

## **COURSE GUIDE**

### **CRS122 TYPES OF THEOLOGY**

**Course Team**      Dr. Phillip Tachin (Course Developer/Writer) -  
Theological College of Northern Nigeria  
Bukuru, Jos  
Dr. Ubong E. Eyo (Course Editor) - UNICAL  
Prof. Elias Kekong Bisong (Course Reviewer)-  
UNICAL  
Nana Erin (Copy Editor)- NOUN



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

© 2022 by NOUN Press  
National Open University of Nigeria  
Headquarters  
University Village  
Plot 91, Cadastral Zone  
Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway  
Jabi, Abuja

Lagos Office  
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way  
Victoria Island, Lagos

e-mail: [centralinfo@nou.edu.ng](mailto:centralinfo@nou.edu.ng)

URL: [www.nou.edu.ng](http://www.nou.edu.ng)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from the publisher.

First Printed 2021,2022

ISBN: 978-058-578-8

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Introduction.....	IV
What You Will Learn in this Course.....	IV
Course Aims.....	IV
Course Objectives.....	V
Working Through this Course.....	V
Course Materials.....	VI
Assignment File.....	VII
Presentation Schedule.....	VIII
Assessment.....	VIII
Tutor Marked Assignment.....	IX
Final Examination and Grading.....	IX
Course Marking Scheme.....	IX
Course Overview.....	X
How to Get the Most From this Course.....	X
Tutors and Tutorials.....	Xi
Summary.....	Xii

## **INTRODUCTION**

CRS122: Types of Theology is a one-semester 2- credit unit course. It will be available to all students as a course in Certificate, Diploma and Degree in Theology. The course is also suitable for anybody who is interested in the theological study of Christian Faith. The course (will consist) of 15 units which include; the definition of theology, preliminary issues about theology, relationship between Bible and theology, relationship between hermeneutics and theology, ecumenism and Theology, different types of theology (including Roman Catholic Theology, Protestant Theology, Evangelical Theology) and modern and emerging theologies, such as, liberation theology, feminist theology, black theology and African Christian Theology among others.

There are no compulsory pre-requisites for this course. The course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasizes the need for tutor- marked assignments. Detailed information on tutor-marked assignments is found in the separate file, which will be sent to you later. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to the course.

## **WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE**

The overall aim of CRS122: Types of Theology is to introduce you to the basic issues in theology, the function of theology in the society and the principal elements that serve as sources for the development of theology. Your understanding in this course will prepare you as a student to understand the fundamentals of theology, the relationship between hermeneutics and theology and the resulting different theological views in the Church. You will also be able to appreciate the emerging theologies such as liberation and feminist theologies.

## **COURSE AIMS**

The aim of the course can be summarised as follows: This course aims at helping the students of Christian Theology to understand the fundamentals of developing theology, the various types of theology and the emerging modern theologies.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

To achieve the aims set above there are set overall objectives. In addition each module and unit also has specific objectives. The module and unit objectives are always included at the beginning of every module and the unit; you should read them before you start working

through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the module and unit to check on your progress.

You should always look at the module and unit objectives after completing each section. In this way definitely, you can be sure that you have done what was required of you by the module and unit. Stated below are the wider objectives of this course as a whole. Definitely by meeting these objectives you should therefore know that you have achieved the aims of the course as a whole. On your successful completion of the course, you should be able to: know the definition of theology; types of theology and the emerging theologies that can be termed modern.

On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- define theology
- evaluate Roman Catholic Theology
- evaluate Protestant theology  
compare Roman Catholic and Protestant Theologies
- evaluate the formation of the Theology of African Independent Church.

Examine the relationship between hermeneutics and theology  
Assess the theological methods of Liberation Theology. Explain the origin and development of black theology. Compare Black theology in North America and South Africa. Discuss the Origin and Development of Feminist Theology. Examine the reason for the emerging theologies

## **WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE**

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, read recommended books and read other materials. Each unit contains self-assessment exercises, and at points in the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of this course is a final examination. Below you will find listed all the components of the course and what you have to do.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

Major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignments File
5. Presentation Schedule

In addition, you must obtain the materials. Obtain your copy. You may contact your tutor if you have problems in obtaining the text materials.

## STUDY UNITS

There are 15 study units in this course broken into 3 modules of 5 units each. They are as follows:

### Module 1

Unit 1	Preliminaries
Unit 2	Bible and Theology
Unit 3	Christology and Theology
Unit 4	Hermeneutics and Theology
Unit 5	Ecumenism and Theology

### Module 2

Unit 1	Roman Catholic Theology
Unit 2	Protestant Theology
Unit 3	Evangelical Theology
Unit 4	Pentecostal Theology
Unit 5	Theology of African Independent Churches

### Module 3

Unit 1	Liberation Theology
Unit 2	Black Theology
Unit 3	Feminist Theology
Unit 4	African Christian Theology

Each unit contains a number of self-tests, in general terms, these self-test questions on the materials you have just covered or require to cover are to be of help to you in your relationship to the traditionalists and it is also meant to help you to evaluate your progress and to reinforce your understanding of the materials. Alongside with your tutor-marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in achieving stated learning objectives of the individual units and of the course.

### Set Textbooks

Alexander, Desmond T. et al. (1998). (Eds.). *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press.

Blomberg, Craig L. "The Unity and Diversity of Scripture." *New*

*Dictionary of Biblical.*

*Theology.*

Alexander T. Desmond et al. (Ed). (2000). Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press.

Fabella, Virginia & R.S. Surgirtharajah. (Ed.). *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*. New York: Orbis Book, 2000.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. et al. (Eds). (1988). *New Dictionary of Theology*. Leicester, England: Inter- Varsity Press,.

Millard, Erickson. (1988). *The Christian Theology* Michigan: Baker Books.

Osborne, Grant R. (1991). *Hermeneutical Spiral*. Illinois; Inter-Varsity Press.

## **ASSIGNMENT FILE**

In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the Assignment File itself and later in this Course Guide in the section on assessment.

## **PRESENTATION SCHEDULE**

The Presentation Schedule included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against falling behind in your work.

## **ASSESSMENT**

There are two aspects to the assessment of the course. First are the tutor-marked assignments; second, there is a written examination. In tackling the assignments, you are expected to apply information and knowledge acquired during this course.

The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the Assignment File. The work you

submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final three-hour examination. This will also count for 70% of your total course mark

## **TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

There are fifteen tutor-marked assignments in this course. You need to submit all the assignments. The best four (i.e. the highest four of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total course mark.

Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the Assignment File. You should be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your set textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with TMA (Tutor-Marked Assignment) form to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given to the Assignment File. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is done to discuss the possibility of an extension.

## **FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING**

The final examination of CRS122 will be of three hours' duration and have a value of 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

## **COURSE MARKING SCHEME**

This table shows how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assignment	Marks
Assignment 1-4	Four assignments, best three marks of the four count at 30% of course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks



	100% of course marks
--	----------------------

Table 1: Course Marking Scheme

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

	<b>Title of work</b>	<b>Week's Activity</b>	<b>Assessment (end of unit)</b>
Unit	Course Guide	1	
1.	Preliminaries	1	Assignment1
2.	Bible and Theology	2	Assignment2
3.	Christology and Theology	3	Assignment3
4.	Hermeneutics and Theology	4	Assignment4
5.	Ecumenism and Theology	5	Assignment5
<b>Module 2</b>		6	Assignment6
Unit			
1.			
2.	Protestant Theology	7	Assignment7
3.	Evangelical Theology	8	Assignment8
4.	Pentecostal Theology	9	Assignment9
5.	Religious Leaders	10	Assignment10
<b>Module 3</b>		11	Assignment11
Unit	Theology of		
1.	African		
2.	Liberation Theology	12	Assignment12
3.	Black Theology	13	Assignment13
4.	Feminist Theology	14	Assignment14
5.	African Christian Theology	15	Assignment15
16.	Revision	16	
17.	Examination	17	

Table 2: Course Overview

## HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other material. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a

### Reading Section

Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly.
2. Organize a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course overview' for more details.

Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates for working on each unit.

3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.

5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also on what is written on the assignment. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide).

## **TUTORS AND TUTORIALS**

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary.

Contact your tutor if: you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings, you have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises, you have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should do your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and to ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

### **SUMMARY**

CRS122 intends to introduce you to the basic issues in the formulation of Theology. Upon completing this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

What are the sources of theology? Identify the elements of theology  
What is the role of hermeneutics in the formation of theology? What is the role of ecumenism in the formation of theology? What are the important landmarks in Roman Catholic Theology? What are the weaknesses of Evangelical Theology?

What are the weaknesses of African Independent Churches Theology?  
What does the proliferation of theologies tell us about traditional theology? What are the unique features of Pentecostal Theology?  
Of course, the questions you will be able to answer are not limited to the above list. Types of Theology are an exciting study. We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful

**MAIN  
COURSE**

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>Module 1 .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Unit 1 Preliminaries.....	1
Unit 2 Bible and Theology.....	12
Unit 3 Christology and Theology.....	19
Unit 4 Hermeneutics and Theology.....	26
Unit 5 Ecumenism and Theology. ....	32
<b>Module 2 Types of Theology I.....</b>	<b>37</b>
Unit 1 Roman Catholic Theology.....	37
Unit 2 Protestant Theology.....	43
Unit 3 Evangelical Theology.....	47
Unit 4 Pentecostal Theology.....	52
Unit 5 Theology of African Independent Churches...	57
<b>Module 3 Types of Theology II.....</b>	<b>63</b>
Unit 1 Liberation Theology.....	63
Unit 2 Black Theology.....	69
Unit 3 Feminist Theology.....	74
Unit 4 African Christian Theology.....	81

**MODULE 1**

Unit 1	Preliminaries
Unit 2	Bible and Theology
Unit 3	Christology and Theology
Unit 4	Hermeneutics and Theology
Unit 5	Ecumenism and Theology

**UNIT 1 PRELIMINARIES****CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Definition of Theology
3.2	History of Theology
3.3	Disciplines of Theology
3.4	Task of Theology
3.5	Presuppositions of Theology
3.6	The Limitation of Theology
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Mark Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The course, *Types of Theology* introduces the students into the dominant theological development of the last century, particularly as they related to the non-western settings in Africa, Latin America and Asia. In this unit, we will explore the general definition of theology, analyse in-passing the general historical background that occasioned the rise of these brands of Christian theologies, account for the theological and existential bases for their origin, appeals and continuous support in the developing nations, but most importantly, the guiding theology presuppositions justifying these multiple theological expressions.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define the different brands of Christian theologies
- critically evaluate the major theological beliefs, tenets and presuppositions under-girding these groups of Christian theologies.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Definition of Theology

Theology is ordinarily defined as “the human study of God.” However, this definition though simple is yet profound and indeed introduces serious theological complications. The complication inherent in this definition is the presence of two participants in the definition, namely human and God respectively. In this definition, human is the subject, which by implication is the active participant and God is the object hence, a passive category in theological discussion. This understanding of theology raises serious problem because it envisaged a hypothetical situation whereby humankind with all their obvious limitation in time and space becomes the interpreters or investigators into a profound being that is infinite in nature. The dominate human role in theological investigation is both intriguing and also problematic in this last sense, since the whole enterprise began on a hypothesis that the finite human being could indeed reflect on the infinite divine. However, even beyond this stated problem of epistemology, is also the concern whether humans could actually capture or interpret the divine infinite being in the category of creeds, beliefs and religious system as easily seen in contemporary religious professions.

Interestingly, the classical answer to such a theological question or consideration in the Christian religious tradition is in the affirmative. The Christian religious tradition believes that the divine has become revealed in the New Testament revelation and thus, a tacit justification for human reflection on the divine. In this sense, human particularly Christian could reflects on the divine despite the recognition that none religious confession could in the long run capture the entire divine essence as often depicted in stereotyped traditional theological reflections.

Nonetheless, with all its many problems, the human dimension reminiscent in theology is both liberating and not always problematic as already shown, since it provides a crude justification for differing ways of understanding the transcendent in view of the diverse theological understanding of such a being within, even the Christian theological traditions. If we recognize the human dimension inherent in theologising, it goes along to show that theological differences is actually a healthy necessity in light of diverse human understanding and in this sense, Christian theological understanding of God and His activities in time and space. The thrust of this last assertion revealed also the limitation of every theology since every theology (Christian theology in particular) seeks in the long run to capture the eternal claims of the divine in the light of the present spiritual, economic, political

context, and also in the background of class, gender and other human determinants. In this understanding, every theology always develop not in isolation or vacuum but rather reflect the cultural, spiritual and political trends of its contemporary context. This goes to suggest that every theology must be ready to accept its temporary and human dimension even when it claims to speak for the infinite divine being and at such every theology is limited and thus must be subjected to critical evaluation and review in order to engender a healthy theological discussion. It is assumed that such a fresh and critical reflection into theologies will engender newer and more biblically honest theological understanding in the long run.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are the problems inherent in the recognition of the human dimension of theology?

### **3.2 History of Christian Theology**

A survey of the history of theology could be divided in a restricted sense into four major periods. This division is informed basically by the distinctive nature of theology in the following times. However, one has to realize that history of theology in its broad perspective began in the Bible especially in the theological reflection of the biblical writer. The biblical writers captured the transcendent in a unique form, which according to conservative understanding could never be reduplicated; nonetheless there is an aspect of theology that could be traced throughout the history of the Christian Church. The following periods are the four dominant stages in the development of Christian theology.

#### **Patristic Period**

In its narrow usage, Christian theology has its genesis in the writings of the Church Fathers, particularly in the works of the Christian apologists of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century respectively. The Church apologists sought to reassert the claims of Jesus Christ hitherto in the Jewish context to their own contemporary Greek context. Foremost among these apologists were Justin Martyr and Tertullian. However, even before this time, theological reflection on the need to reassert the unique claims of Jesus Christ in the Greek context goes back to the New Testament, specifically, in the Pauline writings where the preoccupation to reassert the claims of Christ in the Greco-Roman world was dominant. This similar preoccupation is also chiefly seen in the writings of the apostolic fathers, who admonish the church using the Bible, but drawing largely on their Greek linguistic and philosophical backgrounds to understand and interpret the biblical revelation. In this



same sense, the 4<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of Christological thinking as particularly expressed in the Nicean and Chalcedonian Councils and the theological reflection of Athanasius and later Augustine.

### **Medieval Period**

The understanding of theology in the medieval period could be summed up in the term scholasticism. This descriptive term though often derogatory described the preoccupation of Medieval Theology with Aristotelian logic, traditionally inclined and straightjacket understanding of theology. For the scholastics, they sought to harmonize Christian revelation and reason. The overriding hypothesis of scholastic theological works was the general commitment of these individuals to the Christian faith and in the rationality of the biblical revelation. Foremost theologians of this period are Thomas Aquinas, Anselm and Peter Abelard.

### **Reformation Period**

The monolithic theology of the medieval church was called into question by the Protestant movement of the sixteen century. The medieval theology dominated by scholastic tendencies and the Roman Catholic dogmatism led to the break of the Church at the advent of reformation. Beginning in Germany, the reformation proceeded unto Switzerland, Scotland, France, and England. The reformer's theology both in the radical and non-radical expressions of the reformation bordered on the doctrine of "sola fide" and "sola scriptura" meaning "salvation by faith alone" and "the finality of Scripture in the Church's faith and practice." On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Theology as later expressed fully by the Council of Trent advocated equal place to the Bible and Tradition in the Church ministry and sacraments. Foremost of the protestant theologians of the period are Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, but also include radical reformers such as Karlstadt, Thomas Muntzer and the Anabaptist. It is very important to note that even though united under the single course of reformation, the reforms were similarly divided and different in their theology of God and of Christ.

### **Enlightenment Period**

Following the double impact of the Renaissance and the reformation on the western academia and the Western Church, a scenario developed whereby the Bible and the Church came under close scrutiny with the result whereby the church and the Bible came under serious suspicion and the preference for reason. Reason became the standard test for everything that has to do with religion. Consequently, various forms of criticism and critical apparatus were applied to the Bible and the

Christian religion. On the whole, theology in the enlightenment period was dominated by pure reason hence theology became more abstract, rather than be in engagement with societal or existential situation of the human society. In its radical expression Enlightenment degenerated towards anti-supernaturalism, whereby academic or science assumed hatred and disbelief in divine Scriptural activities in the world. In its moderate form, acceptance of supernaturalism was deemed possible, however, it was assumed, particularly the deist that the divine had left the world to work on its own (like a watch), hence the notion of *divine absconditus*. Foremost among the theologians of this period include W. F. Hegel, Emmanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleimacher.

### **Modern Period**

The academic and theological challenges of the Enlightenment were sustained in the modern context, but perhaps with little modification. Many theologians became vocal challenging the dominance of western theology as seen in the stereotyped classical Christian theological reflection and postulated the need to express the divergence of the modern context particularly in context of colonization, race, gender, class and other social and political definitions of the modern society. These modern incentives with the one-sided nature of western theology and its patriarchal and capitalist disposition brought about great innovation in theological reflection of the modern period. Thus, these theological developments resulted in the birth of modern theologies such as Black, Feminism, Liberation, Asian and African Theologies to fill the theological and contextual void seen in classical western theology.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss the major preoccupation of theology in the historical epoch sampled.

### **3.3 Disciplines of Theology**

Theology, in its classical expression has been broadly divided into many disciplines and subcategories. The following are some of the basic disciplines of Theology.

#### **Biblical Theology**

Johann Philip Gabler (1753-1826), the father of Biblical Theology defined Biblical Theology as “the historical study of the OT and the NT, their authors and the contexts within which they were written.” The basic presupposition of Biblical Theology is that it is an objective

process of recovering of the theology of biblical authors without the necessary interference of one's religious tradition. Thus, Biblical Theology is assumed to be a central theology, which opens to different religion or theological traditions the horizon of biblical authors. In this understanding it is assumed that Catholic or Protestant, liberal or conservative, Muslim or Jew could participate in the science of Bible Theology.

### **Philosophical Theology**

Philosophical Theology was dominant in 17<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. It sought to use philosophical categories to understand biblical revelation and human forms without the necessary *a priori* commitment to the Christian faith. Philosophical theology is reminiscent in the scholastic theological tradition of the medieval period and the Enlightenment obsession of rationality in the 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> century. Dominated by western philosophical forms, philosophical theology becomes glued to abstract theological forms, even though paying lip service to existential issues such as the existence of God, theodicy, freedom of the will and other related terms.

### **Historical Theology**

Historical Theology concerns itself with historical development of Christian doctrines. It seeks to reveal the political, economical, religious and ecclesiastical factors that aided in the evolution of Christian doctrines. Historical Theology in this dimension revealed the humanness and contextual nature of every theological creation. Thus, this theological discipline often challenged the tendencies in most theological traditions to make a theological reflection of the past sacrosanct for the present. Even though, one has to recognize that timeless theological truths existed in theology such as God which will always occupy the minds of theologians of each generation or time, yet overshadowing the present with the creeds of the past has tendencies of merely paying lip service to the present while actually living in the past. In this sense, historical theology challenges the uncritical imposition of theological tradition of the past on the present.

### **Systematic Theology**

Systematic Theology seeks a rational presentation and documentation of doctrinal beliefs of the Church. Even though the Bible itself never revealed such a coherent rational pattern to present its beliefs, yet theologians in light of academic and modern challenges had sought to represent Christian beliefs in systematic forms. This practice could

be traced back to the writings of the Church fathers particularly Tertullian and Origen and such quest for systematization of dogmatic doctrines as inherently seen in the preoccupation of medieval scholastics. Despite its service to the course of Christian faith however, the flaw of systematic theology is its tendencies of proof-texting. Many verses on the topics and themes in the Bible are just collected without a forthright exegesis of the texts.

### **Pastoral Theology**

Pastoral Theology is mainly concerned with the relationship that exists between theology and the pastoral ministry. It sought to capture for the pastoral ministry helpful developments in theology and the Bible. Under this understanding, Pastoral theology explores ingredients of pastoral ministry such as worship, liturgy, homiletics, administration, hermeneutics and ethics.

### **Exegetical Theology**

Exegetical Theology is preoccupied with the text of Scriptures. It seeks to explicate the meaning of the text as understood by the contemporary and original or intended audience of the text. Hence, exegesis and systematic analysis of the text becomes the first very important level and also the primary level of theology where all other development or disciplines of theology built on.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the various disciplines of Theology.

#### **3.4 Task of Theology**

The tasks of theology are many because of the many disciplines of Theology as already highlighted in study unit 3:3. Some had reduced the task of theology to explication of divine will for humanity; others had stressed the commitment of theology to social and political concerns. Still, others had sought to defend the task of theology to missiological particulars. On the other hand, others have underscored the apologetic nature of the task of theology noting the commitment of theology towards correcting the misrepresentation and other miscellaneous erroneous understanding of the Christian faith. In the same vein, others have understood the task of theology in terms of the edification and ministry of the Church in the human society.

It seemed that these many tasks of theology could be reduced into two categories, which has been and ought to be the task of every

theology. These two categories that explicate the task of theology are namely the theological commitment to transcendence and secondly its commitment to immanent or contextual realities.

### **Transcendent Commitment of Theology**

Theology must seek a conscious commitment to the transcendent. By its name, it is rightly assumed that theology should have the divine being at its core or focus, however unfortunately this defining task of theology has often eluded many Christian theologies. These types of Christian theologies have sound humanitarian or contextual concerns but faulty transcendent concerns and thus, inevitably such Christian theologies become shallow and inadequate to address the humanitarian or contextual concerns of the human community. Similarly, the flaw of many Christian theologies with a strong transcendent commitment is their inability to articulate a coherent commitment to the context of human experience.

### **Immanent Commitment of Theology**

Most theologies have been warped in philosophical categories around transcendence that no room is left to address the human situation in which theological reflection is taken place. Traditional Theology as revealed in Western Theology often is abstract, impersonal, reflective and unable to address the human socio-political, racial, gender and other cogent and volatile components of the human society. With such disposition in academic shibboleths and devoid of the existential factors in the human context, thus the theological preoccupation becomes a reflection of mirage and not really the felt needs of the human society. Unfortunately, it is such lack of praxis - sensitivity of classical theology that cause the rise of multiple theologies to address the many human concerns that have generally been ignored as theological agenda in classical theological reflection. Theology must have a transcendent focus and an immanent locus, without these two horizons kept in check, theology becomes irrelevant and obsolete. It is true that neither of these Christian theologies, which have no transcendent or immanent context, is adequate enough to deal with the human existential crisis of the modern times and also, the post-modern crises of future times.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the two basic tasks of Theology?

### **3.5 Presupposition of Theology**

Every theology, whether explicitly stated or not has some basic assumptions or hypothesis that guide its theological methodology. There are different presuppositions in theology that a catalogue of each of them here becomes entirely a Herculean task. However as we are going to see in the presentation of some of the theologies that these presuppositions could be narrowed down into two primary presuppositions, namely the rejection of the normative character of western theology as universal theology and the acceptance of multiple theological expressions.

#### **Rejection of Western Universal Theology**

Most theologies particularly of the liberation stock “and those of racial, gender and regional brands such as African Theology, Asian Theology, Feminist Theology, Liberation Theology and Black Theology have certain basic assumptions that western theology though often positioned to assume universal status is understood to be inadequate in the human context of African, Latin America, and Asia. This is because such theology was fundamentally shaped by western questions, which often are poles apart from those of the African continent or Developing Nations’ contexts.

#### **Validity of Contextual - Local Theology**

Rejecting Western assumed universal Theology, theologians in non-western context understood a just basis for other theological expressions of the Christian faith because of the realization that western theology has a blind spot towards issues of race, colonization, nationalism and gender related upheavals. Thus, the local, religious and contextual differences of all human contexts warranted the necessity of multiple theologies.

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss the two basic presuppositions of Theology?

### **3.6 The Limitations of Theology**

Theology as a human endeavour to understand or interpret the divine is inherently saddled with diverse forms of limitations. These limitations had been expressed in many ways and many forms, however three salient limitations of theology are forever certain and thus the necessity to tolerate, appreciate and also be sympathetic to the weaknesses revealed by many theologies in their quest to capture the infinite

transcendent being for their time, generation and human context.

### **Limitation of Scope**

No single theology has ever captured all dimensions of the human existential experiences; instead every theology is in every sense narrow, limited and preoccupied with a particular time, context and agenda. It is thus unhealthy and absurd to develop a theology that will truly cut across all races, gender, class and other different categories of the human society. Even though, many a theology claims this impossibility, yet a closer look at these theologies revealed that often those claims are bogus generalizations and not founded on reality. It is true that most theologies seek to be universal in their relevance to the entire globe, but it is also true that such desire is just wishful thinking since theology itself from its simple definition encompasses ultimately the reflection of the human in the various context about the divine being who no single person or time could ever capture for every people and time.

### **Limitation of Methodology**

The revolt of the existential theology and philosophy against traditional theology and philosophy is in this sense justifiable since no human methodology or system could in every sense captured the full and stalk dimension of the human existential experiences. Thus, in this particular sense every theological methodology whether expressed or unexpressed has a salient limitation and hence revealed that no one single method of theology could in every sense translate the divine or interpret the full scale of human socio-economic experiences.

### **Limitation of Agenda**

It is now known that no single theological agenda whether of Traditional theology, or Feminism or Black theology or any other theology in that sense could be sufficient and transcend all cultural boundaries, age group, gender distinction, racial categories and economical and social status. Thus, every theology is limited in its choice and identification with a theological agenda whether this agenda is expressed or unexpressed.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

State the three basic limitations of every theology!

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

In order to understand the major concerns of the different types of theology, there is as a necessity the need to understand the general introductory aspect to theology as a field. This is done with the intention that such understanding will aid the student in a critical and systematic appreciation of the many different Christian theologies of contemporary times.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major lessons you have learnt in this unit: Theology can be defined as the human study of God. There are five periods in the history of Theology, namely patristic, medieval, reformation, enlightenment and modern periods.

There are six disciplines of theology, namely: biblical, philosophical, historical, systematic, pastoral and exegetical. Theology must be committed to the transcendent and immanent aspects of its task

Theology is limited in scope, methodology and agenda.

#### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1 What is your own understanding of theology particularly, in relationship to the human dimension of every theology?
- 2 State the two basic task of every theology?
- 3 Narrate briefly the history of Theology?
- 4 State the basic presupposition and limitation of Theology?

#### 7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

Alexander, Desmond T. & et al. (Eds.). *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, (1998).  
 Fabella, Virginia & R.S. Surgirtharajah. (Ed.). *Dictionary of Third World*.

*Theologies*. (New York: Orbis Book, 2000). Ferguson, Sinclair B. et al. eds. *New Dictionary of Theology*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988). Millard, Erickson. *The Christian Theology*. (Michigan: Baker Books, (1988). Michael, Matthew. *An Introduction to Third World Theologies. Unpublished Work*. Copyright, 2006.



## UNIT 2 THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Authority of the Bible
  - 3.2 The Unity of the Bible
  - 3.3 The Diversity of the Bible
  - 3.4 The Relevance of the Bible
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

“The Bible” as observed by John S. Mbiti “is a strange and unique book.” It is strange according to Mbiti, because it is “written by one people, the Jews,” and now has “become a universal book.” Consequently, the Bible as a universal book has to be understood and interpreted by people of other places who were not primarily the recipient of its message. At such, the Bible is one of the fundamental and central sources of Christian theology. For many theologies, the Bible solely occupied a lofty place in the theological reflection that often, is seen as the only source of a Christian Theology. Thus, this unit seeks to reflect on the central role that the Bible occupies in theological discourse, but it also sought to relate the unity and diversity of the Bible and its relevance in contemporary multiplicity of Christian theological reflections.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define the nature of the authority of the Bible
- discuss the unity and diversity of the Bible
- explain the role of the Bible’s diversity and unity to the present multiplicity of Christian Theologies.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 The Authority of the Bible

The authority of the Bible has variously been defined in many ways. As defined by Wayne Grudem, “The authority of Scripture” means “that all the words, in scripture are God’s words in such a way that to obey

or disobey any word of God is to disbelieve or disobey God.” (1994: 73). This suggests that the authority of the Bible is fundamentally based on certain claims of the Bible itself.

However, the authority of the Bible also stems` from its canonical and ecclesiastical status particularly in the popular acceptance of the Bible as God’s word. Thus, the authority of the Bible in relationship to theology could be discussed in three basic subheadings.

### **The Testimony of the Bible**

The Bible becomes truly the basic source of witness to its own authority since almost all the pages of its sacred words revealed the divine as its ultimate source of revelation. These divine claims of the Bible have been subjected to various academic criticisms, however the understanding still reigns in theological discussion even if often not out rightly expressed that the Bible is fundamentally a sacred document. This understanding of the Bible’s authority has serious implications for theology because it is assumed rightly that reflection on Bible should be seen as a sacred task particularly in the quest for understanding the mind of the divine for the contemporary society, which ultimately becomes the preoccupation of theology. Significantly, however, the authority of the Bible makes it the ultimate standard of truth, whereby all theologies must be tried and tested. There seems to be a paradox here because while theology or the academic expression of it evaluates or tests the divine claims of the Bible, on the other hand, the Bible also becomes the judge and litmus paper by which all theologies are tested.

### **The Canonical Status of the Bible**

Apart from the testimony of the Bible as to its authority, various councils and theological discussions in Church history have largely accepted the authority of the Bible even though with few dissidents. The culminative testimony of the canonical and ecclesiastical status of the Bible makes it an authoritative for every theology. This is not to suppose that the academic attacks challenging its authority have not taken place in history, but to underscore the importance of such document despite the few occurrences of these academic attacks. Thus, any theology that must be taken seriously must reckon or recognize the canonical authority of the Bible in order to remain Christian.

### **The Popular Status of the Bible**

Even though not often emphasized the popularity of the Bible as a divine document is largely assumed. Interview, discussions and studies of the Bible in the African context is primarily based on the accepted understanding of its authority in the matter of faith and practices. The

reason for the popular appeal of the Bible, particularly in the African context is beyond the scope of this study; however it must be due to the affinity between the biblical world and the worldview of the African people.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are the three basic sources of the Bible's authority in relationship to doing theology?

### **3.2 The Unity of the Bible**

The unity of the Bible has basically shaped classical theology whether in exegesis, homiletics or Biblical Theology. This monolithic unity of the Bible is chiefly based on the implication of the foregone discussion, particularly in the general acceptance of the divine authority of the Bible by both the ecclesiastical and popular understanding of the Bible. Thus, tensions between the Old Testament and New Testament were often allegorized and harmonized in holistic understanding of singular divine authorship. This understanding of the application of the "regula fidei" (or rule of faith) to perceived tension or contradiction between the Testaments went beyond the broad theologies of the testament to individual texts, whereby texts were harmonized and made to carry the general tone of biblical literature. However, despite the perceived diversity, a common and central unifying framework exists and this makes discussion in the unity of the Bible possible, particularly in the broad spectrum of the Old Testament and New Testament.

#### **Old Testament**

The central unifying theme of the Old Testament has been hotly debated. As such, various centres have been proposed for considerations. These centres ranges from promise, covenant motif, dominion, justice, God's people, community motif to such complex multiple canters such as Deliverance-freedom motif, covenant-promise motif, and creation-new community motifs. In the presence of diverse centres, it is needful to reassert the centre of salvation as the major defining centre of the Old Testament as already underscored in traditional Christian Theology. This is not to suggest that such theme of salvation is not problematic, but rather that even with its many problems such centre encompasses the thesis of the other centres and also translates such concerns to the end product of the salvation of the human race.

## **New Testament**

The New Testament centres too have also been debated with many theological proposals as the centre of New Testament such as the gospel, justification, reconciliation, faith, new creation, kingdom and Salvation history. Other multiple centres such as Christology-ecclesiastology and community-mission motif have also been forwarded. With all its many problems, it seems on the face value that Christology is the major centre of the New Testament Scripture, even though such Christology could not be deprived of inter-relationship with New Testament theme of salvation history.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the unity of the Bible?

#### **3.3 The Diversity of the Bible**

The Bible written by different people from different backgrounds, at different times on different subjects, naturally has an obvious heterogeneous nature. This diversity of the Bible should be stressed since it gives legitimacy to the different brands of theology that now characterizes contemporary Christendom. Hence, it is legitimate to underscore the diversity of the Bible writers in relationship to doing theology in the contemporary context. This diversity of the Bible is revealed in both the Old Testament and New Testament respectively.

## **Old Testament**

The Old Testament reveals diversity in the subject matters as well as style and context of Biblical writers. Thus, different biblical writers at different times made different religious or ethical demands on the human society based on their background, context of their audience and other existential situations of the cultural and religious milieu in which they lived. Thus, Genesis was committed to the narration of creation story and the founding of the Israeli nation; Exodus with the theme of redemption and deliverance; Leviticus with the cultic issues of sacrifice and holiness; Numbers on the national tragedy in the wilderness and Deuteronomy on the giving again of the commandments. The two books of Samuel, Kings, Judges and Chronicles are preoccupied with history and the Prophets with issues of social justice, judgment, salvation and messianic expectations. This diverse nature of theology which was harmonized and sealed by canonical authority gives a clue to the necessity of plurality in theological reflection. However, this understanding does suggest that the harmony of these diverse theologies was envisaged by the Biblical

authors and thus, imply that contemporary theologies with pluralistic agenda must also find harmony in the context of Scripture.

### **New Testament**

The New Testament reveals also that diversity as clearly seen in the different understanding of the New Testament writers. Matthew was preoccupied with the Jewish context and issues that arose from the encounter of Christianity with the Jewish religious and cultural contexts. The gospel of Matthew sought to reflect the claims of Jesus as Messiah within the Jewish milieu. On the other hand, the gospel of Luke wrestled with the issues of the Gentile context and this theological concern is also found in Pauline epistles. The gospel of John incorporated the contextual issues of the post-apostolic context into his interpretation of the apostolic and the Christological tradition. (Mark's Gospel is the Original Gospel Tradition from which all others copied directly or indirectly).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

State the nature of the pluralistic tendencies in the theologies of the Bible?

#### **3.4 Relevance of the Bible**

The relevance of the Bible could easily be seen by the growing popularity of the Bible in the continent of Africa. However, theology has often been used as the vehicle of philosophy instead of the content of biblical revelation. It is this understanding that often weakens the credibility of such theology. Thus, it should be emphasized that with all the already highlighted diversity and unity, the relevance of the Bible in today's world is not only necessary, but also imperative particularly in discussion of theology and the ministry of the Church in both popular and academic contexts.

#### **Relevance of the Bible in Theology**

The Bible becomes a normative tool for theology, and also forms the yardstick by which theologies are judged, understood, interpreted and evaluated. However, even within the Bible (as already shown) the diversity of theology is well entrenched and thus should provide a legitimate basis for the acceptance of various theologies whose theological agenda might in many ways seem foreign when compared to the familiar traditional theology. The relevance in emphasizing the diversity and unity of the Bible is that it has the tendencies of initiating and invigorating a healthy theological discussion across the various spectrums of Christian theologies and thus in the final analysis

contribute to a tolerant atmosphere in the universal theological discussions.

### **Relevance of the Bible in the Context of Church's Ministry**

The Church's context of the ministry has always relied on the Bible for instruction and guidance for ministry. Though the Roman Catholics has complemented such emphasis with Church traditions, yet it is obvious that the Bible forms a very important tool in both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic confessions. This value accorded to the Bible in context of church's daily ministry in the human society makes it necessary for every theology to affirm a commitment to the Bible.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What relevant role does the Bible occupy in theology and church's ministry?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The relationship between the Bible and Theology is a very interesting one. This relationship becomes also significant and a paradox because as already seen, theology seeks to understand and evaluate the claims in the Bible, but also the Bible on the other hand, should be used to test every theology in order to see whether such theology has any serious commitment to the Bible. It is this dialectic relationship that should characterise theological discussion. However, as also seen, theologies in the Bible were in every sense diverse as well as unified. Thus, this understanding could help in developing a tolerant atmosphere that could aid in a healthy global theological discussion. It is in this latter sense, that Craig L. Blomberg advises that "the diversity of Scripture demonstrates how no one sect or ecclesiastical tradition has a monopoly of the truth. One can become heretical by either being too broad-minded or too narrow minded." (2000:72).

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major lessons that you have learnt in this unit: The authority of the Bible is based on the biblical claim for divine authorship and also from its canonical and ecclesiastical status. The monolithic unity of the Bible is based also on its claim to divine authorship The diversity of the Bible is based on the nature of the Bible, especially because of its multi-authorship nature. The diversity of the Bible should make us become tolerant of other theological views.

## 6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What are the basic sources of the authority of the Bible in relationship to theology?
2. Explain the unity and diversity of the Bible's authors?
3. What is the relevance of the Bible in the African Church and theology?

## 7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

Alexander, Desmond T. et al. (Eds.). *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000).  
Blomberg, Craig L. "The Unity and Diversity of Scripture." *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Alexander T. Desmond et al (Ed.). (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press,2000).

Fabella, Virginia & R. S. Surgirtherajah eds. *Dictionary of the Third World Theologies*. (New York: Orbis Book, 2000). Michael, Matthew. *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*. Unpublished work. Copyright, 2006. \

## UNIT 3 CHRISTOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Definition of Christology
  - 3.2 Various Types of Christology
  - 3.3 Sources of Christology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The teachings about Jesus, his nature, being, and functions in the Trinity are what we call “Christology.” In some aspects, some scholars treat Christology separately from Soteriology. The importance of Christology for the Christian Church cannot be underestimated, since apart from him the religion called “Christianity” could not have come into being. Thus, Christianity is synonymous with Christ.

The way the New Testament painted the picture of Jesus has been vigorously debated by scholars (see Albert Schweitzer, *The Search for the Historical Jesus* (1906)). Some call him a Prophet, Messiah and a Teacher among others. In whatever status he was seen, he attracted large followers mainly from the peasants and the lower classes of people from the cities, towns, villages, and country side of Palestine (now Israel). He was rejected and crucified by the Jews, but later he rose up from the dead. Now, his resurrection is the significance of the “Easter-event” in Christianity. His resurrection, according to Paul in 1 Cor. 15:1-19 is a historical fact and the cornerstone of the Christian faith. However, attempts to reduce this incident to a spiritual dimension only have always raised some theological problems.

Some of the difficulties these have created are: How much of the New Testament witness of Jesus came directly from him and how much belongs to later ecclesiastical reflection (see Mt. 16:16). Another difficulty with the New Testament Christology concerns its content. These include: The Gospels different titles assigned to Jesus such as Saviour, Messiah and Son of Man among others. The New Testament claims that Jesus is the heir to the throne of David and that he also became the High Priest, as well as the victim of the atoning sacrifice on the cross in order to save humankind from their sin proved that Jesus was



God in the human flesh. The post-apostolic Christology by the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D. developed in response to the heresies of various kinds. At that time, there were some who held that Jesus was a kind of an angel, who seemed to be partly human and partly God (cf. 1 John 4:2-3). Such heretical teaching is called “docetism” from the Greek word “*dokein*” meaning “to seem.” Perhaps some orthodox Christians as well as the heretics held to this view.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define Christology
- differentiate Christology from other Christian Theologies
- explain different types of Christologies
- state the sources of Christology.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Definition of Christology

Strictly speaking, one will agree that “Christology” can be defined as “the doctrine (teaching) about Christ, his person and nature, being and works.” The linguistic root of the terms comes from the combination of two Greek words “*Christos*” (Christ) and “*Logos*” (Word). Now, when put together it gives us “Christology” which, in simple terms means the study or discussion of Christ’s words.” It will be a rewarding experience or exercise to study types of Christology taught or held by various groups in Christian circles. So far, our definition of Christology has been to provide you with a peg on which to hang your study of Christ. It seems the following elements are very important in our definition of Christology and should be re-stated or elaborated upon as follows:

Christology, when it comes to interpretation, should be logically, clearly, and coherently stated in line with the teaching of the Scriptures. Christology cannot be studied independent of God and the function of Christ in the Trinity. Every theology in the Christian Church cannot be complete without relating to Christology. Similarly, Christology must be studied in the light of its historical development and tradition in the Christian Church through the centuries.

A true biblical Christology must understand and accept that Christology involves Christian, individual, and societal experiences in the areas of: economy, political and religious liberation. For this was the purpose of Christ’s coming (Isa. 61:1-3). Christology must be emphasised to relate to each context, culture, worldview, philosophy and situation of people

to whom it is presented before it can be meaningful.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What is the definition of Christology? “State and discuss its etymology and what a true Biblical Christology must include in order to warrant a Biblically acceptable meaning.

### **3.2 The Various Christologies**

#### **Classical Christology**

No doubt, the classical Christology period started in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. as a response to the teaching of Arius. He held and defended the view that Jesus Christ was a heavenly being, intermediate between God and man, yet a creature. He argued that if Christ were not a creature, he would not have been able to suffer and die for us. By the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D; Arius was condemned as a heretic. Nevertheless, his views continued in various forms till at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In the aftermath of the Council of Nicea, two main schools of thought came into being centred at Alexandria and at Antioch respectively. In terms of doctrine, Alexandria claims priority and Antioch was regarded as a reaction against Alexandria excesses.

The Alexandrian school emphasized the unity of Christ. It emphasized the divine nature of Christ. That is, that he was the Son of God in human flesh. But the difficulty encountered was, how they could define the nature of this relationship. There was a constant temptation to say that the term refers only to the flesh of Jesus excluding his soul. The Council of Constantinople condemned this understanding of the nature of Jesus in 381 A.D in favour of the Alexandrian School. By the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D, it had become the article of faith in the Alexandrian tradition, that the incarnate Christ has only one nature and it has to be divine. This, however, brought the genuineness of his humanity into question. This teaching, which came to be later known as monophysitism, was also condemned in the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451 A.D. By 428 A.D. Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius were holding to the Adoptionism, that is, the union of the two natures of Christ (Son of God) the divine nature and (human embryo) the human nature. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ecumenical Council in 431 A.D. at Ephesus, Nestorius was condemned. By 449 A.D., Pope Leo held on to the Orthodox view that Christ was a single person, but that his human nature was added to the divine incarnation. Although, some rejected Leo’s formula, it remained the chief foundation classical Christology to this day. It was the main

foundation of Chalcedon's own definition.

The problem constantly faced by theologians of this period was the witness of the Gospels to the miracles and other extraordinary acts of Jesus. Were these things done by the power of the human or the divine nature? Some resolved this problem by adopting the theory of borrowing. That is, the humanity of Christ borrowed divine attributes as at when required. Today, orthodox Christology holds to the divine Christ who manifested himself in the capacity of two natures.

## **Modern Christology**

### **Modern Western Christology**

After the close of the patristic period and up to the Reformation, there was little or no formed development of Christology distinct from the former ones. Even the reformers were contented with their ancient heritage. For example, John Calvin strongly defended the classical creedal formulae as the faithful representation of Scriptural teaching (see Calvin Institute 1:13) [I. Xiii]. This teaching was repeated by his followers and remained typical of the mainly Western Protestant Orthodox teaching in Churches and Seminaries to present day.

However, due to the impact of the enlightenment in the West, by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, debate about Christ's nature was revisited, but not as vigorous as before. Scholars like Reimarus (1694-1768) up to the First World War, attempted to reconstruct the life of the "historical Jesus" (see also Schweitzer, *The Search for the Historical Jesus*). Surprisingly, the enlightenment Christology argues that Jesus was essentially a prophetic moralist, a religious reformer, a philanthropist, crucified because his thinking was ahead of his time. However, Albert Schweitzer strongly criticized this image of Jesus without returning to the earlier orthodox position. He argued that Jesus was an apocalyptic figure. Thus, this helps divide western modern Christology into two camps using very different principles of the theological method. For example, some exponents hold to a "Christology from Above" which is directly based on the Chalcedonian tradition. The Enlightenment thinkers hold to a "Christology from below." So the former is seen as a modern form of ancient docetism or monophysitism, while the latter is often seen as the modern version of the ancient Nestorians or even adoptionism. Extreme exponents of the latter view have wide spread following in recent times by using the word "myth" to describe the New Testament Christology. No wonder, Rudolf Bultmann endeavours to demythologize the New Testament gospel stories about Jesus in order to reach to the real hidden historical Jesus. To him, the N.T. narratives are myths, and should not be treated

as historical facts. On the other hand, some see the evidence presented in the gospel as historical and as such credible proof of Jesus' divinity. In this understanding are the works of Martin Hengel and W. Pannenberg, who have variously asserted the historicity of the gospels, using it as their basis for Christ's divinity.

### **Modern Non-Western Christology**

The modern non-Western Christology can hardly be the same with the modern Western Christology. This is because the frame and lenses in which the former sees and interprets Christ are not the same with those of the latter. For example, the former spiritualizes everything about Christ including the purpose of his coming and his acts. But the latter sees Christ as a divine being in human form whose coming (incarnation) brings liberation from physical as well as spiritual, economic, political and religious oppression. Without these ingredients, the Modern non-western theologian does not see Christology as indeed Biblical and complete. Thus, for most non-western theologians in Africa and South America, a proper biblical Christology must touch the culture, spiritual, political and physical needs of the people to whom it is presented. Primarily, the Modern non-western Christology is fundamentally colored by the Latin American Liberation Theology in terms of praxis and objectives.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Name and discuss the various types of Christology, noting the arguments in favour and against each. In your own opinion, why do you think the Modern non-western Christology is indeed relevant in the African context?

### **3.3 Sources of Christologies**

#### **The Bible**

Whether in the Western or in the non-Western context, the Bible has often been taken as the major source of Christology. But as always the case, the different understanding of the biblical teaching on Christology has often led to various Christological presentations. This diversity of Christology is not because of the ambiguity of the Bible, but rather the influences from the context of the interpreter since a lot of the presentation of Christology is actually a reflection of the milieu or the context of the interpreter. The Western Christologists interpret the historical facts and narratives about Christ using their frame, lenses, context, culture, philosophy, worldview, economic, and political systems of the West, even though, their presentation explored strongly a biblical or Christian motif or framework. Similarly, the non-Western

settings interpret the text of the Bible in their frame and context. Since the two are in different worlds naturally their Christology cannot totally be the same at critical points.

### **Context**

Christ lived and worked in a context, a historical milieu, a political era and a cultural environment. The question is, how did he relate to and meet each one's needs accordingly? In the Developing Nations, the context in which Christology is being interpreted and practised is very important. As the saying goes, "empty stomachs have no ears." So in the Developing Nations, spiritualization of Christological teaching is secondary. The primary aspect is the physical. This does not mean that there are not spiritual oriented works in the Developing Nations' context; however the preoccupation of these works had a large obsession with the contextual realities rather than purely spiritual works of Western conservative traditions.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss the two basic sources of Christology?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Christological study or discussion is very important. No true biblical Theology will be complete without touching on Christology. It is important due to its relationship with the central personality of Christianity and the Christian faith. It is also important because the history of the Christian Church has revealed a consistent fascination with the study. Certainly, the future or post-modern context would continue to wrestle with the person and works of Jesus Christ.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit: Christology is the study of discussion about Christ.

The issue of Christology has been in serious contention in the church from the very beginning. The Bible and the context of the Theologian have been the sources for the study of Christology.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. What do we mean by Christology?
2. What are the various types of Christology and how do they differ from each other in terms of objectives and sources?
3. Summarise the history of Christology from 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. to

- present.
4. Why is it that Modern Third World Christology cannot be exactly like its counterpart in the Modern Western World?

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Bray, G.L.B. "Christology", in *New Dictionary of Theology*.  
Ferguson,  
Sinclair, B., & David, F. Wright, J. I. Packer. (Eds.). Leicester,  
England: Inter-Varsity Press. (1988). 137-140.
- Marshall, I.H. (1976). *The Origins of New Testament Christology*,
- Moule, C.F.D. (1977). *The Origin of Christology*.
- Runia, K. (1984). *The Present-Day Christology Debate*,

## **UNIT 4      HERMENEUTICS AND THEOLOGY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Definition of Hermeneutics
  - 3.2 Traditional Hermeneutics
  - 3.3 Modern Hermeneutics
  - 3.4 Hermeneutics and Plurality
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The study investigates the development in hermeneutics in relationship to Theology. It is important to note the close relationship between theology and hermeneutics because as one may guess different theologies are product of differing hermeneutical methodology or agenda. Thus, it is pertinent to observe the relationship between theology and hermeneutics in order to account for the multiplicity of contemporary brand of Christian theologies.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit you will be able to:

- define hermeneutics
- explain the relationship between hermeneutics and theology
- analyse the nature of modern and traditional hermeneutics
- discuss fundamental developments in hermeneutics as it affects theology.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Definition of Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics is often defined as the art, science or theories of interpretation. However, in its restrictive Christian usage, it encompasses the study of rules or principles for the interpretation of the Biblical text. On the other hand, in the non-Christian usage, it is applied to the art of communication whether verbal or written. Another understanding of hermeneutics is also extended to the interpretation of the human society and the investigation into the social,

economic and political networks or links present in the human society. Hermeneutics in this latter sense becomes a sociological tool towards the interpretation of class distinction, gender designation and other fundamental aspects of the human society. The current discussion of hermeneutics is in the former sense and not in the latter sense, thus we will be preoccupied with relationship of hermeneutics of the Biblical text and its corresponding relationship to theology in general. There are different approaches to hermeneutics in Church history. These approaches include the allegorical, midrashic, typological and other forms of hermeneutical methods.

However in recent times there is a move towards historical-grammatical hermeneutical methodology. The benefits of this hermeneutical methodology are many, but nonetheless it has also come under serious attack because of the obvious obsession of the methodology with historical forms, particularly its tendencies towards active preoccupation with the Biblical text and passivity towards the existential context of the interpreter.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Define Hermeneutics?

### **3.2 Traditional Hermeneutics**

Traditional theology as a result of the influence of Western scientific quest for objectivity has generally discussed hermeneutics in a manner that assumes the enterprise is entirely neutral without the presupposition of the interpreter. This posture of traditional hermeneutics had been challenged by the emergence of different hermeneutical methodologies, which acknowledges the need of presuppositions and hypotheses in the process of hermeneutical investigation.

#### **General Principles**

Traditional Hermeneutics has three basic guiding principles. The first guiding principle is the assumption that a contemporary reader could actually observe the intended meaning within the Biblical text. This understanding is problematic since the human authors of the Bible are not always present to explain the meaning of the text to the modern reader. It also presupposes that separated by time, culture and linguistic barriers the meaning of the text becomes unrecoverable because of the significant changes in the way of life in the biblical times and the contemporary modern society. However against such understanding, the traditional hermeneutics has sought to discover the



intended meaning of the text through historical and grammatical parameters. Secondly, this first point is also extended to mean that there is only one single meaning in any given text and not multiple meanings. This single meaning is believed to be the original intention of the biblical authors and thus, the necessity of removing the grammatical layers of the text to discover such meaning. Lastly, the understanding from this foregone is drawn on the assumption that the Biblical text itself is static and not dynamic; hence the text is immune from the historical and contemporary influences that preserved the text. The static understanding of the text makes hermeneutics a mere human endeavour insulated from the myriad human antecedents that aided in the shaping, transmission and translation of the text.

### **Problems**

The assumptions of traditional hermeneutics, despite its appeals could not be substantiated by reason or the Biblical documents, since the Bible revealed little or no guide in the form of historical and grammatical preoccupation with the revealed text, instead the apostles used hermeneutical methodology that seemed different from the ones used by contemporary traditionalist interpreters. Similarly, traditional interpreters are often embarrassed by their presuppositions and thus these presuppositions are usually disguised as no existence in their hermeneutic endeavours. However, a look at its methodology and content reveals the existence of such presupposition. In this understanding, the disclosure of such presupposition so that it could engender dialogue with the Biblical text, is healthier for Biblical theology rather than suppressing them and assuming their non-existence.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

State the basic guiding principles and problems of traditional Hermeneutics?

### **3.3 Modern Hermeneutics**

Modern hermeneutics developed as a revolt against traditional hermeneutics and theology with its narrow theological agenda and its refusal to place class, gender and race at the centre of theology and hermeneutical investigation. This new modern hermeneutics emphasized the context of the interpreter rather than the text of the Bible in isolation. Its commitment to the context of the interpreter makes modern hermeneutics revolutionary. This radical way of doing theology and hermeneutics rejected a presupposition less hermeneutical enquiry and grounded hermeneutics and hence theology in contextual

presupposition of the interpreter. This section analyses the guiding principles and problems of these new modern hermeneutics.

### **Guiding Principles**

The guiding principles of modern hermeneutics are basically three. First, it argues that hermeneutics must proceed from the contemporary context and not the text of the Scripture. In this methodology, hermeneutics as well as the subsequent theology from such reflection is context-initiated and thus context in this procedure becomes the centre of theological reflection and not the mere afterthought of hermeneutical or theological investigations. Secondly, it de-neutralized hermeneutical inquiry and redefined Biblical interpretation around some well defined presupposition of theological agenda. Lastly, it expressed freely the hitherto mute voices, of individual at the fringe of the human society such as women, outcast, and the Blacks. It did not only reject the dominance of traditional Theology and hermeneutics, but transformed theology and hermeneutic by asserting neglected human category as central issues in theology and hermeneutics, thus forever redefining theology and hermeneutics.

### **Problems**

The problems of new modern ways of doing hermeneutic is that often they become engrossed in the details of the interpreter's context at the expense of a thorough exegetical and syntactical commitment to the Biblical text. Thus, they revealed an impeccable interpretation of the human society by the use of basic theories of social analysis, but however show little or no devotion to Biblical studies or exegetical theology. This one-sided nature of modern hermeneutics raises serious problems for theology since it undermined the historical source of theology, namely the Bible. Consequently, loyalty to the context of the interpreter at the expense of a serious engagement with the text of the Bible rendered it less credible a methodology of Hermeneutics.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

State the basic guiding principles and problem of modern Hermeneutics?

### **3.4 Hermeneutics and Plurality of Theologies**

The root of diverse Christian theologies could be easily traced to the diversity of hermeneutical traditions, methods or presuppositions of theology, thus as long as hermeneutical methodologies or presuppositions are different, interpretation and conclusions to the Bible and doctrine of the Scripture will always be different.

Consequently, this accounts for multiplicity of theologies. This relationship between theology and hermeneutic revealed the fundamental role hermeneutics played in the determination of the content and nature of Theology. Since the understanding of the text necessitates diversity of reading and rereading, the plausibility of diverse theological traditions will indeed remain with us. However, even with such diverse tendencies that plurality of theologies engender, ultimately the course is a healthy one for the theological discourse in the long run, since it often revealed the richness and beauty of the Christian faith. Accordingly, this section presents justification for the plurality of theologies and the hermeneutical methodology.

### **Hermeneutical Justification for the Plurality of Theologies**

The hermeneutical justification for the plurality of theologies lies in the human dimension of hermeneutics as well as theology. It is not that the text is ambiguous or problematic as such, but that our ability to comprehend, understand, interpret and reconstruct the Biblical text is limited and by all indication human that we cannot fully grasp the full import of a particular text even when such text is clear. Most importantly, we unconsciously bring to the text unknowingly, our backgrounds, presuppositions and all other human categories into the text and thus, the diversity of our experiences shapes and colour our questions, and most often even the answer, we expected from the text of Scriptures.

### **Theological Justification for the Plurality of Hermeneutical Methodologies**

There is also a way that preconceived theologies shape the methodology of hermeneutical investigation and the outcome of such hermeneutical enquiry so that even when the meaning of meaning comes to us naturally yet the process of understanding such conceived natural flow of meaning might be due to preconceived theologies and choice of methodology that remote control the expected meaning from the text. The interface between the interpreter and the text normally argued against the tendencies to assume our interpretation as the best or the only meaning that could be found in the text.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

State the hermeneutical and theological justifications for the plurality of theologies and hermeneutical methodologies?

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Hermeneutics as already seen in this lecture holds a very important place in the contemporary diversity of theology. This study unit accounts for the nature as well as the content of theology, thus ultimately determining the distinctive characteristics of each theology. The contention of this investigation is that by studying the forces that shaped hermeneutics, we are invariably a foot away from the forces shaping theology itself because ultimately theology is a child of hermeneutics.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit: Hermeneutics is the art, science or theories of interpretation. Hermeneutics have taken various shapes in church history such as: allegory, midrashic and typological. The emergence of new hermeneutical methodologies have challenged the position of traditional hermeneutics. The plurality of hermeneutics justifies the plurality of theology.

#### 6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define hermeneutics?
2. Give the general guiding principles and problems of traditional and modern hermeneutics?
3. Discuss the theological and hermeneutical justifications for plurality of theologies and hermeneutical methodologies?

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Ferguson, Sinclair B. et al (Ed.). (1998). *New Dictionary of Theology*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Michael, Matthew (2006.). *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*. Unpublished Work. Copyright, Osborne,
- Grant, R. (1991). *Hermeneutical Spiral*. Illinois; Inter-Varsity Press.

## UNIT 5 ECUMENISM AND THEOLOGY

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Definition of Ecumenism
  - 3.2 Trends in Ecumenism Theology
  - 3.3 Ecumenism and New Testament Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, theological discussion concerning the quest for the unity of the Church featured frequently. The Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 has often been associated with the ecumenical movement. After a preliminary meeting in Geneva in 1920, the first World Conference on matters of Faith and Order was held at Lausanne in 1927. While Edinburgh was a missionary gathering, Lausanne was formally an inter-Church assembly with some 90 Churches represented. The Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox Church and most of the Evangelical Churches were absent. The next milestone was the second Faith and Order conference held at Edinburgh 1937 with 123 Churches represented. That conference gave birth and endorsed the proposal for a World Council of Churches, and was realized in 1948. Since then, the Faith and Order Commission, the main agency of the WCC has reported to it at Evanston, Illinois USA (1954), New Delhi (1961), Uppsala (1968), Nairobi (1975), and Vancouver (1983). Membership of representative Churches has clocked 301. Some of the matters concerning *Baptism*, *Holy Communion*, and *Ministry* gained consensus in Lima and Geneva (1982). Other matters, which the movement is concerned about includes: Salvation, Church, God's Reign, and Unity. The WCC's original statement declared that it is "a fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour." Because of the much criticism and vulnerability of this declaration, it was amended in New Delhi to read: A fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (D.F. Wright, pp.219-220).

The main purpose and goals of the Ecumenical Movement were:

- (a) To heal the historical division of the Churches, thus stimulating renewal in Faith and worship.
- (b) Struggling by social and political means to secure freedom, justice, and peace;
- (c) To extend the mission of the gospel to all spheres of society.

From this overview of the ecumenical movement, this unit presents some developments and perspectives in relationship to ecumenism and diversity of Christian theologies.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define ecumenism
- identify and discuss the trends in Ecumenical Theology
- explain ecumenism and its relationship to New Testament Theology
- discuss various scholastic positions on Ecumenism and Theology.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Definition of Ecumenism

The word “Ecumenism” can be said to come from the Greek word *oikoumene* which literally means “the whole inhabited world.” So by extension, ecumenical movement is “a movement started to express the wholeness of the Christian faith as held by diverse Churches in pursuit of a common worldwide mission” (J.R. Nelson Keith Gim, (Ed.). *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions*, 1981, 234).

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Define and Give the etymology of the term *Ecumenism*?

### 3.2 Trends in Ecumenical Theology

One of the problems in the ecumenical movement is that in Lausanne and Edinburgh, the conclusions reached there failed to take into consideration biblical or theological criteria, or its feasibility when the declarations were made. Evangelicals have, therefore, criticized repeatedly the ecumenical theology on several grounds. For example, the imprecise language used; abuse of biblical terms and concepts; quest for consensus rather than truth; taking Churches stand point of view rather than the Bible as its basis and pervasiveness of universalistic assumptions.

Today, because of the continued evangelical participation in large numbers, the WCC is now paying attention to conservative biblical and theological beliefs. Consultations in ecumenical theological debate have increased, especially on issues such as the nature of Salvation and the Mission of the Church. A major question that arises in ecumenical theology is whether salvation could be found in other religions apart from Christianity.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss the basic trends in contemporary ecumenism?

### **3.3 Ecumenism and New Testament Theology**

Despite the strides recorded by the ecumenical movement, however, the theological issues are still the major obstacles that prevent ecumenical movement from achieving its goal of global Christian Unity. For example, whenever one considers the various types of reservations expressed regarding the movement, theology seems to occupy a major share of the ecumenical discussions or consultative forums. Conservative and liberal tension often characterized these forums because of the understanding particularly of the former that there is less emphasis on certain aspects of belief, biblical teaching and doctrine. For example, the supreme authority of the Bible as the basis and source of Christian faith and practice is often assumed to be watered down by ecumenical emphasis on unity. This became a problem particularly because not all the participants of those forums believed in the Biblical miracles, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus. Similarly, not all Churches or participants agreed that salvation is by faith and grace as taught in the New Testament, nor do all Churches or participants believe in bodily second coming of Christ as taught in the New Testament? Thus, from these diverse theological traditions naturally the confessional statement or creeds became less than Biblical in the New Testament sense. It seems that on matters of theology, the ecumenists spend more time on issues of Church unity at the expense of other New Testament teachings. Catchy phrases such as: “there shall be one flock, one Shepherd” (John 10:16), “that they may all be one” (John 17:21), “that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me” (John 17:23), “called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 1:2), “being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2:2), “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph. 4:12-13), “those members are all one body” (I Cor. 10:17; 12:12-26) are often flaunted by ecumenists. While the validity of these references revealed the divine desire for unity, these

references however, are often emphasized by the ecumenist at the expense of Biblical teaching on the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believers' life. Also, the purity of the Church and its separation from the world are given less attention. However, in the midst of the many diversities that characterized the contemporary modern Christian theologies a truly ecumenical movement could be found in the spiritual unity of the church rather than a physical unity based on creeds and confessions that the representatives or participants of ecumenical forums shared but which has little or no support from the Bible or Christian traditions.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss the understanding of *Ecumenism* in New Testament Theology?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The main purpose of the Church's merger with heavy emphasis on oneness is weak. However, the good aspect of ecumenical movement is that although all Churches have suffered the blow of divisions for a long time due to differences in doctrinal and other theological matters, it is good that these Churches have now been propelled into dialogue. Perhaps one day some proper understanding will be reached whereby each side can reshape its theology in line with Scriptures and also tolerate each other's; diverse theological traditions.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major lessons you have learnt in this unit: Ecumenical movement is a movement started to express the oneness of the Christian faith It started with the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 The first World Conference on matters of order and faith was held in Lausanne in 1927 Ecumenism puts too much emphasis on "oneness" as taught in the N T over other matters in the Scriptures.

### **6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- 1 Define Ecumenism.
- 2 What are some of the theological trends in Modern Ecumenism?
- 3 What do Churches/Denominations stand to gain in establishing interfaith?

### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

Bell, G.K.A. (Ed.). *Documents on Christian Unity*, 4 vols. (1924 - 58).



Flesseman - Van Leer, E. (1980). *The Bible: Its Authority and Interpretation in the Ecumenical Movement*.

Neil, S.C., (1948). *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, Vol.1, 1517.

Wright, D. F., "Ecumenical Movement" *New Dictionary of Theology*.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. & David F. Wright, J.I Packer ed.  
Leicester,England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988: 219-220.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*,

Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994): 873-886.

Erickson, Millard J., *Christian Theology*, vol.3, (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 1129-1148.

## **MODULE 2            TYPES OF THEOLOGY I**

- Unit 1    Roman Catholic Theology
- Unit 2    Protestant Theology
- Unit 3    Evangelical Theology
- Unit 4    Pentecostal Theology
- Unit 5    Theology of African Independent Churches

### **UNIT 1            ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0    Introduction
- 2.0    Objectives
- 3.0    Main Content
  - 3.1    History
  - 3.2    Theology
  - 3.3    Evaluation
- 4.0    Conclusion
- 5.0    Summary
- 6.0    Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0    References/Further Reading

#### **1.0    INTRODUCTION**

The Roman Catholic Church is one of the largest denominations in the world, with the members cutting across all races, gender and different social status that characterize the human society. It also cuts across the different continents of the world with members found in both the urban and rural settings, among the educated and the illiterate and among various groups of tribe or ethnic affiliations in the world. Many factors account for the exponential spread of the Roman Catholic Church; however two factors are basically responsible for this particularly in non- Western contexts. The first reason is the vibrant missionary outfit of the Roman Catholic Church as classically expressed in the Jesuit Roman Catholic Missionary outlet of the sixteenth century and other Roman Catholic Religious Orders and Societies. The second factor is the metaphysical outlook of the Roman Catholic Church, with strong emphasis in the mediating roles of the Saints, the Blessed Virgin Mary and angelic personalities. In Africa and other non-western contexts, this Roman Catholic theological emphasis sounded a familiar chord with the already established mediating role of the ancestors, gods and goddesses of the African pantheon. As such, most Africans saw in the Roman Catholic Church a continuity of these pre- Christian religious forms in the new definition and borders of Christianity.

This unit investigates the origin and theology of the Roman Catholic Church and subsequently, evaluates the theology, noting the problems and prospects of Roman Catholic Theology.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By end of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the origin and theology of Roman Catholic Church
- evaluate the Theology of Roman Catholic Church, noting the problems and prospects inherent in Roman Catholic Theology.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Origin of Roman Catholic Theology**

The origin of Roman Catholic Theology goes deep in Church history, beginning in the history of the patristic fathers to the erudition of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. However, the origin of Roman Catholic Theology is so complex and complicated that capturing the origin of the official Roman Catholic teachings and the other myriads of Roman Catholic theologies as expressed by her many schools of theology is a daunting task that could not be sustained in the present investigation. However, some salient defining historical points in Roman Catholic Theology would be reviewed.

### **Roman Catholic Reformation**

The Roman Catholic Reformation also known as Counter- Reformation is a very important historical point in the development of Roman Catholic Theology. The Roman Catholic reformation sought to reassert and developed the distinctive masks of Roman Catholicism in the light of the Protestant onslaught at the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. The Reformation of the Roman Catholic Church was on a large scale that goes throughout Europe. Closely related to our present discussion of Roman Catholic Theology is the significant Council in the history of Roman Catholic Theology, the Council of Trent that was held between 1545 and 1563. The Council has been described as “Impressive Ideals” of the Roman Catholic Theology. The Council stood in opposition to the major doctrinal emphasis of the Protestant movement and clearly defined the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. The Council resolved to uphold the systematic training of Roman Catholic Priesthood to guard against the repetition of Protestant rift. Similarly, the Council rejected the heart of Protestant Reformation by its rejection of the doctrine of justification by faith and asserted that good works are a necessity and prerequisite for salvation. This Council

also affirmed the validity of the Seven Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Order and Holy Matrimony,) and made them a necessity for true sanctification. The Council made the Vulgate (Latin Bible), the standard Bible for the Roman Catholic Church and Thomas Aquinas the Model Theologian for the Roman Catholic Theology. Lastly, the Council of Trent declared those outside of the Roman Catholic Church anathema, that is, accursed. The influence of the Council of Trent is wide reaching and imposing that most of its resolutions had remained intact for centuries in Roman Catholic Theology.

### **The Second Vatican Council**

The Second Vatican Council was also a very important movement for the redefinition of Roman Catholic Theology in light of the challenges of the modern context. The Second Vatican Council took place between 1962 and 1965 at the peak of salient political and theological revolution that took place in most parts of the world, particularly the Developing Nations contexts. The Second Vatican Council repositioned Roman Catholic Theology to address modern contemporary challenges such as inter-faith religious dialogue and to soften the tune of most of the theological emphases of the Council of Trent. This resolution at the Second Vatican Council has opened doors to ecumenical dialogue and has significantly aided in the founding of Liberation Theology in South America.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are the two important historic points in Roman Catholic Theology?

### **3.2 Theology**

Roman Catholic Theologies are many and thus, the problem of relating all of them in the limited scope of this study; however some of her salient theologies are hereby briefly highlighted.

#### **Theology of Scripture**

The Roman Catholic Church as many Protestants believes in the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. However, Roman Catholics also believe that the authority of Scripture should be complimented by Church Tradition in the form of ecclesiastical rulings and past heritage of the Church. They also uphold the apocryphal books as equally authoritative in matters of faith, morals and practices of the same. The important place that Tradition holds for the Roman Catholic Church stems from the understanding that most of the doctrines and practices of

the Roman Catholic faith come from these different arrays of Church Tradition. This Church's Tradition is responsible for the Priesthood, the Holy Mass, Transubstantiation, Penance, Veneration of Mary, the use of images in worship, Holy water, Rosary beads, Papacy, and other Roman Catholic characteristics.

### **Theology of Salvation**

In classical Roman Catholic theology, salvation is complemented by good works. This understanding of salvation has necessitated Roman Catholic doctrines such as Penance and Indulgence. The nature of salvation in Roman Catholic definition makes the entire work of redemption dependent on the works of individual and thus poses a serious problem to the doctrine of grace as the Protestants would hold. It is this Doctrine of Salvation and Scripture that caused the rift between the Roman Catholic Theology and the Protestant faith.

### **Theology of Mary**

Roman Catholic Theology has given an unequal honour, reverence and worship to Mary that it seems in some cases that Mary has been admitted into the Godhead, as the Protestants allege. Though, many Roman Catholics repulse the idea that they are worshipping Mary and assert that they are merely giving "reverence" and not worship, yet the appellation in Hail Mary such as "Mother of God" often lead to this conclusion. The mediatory role of Mary in Roman Catholic Theology has also been termed Mariolatry, by Protestants rather than the Roman Catholic correct terminology of Mariology. Despite these definitions, many have seen this development in Roman Catholic theology as a development towards gender-inclusive worship and faith.

### **Theology of the Pope's infallibility**

The theology of the Pope's infallibility that came as a result of the Vatican Council of 1870 is one of the controversial points of Roman Catholic Theology. It asserts that the Pope is infallible in his pronouncement and decision pertaining to ecclesiastical matters promulgated from his Seat, or Official Throne as Pope. This Council claims infallibility for the Pope when the Pope is speaking "ex cathedra" and that the pronouncement of the Pope is binding on the whole Church in cases of Faith and Morals. This understanding of the Pope does not mean that the Pope is infallible as a man. This theology of the Pope's infallibility does not also apply to the Pope's personal habits. It does not assume that the Pope is a sinless or perfect man, nor does it presume that the Pope is inspired as the Apostles so that his writings were canonical as those of the Apostles. Contrary to this, however it

means “that in his official capacity as teacher of the Church he has the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that he can interpret and state clearly and positively doctrines which allegedly have been part of the heritage of the Church from the beginning.”

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are some of the salient Theologies of the Roman Catholic Church?

### **3.3 Evaluation**

Roman Catholic Theology is definitely undergoing certain major changes particularly with the emergence of the Charismatic movement within its walls and the great contribution of Liberation Theology in Latin America to the cause of global Christianity. However, most of its doctrinal and theological emphases have remained basically unchanged. Despite the Second Vatican Council’s move to spark changes in Roman Catholic Theology, the majority of Roman Catholic theology is still orthodox and conservative in posture. Two areas however seem to be vying for reforms in Roman Catholicity.

#### **Commitment to the Bible**

Many astonishing and wonderful Biblical materials have been produced by Roman Catholic Theologians. However there is still the growing need to align these biblical works with biblically based presuppositions rather than merely to critically defined philosophies.

#### **Commitment to the Context**

Roman Catholicism has been known for involvement in social work and the politics around the globe, however in Africa, the liberation presupposition that accounts for the mass revolt against the social and political status quo have not been fully grasped. Often, injustices and corruption go without criticism from the ecclesiastical bureaucrats. It is the moves to address the political and social settings of particularly the West African region that should dominate Roman Catholic theological discussion in Africa.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are the two commitments that the Roman Catholic theology in Africa should make?

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Roman Catholic Theology has all the necessary components to start as well as sustain global theological discussion. The study has shown that Roman Catholic theology has undergone certain significant changes, but still retaining its pre-modern theological emphases. Thus the task of Roman Catholic theology particularly in West Africa, is to show more commitment to the Scriptures and the context of West Africa in terms of critical engagement with the social and political contexts.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit: The Council of Trent (1545-1563) sealed the Roman Catholic Theology. The Council of Trent rejected the heart of Protestant Reformation. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) is an attempt to review Roman Catholic Theology. The Second Vatican Council opened the doors (spalancate le porte) to ecumenical dialogue. Roman Catholic Theology has to show more commitment to scripture and context of West Africa in terms of critical engagement with the socio-political context.

#### 6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Highlight the historic points in the development of Roman Catholic theology.
2. Discuss four basic theologies of the Roman Catholic Church.
3. Evaluate Roman Catholic commitment to Scripture and socio-political context of West Africa.

#### 7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

- Atkinson, J. (1998). "Catholic Counter-Reformation." *The New Dictionary of Theology*.
- Sinclair, B. Ferguson Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press,
- Boettner, Loraine. (1962). *Roman Catholicism*. Phillisburg: The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Comp.
- Charley, J. W. "Roman Catholic Theology." *The New Dictionary of Theology*.
- Ferguson, Sinclair B., & David, F. Wright, J. I. Packer. (Eds.). (1988). Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press,
- Dickens, Arthur G. (1969). *The Counter-Reformation*. New York: Hercourt, Brace,
- Kidd, Beresford. Z. (1933). *The Counter-Reformation, 1550 - 1600* London: SPCK,
- Michael, Matthew (2006). *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*.

Unpublished work. Copyright,



## **UNIT 2      PROTESTANT/REFORMED THEOLOGY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Origin of Reformed Theology
  - 3.2 The Content of Reformed Theology
  - 3.3 An Evaluation of Reformed Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In recent times, the two terms “Protestant” and “Reformed” are used interchangeably in reference to the branch of the Church that came out of the Roman Catholic Church during the sixteenth century Reformation. Hence, in this unit we will also use both terms interchangeably. Today all Christian Churches/denominations that are not in the Roman Catholic orbit of Church authority are called “Protestants” or “Reformed.” They are called “Protestants” because when Martin Luther left the Roman Catholic Church it was interpreted as a “Protest.” Consequently, all who went with him were called “Protestants.” “Reformed” on the other hand, it was because the purpose of Luther’s protest was to reform the Church from the alleged deviation from apostolic teaching and some of the Roman Catholic handling of the scriptures. Thus, the interchangeable use of the terms is justified.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the origin of Protestant or Reformed Theology
- describe the nature and an evaluation of Protestant or Reformed Theology.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Origin of Reformed Theology**

Protestantism is that form of Western Christianity, which does not accept the authority of the Pope of Roman Catholicism. Although some hold that the name “Protestant” comes from a statement made by a

party of Christians at the Diet of Speyer in Germany (1529), it is well documented that its roots went beyond that date. For example, in Bohemia John Huss became restless and was concerned about Papal Authority, the neglect of the Scriptures, and the Doctrine of Grace. The actual root of the Reformed Theology however, can be traced to Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli and many other reformers in the Netherlands, Scotland and England. From its sixteenth century roots the movement had successfully gone through the enlightenment period and the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution added fuel to the movement. For example, the printing press invention aided the revolution because the printed page with its power and dissemination of information sent information all over the continent of Europe. By the time the puritans, the pilgrims arrived in America, they brought along with them the spirit of Protestantism, which spread from this place to other parts of the American colonies and other part of the world.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Briefly describe the historical origin of the Reformed Theology.

### **3.2 The Content of Reformed Theology**

The Theology of the reformed churches is based on the Scriptures. Every theology is judged by the method of its hermeneutics. Thus in the Reformed formulation of theology, there are a number of aspects that are considered as guidelines or procedures. For example:

- 1 There is emphasis on literal interpretation of the Bible.
- 2 There is emphasis on the teaching of the NT. This is because although the OT is prior in time, the NT is prior in method. It is the capstone of God's revelation (Heb.1:2).
- 3 Exegesis is taken very seriously because it is prior to making any theological statement. Even the historic Protestant position emphasizes the anchoring of theology in biblical exegesis. Philosophy has a place in theological formulation, but it is not itself the source of or the data. Rather, its function is ancillary.
- 4 Whatever is not a matter of revelation cannot be made a matter of creed or faith.
- 5 Protestants hold dearly the literal historical and grammatical interpretation of the Scriptures.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Describe some basic contents of Reformed Theology.

### **3.3 An Evaluation of Reformed Theology**

The Reformed Church theology at the very beginning was packed with reactions. This is because when Luther broke away, he hated anything Catholic. He abolished images, pictures of saints and prophets in the Reformed churches. While Protestants' theological formulation procedures are great, some segments in Protestantism are massacring the theology, especially the Pentecostal arms. This is because sometimes they take the scriptures too literally and without proper exegesis. Their lack of proper theological training is contributing to such weak exegesis and theology. However, this problem is not only peculiar to the Pentecost but also could be seen in the narrow exegesis and spiritually obsessed hermeneutics and theology of reformed theology with its backward looking tendencies to deal with contemporary questions.

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Critically evaluate the Reformed Theology and Theologies.

### **3.4 Comparison of the Protestant and the Roman Catholics Scripture and Teaching**

The early Protestants complained that Catholics had elevated Church Tradition at the expense of the Bible. Thus the printing and distribution of the Scriptures became a passion for the Protestants during the reformation. They abolished the papal authority and idolized the Scriptures. During the Reformation, Protestants fashioned elaborate doctrines to support their claims of Scripture inerrancy and infallibility.

#### **Social Institutions**

Protestants or Reformers took over many of the social forms of Western Catholicism and unanimously rejected only the Papacy. However, many churches in the Protestant Orbits such as Anglican, and some Lutherans, including many of the independent churches even in recent times, kept the office of the Bishop and Episcopal patterns. The Protestants hold to the priesthood of all believers and, therefore, they teach that the laity is on the same status with the clergy. In spite of this, the Protestant clergies are the only one empowered to preside over the preaching and administering of the Holy Communion.

#### **Rituals and Worship Activities**

The Roman Catholics venerate the services of the Holy Mass as Sacrifice. But the Protestants lay more emphasis on the preached Word.

There have been many changes in some ways in Catholicism and Reformed churches in recent times. With more and more biblical scholars from all continents coming to the scene of theology and condition of the world - systems changing very fast, it remains to be seen how Catholics and Protestants will relate. That is, whether they will be closer or they will further part ways.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Since the reformation, due to proliferation of Protestant or Reformed denominations, the unity of their theology tends to be a matter of concern now. On another front, contemporary issues of modern and post-modern contexts have consistently challenged her hermeneutical and theological presuppositions and have often forced her to more biblically honest and realistic prescriptions to the ills of the human society.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit: The invention of the printing press aided the Reformation Protestant Theology upheld the central authority of the Scriptures Protestant Theology upheld literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Protestant Theology upheld literal, historical and grammatical interpretation Some Protestant churches still retain the form of Roman Catholic Church government.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- 1 Explain the terms “Protestantism” and “Reformed” and noting the relationships of each of the terms.
- 2 What are some of the major areas that parted the Roman Catholics and the Protestants?
- 3 Discuss briefly the major emphases of Reformed Theology.

#### **7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING**

Ramm, Bernard, (1970). *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*. Michigan: Baker Book House.

Erickson, Millard J. (1985). *Christian Theology*, 3 vols., (Michigan: Baker BookHouse.

Williams, C.P. “Protestantism,” *The New Dictionary of Theology*.

Ferguson, Sinclair B. & David, F. Wright, J. I. Packer. (Eds.). (1988).

Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 538-541.  
Kargza, Kenneth (Ed.). (1978). *Evangelical Roots*, New York:  
Thomas Nelson Publishers.

## UNIT 3      EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Definition of Evangelical
  - 3.2 The Origin of Evangelical Theology
  - 3.3 Evangelical Theology
  - 3.4 An Evaluation of Evangelical Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The term, “evangelical” should not be understood in a confessional, that is, in a denominational and exclusive sense. “Evangelical” refers primarily and decisively to the Bible, which in some way is respected by all confessions. It has to be stated that not all so-called “Protestant” theology is evangelical. On the other hand, Evangelical theology is found across the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Pentecostal traditions.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

- By the end of this unit, you will be able to:
- trace the history or origin of Evangelicalism
- discuss how the term has been used over the years.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Definition of “Evangelical”

The term “evangelical” derives from the Greek word “*Euangelion*” meaning “gospel.” In the reformation era, the term “evangelical” was used to refer to the adherents of the Augsburg Confession in contrast to Roman Catholic or Reformed Churches. Historically, a second meaning of the term has evolved. Due to the characteristic unity of the doctrine exposed and defended by the early Protestants, the word “evangelical” has tended in a narrower sense to denote all who remain fully committed to Protestant Orthodoxy.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Define and Give the etymology of the word *Evangelical*.

### 3.2 The Origin of Evangelical Theology

The origin of “evangelical” can hardly be separated from its meaning. As mentioned above already, it started in the Reformation era as a reaction against some of the Roman Catholic formulation of theology and beliefs. But as a movement its roots are traced to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the term came to be applied to those who favoured a Protestant Church of England (as Anglicans). In 1846 opponents of the Anglo- Catholic movement in England formed a cooperative venture, the Evangelical Alliance. This alliance affirmed a nine-point statement of faith that included the Inspiration of the Bible, Atonement, the Trinity, the Fall and Depravity of man. By 1867 an American Evangelical Alliance was formed. By the 1940s a new evangelical movement, which is of interest to this segment, began to form as American Fundamentalism. Carl F. Henry, a Baptist minister and Educator, signalled the beginning of this neo-evangelicalism in his publication the *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* in 1947. E.J. Carnell (1919-1967) was the early theologian of this new type of conservative faith. At this time the conservative Churches grew very fast. As a result of the strength of this evangelical movement, extra- congregational institutions came into being, thus, the founding of notable of evangelical institution such as Gordon-Cornwall, Fuller and Trinity. Subsequently, these institutions had caused the influence of evangelicalism to spread globally.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Describe briefly the historical origin of *Evangelical Theology*.

### 3.3 Evangelical Theology

A denomination, a religion and an institution are always measured by what they teach and hold dearly. Similarly, the evangelicals have what distinguishes them from others in terms of theology and belief. Generally speaking, evangelical theology’s basic substance is drawn from the heritage of Orthodox Christian formation. Thus it stands in the great Christian theological tradition. For example, evangelical theology goes back to the creeds of the first centuries of the Christian era in which the early Church sought to correlate the teaching of Scripture and to defend it. Evangelical theology also has strong links with the early medieval Church, the distinctive of Protestant Reformation,

and it is deeply indebted to the series of evangelical awakenings starting from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Since then it has broken away from its preoccupation with the theology of Christian life to serious exegetical work. Unfortunately, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as the pressure from liberal theology mounted, evangelicalism kind of weakened. That brought about the defensive fundamentalism. From the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been revitalization in the part of Evangelical theology. Now, we have to open our eyes and ears to see and hear what the 21<sup>st</sup> century will say. When we talk of evangelicals, first we need to see them as fundamentalists. However, the first and foremost emphasis of evangelicals when it comes to theology is their belief the in Bible, the 66 Books only, is the only inspired word of God. Within this Bible there are cardinal teachings that, according to Evangelicals, if tempered with, will devaluate the validity of the Scriptures. These cardinal teachings are:

- 1 **The Bible** – The Bible is the only book that is the Word of God. It is the revelation of God to mankind.
- 2 **Revelation** - God revealed Himself to man through special revelation, which include the Word, the Son, etc. Then the general revelation, which is all the visible and invisible things, God created in the world.
- 3 **Inerrancy of the Scripture** – This teaches that the Bible is without error. This excludes typographical errors, dating errors and omissions among others.
- 4 **Inspiration** - The Scriptures are inspired by God. That is, God breathed into the writers and they wrote under the control of the Holy Spirit. Thus evangelicals hold that the terms: “infallibility”, “trustworthiness”, “plenary Inspiration”, “inerrancy as to teaching”, or “inerrant in all it affirms”, are all adequate.
- 5 The Virgin birth is held dearly by evangelicals.
- 6 Jesus the son of God and His bodily return cannot be theologically compromised.
- 7 Faith and practice - faith is the event and history without which no one can become a Christian. Faith helps the believer in his formulation of theology. Faith gives hope. Hope in the now and in the future.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Briefly outline the content of *Evangelical Theology*.



### 3.4 An Evaluation of Evangelical Theology

It is a little difficult to evaluate evangelical theology fully in a work like this one. However, we need to realize that evangelicals are still trying, as a movement, to fashion a theology that will still proclaim their distinctiveness. For within the evangelical realm or movement, there are Pentecostals who place premium on some doctrines or biblical teachings than others. For example, healings, miracles and prosperity among others are very much at the forefront. Tongue speaking from the 60s to the 1990s was emphasized in Pentecostal circles but it is dying out now. Most evangelicals did not subscribe to tongue speaking and second baptism of the Holy Spirit. All these trends reveal the diversity inherent in the evangelical movement.

At the moment the evangelical theology can be termed biblical (since its source of the Old Testament/New Testament) and spiritual theology. It takes into consideration God's purpose for mankind. This brings us to the issue of contextualisation, which is the task of systematic theology. However, evangelical theology has not been able to articulate its theology in the arena of political and cultural entities of the human society.

#### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Critically evaluate *Evangelical Theology*.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Thus far this unit has introduced Evangelical Theology, and its objective. It defined what "evangelical" means and discussed its theology. It concluded by evaluating its theology. Evangelical theology is still the product of the Reformation, Great awakenings, and its source is the Holy Scriptures. We are still keeping our fingers crossed to see what evangelical movement will offer the Christian Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit: The term evangelical tends to refer to all who remain committed to Protestant Orthodoxy. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the term was applied to those who favoured Protestant Church of England. There are various shades of evangelicals but there are seven points of belief that are generally held.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1 Explain the origins of evangelical and its theology.
- 2 Who were the precursors of Evangelical movement?
- 3 In what ways has this movement and its theology related to or affected the African Christians?
- 4 Suggest a way forward for evangelical movement and its theology.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Barth, Karl. (1963). *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmann,.

Carnell, E.J. (1968). *The Case for Biblical Christianity*,

Davis, John Jefferson (1984). *Foundation's Evangelical Theology*, (Michigan: Baker BookHouse,

Kanzer, Kenneth (Ed.) .(1978). *Evangelical Roots*, New York: Thomas Nelson.

Kelsey, David H. (1975). *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Millar, G., "Evangelicals", (1981). In: *Abindon Dictionary of Living Religions*, Keith Crim (Ed.). (Northville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 243-244.

Ramm, B.L. (1985). *After Fundamentalism: The Future of Evangelical Theology*.

Rennie, I.S., "Evangelical Theology," In: *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Ferguson, Sinclair B., and D.F. Wright. (Eds.). Leicester, England: Inter- Varsity Press, 1988), 239-240.

## **UNIT 4      PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Origin of Pentecostal Theology
  - 3.2 The Pentecostal Theologies
  - 3.3 An Evaluation of Pentecostal Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Pentecostalism is the fastest growing movement in present day Christendom. The Pentecostal Theology has also far reaching influence than often acknowledged. The influence of Pentecostalism is clearly seen in the semi-modified liturgy, sermon and theological emphases of even the mainline conservative missionary churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The phenomenon of Pentecostalism has now sparked theological discussion though it has over the years been ignored in academic theological reflection until recent times. This study investigates briefly the origin, theology and presence of Pentecostal movements in the non-Western context. It also evaluates the contribution and weaknesses of contemporary Pentecostal movement.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Narrate
  - origin of Pentecostal Theology
  - explain the nature of Pentecostal Theology
  - discuss the basic Content of Pentecostal theology
  - evaluate the contributions of contemporary Pentecostal movement.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Origin of Pentecostal Theology**

The origin of Pentecostal Theology has often been dated to Pentecostal events of the last century; however, the Pentecostal

phenomenon in a loose sense goes back to the Old Testament world especially in the active role played by the Spirit of God in the lives and ministry of the Old Testament saints, prophets and all spirit-led leaders. This section highlights the ancient and modern roots of Pentecostal phenomenon and its consequent theology.

### **Ancient Roots**

Pentecostalism is not merely a twentieth or twenty-first century revival or phenomenon but has its roots deep down in Church history. Apart from the charismatic leaders of the Israelite society who were imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit, there were indications in Israel's prophetic genre that people of the exilic and post exilic period anticipated an increase in the activity of the Spirit of God in their day, hence the prophecy of Joel that in the last days the Spirit of God will cut across age, gender and class distinction of the human society (2:28-32). This scriptural passage was interpreted by the early Church as a reality in the coming of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts (2:16-21). The Pentecostal phenomenon was clearly celebrated in the life, message and ministry of the Early Church as attested to by many scriptural passages devoted to explaining the gifts, fruits or works of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Church and the individual members respectively. This emphasis on the Pentecostal phenomenon is clearly seen in Pauline epistles and the gospel narratives. The history of the Church is creamed with references to this Pentecostal phenomenon. In the writings of the Church Fathers particularly Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Origen, there are references to this event. Even the reformers attested to the reality of this phenomenon in their day, though some of them because of the medieval superstitious practices condemned such Pentecostal dispositions. Similarly, such Pentecostal phenomena such as healing, prophecy, speaking in tongue have also been celebrated by dissident movements or sects in Church history particularly the Montanist, Waldensians, Lollards and the Moravians.

### **Modern Roots**

The modern origin of Pentecostalism is dated to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901 at the beginning of twentieth century, when Miss Agnes Ozman, a student at the Bethel Bible College, Topeka, Kansas was believed to have spoken in tongues at the laying of hands of the Principal of the school Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929). The singular event coupled with the Azusa Street revival spearheaded by the Apostolic Faith Mission in Los Angeles launched Pentecostalism to global attention. Ever since then, Pentecostalism has spread by leaps and bounds across the globe. This staggering growth, while also taking place in the West, has primarily taken place in the Developing Nations Contexts. The appeal of Pentecostalism is largely due to the affinity that

Pentecostal theological emphases has with the Third world context, particularly Africa. Thus, the message of divine security, financial prosperity, success and deliverance from witches and wizards always rings a familiar chord with the expectation from the worldviews of most Africans.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are the ancient and modern roots of *Pentecostalism*?

### **3.2 The Pentecostal Theologies**

Pentecostal Theology has many different distinctive features and emphases; however, three basic theologies have often shown the unique contribution of Pentecostalism to theology. These theologies are as follows:

#### **Theology of Salvation**

The Pentecostals believe in holistic salvation or well-being both for the Spirit and the Body. They extend the theological domain of salvation to encompass wealth and financial prosperity. This understanding of salvation is also stretched to include divine protection against the forces of evil whether they are demons or witches. They also believe salvation should include the “now” in concrete physical terms and not postponement of divine promises to the future. They believe that a life of abundance, faith and positive thinking should characterize the life of a believer.

#### **Christology**

The Pentecostal Christology is a “realistic Christology” that deals pragmatically with problems of the now. The Christology of Pentecostalism is quite different from the Christology of those found in conservative theology. Most conservative Christology often depicted Christ in philosophical and abstract clothing, but the Christology of most Pentecostals is clearly constructed to deal with crucial issues in the concrete lives of their members.

#### **Pneumatology**

The recovery of the Third person of the Godhead in the Theological discussion is generally a bye-product of the rediscovery of the Holy Spirit by the Pentecostals. They single-handedly reawakened an interest in the Holy Spirit, His work and charismatic gifts, which many conservatives believed had ceased. They reverted the “Binitarian”

disposition of classical Theology in its emphases on God the Father and the Son and the often neglect of the Holy Spirit. It is in this latter sense, that Pentecostalism has made a great contribution to global Christianity, even with the recognition of its many flaws.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are the three basic theologies of Pentecostalism?

### **3.3 An Evaluation of Pentecostal Theology**

Despite the contribution of Pentecostalism in Pneumatology and even Christology, yet some salient problems of Pentecostalism and its theology are rooted on two fronts.

#### **Pentecostal Hermeneutics**

Interestingly, most of the excesses of Pentecostal theology could be traced to faculty hermeneutics particularly as expressed in shallow exegesis and the habit of proof-texting. This practice often degenerates to heretical and syncretistic tendencies, whereby context of scriptures are ignored, progressive revelation confused and thus, Pentecostals reach out with all zest to claim millennium texts, whether in prophetic books or within Psalms.

#### **Pentecostal Pastoral Ministry**

Pentecostal pastoral ministry is filled with apparent contradictions because most often, it is the pastor that is frequently blessed and the members are usually left feeling unrealistic longings for financial prosperity or the expected healing. Their Theology of salvation influences their pastoral ministry to the extent that the leaders are prefigured as super human and thus the members' cream around them like demigods. This usually cripples the spiritual maturity of the members.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The Theology of Pentecostalism can no longer be ignored as has often been done in classical Christian reflection. This is because the Pentecostal movement has influenced the language, attitudes and lifestyle of most Christians in Africa, Asia, and South America at the grassroots. It is in this understanding we must overlook its fanaticism, challenge its presuppositions and correct its many flaws.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit: Pentecostalism has its roots in the Old Testament Modern revival of Pentecostalism can be dated to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901 and the Asuza Street revival. Pentecostal hermeneutics often involved proof-texting and shallow exegesis.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain the contributions of Pentecostalism in the area of Pneumatology.
2. What are the ancient and modern roots of Pentecostalism?
3. Give a fair evaluation of Pentecostalism in your neighbourhood.

## 7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

Keener, Craig S. (1996). *Three Crucial Questions about Holy Spirit*. Michigan: Baker Books,

Michael, Green (1985). *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Michael, Matthew (2006). *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* Unpublished Work. Copyright.

Millard, Eriskson. (1988). *The Christian Theology*. Michigan: Baker Books.

## **UNIT 5 THEOLOGY OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Origin of African Independent Churches
  - 3.2 The Theology of African Independent Churches
  - 3.3 An Evaluation of African Independent Churches
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The African Independent Church also known as the *African Initiative Church* or the *African Prophetic Church* is one of the significant theological developments in the African religious terrain of the last two centuries. The emergence of the phenomenon of the African Independent Church arose out of the complication arising from the missionary encounter between the Western Missionary and African Worldview and Spiritual longings. This unit investigates the origin and theology of the movement and also reveals their basic theologies, noting their contribution to universal Christianity.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the origin of African Independent Churches
- evaluate the basic theologies of the African Independent Churches appreciate the contribution of African Independent Churches to African and global Christianity.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Origin of African Independent Churches**

The origin of African Independent Churches could be attributed to the stark reality of modernisation on the African society, particularly in the collapse of pre-Christian religious structure and thus the necessity of recreating new religious structures on Christian religious lines at the beginning of modernisation in Africa. However, such sociological explanation of the cause of African Independent Church does not do



justice to the ancient roots or occurrence of the phenomenon of African Independent Churches in the religious consciousness of the African society. This section surveys the ancient origin and modern roots of African Independent Churches.

### **Ancient Roots**

The historic root of African Independent Churches has generally been traced to the Congo region in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In a Roman Catholic Missionary context of the Congo area, a Congolese of royal family by name Kimpa Vita advocated some theological and prophetic disposition that is now closely associated with African Independent Churches. After her Baptism, Kimpa Vita began to manifest some prophetic gifts and she was anti-white missionary in her messages. She related in her vision that Jesus and the apostles were black, which was contrary to representation of Christ by the white missionaries. She also saw Jesus as a liberator from poverty and oppression, and she looked to the future, when a black millennium will dawn on earth with its capital in Africa. The implication of Kimpa Vita study for theology is that it revealed an early dissatisfaction and rejection of the hermeneutics and theology of western missionaries and a conscious preoccupation to define hermeneutics and theology using an African contextual agenda. It is in this sense, that Kimpa Vita became the first page and genesis in the study of African Independent Churches.

### **Modern Roots**

The dawn of African Independent Churches has been traced to the message and missionary activities of William Wade Harris in the early twenty century in the region of West Africa, particularly in the Liberia and Ivory Coast. Harris was a revolutionary figure, who had been credited as responsible for the religious changes in the spiritual landscape in Ivory Coast. He retained in his theology and messages a preoccupation to define the Christian reality using the African worldview. In his evangelism, Harris preached salvation, divine protection against witchcraft, healing and miracles, destructions of charms and idols and substituted the Christian God for the African gods in traditional African religious songs. He was reported as having baptized 120 thousand converts, per year and subsequently turned over these converts to established denominations for discipleship. He helped to spark the phenomenon of African Independent Churches in West Africa. However, similar trends were also taking place in other parts of Africa, namely: South Africa and East Africa. The modern and ancient expressions of the phenomenon of African Independent Churches stemmed from the radical rejection of the hermeneutics and theology of the Western Missionaries and their siblings, the mainline denominations as incompatible with the African worldview and contextual

realities.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are the two *Basic historical Roots* in the history of African independent Churches?

### **3.2 The Theology of African Independent Churches**

The theology of African Independent Churches has many and diverse theological emphases. However, three salient theologies dominate the hermeneutics, homiletics and Pastoral ministry of African Independent Churches. These theologies could be easily seen in the Cherubim and Seraphim Churches, Christ Apostolic Churches and other expressions of African Independent Churches scattered over Nigeria and Africa in general. The major three theologies of these denominations are:

#### **Christology**

Instead of creedal Christology that had dominated the missionary founded churches particularly in its abstract spiritualized and philosophical interpretation of the person of Christ and the Christ event, the Christology of the African Independent Churches is by all purposes functional rather than creedal. In this understanding, Christ is depicted as the cosmic victor and Lord of the African cosmology and thus, all forces of evil and good are duly under his sovereign control and rule. Consequently, every person under his care is assured of divine protection against these feared forces of cultic and metaphysical personalities, as well as, their human agent such as witches, wizards and the native herbalist. This deduction lays emphasis on Christ's supernatural victory over the forces of evil dominant in the song, liturgy, preaching and ministerial outlook of African Independent Churches. In a very subtle way, the African Independent Churches have emphasised the irrelevance of western Christology and sought to redefine Christology in terms of the African worldview and context. Consequently, Christ in this depiction is made to deal with the spiritual and cultural fears of the African people. The distinction between the non-miraculous and non-active and non-sensitive western Christology is drawn. Though maintaining some close continuity with the western Christology yet in the African Independent churches, Christology maintains a closer relationship with African worldview in the interpretation of the Bible and the interpretation of human cultural assumptions.

### **Soteriology (Theology of Salvation)**

The understanding of salvation within the context of the African Independent Churches is in holistic terms. The African Independent Churches conceive of salvation as encompassing spiritual, bodily and other dimensions of the human personality. Thus, the redemption of the entire human personality is assumed in the understanding of salvation by the African Independent Churches. These emphases are a direct reaction against the narrowly defined understanding of salvation in the mainline churches and western theology. Similarly, the emphasis in holistic salvation came along with it a strong African conception, since for most Africans; salvation is basically interrelated with the concept of blessedness, whereby the understanding salvation seemed synonymous with blessing in terms of wealth, children, possessions and health. Thus, the preoccupation in traditional African society to seek the gods in order to initiate, promote or protect such desirable state of being is Christianized. The African gods are relevant only as they help to actualize the blessedness of the African community without such role within the African society; the African gods lose their place. There is no such thing as worshipping of the gods for the divinity sake in the African pre-Christian context as the general tune of western traditional Christianity often suggests. African gods are worshiped for utilitarian reasons and thus, the African Independent Churches understood salvation in these terms, hence, seeking to actualize those African collective salvation definitions in Christian terms.

### **Angelology**

An elaborate theology of angels dominates the worldview of the African Independent Church. These emphases on angelic mediation or ministry have certain Biblical justification, but however it is completely the by-product of the African pre-Christian worldview of people in African Independent Church. In pre-Christian Africa, belief in the mediatory role of angelic or spiritual entities are clearly envisaged, where through these intermediaries the Africans are expected to relate with the highest God. This role is also closely performed by the ancestors who mediate between the physical world and the spiritual world. In a new context devoid of these traditional religious expressions, the African Independent Churches place emphases on the angelic personalities with closer relationship to the African mediating role of the spirits. These angelic personalities are often invoked through repetition and incantation in words and rhymes similar to those found in the pre-Christian traditional religious environment. The protection and provisions from angels such as Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael are often invoked. It is this angelic emphasis that made the phenomenon of African independent Church an interesting African phenomenon.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

State and explain the three basic theologies of the African Independent churches.

### **3.2 An Evaluation of the African Independent Churches**

The appreciation of the theologies of African Independent Church must be done particularly in their hermeneutical, liturgical, homiletical and pastoral quest to consciously break away with the unrealistic spiritual or theological emphases of the mainline churches. Interestingly, they produce unilaterally a theological emphasis that is a rich blend of their deep commitment to the African primeval worldview and Biblical affirmation. However, caution in two areas in reference to the theology of African Independent Church must be exercised.

#### **Syncretistic Tendencies**

It is obvious that African Independent Church maintained a commitment to the African worldview. However, their romance with the African worldview and the African pre-Christian religious heritage has often generated some serious concerns particularly in the adulteration of the Christian forms and the introduction into the Christian forms of questionable religious unrealistic forms such as prescription of candles, sacrifice and unhealthy emphases on the mediatory role of the angels. These syncretistic tendencies have generally made the African Independent Churches a sect instead of playing a defining role in mainstream African Christianity.

#### **Subjective Spiritual Experiences**

Often, in the services, liturgy, ministrations, prophecies and interpretation of the Bible subjective experience of the leaders of founders of the African Independent Church are emphasized and defined as normative for the course or nature of the worship or ministrations. The text of the Bible is thus at the mercy of the imagination of the shepherd, who often employed it to defend his presumptuous and interests. "Bible abuse", if there is anything like that, frequently characterizes the sermons, interpretation and pastoral works of the leaders. They punctuate every phrase in a sermon with chain of references to visions or angelic visitation, which are assumed as normative to guiding the church's course of action.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are your personal evaluations of an African Independent Church in your neighbourhood?

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The study underscores the importance of African Independent churches in Africa. It reveals the quest of African Independent Churches to harmonize the Christian biblical revelation with African pre-Christian traditional forms. The distinctive shape taken by the theologies of African Independent Churches is quite interesting, but also reveals some concerns, particularly in the quest to align the content of such theology to the Bible.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit: The ancient root of African Independent Churches can be traced back to Kimpa Vita of Congo in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The modern root of African Independent Churches can be traced back to the activities of William Wade Harris in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. The theology of African Independent Churches has three distinctive emphases: Christology, Soteriology and Angelology. African Independent Churches theology is however subject to syncretistic tendencies.

#### 6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Who are the African Independent churches?
2. What are the ancient and modern roots of each movement?
3. Discuss the theologies of African Independent Churches.
4. Evaluate any African Independent Churches in your neighbourhood.

#### 7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

Adams, Tuesday David. "The Use of Psalms in African Independent Churches in Nigeria." *The Bible in Africa*.

Gerald O. West & Musa W. Dube, (Ed.). (2001). Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

.Anderson, Allen H. (2001). *African Reformation : African Initiated Christian in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press.

Appiah, Kofi. "Indigenous African Christian Churches: Signs of Authenticity." *Third World Theologies: A Reader*.

Deane, William Ferne (Ed.). (1986). Mary knoll, New York: Orbis

## Books.

“Christology.” (1987). *A Reader in African Christian Theology*.  
John Parrat, (Ed.). London: SPCK.

Michael, Matthew (2006). *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*.  
Unpublished work. Copyright.

Oosthuizen, G.C. (1968). *Post-Christianity in Africa: A Theological  
Anthropological Study*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing  
Co.

## **MODULE 3            TYPES OF THEOLOGY II**

- Unit 1    Contextual Theology
- Unit 2    Liberation Theology
- Unit 3    Black Theology
- Unit 4    Feminist Theology
- Unit 5    African Christian Theology

### **UNIT 1    LIBERATION THEOLOGY**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0    Introduction
- 2.0    Objectives
- 3.0    Main Content
  - 3.1      Sources and Development of Liberation Theology
  - 3.2      Theological Methodology of Liberation Theology
  - 3.3      Some Exegetical Direction of Liberation Theology
  - 3.4      Assessment of Liberation Theology
- 4.0    Conclusion
- 5.0    Summary
- 6.0    Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0    References/Further Reading

#### **1.0    INTRODUCTION**

Liberation theology is a contemporary significant movement. It was born in Latin America in the 1960s and was largely Roman Catholic in orientation. It is different from previous systematic theological expression of faith in that it seeks to interpret the Christian faith from the perspective of the poor and oppressed (Option for the Poor!). In each era, there is a theological struggle. For example, in the post-enlightenment skepticism, there was the defending of the supernatural in the natural world. There were questions, “where is the God of truth in a world of science and technology?” For Liberation theology, the struggle is with the issues of faith and post-colonial deprivation. It is searching for hope in a world of poverty. The question Liberation Theology is asking is, “Where is the God of righteousness in a world of injustice?” Gustavo Gutierrez is often considered the Father of Liberation Theology. In his word, he states “the starting point of Liberation Theology is commitment to the poor, the ‘non-person.’ Thus, the idea of this theology comes for the victim”. Similarly, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, the two Brazilian priests speak of Liberation Theology as a kind of chemical creation: Faith + Oppression = Liberation Theology. Since the 1970s, the Latin American Liberation Theology has exerted a lot of

influence in the LATFRICASIAN regions (Latin America, Africa, and Asia). It influenced Black Theology in people like James Cone in the USA, whose concern focuses on racist oppression. It also influenced the Black South Africans during the anti-apartheid years. A branch of this theology showed its head in the war-torn Northern Ireland. In fact, Liberation Theology's influence has gone far beyond the Church into government circles. Can we deny that the quest for Debt-Relief from the Paris club by the under-privileged countries is far from Liberation Theology? Struggle for independence in most developing nations' colonies in the 1960s - 1970s was influenced by this theology.

Liberation Theology's origins cannot be separated from the economic and political structures of the industrialized nations of the West towards Latin America, Africa and Asia. Hence, in a reaction, the Latin American theologians, particularly the Catholic priests, began to formulate a theology by interpreting the Bible not in the American and European lenses and frames, but in response and according to the situation and context in which their theology is being done. Thus, the call for 'Contextualisation' and 'Inculturation' cannot be separated from Liberation Theology.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe how the student understands Liberation Theology, its origins, sources, methods and direction
- differentiate between Liberation Theology from other theologies
- explain what the conventional theology can learn from Liberation Theology.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Sources and Development of Liberation Theology**

According to Conn, the most basic source of Liberation Theology is the experience of poverty, distribution and repression in a region dominated by Christianity for centuries. For the Liberation Theologians, human suffering in every form; whether economic, political, religious and social is against God's will. Thus, it constitutes a moral imperative for the Christian conscience to fight against these ills. Gutierrez asserted that "we are on the side of the poor, not because they are good but because they are poor."

Sources of Liberation Theology roots can still be traced to Europe political theology and to Jürgen Moltmann in his "Theology of Hope."



Moltmann sees the political character of eschatology, and hope on having a liberation function in history. Some scholars, especially Europeans, charge liberation theologians for lack of concreteness, that is, their reflection on theology is full of theoretical obstructions and is ideologically neutral. Upon all these, we can say that the deepest theological roots of Liberation Theology remain in the growing interest of the Roman Catholic Church which emphasizes dialogue with the world and other religious faiths, and which sees social care of the Church towards the poor, widows, orphans, oppressed, etc., as a task that must be done. In the midst of this Roman Catholic link with Liberation Theology, there has been a word of caution from the Papacy. Some series of theological skirmishes with the Vatican Curia have ensued. The Vatican sees some excesses in Liberation Theology. Thus in 1984 and in 1986 some instructions were issued by the Vatican which recognizes several forms of Liberation Theology, identified itself with the poor and oppressed, but rejects some aspects of Liberation Theology. Perhaps a major cause of the Vatican concern with Liberation Theology is its use of Marxist ideology and categories in its formulations. Liberation Theology adopts Marxism as an instrument of social analysis - focusing on economic system as the battleground between the rich and the poor. The precursors of Liberation Theology in Latin America were the University lecturers and the middle classes. Later, the writers were the systematic intellectuals, who see their role as interpreters who speak with and for the poor and socially deprived. It seems Liberation Theology has shifted to a more positive stance.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss the sources and development of Liberation Theology.

### **3.2 Theological Method of Liberation Theology**

The key in Liberation Theology's theological formulation is the liberation of the oppressed. It starts from below. It is committed to the poor of the society. According to Sobrino, "the poor are the authentic theological source for understanding Christian truth and practices" (1988: 389). The context of Liberation Theology is the concrete social situation. Before theology spent time on philosophical matters, now theology is to respond to social, political, economic, and all that it takes to be a real human being in the social sense. The methodology of Liberation Theology is its reflection on praxis. Theology must be practical, done and not just spending time learning and reflecting.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain Liberation theological methodology.

### 3.3 Some Exegetical Direction of Liberation Theology

In its theological approach, Liberation Theology does biblical study from the perspective of the oppressed. The earlier Liberation Theology exegetical efforts were in the Old Testament, particularly in the book of Exodus. It was a model for the plight of the poor. Some Liberation Theologians have now spread their nets of theological models to include the Exile. The New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God has also received much attention. Likewise, materials are appearing now on the work of Christ and his identification with the poor and oppressed. What all this seems to be pointing at is that Liberation Theology has become more serious about sharpening its hermeneutical tools. Classical themes are receiving attention from Liberation Theologians today. Such themes include: Christology and Ecclesiology.

#### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss some Exegetical Directions of Liberation Theology.

### 3.4 Assessments of Liberation Theology's Theology

In this section, we will like to briefly consider some aspects that help assess the theology of this movement. One can easily, as an Anglo-Saxon, criticize Liberation Theology only if he or she sees everything in his own lenses and not in addition to those of the Liberation theologians and their contexts. There are some questions that are always raised against Liberation Theology. For example:

1. How much attention does Liberation Theology pay to salvation *per se*? How come that it lays more emphasis on physical than spiritual salvation?
2. Liberation Theology has left us with a bare view of sin. Sin is from the Devil.

Human beings are sinful by nature. Perfection here on earth is not obtainable. It is only at death when the soul separates from this sinful body that one can be holy. But Liberation Theology appears to be saying that elimination of poverty, oppression, racism, sexism, classism, and capitalism, the human sinful condition will be altered in a radical way. This, we know that it is not possible. Jesus says that the poor will always be around.

Having made these few observations, we may at the same time appreciate Liberation Theology because: (1) It offers other theologians

an opportunity for self-evaluation. (2) It offers us new challenges to return to the factory of theology. (3) A true and thorough theology must put into consideration the culture, customs, social conditions, political conditions, economic context and society within which it is practised. This raises the question of contextualization. (5) In what sense should our theology address commitment to the poor? How come that our theological formulation has brought comfort to the rich and middle class without much consideration of those at the lower echelon of society?

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Liberation Theology, in spite of its weaknesses at some points, has greatly enriched contemporary Christian discussion. It fills in some gaps left out by the main line theology. It forces other theologies to rethink their theological formulation. It is a theology of both rich and poor. For example, it soothes the hearts of the poor and oppressed by giving them hope, but it pricks the conscience of the rich, middle class, and the oppressors.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major lessons you have learnt in this unit:  
Liberation Theology in the Latin Americas in the 1960s

Liberation Theology is Roman Catholic in orientation

Gustavo Gutierrez is regarded as the Father of Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology is a theological formulation committed to the poor (Option for the poor)

Liberation Theology is a challenge to address the socio-political and economic reality of the society in theology.

#### **6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSESSMENT**

1. Write a brief introduction to Liberation Theology, noting its origins, objectives, and sources.
2. Explain some of the strengths and weaknesses of Liberation Theology.
3. Briefly describe methodological and exegetical approaches of Liberation Theology.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

Conn, H.M. "Liberation Theology," In: *New Dictionary of Theology*.

Ferguson, S. B., & David, F. Wright, J. I. Packer, (Ed.). (1988).  
Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, : 387 -391.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *The Power of the Poor in History*.

Robert, R. Barr (Trans). (1983). Maryknoll: Orbis,

Michael, Matthew. (2006). *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*  
Unpublished work. Copyright,

## **UNIT 2      BLACK THEOLOGY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Nature of Black Theology
  - 3.2 Black Theology in the U.S.A
  - 3.3 Black Theology in South Africa
  - 3.4 Evaluation of Black Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Black race has often been dehumanised throughout history. However, it was the problem of slavery, racism, and other psychological and cultural stereotypes against the Blacks in North America that gave birth to the theology that is now known as Black Theology. Hence, “Black Theology” could be said to be purely a by-product of the response of Black North American Christians against the social and political segregations they suffered in the North American society. By an extended meaning, Black Theology is “the religious counterpart of the more secular term - Black Power.” It calls for the need for black people to define the scope and meaning of their existence, especially in a white racist society. Although Black Theology and Black Power are allies, each has its own focus in the operational arena. For example, while black power focuses on the political, social and economic condition or situation of the black people, Black Theology puts its emphasis on the identity of blacks in theological context. In this way, its adherents have been able to show that Black Power is not only consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but that it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Although Black Theology had since gained a lot of adherents from the African continent, they are more pronounced in Southern Africa than in the rest of Africa. The reason for this is not far-fetched. That is, it was influenced there by the South African Boers’ political and economic policies during the apartheid years.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the origin of Black Theology
- discuss the nature of Black Theology
- evaluate the contribution of Black Theology
- analyse the weaknesses of Black Theology.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Nature of Black Theology

The intentions and concerns of black theology are rooted in the experience of oppression by the blacks in the USA. Thus the Afro-Americans and, perhaps those from Southern Africa, see their history as inseparable from Black Theology. So, Black Theology, therefore, is that attempt to articulate that significance within the Black Christian Community and beyond it. It emerges from a black reading of the Scripture, from a black hearing of Jesus and a black understanding of Jesus as the Liberator of black people. Thus Jesus is seen and interpreted as the Black Messiah. This brings us to the notion that there is such a thing as black spirituality, which is experienced, in black worshiping community. However a note of caution is at this juncture necessary, because the designation “Black Theology” is not because it is produced by black people, but because it describes a particular worldview particularly in the symbol of black as a representation of dehumanization, abuse, oppression and other related existential forms. Since the black race is understood to be the *par excellence* representation of these negativism, thus the usage of the term.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the nature of Black Theology.

### 3.2 Black Theology in the U.S.A

In the U.S.A., Black Theology has gained roots and has been exported in different forms and faces to Africa, Asia, and even South America. This, of course, is done all under the canopy of “Liberation” and “Freedom.” Although the racist and segregated practices are still found in some predominantly white churches in United States, today, it is not as strong as it used to be. Yet, the practices have left their imprints on the African Americans. As a result, some of them resolved to rather embracing Islam than Christianity. They see equality of social interaction and acceptance in Islam than in Christianity in their perception. In the North American context, Black Theology has greatly

thrived and had attracted criticisms. However, the advocates of black theology such as James Cone have responded to these criticisms. For Cone, the fact that majority of Blacks did not reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them by the white Western indicates the differences between the blacks and the whites perception of the Gospel. In defense of this statement, Gayraud Wilmore contemporary and foremost historian of Black Religion declares that: “Blacks have used Christianity not as it was delivered to them by segregating white Churches, but as its truth was authenticated to them in the experience of suffering, to reinforce an ingrained religious temperament and to produce an indigenous religion oriented to freedom and human welfare” (1988:104).

Thus to term the Gospel “Black” and to call Jesus “Black” is simply to express the sense of freedom of black people who discovered in the Black Jesus’ Gospel the liberation which was denied them by White Christianity. So, since salvation too is black, the white folks cannot be saved without first of all becoming or accepting the symbol represented in black by the image of Black. In fact as early as 1894, Henry McNeal Turner (1834-1915), a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, in view of the white practices of racism in the churches, declared, “God is a Negro”.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Briefly explain the nature of Black Theology in United States.

### **3.3 Black Theology in South Africa**

The connections, linkages and affinities of Black Theology from the West to that of Southern Africa are obvious. For example, the political, social and the economic conditions of black people under the apartheid system in South Africa make the appeal very unavoidable. Nevertheless, South African Black Theology has tried and did develop its own insight. This really has helped to set it aside in some important respects. For instance, the South African Black Theology has rejected the violent method and has taken the Martin Luther King, Jr., path of non-violence. Allan Boesak, a leading exponent of South African Black Theology asserts that following Martin Luther King, Jr., Black Theology in South Africa takes “Christian love” as its banner. This Christian *agape* stand at the very centre of God’s liberating actions for His people. Similarly, Manas Buthelezi rejects the quest for Black Theology if it is only based on black awakening of nationalism or consolidation of Black Power. He argued that if this is the intent, then Black Theology is only an emotionally charged political concept.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Briefly explain the nature of Black Theology in South Africa.

### **3.4 Evaluation of Black Theology**

Every theology, whatever and no matter its orientation has its own merits and demerits particularly as it relates to the theological peg on which it hangs its presupposition or the presuppositions themselves. For example, the African American Black Theology sees Jesus, salvation and God as being black. Anything short of that is white. No wonder, Allan Boesak equates “blackness” with “humanness.” That is, to be black is to be human. So, white are not human. Note, however as already pointed above, that in this sort of reasoning, blackness does not designate skin colour. Rather, it is a discovery, a state of mind, a conversion and an affirmation of being. However, even within this understanding the racial conception of Black Theology is unmistakably evident and points to the narrow theological agenda of Black theology on race. Similarly, Black theology as held in South Africa has often divorced itself from the cultural and traditional African issues that had generally been the obsession of African Theology and seems lost in the political struggle of the Southern African context. Even though, such undertaking is necessary, however such political orientation should also not lose sight of traditional African religious or cultural settings, which actually has made us African in the first place.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Critically evaluate Black Theology.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

No theology can totally stand-alone without some areas of connection with other theologies. Although Black Theology has attempted to be unique, such attempts have not been successful. For instance, to have a Black Jesus, a Black salvation, and a Black God is equal to saying that there will be a Black heaven. However, even with its seeming flaws Black Theology has sensitively engaged the racial problem of the contemporary society, placing the neglected black race at the centre of theological discussion.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The following are the major things you have learnt in this unit:

- Black Theology has its origin in the experience of the afro-Americans in North America.



- Black Theology is a response to the socio-political segregation the Blacks have suffered in North America Black Theology appeals to the Black Theology in South Africa because of similar socio-political and economic conditions.

## 6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Trace the origins of Black Theology in the U.S.A. and South Africa.
2. How do you evaluate Black Theology in the light of other theologies?
3. Explain the relation between Black Theology and African Theology.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Bediako, K., "Black Theology". In: *New Dictionary of Theology*..

Ferguson, Sinclair B. & D. F. Wright, J. I Packer, (Eds.). (1988). Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 103 – 105.

Boesak, Allan (1977). *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Black Power*, New York.

Cone, James H., Black (1975). *Theology and Black Power*, (New York, 1969). *God of the Oppressed*. New York.

Michael, Matthew. (2006). *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*. Unpublished work. Copyright.

Wilmore, Gayrauds S. & James H. Cone (Eds.). (1979). *Black Theology: A Documentary History 1966-1979*, New York.

## **UNIT 3 FEMINIST THEOLOGY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Origin of Feminist Theology
  - 3.2 Feminist Theologies
  - 3.3 An Evaluation of Feminist Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Traditional Theology has often been one-sided. It has been dominated by the male gender and thus most often, its investigation, interpretation and theological formulations were based on the understanding of the male gender without the apt recognition of the female gender in the defining issues of theology. The silence of the female gender and their ostracisation in the domain of theology normally makes classical theology a half of the total reflection of the divine will for both genders. It is this under-representation of the female gender in theology and the ecclesiastical restrictions placed on her ministry in the Church that necessitated the quest to redefine theology and religion in the mutual recognition of the equality of the genders. This unit investigates the origin, theology and the evaluation of Feminist Theology, noting the problems and contributions of the feminist movement to the global Church.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the Origin of Feminism
- discuss the basic contents of Feminist Theology
- evaluate the contribution of Feminist Theology.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Origin of Feminist Theology**

The origin of feminism antedates the modern feminist movement and has its source in ancient times in the untold stories of women who sought to transcend the patriarchal restriction of the human society and assert

their divine calling in the face of many gender-related obstacles on their path. This unit traces the ancient and modern roots of feminism and underscores the thesis that Feminism has its root down to the struggle of women in the context of male-suspicion, androcentricism and the misogynistic tendencies of the human society.

### **The Ancient Roots**

The root of feminism, though often not acknowledged goes beyond the present feminist movement of the modern world to the world of the Bible and to the stories of women who broke through the glass limit placed on them by the patriarchal nature of the human society. These often-nameless women redefined their gender role in a male dominated society and by so doing, actualized their God-given purpose in the context of the human community. In this perspective are Biblical women such as Deborah, Esther, Huldah, Bathsheba, Abigail, Mary, Priscilla, and Eunice, who contributed to the growth and development of the human society by their participation in the divine plan in their own times. These women and other nameless Biblical characters went beyond gender restriction of the context and were duly involved in the political and religious reformation of their days.

Similarly women could be found in the pages of Church history, who are often ignored in the narration of mainstream Church history. Their lives and contribution to the cause of God and humanity is lost in the shadow of their husbands. An interesting omission of the deeds of the wives and mothers of most figures in Church history is painfully obvious. Despite the salient contributions of the women to church history they are merely given a footnote and not a place or part in the main text of church history. For example, the contribution of Monica the mother of St. Augustine of Hippo is repressed, ignored or given few lines; yet she played a great part in the shaping of the life of Augustine his son. The unconscious silencing of the voice of women in the pages of Church history could be extended to the deeds of the wives of the Reformers. The deeds of Katherine Von Bora, the wife of Luther is not often mentioned and yet she struggled with Luther throughout the persecution that took place at the Protestant Reformation. Similarly, are the deeds of Anna Reinhart, the wife of Zwingli, who is often given two or three lines to describe her role in the life of Zwingli. On the whole, it is this omission of the deeds and place of women in history, theology and religion that necessitated the modern feminism in all its ferventness.

### **The Modern Roots**

The modern feminism had its root in the already alluded to tendencies

of traditional theology or history to neglect the contribution of the female gender and the acceptance of an attitude that seems to suggest the inferiority of the female gender. However in the modern context Feminism is closely associated with women liberation of the 1960's who sought through legislation the equality of genders and assertion of the humanity and dignity of womanhood. It is this secular background that influenced the founding of the Theology of Feminism. Based on their attitude towards the Bible, modern Feminism has been divided into three groups or models. The first model known as the *Post-Christian model* rejected the Bible as a whole because of its acclaimed patriarchal and androcentric sentiments. Thus, the radical expression of this post-Christian model advocated a return to the religion of witchcraft, nature, mysticism and other religious beliefs that underscore the femininity of God. However, others within this designation merely saw the Bible as promoting oppressive patriarchal nature of the human society and thus no longer binding on them.

The second model known as the *Liberation model* had the basic assumptions of the Post-Christian model in their understanding of Judeo-Christian heritage, however instead of rejecting wholly the Bible or the Judeo-Christian tradition as did the first model, they use the Bible to reveal the positive role of Biblical women. They employed feminist hermeneutic principle in order to show the quest of the Biblical authors for a fair and just society that is freed of sexist oppression. The last model known as the *Evangelical Model* saw the Bible as none oppressive in its gender descriptions and roles. Thus, women are taught to submit in Church and family and also taught to assume their submissive role, which they understood, are not in any way dehumanizing to women.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the ancient and modern roots of Feminism.

### **3.2 Feminist Theologies**

The theology of feminism is wide and complex in its content as well as scope. It also has various racial religious and contextual colourings that make it impossible to pin down into simple easy list of theologies. However, there are three basic theological emphases that have generally characterized all brands of feminist theologies. These theological emphases are as follows:

#### **The Recognition and Rejection of Patriarchal Structures**

Feminist Theology has located the patriarchal nature of most human

structures in religion, politics, and social arms of the society. It has repudiated these androcentric structures found in the society as the legacy of the past, which has no place now in the modern context. Thus, by its recognition and repudiation of the patriarchal structures in the human society, feminism has ushered in a new global gender sensibility towards the recognition of the role of women in the society and also asserting its agenda of equality in the realm of religion, politics, education and the scientific world.

### **The Recreation of a Positive Image of Womanhood**

In a grand theological agenda, feminism in all confession seeks to redeem the battered, dehumanized and often abused image of womanhood as associated to media advertisement, pornography, prostitution and the general tendencies towards what has been described as the “commodification” of the woman. Thus, to underscore a positive image for the female gender various reconstructions of the Biblical context and traditions to assert a healthy and robust image of womanhood has been carried out. To reclaim (back) this feminist idealism feminist hermeneutics and other liberational methodologies have been employed to bring about a lofty feminist global vision.

### **The Quest for Gender Equality**

The quest for gender equality has always been the obsession of Feminism whether expressed or not. This egalitarian objective has been in the forefront of feminist theological agenda and has often characterized or coloured feminist attitudes towards the Church leadership, pastoral ministry and contemporary issues such as Female Ordination. While the general attitudes of the Church towards the agitation of equality in role-play have often being ignored, feminists are still determined to actualize such egalitarian dreams. The continuous instances in the exemplary female leadership in the political sphere would someday be translated in the ecclesiastical sphere especially as more and more men see the exceptional leadership qualities of most women in the political realm.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the three basic theological emphases that characterize Feminist Theologies.

### **3.3 An Evaluation of Feminist Theology**

Feminism as a movement has greatly contribute to the global Christianity in its repudiation of patriarchal structures, its quest to

recreate a positive image for womanhood and its quest to seek equality in the context of limited economic, social, political and religious opportunities that have characterized the human society. However, the following considerations are some of the problems that feminism raises for global Christianity.

### **Feminism Tends Towards Division Rather Than Unity**

Feminism in its quest to assert a feminist agenda has often degenerated towards division rather than the unity of the sexes. While the feminist stand for womanhood is not wrong, it's too often emphasizes on the independence of the female sex has serious unhealthy implications for the unity of human sexes.

### **Rejection of Authoritative Guide**

Often, feminists generally reject the Bible as a guide and replace its authoritative place with their own presupposition, arguing that the Bible is patriarchal and androcentric in its message and nature. By such rejection of a defining reference of authority, feminism often loses its Christian mooring and thus has no authoritative basis by which its teachings could be evaluated.

### **Feminist Christology**

Most feminists Christology has no serious dialogue with the Biblical text, rather they are sentiments and even ridiculous in its basic presuppositions and inferences. It is right for feminists to ask whether a male Christ could save a woman, but to reconfigure Christology on female gender or the reflection of God in female mode while innovative, yet has the inevitable tendencies of distorting the Biblical meaning of God and Christ. It is this basic assumption of feminism that raises serious problems for Christianity.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Beyond the highlighted problems of feminism, the feminist theological agenda must be respected particularly in their quest to assert a new global gender-sensitivity. Similarly, its quest to rid the world of all oppressive patriarchal structures are in order and to recreate a new positive image of womanhood is a theological agenda that should characterize every theological reflection particularly in the majority world where the image of womanhood has been bastardized and abused.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points you have learnt in this unit: Feminist Theology has its roots in the ancient biblical accounts, Modern Feminist Theology movement is rooted in the women's liberation movement of the 1960s. There are three models of Feminist Theology, namely: Post- Christian model, Liberation model and the Evangelical model. Feminist Theology is characterized by: rejection of patriarchal structures, recreation of a positive image of womanhood and the quest for gender equality.

## 6.0 TUTOR - MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain the ancient and modern roots of feminism.
2. Discuss the three basic theological emphases of feminism.
3. Give a proper evaluation of feminist Theology, noting its contribution and problems.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Conn, H. M. (Ed.) "Feminist Theology." *New Dictionary of Theology*.

Sinclair, B. Ferguson & David, F. Wright (1988). England: Inter-Varsity Press.

Oduyoye, Mercy A. & Musimbi Kanyaro (Ed.). (1992). *The Will to Arise: Woman, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*. Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Maria Pilar Aquino. (Ed). "Feminist Theologies in the Third World." *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*.

Virginia, Fabella & R.S. Surgirtharajah (2000). (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Kwok, Pui-lan. (1995). *Discovery the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*. Mary Knoll. New York: Orbis,

Isabel, Apawo Phiri (Ed.). (1987). "Doing Theology as African Women." *A Reader in African Christian Theology*

John Parrat (1983). London: SPCK,

.Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Sexism and God Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston: Beacon,

Schiessler, Elisabeth Fiorenza. (1984). *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York: Crossroad.

MacFague, Sallie. (1982). *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.



## **UNIT 4      AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Definition
  - 3.2 The Origin of African Theology
  - 3.3 The Content of African Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Mark Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0      INTRODUCTION**

African Christian Theology is the product of theological complications arising from the encounter between Africans and the Western missionary activities. It is a theology that seeks to reject the western theological claims particularly the understanding that western theology is normative for each human context. The rejection of western imperialism at independence, suddenly revealed the rationality of such step since at independence, the political structure was handed over to the Africans. On a similar basis, it was assumed that the West, the Church, and the hence, theology should be relinquished to Africans. However, even before independence such quest to understand the Christian gospel using African flavour was already in process particularly as expressed in the work of Edward W. Blyden and James Holy Johnson, who vehemently argued for an African expression of the Christian gospel. This unit investigates the origin, context and evaluation of African Christian Theology.

### **2.0      OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define African Theology
- narrate the origin, nature and content of African Christian Theology
- evaluate the quest in the development of African Christian Theology.

### **3.0      MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1      Definition**

African Christian theology is confronted with the problem of definition. How could one define an African Christian theology that is supposed to feature the theological, cultural and social political characteristics of over ten thousand million ethnic groups and sub-dialect groups in Africa? This becomes a serious problem particularly because Africans though united in some cultural emphases and their obvious black skins are no doubt different and heterogeneous in their specific, local and contextual settings. Complicating such problem of definition also, is the ambiguity of the term theology itself, which ordinarily did not have a Christian monopolistic usage. Thus, African Christian Theology might connote African traditional religion and not necessarily a Christian theology. It is out of these problems of definition that the usage with the added qualification, Christian is necessary.

However beyond this squabble over definition, African Christian Theology has developed a pattern on which its definition could be given. From the different reflections as attested by many themes on the dominant usage of the Christian gospel to understand the contextual realities of the African context in distinctive opposition to the Western theology and its pro-western theological allies, one could define African Christian theology as the quest by African Christians to understand, interpret and reconstruct theology based upon the existential, cultural, political and spiritual categories of the African context. Even though different measures of success have been so far recorded, nonetheless the realization of the true meaning of this definition is still pending. This understanding presupposes that such actualization of this definition becomes necessary because the definition points to the two necessities that must be involved in any theological reflection. These two necessities are discussed below.

### **Commitment to the Biblical Framework**

Every theology that must be called Christian must seek consistently to align its basic agenda to the sanctions and judgment from the Christian Biblical revelation. It is this commitment that African Christian theology in definition must seek to actualize. Though the trend in African Christian theology so far had revealed this commitment, however, much needed to be done particularly in allowing the Biblical revelation to colour our contextual theological inquiries. It is true that contextual realities must be in active dialogue with every theology, but theology lost its bearing and moorings if allowed to move away from its source. John Mbiti, Kwesi Dickson, Byang Kato and Kweme Bediako have championed the commitment to the Biblical framework. The African theologies despite their diverse understanding of the Christ event yet have placed a high premium on the major part the Bible must play in the development of African Christian theology.

## **Commitment to the Socio-Political Context**

The Bible with all its significance to Christian and humanity however becomes a relic of the past or merely a religious object if the thrust of its claims could not be substantiated in a given human context. Thus, even when African Christian theology strived at reflecting the framework of the Biblical revelation in its discourses, it must also seek to be conversant with the dynamism involved in the ever-changing context of the African society. Thus, in accordance with our definition of African Christian theology the need to reconstruct theology in the basis of the existential, political, economic and religious patterns of the African context is just meritable. The demise of every theology is sure if it fails to make the context of its reflection the principal partner of theological dialogue. The missionary Christianity often neglects such contextual necessity for relevant hermeneutical, homiletical and pastoral ministry that is compatible in the different faces of African socio-religious life. It is these two commitments that actually define African theology and the quest to develop it.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Give a working definition of African Christian Theology. Discuss the two theological commitments of these definitions.

### **3.2 The Origin of African Christian Theology**

The origin of African Christian Theology, as already noted, goes back in history to the turbulent relationship between the encounter of Western missionaries with the peculiarities of the African context such as the uniqueness of the African cultures and customs, and most importantly, the differences in the African worldview in comparison to those of the West. Primarily, the quest to develop an African Christian Theology was also due to the misrepresentation and misunderstanding of earlier anthropological and missionaries' misinterpretation of African culture arising from this context of missions. Following this precedence, two roots of African Christian theology are briefly examined, namely its ancient and modern roots respectively.

#### **The Ancient Roots**

The ancient roots of African Christian theology have been traced to two figures at the beginning of African Christianity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These two individuals could be called, "The ancestors of African Christian Theology" because of their separate, but complementary quest to see the realization of an African Christianity. These individuals are namely Edward W. Blyden of Ghana and James Holy Johnson of Liberia. These

individuals realized the necessity of Christianity to have the trademark of Africa cultural context. They sought to incorporate the African unique identity into the Christianity brought to Africa by the Western missionaries. Blyden's and Johnson's foresight to understand that Christianity must readjust in form to the contextual elements found in African society made them inevitably a precursor in the contemporary quest for an African Christian Theology.

However, the quest to domesticate and indigenize Christianity goes beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> century works of Blyden and Johnson to the ancient legacy of the Coptic and Ethiopic Church. Beginning with the Ethiopic Christianity, the theological redefinition of Christianity in light of Ethiopic cultural and political realities is a very important development that should begin any discussion on the contemporary quest for African Christian theology. This is because the Ethiopic Church has one of the oldest forms of Christianity in world today, with an existence of more than 1,600 years. Among the progress recorded in the fourth century in Africa was the formation of the Church in the Abyssinian Kingdom by the missionary activity of Frumentius. Through this zealous individual, the kingdom of Axum was also Christianized with the conversion of the monarch and the populace. The Ethiopic Church involved itself in great theological reflection such as the translation of the Scriptures into Ge'ez, the native indigenous language of the Axum people. This development in reference to the contemporary quest for an African theology is significant because the translated copies of scripture in the language of the indigenous afford the people of Abyssinian the rare opportunity of a total assimilation and inculturation of the Bible to the lives, symbols and the general context of this African people. It is also significant because it marked a decisive turn in the African church's quest to be indigenous. Interestingly, in a world dominated by Latin and Greek, the Abyssinian Church decided to tread in the rare path of making the Scriptures accessible to the people instead of following the convention of the time. Also, the Ethiopic Church became distinctively opposed to Western Christianity by adhering to a monopolistic Christological understanding at the end of the fifth century Christological debate. It is this indigenous quest to contextualize Christianity that led to theological writings in the Ethiopic kingdom, which culminated in the two classical Abyssinian literatures, the "Kebra Negast" and the "Glory of the Kings."

Similarly, the Church in Egypt or the Coptic Church was significant in the history of African and global Christianity particularly in the founding of the catechetical school of Alexandria, which became the first Christian Seminary and subsequently contributed to the theological education of Clement and Origen. It seemed fair to note that all these two great African theological traditions in their own different ways seek

to define Christianity within the perception of the African context and thus in a sense and in part a collective effort towards the development of the contemporary African Christian theology.

### **The Modern Roots**

The modern roots of the present quest for an African Christian theology could be traced to the African colonization, independence and the events of the post-colonial context. The Independence in the 1960s led to change in the African Church leadership from the expatriate white to indigenous African Church leaders. In this context of the post-colonization, many indictments of the Western Christianity were popular, particularly in its identification with colonization and its misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the African cultures and pre-Christian religions as fetish, barbaric, pagan and animistic. The African Christian theology at this period began to address these negativisms by emphasizing the virtue of the African religions and cultures. This redefinition and reinterpretation of the African religions and cultures dominate the African quest for an African Christian theology. Thus, African theological works on a positive note sought to critique the Western misrepresentation and also acknowledged the uniqueness of African cultures and religious beliefs in comparison to those in the Western context. It is in this understanding that Placide Temple “Bantu Philosophy”, Bolaji Idowu” *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*” and Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth editorial compilation of “*Biblical Revelation and African Belief*” were written. Similarly, in this understanding are the works of John Mbiti” “*African Religion & Philosophy*” and his other major theological works are written such as “*the Concepts of God in Africa.*” These works had one common thesis; they seek to redefine African culture and to present African cultures and religious beliefs, particularly in the light of common misrepresentation by the early missionaries. Thus, cultural and ethno-religious concerns dominated African Christian Theology until in recent times.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Describe the origin of African Christian theology in its ancient and modern roots.

### **3.3 The Content of African Christian Theology**

The content of African Christian Theology has been of diverse nature as the many diversities of the African continent. It seems different parts of the African continent have different theological preoccupations, however, a harmony of these diverse theological definitions is observable. Since the scope of the present study is limited a certain

salient content of African theology is hereby presented.

### **African Culture and pre-Christian Religious Emphases**

One common factor dominant in most of African Christian Theology is the African culture and religious beliefs. The religious and cultural elements in African Christian Theology came as a result of the already highlighted reasons, particularly in the misrepresentation of African pre-Christian religions and culture. Classical examples of this dominant nature of cultural and pre-Christian religious forms in African Christian works could be easily seen in John Mbiti and Bolaji Idowu theological works. It is significant to note that such emphasis on African culture and pre-Christian religious beliefs are not only peculiar to these cited individuals, but also characterized many works in the African theological discussions.

### **Biblical and Systematic Theological Emphasis**

Another salient content of African Christian theology is the quest to de-westernise the Bible and systematic theology, thus Biblical and systematic works that reflect African worldview had generally become popular. Dominant Biblical and systematic works are primarily in the areas of Salvation, Christology, Gender, Ecology and Ecumenism. However, in recent times the African Christian theology has been dominated by Christological emphases, particularly in the quest to redefine Christology in the category of African ancestor, Elder brother and other respected cultural designations of African people. Such is the Christological redefinition by Kwane Bediako and Charles Nyamiti, who reconfigured Christology using the ancestor as the basic paradigm.

### **Political Theology Emphases**

With the exception of the dominant role of politics in South African Christian theological discussion, there is no serious political theological engagement in African Christian Theology as done in the Latin American context. The oversight of African theology in its inability to discuss and address political issues may partly be responsible for the chaotic state of the African political leadership. However, this concern for a politically sensitive African Christian theology has been emphasized by Desmond Tutu and John S. Pobee.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

State and explain the three dominant contents of African Christian Theology.

### **3.4 An Evaluation of African Christian Theology**

The quest for an African Christian Theology has immensely contributed to the richness of African Christianity. Firstly, it has helped to address the misrepresentation of African traditional religions and cultures. Also the quest for an African Christian theology has contributed in some noble initiatives, particularly in Christology and Soteriology, which has greatly sparked global Theological discussion especially as it relates to the Western Christology. However, three areas that pose a serious problem in the quest for an African Christian Theology are as follows:

#### **Theological Content**

Even though, steps are taken to harmonize the different local theologies in the African heterogeneous context, yet the diversity of the social, political and cultural situations made definitions of the scope, nature and content of African Christian theology impossible. This becomes a serious problem in the light of African Christian ecumenism and the quest to know and understand African Christian Theology.

#### **Theological Methodology**

Though African Christian Theology seeks to break away from the hermeneutics, homiletics and Theology of the West, inevitably such break becomes unrealistic because of the dominant usage of western hermeneutical or theological methodologies in African theological discussion, which recommends western methodologies as the standard vehicle for theological enquiry. This understanding sabotages the effort of producing an independent African Christian Theology and eternally makes African Theology the child of Western Theological methodologies.

#### **The African Context**

The political context of African Christian Theology has generally been ignored. Even though such contexts are engrossed some issues that are closely related to theology, yet attention is narrowly given to such political issues like election, democracy, good governance, abuse of power, human rights, and other political maladies of the African context. Even though the South African context has complemented these deficiencies in Africa theologies in the West and East Africa, yet the post-apartheid government similarly raises theological issues for the South African theological discussion.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Evaluate the African Christian theology in three basic areas.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The direction of African Christian Theology is definitely uncertain because of the many theological works seeking to chart the course for African theology, however, the credibility of such direction will hinge on the centrality of the Bible and the African context to such defining theological work. Indeed, these relationships will become the premises on which every theology and particularly African Christian theology derives its significance as well as its relevance.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The study unit discussed the definition, origin, theology and an evaluation of African Christian theology. It investigated the nature of the origin and the contents of African theology but also evaluated African theology in terms of content, methodology and context respectively.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Define African Christian theology and the two theological commitments inherent in this definition.
2. Describe the ancient and modern roots of African Christian theology.
3. Describe the three basic content of modern African Christian theology.
4. Evaluate African Christian theology in reference to content, methodology and context.

### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

Ayandele, E. A. (1970). *Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism*. New York: Humanities Press.

Bediako, Kwame. "Jesus in the African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective." *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*.

William, Dyrness (Ed.). (2000). Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

"Jesus in Africa: (1994). *The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*. (Yaundxe: Ed. Cle.,



Dickson, Kwesi. (1984). *Theology in Africa*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

Lynch, Hollis. (1970). *Edward Wilmot Blyden : Pan-Negro Patriot*. New York: Oxford University,.

Mbiti, John S. (1919). *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann.

“The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion.” *The Third World Liberation Theologies: A Reader*. Deane.

William, Ferm. (Ed.). (1986). New York: Orbis,