood to be a universalist and thus for him Christianity cannot claim monopoly of salvation. Byang Kato also understands Idowu in the same way but both Adeyemo and Kato do not state in what way and by what means Idowu says that people are saved in African

(75) John Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, p69

(76) E Bolaji Idowu, Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief, p168

traditional religion.(77)

Another African theologian that has the same views as that held by Idowu, as explained by Adeyemo and Kato, on salvation in African traditional religion, is Gabriel Setiloane. Setiloane is definitely of the opinion that African traditional religion is just as good as Christianity. He thinks salvation can be mediated to people from both religions. Although he does not say so explicitly, one would not be wrong to understand him in that way since he wonders why Africans have to be converted into Christianity. "I must confess that nowadays I find an ecumenical Bible study session with my Western Christian theologian brothers and sisters rather irksome and boring. The question is not only why do we remain in the Christian fold, but, as one young West African Christian said to me in Basel: 'Why do we continue to seek to convert to Christianity the devotees of African traditional religion?'"(78) By speaking in this way Setiloane is adopting and endorsing the question of the West African Christian.

Setiloane goes as far as asserting that the Christian western concept of God is so small and human that it can easily die, but the concept of the deity as Modimo lives

(77) Tokunbo: Adeyemo, Salvation in African Tradition, pp81 and 82; cf. Byang Kato, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, Evangel Publishing House, Kitumu, Kenya, 1975, pp91 and 92

(78) Gabriel Setiloane, "Where are we in African Theology?" in: African theology en route, ed. by Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, Maryknoll, New York 1979, p64

forever. "The Sotho - Tswana God, according to me, according to Kibicho, could never die, because It has no human limitations and It is so immense, incomprehensible, wide, tremendous and unique."(79) He is referring to Modimo as understood by the Sotho - Tswana in African traditional beliefs and not as understood by the Sotho - Tswana Christians as influenced by the Christian teaching of God. The latter worship God as a "He" while the former worship a deity that is an "It".

He wonders why he is still a Christian,(80), because salvation can be experienced in both Christianity and African traditional religions or perhaps because the African traditional religious concept of Modimo of the Sotho - Tswana can give a better concept of the Supreme being than Christianity can. It may also be because for him some African myths make more sense than those popularised by Christianity, for example, on the creation stories.(81)

Having discussed salvation in African traditional religion with reference to how African theologians see salvation in it, I will now discuss the African Christian concept of salvation. It is clear from what is said that an African in his cultural context thinks of salvation as rescue from dangers that threaten to terminate his physical life. He has no thoughts of future life after death because the beliefs he holds that come from the myths have conditioned him to think

(79) Op.cit., p60

(80) Op.cit., p64

(81) Op.cit., pp62 and 63

that immortality and resurrection from the dead are lost forever. His only hope is in this life and he tries all that he can to preserve his life up to his old age when it is natural that he should die and join the world of the spirits. There is no hope of reward or fear of punishment after death.

In the following part I will discuss whether an African who is converted into Christianity abandons all his African traditional beliefs or not. If he retains some of these beliefs, as inevitably he might, his Christian view of salvation should be examined to see how far it is affected by his African traditional beliefs. This is discussed under the African Christian concept of salvation as viewed by African theologians especially John Mbiti.

CHAPTER VI : THE AFRICAN CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF SALVATION
ACCORDING TO JOHN MBITI

Christianity, like other religions, takes man's salvation as its central doctrine and it is no exaggeration to say that the chief aim of the Christian Church is to proclaim the gospel of salvation to every nation in the world. However, there are differences among the religions on the concept of salvation and how it is appropriated by man. The differences of the means of obtaining salvation and of its meaning are not only different from one religion to another but are seen even within one religion, for example, Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church differs from the Protestant churches in its teaching of man's appropriation of salvation.

However, even the Christians of the same denomination may have different views of the concept of salvation and how man is saved, although the Church may be teaching her members the same doctrine. This may be the case where the members come from different cultural backgrounds. African and Western Christians belonging to one denomination tend to understand Christian concepts differently because of their coming from different cultural backgrounds. The complaint of many African theologians today is that Christianity was carried to Africa in the Western cultural form and part of their theological task is to strip the current brand of African Christianity of its foreign clothing and dress

it in the African garb.(1)I concentrate on John Mbiti's view of the African Christian concept of salvation and not on how salvation is obtained because he said very little of the latter. The concept is formed by African Christians because of their traditional cultural background. In order to understand Mbiti well the discussion should start with the traditional religion because he, like Setiloane, says that Africans when converted into Christianity go into it with their traditional cultural thought forms and read them in the Gospel messages.(2)

1. Salvation against the background of traditional religion.

Mbiti is of the opinion that the word 'salvation' does not mean the same thing to different people whose language and culture are different. For this reason he discusses salvation from the African linguistic background before he discusses the African concept of salvation. The missionaries did not introduce the Christian sociological terms which were already in use amongst the people without a thorough investigation of whether the terms really meant what the missionaries had in mind in their teaching.

Mbiti says that the abstract nouns of salvation and redemption are not practically used outside the

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- (1) Watson Omulokoli, "The Quest for Authentic African Christianity" in Fast African Journal of Evangelical Theology, vol 5,1986,P23
- (2) G M Setiloane."Confessing Christ today" in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa,vol12,1975,P35

Christian context among the Akamba people of Kenya.(3) This is so because among the Akamba people the word has meaning only when it is used in practical terms. A person is not called a saviour or redeemer because he saves someone from danger since he acts in a time of emergency and he stops the act of saving as the person in danger is rescued.

The Akamba people associate the words with actions and the verb save and to redeem are commonly used where actions are taking place. The verb to save refers to present activities, to things happening at the present time. The people try to save themselves from the danger and where they fail they call upon God to help them. "God saves the sick from death, people from danger, calamity, destruction, famine, drought, war, animals, drowning, floods, locusts, and captivity."(4)

Not only God saves people from danger, for the verb to save refers to anything that helps one to get out of danger and thus prevent loss of life. The word 'saving' is not restricted to people but it extends to involve the rescuing of an article of property from being destroyed. Even animals or things where they act in preventing man's loss of life, are said to be involved in saving. Mbiti says a dog may save someone or something from destruction and a branch of a tree may

(3) John Mbiti, "Some reflections on African Experience of Salvation Today" in: Living faiths and ultimate goals, S J Smartha ed, Geneva, World Council of Churches 1974, P108

(4) Op cit., P109

save someone from drowning.(5)

Certain words which refer to salvation in Christianity like redeemer, redeem and redemption are not commonly used in the Akamba life and the word 'redeem' when used, does not refer to people but to an article or property that has been taken by someone else and the owner wants to get it back. The owner pays something in exchange to get it. The word has nothing to do with man's salvation and in the Akamba context it does not apply to God at all.(6)

When the missionaries came into Africa to evangelise the people they used the words saviour, salvation, redeemer and redemption, but they expressed them by using the words borrowed from the local African languages that are used in different areas of Africa. The meaning of these African local words that bear traditional cultural thought form has an influence on the African Christian concept of salvation among African Christians.(7)

Not only the African local words have bearing on the African Christian concept, but also African traditional religious life influences the African convert in one way or another as is shown in this section. Mbiti tells us that "Many of the practical expressions of African

(5) Op cit., p109

(6) Op cit., p110

(7) N K Dzobo, "Releasing the Power of Cultures for Witnessing in Africa, The Case of Ghana." in: Reformed World, vol.38 1984-5, p98 cf J Mbiti, "Some Reflections on African Experience of Salvation today", p110

Religion all over the continent, are salvatory." Most prayers in African traditional religion involve requests for health, healing from disease and barrenness, for success in undertakings, protection from harm and danger or death. There are prayers for peace and blessings which refer to salvation from war and deprivation.(8)

When prayers are rendered to God, they symbolise that the people are requesting for salvation or they are thanking God for the saving acts experienced from Him. Gratitude is expressed in sacrifices and offerings when man feels that he is safe and secure from the dangers of life. When the people pray to God in offering their requests, they want to be saved from sickness, death, witchcraft, misfortunes and from anything that threatens the well-being of man.(9)

God is called the Saviour of both man and other created beings although He is not always called by this title. Since He is the Creator and He gives life by which act He saves man from death and gives people rain and saves them from drought, the title Saviour is sometimes accorded to Him because of such saving acts.(10) Salvation in the African religious concept refers to physical dangers of both the individual and the community and is only applied to concrete situations.

According to Mbiti salvation in African traditional concept refers to the present or immediate situation

(8) J Mbiti, "Some Reflections on African Experience of Salvation today", p110

(9) Op.cit., p110

(10) Op.cit., p112

and to the past, but not to a remote future. He says this is because basically the general understanding of Africans about time does not refer to a distant future, but lays great emphasis on the past and present. This salvation has little to do with sin or the moral life of the individual or community.(11)

People do not pray to God that they should be saved from evil of a moral nature. The myths which tell about how man lost immortality and resurrection after death, do not speak about the recovery of life after death. Man just accepted the situation in which God placed him and he has lived in that way ever since. The question of original sin and salvation from moral evils has no place in the African traditional religion. Spiritual salvation that will result in the consummation of history and the establishment of the Kingdom of God are not part of the characteristics of the religion.(12)

Mbiti also discusses the role of faith in man's salvation from the African traditional cultural background. He thinks that this also has a bearing on an African Christian concept of salvation. Although there is faith in African traditional religion, it is not spoken much about because people do not get converted into the religion but they grow up in it. The knowledge of God's existence is acquired from childhood and the beliefs about God's relations with people permeates the whole place where the Africans live. These beliefs are communal and no-one has to teach the other, for everyone

(11) Op.cit., p113

(12) Op.cit., pp113 and 114

lives with these beliefs.(13)

Religious beliefs for Africans are part of life without which they cannot live and enjoy life. Mbiti compares these beliefs with African daily activities such as fetching water and using fire for cooking. And to emphasise this point he also compares them to man's breathing of air. The people's trust in God is expressed in such a way that it is faith in practice that is involved in the whole life of man.(14) Man is not rewarded for his faith or punished by God for lack of it because everyone is assumed of having embraced the beliefs of God's relations with people and everyone accepts God's salvatory acts.

2.AFRICAN CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF FAITH.

Faith plays a very big role in Christianity in the fact that salvation has to be appropriated by believing in Christ (Acts 16 : 31; Mark 16 : 16). The understanding of faith in one's Christian life is very important for this reason. Mbiti says that the missionaries who introduced Christianity into Africa, did not give a theological definition of faith and the African Christians themselves have not given it a theological definition. The African Christians have taken faith as it has been seen expressed in the biblical context and not as a body of Christian truths in terms of doctrines handed down from apostolic times.

(13) J Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity

Nairobi: Oxford University Press., 1980, p101

(14) Op.cit., pp101 and 103

Mbiti gives four directions of the usage of faith and he thinks this reflects the traditions of the missionaries that evangelised certain areas of Africa. The Roman Catholic view takes faith as the acceptance of "doctrines, dogmas, teachings, formulations of councils and ancient creeds, as handed down and interpreted by the Holy apostolic and Roman Church." (15) The African Christian accepts this kind of Christian faith without really understanding what is involved in accepting it. Through learning this kind of faith in catechumen classes it becomes "something very much of an objective reality." (16)

Another direction is to take faith as a personal experience. This is common in the Protestant churches. This type of faith is more subjective and refers to a personal experience. The believer puts his trust in Christ. It is also referred to in other places as accepting Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour. (17) The understanding of this faith entails personal and deliberate decision in accepting Christ as Saviour. The people who refuse to make a decision of accepting Christ as their Saviour, are threatened by preaching and teaching about God's anger against such people and that God will throw them into hell "whose fires are pictured as being very hot." (18)

The third direction of faith refers to the accepting of the gospel message preached as true. Many African

(15) Op cit., p98

(16) Op cit., p98

(17) Op cit., p98

(18) Op cit., p98

Christians take faith in this way, not that they accept the total biblical teaching, but their faith concerns the accepting that which they hear about Christ is true and correct. This direction of faith is not different from the fourth one which equated Christianity with the Western culture.

For many Africans Christianity means the following of Western life style. This identification of Christianity with the Western culture has occasioned the birth of African Theology in which African theologians urge African Christians to do away with the Western culture and clothe Christianity with African traditional culture. They want indigenous thought forms to be used in the expression of Christian faith and in doing theology.(19)

As long as Christianity is expressed in the Western thought forms, it remains foreign and does not reach people in their real needs. Imported Christianity that uses Western thought forms does not reach the deep cravings of the people's hearts and their fears, anxieties, dreams and hopes are not affected by the gospel message. Because Christianity is associated with education, Christians in many parts of Africa are called "readers" even if they do not know how to read but because they accept as true what is read from the

(19) J W Z Kurewa, "The meaning of African Theology" in Journal of theology in Southern Africa, Vol 12, 1975, p35;cf J Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity, p100

bible.(20) Mbiti emphasises here the point that "faith" among Akamba in Kenya does not mean what the Western Christian understands about it. For the Akamba people Christian faith means accepting as true what is said in the Bible.

The word faith among the Akamba cannot be used in the same way it is used in English. The best way to translate it should be 'to take Christ'. People may suffer or die for accepting or taking Christ as their Saviour and it is correct to speak of takers or accepters of Christ in reference to accepting the teaching connected with Jesus Christ. The Christian English terms and their African equivalents do not mean exactly the same thing when they are used in the Christian contexts.

Having spoken about the difference in meaning of faith in English and of its equivalent in Kikamba, Mbiti looks at the biblical meaning of faith. He starts with its meaning in the Old Testament and connects that meaning with the New Testament experience of faith. He refers to Abel in his offering of the sacrifice, to Noah in the building of the ark and to Abraham's call and the test of his faith that involved the offering of his son Isaac. In all this he sees faith expressed in action.

In the New Testament he sees Christ's healing of the sick involving the patient's faith and he also refers to the healing miracles of the Apostles that display the practical expressions of faith. From what he finds in

(20) J Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity, p100

both the Old and New Testaments he concludes that "Faith is portrayed in the Bible as having to bear fruits, to demonstrate works. Otherwise it is only intellectual and more or less dead."(21)

Mbiti thinks that the African Christian concept of faith reflects that of the Bible, which is always expressed in actions and has specific works. Therefore a man that has that kind of faith, will express it in actions and the African Christians of both the indigenous and missionary run churches always want to express their faith in that way because its basis is that of faith portrayed in that of the Bible.(22)

Mbiti connects faith with health and the well-being of man. Through faith in God that He is able to heal and save life through prayer, healing and the defeats of the enemies are effected. Through faith in God many people are healed of their diseases. The African Christians that pray for the sick do not attribute the healing power to themselves but to God. They believe that God is in and with them and that through the Holy Spirit His power is mediated in them.(23) They do not only attribute healing of the sick through prayers to God but even where healing involves medical treatment in hospitals, or where herbs are used, because God has power to deliver His creatures from all evils, and wherever healing takes place it is God that heals.

(21) Op cit., p102;cf Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya
London: Secker and Warburg 6th ed,1974, p276

(22) J Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity, p103

(23) Op cit., p103

Faith in God that is powerful to deliver His people from evil, makes people trust God firmly that His redemptive acts embrace both the body and the soul of man. Healing becomes the practical expression of man's faith and it also helps in the evangelising of the people and in the spreading of the gospel.(24)

Since evil powers show themselves in the form of sickness, witchcraft and troublesome spirits and the evil powers are concrete, faith to combat these powers has also to be concrete and not intellectual and prove that it is stronger than the evil forces. Faith in the African Christian understanding has to be used as a weapon of defence against and protection from evil forces and to be demonstrated in a way that people can see.(25)

Among most African peoples the evil forces are manifested in the forms of magic, witchcraft, sorcery and spirits. The mystical and spiritual agents are the main causes of disease and other sufferings although they may function through human beings. The evil forces are referred to as Satan and faith has to help defend the people against him.

The enemies of faith are outside man and they are concentrated in Satan. When people are in trouble with health they refer to Satan in public discussions but in their private conversation they speak of witchcraft,

(23) Op cit., p103

(24) Op cit., p114

(25) Op cit., p114

sorcery and magic as the causes.(26) His faith whose enemies have just been mentioned, is liable to be tested and the African Christians find the parallel to this in the Bible-Abraham's test of his faith where the sacrifice of Isaac was demanded by God and the test of Job's faith in his troubles. This makes African Christians interpret sickness and other troubles as God's testing of a sufferer's faith. Sometimes the Christian's problems are taken as Satan's work used to undermine, weaken and even uproot man's faith. When a person's faith is weak, Christians think it to be through the work of Satan that occasion the lack of sufficient trust in Christ, or the negligence of prayers.(27)

Faith as a shield to protect Christians from the attack of Satan is better understood by African Christians where shields are still used in fighting amongst people. The Christians feel faith defends them against the principalities and the powers of darkness. Mbiti thinks that sermons of faith as a shield are frequently preached among African Christians and he cites the frequent use of the letter to the Ephesians by the Aladura Church of the Lord in Nigeria as an example. Faith here is expressed as actively used in defence against the deadly darts of the enemy. Without it, Christians can not survive in the world where the battle against Satan goes on continually.

(26) Op cit., p115

(27) Op cit., p116;cf Clive Dillon-Malone, "The Mtumwa Churches of Zambia: An indigenous African Religious Movement" in : Journal of Religion in Africa, XIV, 3(1983), p215

The expression of faith in action is what African theologians call the theological thought forms in the African cultural context. When faith is defined in intellectual terms among African Christians and is never expressed in actions, it is said to be in captivity of the Western culture from which it should be liberated. The Church in Africa is urged to rewrap the Christian faith in the indigenous thought forms after it is liberated from Western concepts(28)

Faith is associated with action, and with power on the part of believers to perform miracles of healing through prayers. Wherever healing fails after praying for the sick, the cause is attributed to weakness of faith on the part of the patients or failure to allow the Holy Spirit to effect the cure due to bad behaviour.(29) The African indigenous churches associate faith with healing and the power to drive evil spirits away. A person that has faith gets healed from diseases and is protected against magic, witchcraft and sorcery. It is through faith in Christ that a believer experiences God's power in him. Faith creates power for healing and changes the peoples' lives for the better.

Faith as experienced by African Christians takes many forms and it covers different practical areas of man's life. Africans would like to live their faith rather than to recite it, for it involves the whole man since

(28) J W Z Kurewa, "The meaning of African Theology", p40

(29) Clive Dillon-Malone, 'The Mutumwa Churches of Zambia :An Indigenous African healing Movement" in: Journal of Religion in Africa, XIV, 3(1983) pp 215 and 216

in the African views of man body and spirit are inseparable except at death.(30) To speak of the body and spirit separately before death is not an African way of life. Mbiti says the Africans would like to express their faith in dancing, celebrating, shouting and singing as an indication that they are being possessed by the Holy Spirit. Faith is not just recited, not just spoken about, but it is expressed in man's daily activities.

Mbiti says that an African conversion to Christianity is not sudden but is a slow process. When people seem to be suddenly converted and can even date the experience, the occasion of that conversion is the expression of an event which background runs into the past. This is the case because conversion involves the integrating of traditional religious elements with those of the biblical religion. The Christian faith has to find areas of contact that have similar religious elements in the African convert, so that Jesus Christ is accepted as the central point of departure in accepting the Christian teaching.(31) An African convert does not come to Christianity without the African traditional religious concepts.(32) Mbiti says the conversion means entering into a new living relationship with Jesus Christ in which the convert deeply embraces a Christological faith which affects the convert's life and that of the community in which one lives.

(30) J Mbiti, The Bible and Theology in African Christianity, p127

(31) Op.cit., p128

(32) Aylward Shorter, African Christian Theology, London: Chapman, 1875, p10

Baptism, according to Mbiti, is a man's official birth of faith in the Church. Man is taken out of other religions and is placed in the Christian faith community. In other Christian churches adults take up new names as a symbol of the new birth. Baptism also symbolises the removing of sin and the birth of the new life of faith. Many Africans get baptised several times in their lives when they attach themselves to different churches.(33)

3.HOW 'SALVATION' IS UNDERSTOOD BY AFRICAN CHRISTIANS.

I have already said that the word 'salvation' is never used outside the Christian context among Akamba people in Kenya and that it is confined to Christian life. Since this is what Mbiti says concerning the Akamba language, I want now to discuss what he says is the African Christian understanding of salvation. The difference in meaning of the word salvation between the Western and the African is due to the difference of the cultural and linguistic background of the Western and African people. "Pobee calls this a working misunderstanding - the missionary preaches the gospel and the people who are evangelised receive it, but both the missionary and the evangelised person interpret things their own way."(34)

In looking at salvation in an African Christian

(33) J Mbiti, "Bible and Theology in African Christianity, p129

(34) Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogoba, "Christianity in a South African Context" in: Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, 52, Sept 1985, p5

understanding, we should keep in mind that in the African traditional context the word also refers to people's rescue from material and physical dilemmas. This kind of understanding of the meaning of the word salvation does not disappear when one is converted into Christianity. This is also true of the term 'our saviour' in reference to both God the Father and Jesus Christ when we speak of man's salvation.(35)

Mbiti says that in order to get the real meaning of the word salvation one should also refer in his discussion to what one should be saved from. In order to be relevant the saviour should be able to deliver the people from their practical enemies that threaten life. The African's enemies are many and they include among others sickness, witchcraft, sorcery, magic, barrenness, failure, troublesome spirits, danger, misfortune, calamity and death as far as man is concerned, but in connection with the community reference is also made to drought, war, oppression, floods and so on.(36) What does not help the African Christians to escape from these enemies, does not bring them the kind of salvation they yearn for and does not answer the questions of their real needs.

Africans who are not Christians have their own means of fighting against evil forces like anti-witchcraft measures, exorcisms, the use of traditional medicines, divination and the like. They consult local medicine men

(35) J Mbiti, "'Our Saviour' as an African experience" in: Christ and Spirit in the New Testament. Ed.

B Lindars and S S Smalley, Cambridge, 19.3, p400

(36) Op.cit , p406

to use prevention or counter-measures against the evil forces. Only when these measures fail, do they appeal to God for help. There are many situations in the African life where the rescue is required. When the Christian message of salvation came to people with this kind of background, their understanding was the salvation from their present enemies that threaten life.

So the meaning of salvation to African Christians is 'redemption' from physical dangers and the reference to spiritual life comes in the picture as a secondary issue. Since African understanding of salvation mainly refers to deliverance from physical evils the question of sin is of less concern. This is because even if African Christians may talk or preach about sin their understanding of it is little. "Even if the question of sin features a great deal in missionary or historical churches, it is highly doubtful that African Christians understand its centrality in the New Testament teaching about atonement and redemption. A great deal of what is said about being 'saved from sin' is simply a parrot-type indoctrination from the bringers of the Christian message."(37)

Jesus Christ's work as a Saviour is said not to be limited to man's forgiveness of sin but is a concern of the whole man. His life and work on earth touched all areas of man's life and there was no part that was not touched. N. Onwu agrees with Mbiti when he says that in Jesus's healing miracles " he is seen as the bringer of salvation, the liberator from all forces of

(37) Op.cit., p408

dehumanization."(38) The overpowering of the evil forces in Jesus's healing ministry is connected with the blessings expected at the eschaton. Jesus fought against the Devil and sin in a way people understood the world at His time when sickness, the Devil and sin were closely connected. This picture of the world of that time is never past in the African Christian understanding.

Jesus Christ's living among men and working miracles of healing, rescuing and raising of the dead is most meaningful to African Christians. Jesus embodies the power of God to save man from his dilemmas in life. The African Christian appeals to God for help in Christ as both the first and last resort. Christians look upon Jesus as their Saviour because He is human and is able to enter into their human situations that call for redemption. Mbiti says that " .. African peoples find salvation to be meaningful in areas far beyond the limitations of evangelical theology which has more or less confined the term to the question of sin."(39)

Mbiti does not say that African Christians do not have the concept of salvation from sin, but he emphasises the fact that the idea of salvation from sin finds place only within the context of man's deliverance from evil forces. Sin is just one of the many ills and dilemmas in

(38) N Onwu, "The Hermeneutical Model: The dilemma of the African theologian" in: Africa Theological Journal, 14. (3) 1985, p156; cf. J Mbiti, "The Bible and Theology in African Christianity", p151

(39) J Mbiti, "Some reflections on African Experience of Salvation today", p115

man's life from which he should be saved.(40) He also suggests that since salvation has to do with all areas of man's life, it should extend to man's culture and traditions. Man should be saved from cultural demons, fears and hatreds, from outdated traditions and from inferiority complex. Salvation should extend to embrace also national life, so that the nation should be saved from tribalism, corruption, nepotism and the like.(41) All these are characterised by Mbiti as demons from which African people should be saved.

Although Mbiti lays emphasis on the individual and community in his discussion of salvation, he thinks that this dimension is necessary and meaningful only when the personalisation of salvation is in view. The New Testament's true theological perspective of salvation has a view of the whole cosmos and to limit salvation to individuals and to the community and to ignore the cosmic dimension, is to distort the Christian message. Salvation should not be focussed on only the soul of man but it should embrace the individual, the community and the world.(42)

Mbiti knows what the African Christian concept of salvation is from what he has heard said, and seen done by Christians from both independent and historical churches and from what he has read on the subject. This has made him understand that salvation in the African Christian context is seen as wholeness and being in peace. A person who is in unity with his neighbours,

(40) Op.cit., p117

(41) Op.cit., p118

(42) Op.cit., p119

friends and God is experiencing salvation. Prayer for the forgiveness of sin comes in because sin destroys salvation and brings believers into disharmony with God.(43)

Western Christian missionaries have presented a powerless God who cannot save people from their problems. The preaching of salvation of man's soul from sin has made some Africans break away from the mission churches and establish their own churches saying that the God of the mission churches is interested only in men's souls and not in their general and total welfare.(44)

African Christians understand that salvation comes from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and they do not want it to be restricted to the salvation from sin and for the soul. The restriction of salvation from sin and for the soul does not fit the African way of life and is not the view of salvation as given in the Bible.(45)

The African Christian view of salvation is neither restricted to the physical life neither to the spiritual. The Christians have broadened the salvation concept because of reading the Bible. 'For African peoples, therefore, to make full sense, biblical salvation has to embrace their total world, both

(43) J Mbiti, Bible and Theology in Christianity, p152; cf. Wynnand Amewowo "Experiences and discoveries with the Bible in West Africa" in: Mission studies 5, vol. III-1, 1986, p16

(44) Op.cit., p152

(45) Op.cit., p156

physical and spiritual. This is a cardinal point in looking at salvation in African Christianity. No area of the African world can afford to be left out."(46)

The appropriation of salvation for some African Christians is through baptism and the mass. The former being more emphasised not only in independent churches but also in mission-run churches. Mbiti seems to show that his opinion is that both God's grace and man's work co-operate in man's obtaining salvation. This is detected in his reference to Ephesians 2 : 8 and Phil. 2 : 12f. He also says that some people commit themselves to God to effect salvation while others work hard to keep it.(47)

According to Mbiti salvation is received in various ways and it does not matter to him how people get saved. The most important thing is that they are being saved. This salvation is mediated to people through Christ and is not only for this life but is also for the life to come. Christianity has brought to Africans belief in future life which is absent in African traditional religion. The African Christian view of salvation covers physical and spiritual life and it embraces both the present and the future.(48)

4. ESCHATOLOGICAL NATURE OF SALVATION IN AN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN CONCEPT

a. African concept of time: Before I discuss the

(46) Op.cit., p158

(47) Op.cit., p173

(48) Op.cit., p174

eschatological nature of salvation in an African Christian concept as it is presented by Mbiti, it is necessary to look at time as it is conceived by a traditional African. Time is never taken apart from events that happen in a man's life. Whenever a traditional African speaks of time, he always associates it with certain events that constitute it. For example rising up, milking cattle, herding, working in the field, returning home, preparing and eating the evening meal and going to sleep. (49) This kind of reckoning time is due to absence of clocks and watches and events are useful substitutes. When a person wants to tell his friend that he will come and see him in the morning, he tells him that he will come at sunrise in the morning. He has always to associate time with an event in order to communicate with a friend when he wants to do something with him.

This kind of reckoning time becomes clear when one refers to the past which is marked by many events. People will reckon the death of their village headman by associating it with a certain event that took place in that year, for example when there was famine, or war or in the year when there was a great flood. A traditional African lives a life not very different from that of the Old Testament period in reference to time reckoning. Time was reckoned in events in the Old Testament, for example, the time when Michah was a prophet is reckoned as "...in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.. (Micah 1:1). Amos is said to have begun his work as a prophet two years before the earthquake

(49) John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, London; Oxford Press, 1971, p:9

(Amos 1:1).

Mbiti says that the Akamba people in Kenya and other Africans have a two-dimensional perception of time, namely the present and the past. The past is more important than the present because it is full of events, while the future is rather dark and its events have not yet come into existence and are unknown. The African moves backwards into the past to his ancestors. Dominique Zahan is in full agreement with Mbiti when in reference to the African view of time he says, "The human being goes backward in time; he is oriented toward the world of the ancestors, toward those who no longer belong to the world of the living, while he turns his back on what is to come, the future." (50)

Since time in the traditional African concept moves backwards and not forward, there are no thoughts that the world is moving to a goal. This is so because time apart from events does not move and events come and go in rhythmic succession. Man does not think that one day the world will come to a conclusion, but that there is no end to the rhythm of days, months, seasons and years like that of birth, marriage, procreation and death. (51)

There is no resurrection of the dead for there is no need for their coming back to this world because'...on

(50) Dominique Zahan, The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa. Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1979, p45; cf John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, p31

(51) John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, p25

the whole their world is simply a continuation of present life, without either presents or punishments for deeds done in this world. The certainty of the continuation of life in the spirit world inspires no hope for the future, nor is it doubted by anyone,"(52) The dead are nearer God than the living and are provided with the spiritual power, thus they are in a better state than the ordinary living people. God may use them as messengers to perform his will, but he is still the Creator and is not equal to them.(53)

This does not mean that the traditional African completely ignores the future. He thinks of it but in a somewhat limited way. It is often in reference to anticipated events, for example, a child's future initiation ceremony or a boy's future marriage and the like. However, a future dimension of time is being born in the Akamba's life because of the Western influence. In time to come the Akamba people and other Africans will embrace the three dimensions of time.(54)

Some theologians like Byang Kato and A Scott Moreau have criticised Mbiti's understanding of the African concept of time, however, the latter does agree with Mbiti on certain points and he considers that Mbiti's exposition of the African concept of time should be heeded in evangelising the Africans and his findings should not be

(52) Op. cit., p137

(53) Op. cit., p138

(54) Op. cit., p36;cf A Scott Moreau, "A Critique of John Mbiti's understanding of the African concept of Time" in: East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology, vol. 5, 1986, p42

underestimated because, " ... they represent an insider's careful analysis and thought. In addition they do reflect aspects of a true understanding of the African mindset. There is little room for doubt that generally the traditional African focusses on the past far more than is done in the West, or that his sense of and concern with time differs from that of the average Westerner."(55)

b. An African Christian's View of Salvation as a Future Event.

It is very difficult to state in a few words that an African Christian may think of his salvation as futuristic, partly because his background is that the future is dim and seems to have nothing in store for him. Firstly, his concept of time or his whole worldview has to be completely christianised before any talk of salvation as a future event can be discussed. "Everybody has a worldview we are told because everyone has beliefs that guide action and interpret events around us in some kind of sensible way. A worldview varies somewhat from a 'philosophy of life' in that the former is less self-conscious and is more caught than taught."(56)

It has been pointed out that an African has his own interpretation of why he cannot have a direct communion with God and why he does not anticipate the resurrection of the dead and the inheritance of eternal life. His

(55) Op.cit., A Scott Moreau, p43

(56) Mark R Shaw, "Developing an African Christian Worldview", in: Eas: Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology vol.5, 1986, p50

worldview should be replaced by the biblical worldview of creation, fall and restoration. When this is done salvation as a future event may make sense. "For generations African peoples have handed down by word of mouth myths of how paradise was lost, how immortality was lost, how death came about, how God and men were separated, and so on, but nobody knew how this loss could be repaired, how the resurrection could be regained, how the gap between God and men could be bridged. But in Jesus all this falls into place; it makes sense, it becomes a revelation, a hope, and a destiny".(57)

Mbiti is of the opinion that the African acquires a Christian worldview when he is evangelised and is converted into Christianity. The loss of immortality and resurrection that was meant to be forever, is regained and man will no more be lost forever. Africans already know about the role of mediators as they regarded the spirits or the departed to mediate between them and God. Therefore Jesus the Redeemer, seen as the perfect man, works well as a mediator between God and man and thus fulfils what was previously lacking.(58)

Conversion for an African into Christianity means a change from one direction into another and sometimes it is a long process, since those who are converted are mainly from African traditional religion. The change of direction is the result of listening to the message,

(57) John Mbiti, "Some African Concepts of Christology" in: Christ and the Young Church, Ed. G F Vicedom, London, SPCK 1972, p60

(58) Op.cit., p61

asking questions and considering the results of that change. This inevitably goes with the change in worldview thus preparing him to accept salvation as both a present and future event. The convert is oriented to the Christian worldview through Sunday sermons which cover a lot of topics such as "domestic matters, education, politics, family quarrels, marriage, farming, sin, salvation, Christian hope, death, resurrection, heaven, hell, God, Christ, the Spirit, the Church, the Sacrament, etc."(59)

Although an African Christian concept of time is changed by Christian teaching, it is still noted that his future does not go far enough beyond two generations. This makes him doubt the certainty of the eschatological nature of salvation when he does not envisage the immediate return of Christ. Since his cultural background focusses on the present events as dealing with his salvation, he cuts short the distant future in order to have the future near. "We agree with Mbiti in general that the African focus on the future is of a far shorter outlook that (than) we have in the West. Actual planning for events beyond the next generation is often not done. The result of this perspective is to foreshorten future events and thus put them into the prospect of the immediate future. The apocalyptic flavour of the independent churches shows how such

(59) John Mbiti, "'Cattle are born with ears, their horns grow later.' Towards an appreciation of African Oral Theology" in: Africa Theological Journal, vol. 8, no. 1, 1979, p18

a foreshortening can affect African theology.' (60)

However, his perspective of time changes. Instead of thinking that once he dies he goes to be with his ancestors, he now thinks that after death he goes to be with (Christ) God. He may not perhaps think of resurrection, but the shift has been made from ancestors to Christ. Although the concept of a future Kingdom occupied by the dead and the living after resurrection and judgment is out of the traditional African concept, Jesus's teaching as is recorded in the gospels gives meaning and satisfies an African Christian's spiritual needs, provided we let Jesus's message break the old ways of behaviour and thinking pattern that resists change and stagnates society.(61) A radical change is required to break down the barriers that block the new Christian worldview which gives people a hope of resurrection and eternal life in the future Kingdom.

The traditional African concept of time is affected by the African languages which are static or slow in accommodating the future dimension of time. This has resulted in the teaching and thinking of the immediate realised eschatology not only in the independent churches but also in the historical churches such as the Africa Inland Church. The blame of the Akamba Christian

(60) A Scott Moreau, "A critique of John Mbiti's Understanding of the African Concept of Time" in: East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology, vol. 5, 1986, pp46 and 47

(61) N Onwu, "The Hermeneutical Model : The Dilemma of the African Theologian" in: Africa Theological Journal, 14 (3), 1985, pp156 and 158

expectations of Christ's immediate return is not laid only upon the lack of distant future verbs in Akamba language, but also upon the wrong teaching of Africa Inland Mission and Church about eschatology.(62) As a result of the limited linguistic concept of time and the wrong teaching of the Africa Inland Mission and Church, the Akamba always live expecting Christ to come immediately. People are disappointed, their faith is shaken as their new future created by Christianity which they hope to reach immediately seems to be far away.(63)

Mbiti says that to base New Testament Eschatology on a threefold linear concept of time is to expect a worse tragedy mainly among Africans whose future is very short. According to the Akamba's concept of time Jesus Christ's coming cannot go over a period of two years and their proverb that says 'he who is waiting does not die', expresses the view that what is waited for will certainly happen in one's lifetime.(64) This means that eschatological nature of salvation to such people is a problem rather than a consolation.

However, Mbiti observes that Eschatology was also a problem in the early New Testament time. The early Christians who expected Christ to come in their lifetime, died without witnessing His return just as the African Christians see the early Christians in their region die before the parousia. The conclusion that is made from the delay is that the whole teaching is untrue

(62) John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, pp51 - 54

(63) Op.cit., p57

(64) Op.cit., p58

or that Jesus has withdrawn His intention of coming back. But some keep pointing to the signs that refer to His coming and interpret them that they point to the immediate parousia.(65)

Eschatology is misunderstood, not because of the African concept of time only, but also because the Africa Inland Mission and Church base it on the linear concept of time. The New Testament teaching of Eschatology is that it embraces both the present and the future without basing it on a threefold linear concept of time. According to Mbiti, Eschatology should be both horizontal and vertical and the latter is non-temporal and therefore denies horizontalising eschatology. The New Testament Eschatology is grounded on Christology and is therefore able to be taught in any historical and cultural situation, such as the African, without attempting to change the people's worldview.(66)

c.The Problem in an African Christian Eschatological View and Mbiti's Solution.

What has happened to an African after his conversion is that a future concept of time is created in him and it incorporates both the future in this life and in the life to come. The notion of 'the next world' is now found in all African societies as what lies ahead after bodily death. But the next world becomes a carbon copy of the present, thus reverting to a traditional African view of the hereafter. The only difference is that in the latter it lies in the past and not in the future.

(65) Op.cit., pp59 and 60

(66) Op.cit., p61

The concept of the hereafter is moved from the past into the future. The problem which Mbiti sees in an African Christian eschatological view is that his new worldview of the hereafter remains basically materialistic.(67)

The New Testament eschatological nature of salvation is explained in symbols to convey the reality of the new life that lies beyond it. Unfortunately, an African Christian because of his background, stops at the symbols and he takes them as the reality of the new life. Mbiti regards the future of the African Christian an utopia to which he looks forward to escape at death or at Christ's second coming and is a place of sorrow for the non-Christians.(68)

The Eschatological symbols that are taken by the African Christians as reality are eight - gehenna, fire, treasure, city, country, eating and drinking, tears and pain, and heaven.(69) All of these terms do not refer to something that is physically there for people to experience after death, resurrection and judgment, but they point to people's state of life apart from or with Christ. After listing these eschatological symbols, as Mbiti calls them, he explains them one by one and concludes that they are mere metaphors used in the Christian teaching of Eschatology.(70) Instead of quoting everything Mbiti says about each symbol, I single out "fire" with the idea that its explanation

(67) Op.cit., p61

(68) Op.cit., pp63 and 64

(69) Byang Kato, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, p83

(70) John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, p64

will show how he deals with the rest of the symbols.

First of all Mbiti says that fire in the African context is used for cooking, heating, burning wood and grass in clearing the field and has no moral or religious purposes. Even in the world of the spirits fire is used for good purposes only.(71) Nowhere in the African context is fire used to punish people. Fire is associated with the judgment of God in the Old Testament and in other Jewish literature. However, the term 'everlasting fire' for punishment in hell is not used in the Old Testament but it is used in the New Testament as a symbol of judgment having its influence from the Old Testament.(72)

All that is said concerning fire in connection with the last judgment should be viewed as connected with both the present and the future. God's eschatological judgment extends from the present to the future and this fire is already present on earth through Christ's presence in the world. He says that those who are apart from Christ in this life are already cast into the fire and this fire will be fully revealed in the parousia.

According to Mbiti "fire" is a symbol, not only for destruction, but also for purity. Since it is associated with Christ it either saves or destroys depending on a person's relationship to Christ. Unfortunately the African Christians believe in a literal future fire which will burn and torment all unbelievers after the

(71) Op.cit., p67

(72) Op.cit., p68

final judgment.(73) African Christians should look beyond the material symbol of fire and Eschatology should not be based on the threefold linear view of time, for the symbol is not limited to time because it stands for a state and should not be taken literally.

Mbiti explains the other symbols in a similar way. In this way he thinks that the problem of the eschatological nature of salvation in a physical sense, as is generally expected by African Christians, is solved. The African Christian should no more be troubled about Christ's immediate coming and should know that the Church itself already exists in the eschatological time. It is wrong to let Eschatology, which is already present slip into the future. The language employed in explaining Eschatology is used symbolically and is working as the vehicle to communicate the spiritual reality.(74)

The sacraments are good vehicles for the explanation of the non-physical realities of Eschatology by means of the material. The physical and the spiritual meet together and neutralise the temporal limitations, so that the soul experiences the spiritual 'Promised Land' and lives by the sustenance of the powers of the new age.

Baptism works as an eschatological symbol by which the convert enters into the new age and it ensures him of salvation now and on the day of judgment. Through

(73) Op.cit., p39

(74) Op.cit., p89; cf. Byang Kato, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, p79

baptism a Christian lives in both the physical realm and the spiritual, baptism acting as a sacrament of inaugurated eschatology.(75)

The celebration of the Eucharist is the occasion of great joy because it is the time of communion with the Lord and His presence removes temporal limitations. The notion of the delay of the parousia and feelings of disappointment are absorbed by the joy the believers experience at this occasion.

Through the Eucharist the believers experience the three dimensions of time from Christ's incarnation to His glorification, and the eternal realities of existence for believers flow from His life-giving body and blood. The observation of Sunday as the Lord's day instead of the Jewish Sabbath, is an indication of the incursion of the Age to Come into the Old Age. "It is here and now on this eschatological day that the Age to Come most intimately overlaps This Age. But the overlapping, being transacted in Time, points to the consummation when This Age completely disappears and gives way to the Age to Come in all its splendour and intensity."(76) Mbiti believes that what is mediated through the act of the Eucharist is both the fulfilment of the promise, yet it remains a promise. In the former a believer sees and tastes in Christ what he should have in his spiritual life, while in the latter the promise goes beyond the limits of temporal time and cannot be grasped even by

(75) John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, pp98, 99 and 101

(76) Op.cit., p104

the most holy participant in the Eucharist.(77)

The sacraments make the Church as strong as it was in the first century period because the same Lord is mediated through them "... as effectively and sufficiently as He was in the Apostolic days."(78) This view of the Eschatological nature of salvation, in Mbiti's opinion, solves the problem of regarding the eschatological symbols as the physical reality, and the believers are directed to see their present acquired eternal life as being sustained by bread and wine in the Holy Communion.(79) In this way Mbiti removes the futuristic Eschatology and emphasises this point by saying that the whole humanity has already experienced resurrection through Jesus Christ's resurrection. The future is endless and the redemption only for believers gives way to the cosmic redemption and the worry that some may be eternally lost, is banished.(80)

(77) Op. cit., p105

(78) Op. cit., p106

(79) Op. cit., p107

(80) Byang Kato, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, p87;
John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, ppl68 - 169

SECTION C

CHAPTER VII: SOTERIOLOGY IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MALAWI: A REFORMED
RESPONSE AND POSITION.

1. AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION.

a. The Failure of African traditional religion in
mediating salvation.

Salvation defined as the restoration of man to his original state which involves the recovery of man's blessing and glory lost by the human race in the fall of Adam; the restoration of humanity to the life of perfection and happiness with God, is not met by the African traditional religion. The African traditional religion is concerned only with man's present physical life. Although it is true that man in his original state was free from problematic areas that brought anxieties to him, their mere reduction does not bring man salvation.

Man, besides being free from all that threaten to terminate his life, was also in full communion with his Creator and he was created to live with Him forever. Since the preservation of good health is all that is meant by salvation in traditional Malawian beliefs, and there is nothing said about the restoration of man to his original state, it is right to say that the traditional beliefs fail to mediate salvation.

In this notion I agree with Robert Cameron Mitchell who thinks that African traditional religions do not give a radical solution to humanity's separation from God as does Christianity through faith in Jesus Christ, and

with John Mbiti who also sees the failure of traditional beliefs in the lack of myths dealing with the restoration of paradise, man's immortality and his resurrection from the dead.(1)

The restoration of man to his original state, which according to Calvin involves the mortification of the flesh and the vivification of the spirit is the main meaning of salvation in the Reformed view. Man's full restoration is not achieved in this life even when problems with his health is reduced to a minimum.(2) For this reason I do not agree with Simon Maimela who states that African traditional religions mediate salvation because man's whole life is not involved. If man were created only to live to his old age and then die without hope of resurrection, the African traditional religions would have some significance in what I may call temporal salvation. However, the invention of modern medicine and the methods that are used to preserve good health, would make them out of date.

Although it could be proved that the prayers and sacrifices offered to the ancestral spirits in Malawian traditional religion really helped the people to recover from illness or avert misfortunes, it cannot be accepted that the ancestor cult provided our forefathers with salvation. The people might have indeed felt

(1) Robert Cameron Mitchell, African Primal Religions, Illinois: Argus Communications, 1977, P45; cf. John Mbiti, "Some African Concepts of Christology" in: Christ and the Younger Churches, p60

(2) Inst. 3:3:9

psychologically secure after offering prayers and sacrifices to the ancestors, but might also have been greatly frustrated if their problem continued after the sacrifices to appease the spirits had failed. The resort to the diviners in solving certain problems connected with illness involved the suspicion of witchcraft being at work and resulted in the killing of people that were picked up as witches by the diviner. In most cases the innocent people were the victims.(3)

The killing of slaves in order to bury them with their master so that they could serve him in the hereafter, and the threatening of girls with death if they did not have sexual intercourse soon after their first menstrual period(4), are some of the most sinful acts the traditional Malawians had to be saved from. Therefore, anyone who encourages people to live a life of cherishing the past evil traditional customs on the pretext that they mediate salvation is retrograde and dangerous and should not be tolerated to propagate his ideas.

The assertion that there is salvation in African traditional religions is motivated by African theologians' love for their cultural heritage. However, they do this without discrimination of which traditional beliefs are helpful and which are not. The philosophy

(3) J C Chakanza, "Provisional Annotated Chronological List of Witch-finding Movements in Malawi, 1850 - 1980" in: Journal of Religion in Africa, 15 3 (1985), p227

(4) Duff Macdonald, Africana or The Heart of Heathen Africa, pp101 and 125

that what one has received from one's ancestors should be accepted as good and useful without a critical judgment, is dangerous. This philosophy is discerned in Kalilombe's article where he says " I am looking at a venerable and sacred tradition handed over by generations of ancestors. These beliefs and customs will command my respect and careful consideration, even when I may not share them. I cannot act as if these are childish superstitions or mere primitive mumbo jumbo, for I feel with my whole person the seriousness of the problems, questionings, I have no right to look down on my father's culture or to offer simplistic solutions to questions I know to be very complex."(5)

The question should not be whose traditional beliefs one is looking at, but in what sense these beliefs have salvific value. It should be noted that other peoples in other continents or countries had at one time or another their own traditional beliefs about God and their own ways of approaching Him. Some approached Him through idols such as the Greeks who had Zeus and Hermes as their gods (Acts 14 : 12 - 13). Christianity penetrated their cultures presenting the people with Christ as their Saviour. Everywhere the gospel of Christ penetrated, evil traditional beliefs had been abandoned leaving those that were compatible with the gospel message. In this way Christ becomes the transformer of

(5) Patrick Kalilombe, "The Salvific Value of African Religions" in: AFER (21) J E, 1979, pp154 and 155

the culture.(6) This notion does not in any way enhance the acceptance of the Western culture which is not a danger to the gospel message.

Some African theologians' reaction against the Western culture that has penetrated Africa through Christianity and colonialism, whether they know it or not, leads them into fighting against the Western culture bearers. Colonialism has been fought against and is nearly stamped out of existence in Africa, but Christianity has come to stay. However, the discerning of salvation in African traditional religions, despite its apparent evils, is a sign that Christianity is less necessary to some African theologians. This view is detected in the article of Gabriel M Setiloane where he agrees with a West African Christian that the devotees of African traditional religion should not be converted into Christianity. His assertion that some African myths, such as those of creation, make much more sense than those presented in Genesis and universalised by Christianity, may be looked at as an attempt of exerting African traditional religion above Christianity. Setiloane's concept of Modimo as expressing the power of the Supreme Being as better than the Christian God, is clearly a fight against Christianity rather than against the Western culture.(7)

(6) H Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, New York: Harper and Row 1956, p190 ff;cf A Scott Moreau, "A Critique of John Mbiti's understanding of the African Concept of time" in East African Journal of Evangelical Theology 5,1986, pp 44 and 45

(7) Gabriel M Setiloane, "Where are We in African Theology" in African theology en route, pp 60,62&64

Although concepts of salvation may be different to different religions and may differ from one people to another of different geographical areas and cultures because of situations that influence their understanding, as Maimela suggests, care should be taken that one should not regard these concepts as presenting an adequate view of salvation. No concept of salvation is enough that leaves out Christ as a means of grace and the involvement of the whole man in its definition, even if it could be accepted that God speaks to people in and through their cultures. What is a sinful act in a biblical sense in one culture cannot be accepted as gracious in another culture because of the religious beliefs accepted in that geographical area.

Let us take, for example, the traditional Malawian who accepts the hiring of a man to have sexual intercourse with his daughter soon after menstrual period, for fear that if she does not do so she may die. Should he be excused and his actions justified as gracious because he is acting to save his daughter? Certainly not if we accept that "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.."(2 Timothy 3:16), we should use it as a criterion for judging which religious beliefs mediate salvation and which do not.

I do not agree with Setiloane, Maimela and Kalilombe that the traditional religions are adequate vehicles

of salvation for their adherents.(3) Most of the beliefs of the adherents of African traditional religions contradict the teaching of Scripture and some traditional practices such as killing suspected witches, which in most cases involved the killing of innocent people on false accusations, promoted hatred among the different families instead of enhancing peace and good will among people. My fellow African theologians who regard African religions as an adequate means of mediating salvation, contradict themselves by their actions. The fact that they continue working as Christians among their fellow Africans and converting them from the African traditional beliefs into Christianity, is a clear sign that they practically reject what they theoretically assert as the vehicle of salvation.

The traditional religious beliefs of any people, no matter how good they may seem to be to the people themselves, and how long they have been in use among the people, are not salvic as long as they leave out Christ as the Saviour. "African theology" should always be qualified by the epithet "Christian", so that Christianity should be indigenous by dressing it in African culture. All the African traditional customs which are in conflict with Christianity as presented in Scripture, should be abandoned. What is helpful in

(8) Gabriel Setiloane, "Where are We in African Theology?" in :African theology en route, p64; S Maimela, "Salvation in African Traditional Religions" Missionalia(13) no 2,1985, p65 P Kalilombe, " The Salvific Value of African Religions" in AFER (21) J E 1979, p152

African traditional religious beliefs should be adapted. I agree with Haraut Schonherr that different concepts of salvation are supplementary and complementary. However, there should be unity in the difference of possible views so that although people from different cultures should speak differently about Christ they must not differ from Him. I judge it right for me to say with him that " There is no other way of salvation, no African, Asian, American or European way, because there is no saviour beside Christ."(9)

b. What a Christian Malawian can learn from his
Forefather's traditional religious beliefs.

The negative aspects of traditional Malawian beliefs that have been shown as cherished in the past by our forefathers, do not mean that there is nothing in them that a Christian Malawian can learn. Despite the evil practices in these beliefs there are good elements in them. One of these elements is a religious attitude to life.

A traditional Malawian was very religious and he carried his religion wherever he went. He did not locate times for prayers neither did he have special days set aside for worship, such as we find in Christianity. He did not make a journey or go hunting without rendering prayers

(9) Harmut Schonherr, "Concept of Salvation in Christianity" in: Africa Theological Journal(12) no 3,1983, pp162 and 165

to his ancestors.(10) He did not eat or drink without offering the portion of food or some drink to the ancestral spirits to bless them for him. Reverence were given to the ancestors as the servants of the Great Spirit(Mulungu) who gave them power to be in charge of the people's affairs.. This religious life should be adopted and encouraged among Christian Malawians so that they should live a godly life, not only on Sundays, but every day. Christians should pray to Christ before undertaking any piece of work and acknowledge Him as the only mediator between God and men and offset the ancestors(1 Timothy 2:5).

The traditional Malawian did not only request help from God through the ancestors, but he also gave thankofferings(sacrifices) as a sign of gesture to the spirits. When a hunter killed game he always offered part of the meat to the ancestors, whom he believed had helped him to be successful in his hunting. Before he could enjoy new crops, he presented the first heads of maize and some pumpkins as a thanksgiving to the ancestors who gave rains in answer to the community's prayers.(11) A spirit of gratitude to Christ after the success of an undertaking should be fostered among Christians, which may result in the offering of articles of property or some money to the Church for the work of the Lord. The traditionalist teaches us that prayers do not only mean asking for help, but also an expression of

(10) Duff Macdonald, Africana or the Heart of Heathen Africa, pp 60,76 and 85; cf Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A contribution towards Understanding, p42

(11) Op cit., p 88

gratitude for the things received.

During worship adoration was given to the ancestral spirits of the paramount chiefs by the priest in charge. He recited the praise names of a particular paramount whose help was being sought. The rest of the people responded with a murmuring sound which indicated that they agreed with what the priest was saying.(12) Christians should learn to adore God in their prayers mentioning His greatness, loving kindness, long suffering and justice. There is less adoration in our prayers and much time is given to petition and intercession.

The second thing that can be learnt from a traditional Malawian is his belief in a guardian spirit (mzimu). Apart from the belief in the protection of his ancestors he believed that his spirit protected him from evil forces. There was no time when he was completely alone without the spirit.(13) This gave him a sense of security, though, of course, a false one from our point of view. Instead of letting a Christian Malawian believe in anti-witchcraft medicine as his protector from witches, magicians and sorcerers, his thoughts should be directed to the Spirit of God the Father and of Christ as his faithful guardian Spirit. A Christian should, like a traditional Malawian, not imagine of being alone

(12) Margaret Read, The Ngoni of Nyasaland, pp159 and 198

(13) Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom; A Contribution Towards Understanding, p56; cf. E Bolayi Idowu, Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief, p172

completely without a guardian spirit. This time it is God himself through His Spirit that watches over him (Psalm 139:7 - 12).

When a Christian feels secure that Christ is with him through the Spirit (Matt 28:20); he will turn away from the belief in medicine as his protector. The knowledge that the Holy Spirit, who watches over him, is God Himself who is greater than his spirit and his ancestors will give him more security than a trust in whatever he previously thought protected him.

The third thing that should be incorporated into the Christian view of salvation from the traditional Malawian beliefs, is the physical aspect of salvation which is neglected by certain Christians. Some Christians emphasise the spiritual aspect of salvation so much so that the physical aspect disappears completely. The over emphasis of the spiritual aspect of salvation leads to the negligence of a man's physical problems. Man is a unity and salvation involves the whole man - his spirit as well as his body. The Malawian Christian should know that salvation involves both the physical and spiritual aspects of his life. He is not just a spirit, neither is he just a body. What was lacking in the traditional Malawian concept of salvation, was the spiritual aspect and now the Christian Malawian should not leave the physical aspect completely.

I agree with Maimela that in the African world there are problematical, sinful or oppressive acts from which

Africans should be saved.(14) What I do not accept is to regard the physical aspect of salvation, that African traditional religions over-emphasise against the spiritual as sufficient. In Scripture where there is an aspect of salvation in being delivered from one's enemies, there is also reference to the forgiveness of sins(Luke 1:71.77; Ezekiel 18:27;29). It is right to say with Maimela that "... any religious understanding of salvation which is pre-occupied exclusively with the salvation of the soul from the pangs of hell and eternal damnation, as the Christian faith often appears to be, will remain inadequate to meet the needs of the African world, especially if that salvation does not hold promise also for the happiness and prosperity here and now."(15)

The Reformed teaching of salvation aims at the total salvation of man. For this reason Calvin, Berkouwer and Barth, although the latter differs from the first two in his views, teach an eschatological nature of salvation in their soteriology. They all look at salvation as just begun in this life and will be completed after the general resurrection of the body. Both the body and the spirit are involved in salvation(16) There is no negligence of man's physical wellbeing in the Reformed teaching of salvation, neither is there an over-emphasis on the spiritual aspect of man over against his physical

(14) S S Maimela, "Salvation in African Traditional Religions" in: Missionalia (13)no2 1985, pp69 and70

(15) Op cit, p73

(16) Inst 3:9-5;cf G C Berkouwer, The Return of Christ, p49; and Donald G Bloesch, Jesus is Victor! Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation, p66

aspect.

In the soteriological views of all three theologians one notices their general agreement that salvation has to do with both man's physical and spiritual life. There is nothing of the "pie in the sky" kind of salvation in the Reformed teaching, where the physical is sacrificed at the expense of the spiritual aspect of salvation. Works of love that deal with the physical aspect of salvation emanate from the one who experiences salvation by faith in Christ, and there is always a connection between good works and justification. The former being the result of the latter.(17)

The salvation from sin involves the whole cosmos and refers to the renewal of all creation which currently groans and suffers(Romans 8:22). The concept of salvation that is limited to the spiritual aspect of man, is opposed by the cosmic aspect and by the eschatological nature of salvation.

2. AN EVALUATION OF JOHN MBITI'S VIEW ON THE AFRICAN
CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF SALVATION WITH REFERENCE TO
THE MALAWIAN CONTEXT.

Mbiti's insight into the African Christian concept of salvation is, according to my judgment, generally correct and helpful to African pastors who have been trained in Western theological colleges and seminaries,

(17) Alvin J. Baker, Berkouwer's Doctrine of Election, Balance or Imbalance, ppl62 and 163; W Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p130 and Karl Barth, C D IV/2, p627

and are now working among their fellow Africans. Although Mbiti has an insight into the average African Christian concept of salvation, he is not exempt from the Western influence, as most of us are who have had our theological training in the west or had been trained in Africa but by the Western theologians. The problem that an African theologian faces is that he has learned or studied all his theology in a Western cultural setting, and while learning, he has not managed to detach himself from it but instead has attached himself to it and has been influenced by it to a greater or lesser degree. When time comes to put the theological matter, he has learnt, into the African context and speak from the African point of view, the western influence becomes inevitable. For this reason, I do not blame John Mbiti for any Western influence that is detectable in his theological work.

It is true when John Mbiti says that Africans converted into Christianity go into it with their traditional cultural customs or thought forms. They cannot suddenly leave the traditional cultural thought forms that have become part and parcel of their lives. However, what is true for the Africans is also true for the Greeks, the Romans, the Indians and for all other people. The undoing of one's traditional customs is a slow process not for African converts only, but for all other peoples all over the world that become converted into Christianity. What should be done, is to examine the traditional customs whether they can be adopted for use into Christianity or not. Whatever do not come into conflict with the gospel message of our Lord Jesus Christ, should be used so that Christianity should be indigenous.

Mbiti says that the word "salvation" does not mean to an African what it means to a Western man, because the latter in evangelising the former used the word without going to trouble to find out what it means to an African, and he just adapted the word into the religious language and used it. The result is that what is said means two different things - the Western speaker means one thing while the African listener understands another thing. The word "salvation" does not mean two different things to the speaker and the listener for the difference lies in that the African limits the meaning of the word to the everyday secular activities, while the Western man includes in the word a religious meaning as well.

According to Mbiti, in the African concept the verb "to save" refers to present activities and is not limited to people. Animals and articles of property may also be saved from destruction.(18) As far as I know a Western man uses the verb "to save" in the same way an African uses it in daily life activities. A Western man will understand what I mean when I say, for example, that I saved a dog from drowning, or when I say that two people were saved from a car accident in which three people died. The verb "to save" therefore does not refer to present activities for Africans only, but also for Western people depending on what one means in his speech. An African Christian as well as a Western would say that "God saves the sick from death, people from danger, calamity, drowning, floods, locusts and

(18) John Mbiti, "Some reflections on African Experience of Salvation today" in: Living faiths and ultimate goals, p109

captivity."(19) It is wrong to limit this concept to an African only.

In the Reformed teaching this view of salvation refers to God's preservation of his creation and comes under the doctrine of providence and as such it does not exhaust the meaning of the word "salvation". Mbiti is right that the word "salvation" does not refer only to people, but this is to define the word as it is used in the providential preservation of creation or in a secular sense. The word has to include a religious meaning. Salvation as an African Christian concept becomes poor if it means only being saved from physical dangers and does not include the spiritual aspect. In limiting salvation to present activities Christianity becomes identified with African traditional religion. Salvation means more than just being saved from physical dangers.

Mbiti's observation that Christianity has been associated with education and that Christians are sometimes called readers although they may be illiterate is right.(20) The emphasis on accepting into Christianity only those who know how to read, is the reason why Christians have been called readers not only in Kenya but also in Malawi and in other countries in Africa. I should point out that the identification of Christianity with education in this manner has made the traditional Malawians think that Christianity is a religion for literate people only. This idea implies

(19) Op.cit., p105

(20) John Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity, pp99 and 100

that God is interested in the salvation of literate people and is not interested in the illiterate. This has resulted in the influx of the illiterate people into the independent churches. There they worship God whom they know as God for all people - literate and illiterate, poor and rich (Mpingo ngwa anthu onse). (21)

The aim of the missionaries for admitting young people into the Church on the condition that they knew how to read and write was a good one because they wanted people to read the Bible for themselves and from them choose church elders who would be entrusted with the preaching of the Word of God to their fellow Africans. However, the method they used of turning back the illiterate people converted from African traditional religion, is much regretted for it made the converts suspicious of the kind of God the white man was introducing to them, because according to an African concept God is for all people.

Mbiti has mentioned the association of Christianity with education without pointing out its evil. If dying in sin, dying without accepting Christ as a personal Saviour means damnation or being lost into eternal perdition, why return a poor girl or boy who has believed in Christ and whose fault of not going to school to learn to read or write is not his or hers? I know that although "the Church is open to all" (mpingo ngwa anthu onse z.419), it is open to all on one condition only and that condition is faith in Jesus

(21) Zolamulira, zopangana ndi zolangiza, Sinodi wa Nkhoma, 1970, z.419 (From now onwards "z" stands for Zolamulira, zopangana ndi zolangiza).

Christ. The Church is open to all who believe in Christ and is closed to all who do not believe in Him. The method of admitting people to the Church of the Lord on the condition that they know how to read or write, though a good one, is not based on the Bible and should be abandoned if it is still in use elsewhere. " . . . this holy Church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed over the whole world; and yet is joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same spirit."(22)

The best way the Church in Malawi should solve the problem of illiterate Christians, is to encourage Christian parents to send their children to school and co-operate with the government in promoting compulsory education in the country. In this way the false impression that Christianity is a religion for educated or literate people only will be removed. Although the result of this method will be slow, in future there will be more literate people in the Church than we have now. It should be pointed out with sorrow that certain illiterate boys and girls who were sent away from the Church because they could not read or write, never came back to the church and attached themselves to the independent churches and some remained as secular people in Malawian traditional beliefs.

Mbiti's reference to faith as always expressed in action is right and I agree with him that "faith is portrayed in the Bible as having to bear fruits, to demonstrate

(22) Belgic Confession Article 27; cf. Nkhoma Synod Constitution Section 4.

works. Otherwise it is only intellectual and more or less dead."(23) However, I do not share with him the idea that this kind of faith is expressed in actions only by African Christians. The Reformed Church teaches that faith is always expressed in actions and if a Western Christian does not express it in actions or works of mercy, the fault lies with him and not with the church. However, faith is not taken seriously in the historical churches as a means for healing in prayers. This has resulted in leaving the healing ministry to the medical field and in less faith among the Christians in prayers for healing the sick. The historical churches should revive the role of faith in prayers for healing the sick.

Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer emphasise in their teaching that true faith always expresses itself in works.(24) In the Reformed teaching faith is regarded as so powerful that it aids man to fight against evil forces and should not be limited to the African Christians only, as Mbiti asserts. The only difference is that these evil forces are given different meanings. The Westerner refers them to hatred, corruption, murder and the like, while the African refers them to magic, witchcraft, sorcery and the like. However, in Malawi reference can be made to both of these interpretations and Christians should use faith in Christ to defeat evil forces that are seen in the form of magic, witchcraft and sorcery. The reason

(23) John Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity, p102

(24) Wilhelm Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, p124; Karl Barth, C D IV/1, p74; G C Berkouwer, Faith and Justification, p4

why Mbiti and other African theologians say that Western Christianity takes faith as an intellectual and theoretical pursuit. is that when Africans dealt with major problems and " ... needed answers to burning issues such as slavery, racism, apartheid, economic and social exploitation and oppression of the masses, Western theology either became a silent bystander or in many instances, such as slavery, racism, and apartheid, it was used to justify the status quo."(25)

Mbiti says that there are several ways of how man gets saved. It may be through baptism and the mass, through faith in Christ or through other ways. However, he opts for co-operation between God and man as a means for one to get saved. He refers to Eph. 2 : 8 and Phil. 12 : 2f in explaining that some people get saved by faith while others by works, mainly through working hand in hand with God.(26) Although faith in Christ is accepted as a means of getting saved, there is a tendency among many Christians, even of the Reformed Churches to think that works co-operate in obtaining salvation. This notion should be rejected because the forgiveness of man's sins and his salvation is the prerogative of God alone (Mark 2 : 7, Isaiah 43 : 25, Matt. 1 : 21, Ps. 27 : 1).

Unfortunately the teaching that works co-operate in man's salvation is detected in the church in Malawi,

(25) Billy K Jimbo, "An African Critique of Western Theology" in: Evangelical Review of Theology, 7 1983, p31

(26) John Mbiti, Bible and Theology in African Christianity, p173; cf. New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, pp97 and 98

especially Nkhoma Synod, a church that claims to base its teaching on the Reformed tradition. This is probably because the Reformed confessions (zibvomelezo za chi-Reformed) have not been translated into the local language as the Reformed Church in Zambia has done and some ministers do not have these confessions, despite the plea of the Synod that every minister should have them.(27) The book "Chipulumutso" (Salvation) written by the Rev. H D R Blok which the Synod recommended for use in the congregations is not in use any more,(28) and the Synod's request that the catechism should be used by all Christians and not by the catechumens only, has not been observed.(29)

The preaching of salvation being appropriated through works is heard in the revival meetings and is quite clear and unmistakable at the Christian funeral services. At every Christian funeral it is read aloud at the closing of the service. " we therefore commit his body in the grave until that day when all that lie in graves will hear His voice and arise, those that do good will inherit eternal life, those that do evil such as polygamy, drunkenness, strong sexual desire, adultery and the like will go into perdition. Therefore beloved be vigilant that you may be found in peace without spot and blemish.(30)" Who can be found without spot or blemish? In contradiction to what is read at the funeral service the Synod instructs every preacher to read aloud

(27) z.639

(28) z.354

(29) z.622

(30) Malongosoledwe a za mu mpingo Revised Edition 1968, pp20 - 21 (Translation mine.)

to the congregation every Sunday this confession "If we say that we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1 : 8), "for we all stumble in many ways" (James 3 : 2).(31)

Nothing seems wrong with the passage that is read at the funeral service, for it can be defended by Scripture as some ministers wish to do. There are indeed many texts in the Bible that one can use to defend this passage. However, salvation is not obtained by not being drunk or committing adultery etc. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ and there is no other way of appropriating salvation as far as the Reformed teaching is concerned. Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer strongly oppose the teaching of getting saved through works or co-operation between God and man. The judgment at the last day has to do with faith and unbelief as Berkouwer asserts. "The judgment according to works is, in the most profound sense, a judgment concerning faith and unbelief. This is always the measuring rod in the judgment according to works."(32)

The teaching that man is saved by grace through faith in Christ should be taken seriously in Nkhoma Synod and in the Presbyterian Church in general. The role of faith in one's salvation should be well explained to Christians so that it should not be turned into another kind of work. It should be known that faith in itself has no power to save, but Christ saves those that believe in Him. The prepared sermons in Mlozo booklet should

(31) Op.cit., p53 No.8

(32) G C Berkouwer, Faith and Sanctification, pp109 and 110

reflect the Reformed teaching and people should know that faith in Christ comes to them as a gift from God and stop boasting of how good or strong their faith is. People should not feel that salvation depends on what they can do or avoid doing. An average Christian man has the concept that if he does not drink beer, he has only one wife, he does not practise witchcraft, he does not commit adultery and the like, then he is saved. If this view reflects the teaching of the Presbyterian Church in Malawi, then it has gone away from the Reformed teaching and it has no right to call itself Reformed or claim to have based its teaching about salvation on the Reformed tradition.

It is not true, as some would probably assert, to say that the teaching that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ cannot be applicable in the Malawian context, because the people's background is that of achieving physical salvation through works. Good works which people do should be pointed out as fruits of their true faith in Christ. Everyone who has a sincere faith in Christ, will show it through works of mercy and whoever fails to produce works, does not have true faith for the latter is the mother of the former and "It is impossible for those grafted into Christ by true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude." (33) True faith is produced in man by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. And good works that flow from such faith are motivated by God's love, because God is at work in the heart of believers that do them. Therefore no-one is saved by good works while it is also true to say that no-one is saved without them. Not works, but the Holy Spirit

(33) Heidelberg Catechism, Q.64

testifies through faith that the believer is saved. Mbiti's view that salvation should not be limited to the spiritual aspects of man only but should involve the whole man is right, just as it is wrong to restrict salvation to the physical aspect of man as the African traditional religions do. Salvation means the restoration of the whole man to his primitive state and therefore man should be saved from all sinful acts such as hatred, theft, envy and the like and from oppressive acts brought about by political and economic structures. Mbiti's notion of extending salvation to embrace national life in order that people should be saved from sins of racism, tribalism, corruption, nepotism and the like, should be given serious consideration by the Reformed church, not as something to be preached from the pulpit only by individual ministers, although that may be practicable, but the church, through synodical resolutions, should work against any evil existing structures by refusing to help them perpetuate sinful acts. It does not help to preach about the salvation of the soul and to neglect to uplift the standard of the poor or fail to get the oppressed out of their plight. In many cases the church in general has identified itself with the status quo of the state in which it exists and has neglected its prophetic mandate to work against social evils.

Preaching, for example, against tribalism, racism, corruption and nepotism is entirely left in the hands of the politician as his duty to deal with social matters. The church thinks to be involved in denouncing such sins is to be involved in the social gospel which,

(34) Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 62

unfortunately to say, the Reformed church does not sanction or take it as right to preach. However, man lives in a society and what affects him everyday, are social sins which the Church should address. The negligence of preaching against social sins is evidence that even the Reformed church in some countries is focussing on the salvation of the soul which Mbiti speaks against. A Malawian like any other man in the world, wants to be saved from physical dangers as well as from sin.(35)

While I appreciate Mbiti's view that salvation should embrace the whole man and the the whole world, and not only focus on the soul of man, I do not accept that this leads to the salvation of all people. It is true that the whole creation is groaning for full redemption and that man is part of it. It is also true that there will be a new earth and new heavens, but this does not refer to the salvation of all people. Although salvation is available to all, only those who believe in Jesus Christ are saved. Our Reformed view of salvation is that after resurrection and judgment the elect will inherit eternal life and those that do not believe in Jesus Christ, will go to perdition.(36) This confession is based on the teaching of Scripture and should be accepted. Although there are many texts in the Bible that sound like sanctioning the teaching of the salvation of all people, Christ's command to "Go into all the world and preach

(35) Cf. Ronald J Sider and James Parker III, "How Broad is Salvation and Social Responsibility?" in: In Word and Deed, Evangelism and Social Responsibility Michaels ed. Exeter 1985, pp85 and 87

(36) Belgic Confession, Article 37

the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16 : 16), helps us to regard these texts as not teaching universalism.

Mbiti's definition of an African concept of time as representing the average traditional African, is right. I do not share the criticism of Byang Kato and A Scott Moreau that is levelled against Mbiti in respect of the African concept of time.(37) Present and past played a great role in our concept of time in Africa and it is only with the coming of the Western man that we have grasped a three-dimensional concept of time. Any reference to the future was short and rare, as Mbiti points out. The only frequent reference to the limited kind of future was that connected with planting and harvesting; seasons, initiation of boys and girls and the anticipation of their marriages and of course the expectation of having babies. This has in fact been a problem in teaching the eschatological nature of salvation to an African Christian, but with the introduction of a three-dimensional concept of time, this problem is being solved. The biblical teaching on the coming of the Lord warns us against dating or fixing the time of coming. Man should not just sit and wait for the Lord, but he should be involved in witnessing for Christ. The Lord's way of reckoning time is different from man's way and a Christian should not lose heart

(37) Byang Kato, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, p62ff; cf. A Scott Moreau "A Critique of John Mbiti's Understanding of the African Concept of Time in: East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology, 5 1986, pp37 - 47

when he sees some Christians die without witnessing the Lord's second coming (2 Peter 3 : 3ff).

A great emphasis should be laid on changing a traditional African concept of time from a two into a three-dimensional concept. The old traditional ways of thinking pattern about time should be destroyed by emphasising and replacing the new Christian view. The African Christian three-dimensional concept of time with a short future should be re-worked out, so that the future created by Christianity should not go only as far as two to three years ahead. The Church in Africa should not be discouraged by this short future for with enough teaching it will be regarded as extending as far as the Lord wills, because " ... with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Pet. 3 : 8)

There is nothing wrong in the African Christian's notion of expecting Christ to return during one's life-time.(38) What should be discouraged is to despair and to let Christians think that Christ has abandoned his intention of returning. The return of Christ during one's life-time should be the expectation of every Christian and not of African Christians only. The teaching of Christ's second coming to judge the living and the dead and then inaugurate the fulness of the Kingdom, should not be minimised owing to the delay of the parousia.

Mbiti's view that eschatology should not be based on the

(38) John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, p58

three linear concept of time is not accepted because it is against the teaching of the Bible, which clearly shows us about the past - the time of prophecy concerning Christ's first coming; the present - the time of Christ and the Holy Spirit which includes the time of the apostles and our time; and the future - the time of Christ's return, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment and the inheritance of eternal life. The Reformed view of eschatology as is taught by Calvin and Berkouwer, opposes Mbiti's view. The two theologians point out that full salvation lies in the future and is experienced now only through the Holy Spirit.(39) The teaching of eschatology to African Christians should always be accompanied by changing their concept of time emphasising the fact that how far the future extends is in the hands of God and cannot be predicted by man despite the signs associated with the Lord's coming. (Mark 13 : 32ff) The Christians should never be given the impression in our preaching or teaching that Christ will never return and that resurrection and judgment are the events that are already taking place, as Mbiti asserts.(40) Although it is true that we are living in the last days yet the Last Day is not now. We still expect it in the future in the coming of the Lord.

We should not work at removing futuristic eschatology from the African Christian concept to solve, what Mbiti calls, a problem of expecting Christ's return immediately. If we do so the substitute we may give the

(39) F Wendel, Calvin, p285 - 286; G C Berkouwer, The Return of Christ, p113

(40) John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, pp69; 158 - 169

African Christian may be worse than what he now believes because the expectation of Christ's return in one's life is based on Scripture, while the removal of a futuristic eschatology is caused by the disappointment of the delay of the parousia.

An average Christian Malawian does not feel the delay of the parousia and is not disappointed to see older Christians die without experiencing Christ's return. This is perhaps because he has understood the teaching of the church well, or he has taken it lightly that it does not matter whether Christ comes back immediately or not. It may also mean that he is still cherishing the traditional concept of a spiritual world where the dead go after death and live a life similar to the earthly one and will not return to earth in a bodily form, because there is no resurrection of the dead in the traditional Malawian beliefs.(41) The traditional Malawian concept of living with ancestors after death is possibly displaced in most Christian minds by the new Christian concept of living with Christ and fellow Christians. However, this is not enough if the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead has not been grasped by these Christians.

The Reformed teaching does not give us a concept that perfect blessedness comes after death. The life of bliss is only possible after the resurrection of the dead. The concept of living with Christ in such a state is far better than before death (Phil. 1 : 23), yet that life

(41) Margaret Read, Ngoni of Nyasaland, p161; cf.

Thomas Cullen Young, African Ways and Wisdom, A Contribution Towards Understanding, pp57 and 58

is denied full blessedness because man is complete with the body.' Calvin (Barth to a lesser degree) and Berkouwer teach that full salvation is experienced only after the resurrection of the dead and judgment. This teaching reflects the Biblical teaching and is the one the Reformed Church accepts.

SUMMARY**REFORMED SOTERIOLOGY AND THE MALAWIAN CONTEXT**

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Reformed soteriology according to the teaching of Calvin, Barth and Berkouwer attributes salvation to God. It is mediated to man through faith in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. Faith is significant in man's salvation especially in the teaching of Calvin and Berkouwer. It occurs in man through the work of the Word and the Holy Spirit. They work together in enabling man to believe in Christ. Man on his own cannot believe, for faith is acquired through God's grace.

Justification and sanctification occur simultaneously when man believes. He is justified by faith alone apart from works of the law. Works of mercy do not justify man; however, a justified man should produce them as an indication of his being justified. Justification occurs in time, although election occurred before the foundation of the world. Calvin and Berkouwer view election as based on the decree of God, while Barth sees it as grounded in Christ. Calvin teaches that election

and reprobation issue from God's decree while Berkouwer regards reprobation as occasioned by man's sin. Barth views reprobation as removed for man by Christ in His death, making all people elect.

Full salvation is attained after resurrection of the body and judgment. Barth agrees with this view but he teaches that only God, who is immortal, lives for man after his death.

African traditional religion understands the notion of salvation differently from the Reformed teaching. It takes salvation to mean the preservation of man's physical life. Saving man from illness, famine, drought, death etc. is regarded as the full meaning of salvation. This is evident in the study of Malawian traditional beliefs where diviners and medicine men are concerned mainly with the finding and eradication of man's enemies, which are magic, sorcery and witchcraft. The assertion put forward by some African theologians that African traditional religion mediates salvation, is rejected because it neglects the spiritual aspect of man. Reformed teaching takes into consideration both the physical and spiritual aspect of man in its view of salvation. Thereby it obviates a one-sided approach to soteriology. Mbiti says that the African Christian tradition does not have a clear notion of salvation although it understands faith in its biblical meaning. This is due to poor communication that occurred between the early missionaries and the Africans. According to Mbiti, eschatology in particular gives the African a big problem. Symbolical language is understood literally and Christ's second coming is expected any time. His view of eschatology tends toward a universalistic view of

salvation. Mbiti agrees with the three Reformed theologians on the notion that salvation involves the whole man and that eschatological terms such as fire, hell and the like, should be understood symbolically. His views that salvation is attained through various ways and his universalistic trend are rejected. Reformed teaching of salvation is put forward as an acceptable one since it agrees with the biblical teaching and it is generally applicable anywhere else. The Reformed view of salvation avoids the two extremes of thought which emphasise either the physical or the spiritual aspect of salvation.

OPSOMMINGDIE GEREFORMEERDE VERLOSSINGSLEER EN DIE MALAWIESE KONTEKS

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Volgens die leer van Calvyn, Barth en Berkouwer skryf die gereformeerde verlossingsleer verlossing toe aan God. Dit word in die mens bewerk deur geloof in Christus deur die werking van die Heilige Gees. By sowel Calvyn as Berkouwer is geloof dus van beslissende belang vir die verlossing van die mens. Geloof kom in die mens tot stand deur die werk van die Woord en die Heilige Gees. Hulle werk saam om die mens in staat te stel om in Christus te glo. Die mens kan nie deur eie toedoen glo nie, want geloof word deur die genade van God verkry.

Regverdigmaking en heiligmaking vind gelyktydig plaas wanneer die mens glo. Hy word geregverdig deur geloof alleen, sonder die werke van die wet. Werke van barmhartigheid regverdig nie die mens nie, hoewel 'n

geregverdigde persoon dit behoort te doen as 'n aanwysing daarvan dat hy regverdig gemaak is. Regverdigmaking vind in die tyd plaas, terwyl uitverkiesing voor die grondlegging van die wêreld geskied het. Calvyn en Berkouwer beskou uitverkiesing as gebaseer op die verordening van God, terwyl Barth dit sien as gegrond in Christus. Calvyn leer dat verkiesing en verwerping uit die verordening van God spruit, terwyl Berkouwer verwerping beskou as deur die sonde van die mens teweeg gebring. Barth beskou verwerping as weggeneem vir die mens deur Christus in sy dood, wat alle mense die uitverkorenes van God maak.

Volle saligheid word na die opstanding van die liggaam en die oordeel bereik. Barth stem met hierdie siening saam, maar hy leer dat alleen God, wat onsterflik is, vir die mens na sy dood lewe.

Die tradisionele godsdiens van Afrika verstaan die begrip verlossing anders as die gereformeerde leer. Hiervolgens beteken verlossing die behoud van die mens se fisiese lewe. Die verlossing van die mens van siekte, honger, droogte, dood, ens. word as die volle betekenis van verlossing beskou. Dit is duidelik in die studie van Malawiese tradisionele geloof, waar waarsêers en kruiedokters hoofsaaklik besig is met die vind en uitwissing van die vyande van die mens, wat bestaan uit magie, toewery en hekserij. Die lewering deur sommige teoloë van Afrika na vore gebring dat die tradisionele godsdiens van Afrika verlossing bewerk, word verwerp omdat dit die geestelike aspek van die mens verwaarloos. Die gereformeerde leer neem beide die fisiese en geestelike aspekte van die mens in sy beskouing van verlossing in aanmerking. Daardeur voorkom dit 'n

eensydige benadering van die soteriologie.

Mbiti sê dat die Christelike tradisie van Afrika geen duidelike begrip van verlossing besit nie, hoewel dit geloof in sy Bybelse betekenis verstaan. Dit is die gevolg van swak kommunikasie tussen die vroeë sendelinge en die mense van Afrika. Volgens Mbiti verskaf die eskatologie in die besonder 'n groot probleem vir die mense van Afrika. Simboliese taal word letterlik verstaan en die wederkoms van Christus word enige oomblik verwag. Sy beskouing van die eskatologie neig na 'n universele beskouing van verlossing. Mbiti stem saam met die drie gereformeerde teoloë oor die opvatting dat verlossing die hele mens insluit en dat eskatologiese terme soos vuur, hel, ens. simbolies verstaan moet word. Sy beskouings dat verlossing langs verskillende weë verkry kan word en sy universele neiging word verwerp. Die gereformeerde leer van die saligheid word as 'n aanvaarbare gestel, aangesien dit met die Bybelse leer ooreenstem en dit ook elders algemeen toepaslik is. Die gereformeerde beskouing van verlossing vermy die twee uiterste gedagtegeante wat óf die fisiese óf die geestelike aspek van verlossing benadruk.

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