



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COURSE CODE: CRS721

COURSE TITLE: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

CRS840: Systematic Theology is a 3- credit unit course. It will be available to all students as a course in MA theology. The course is also suitable for anybody who is interested in the theological study of Christian faith.

The course (will consists) of 15 units which involve the theology of Trinity (God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit), the theology of creation, evolution, the spirit world, providence, the theology of humankind (uniqueness, fall/sin and redemption). The material has been especially developed for students in African context with particular focus on Nigeria.

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 CRS840: Systematic Theology is to introduce you to the basic issues in Christian doctrines of God, creation and humanity. These topics will be studied through integrating, eclectic approach of systematic theology.

The Bible is the major source to formulate and study theology. However, systematic theology also interacts with science, philosophy, history and some other liberal arts.

Your understanding of systematic theology will equip you to explain Christian faith to other people - Christians and non-Christians. Christian theology is an interesting study and you will benefit from the insights of other theologians.

Course Aims

The aim of this course is to give you an understanding of the following basic doctrines of Christian theology: The Trinity, Creation and humankind. This will be achieved by aiming to:

- Introduce you to the meaning and scope of systematic theology;
- Lead you to examine the doctrines of the Trinity (God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit);

Assist you to describe the biblical ideas of the person and work of Jesus Christ;

Expose you to some of the practical issues related to the theology of creation;

Highlight the uniqueness, fall/sin, and redemption of humankind; Explain to you the nature of revelation and the place of the Bible in the formulation of systematic theology;

Explain to you the relevance of systematic theology for Christian faith, life and ministry.

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims set out above, there are set overall objectives. In addition, each unit also has specific objectives. The unit objectives are always included at the beginning of a unit. You should read them before you start working through the

unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check on your progress. You should always look at the unit objectives after completing a unit. In this way you can be sure that you have done what was required of you by the unit.

Stated below are the wider objectives of this course as a whole. By meeting these objectives, you should have achieved the aims of the course as a whole.

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

Define the meaning and describe the scope of systematic theology, Explain the Christian doctrine of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Describe the person and work of Jesus Christ including the virgin birth and the atonement,

Analyze ideas about creation and evolution,

Discuss the theology of humankind including the nature, fall/sin and redemption,

Discuss the concept of revelation and the use of the Bible and some other sources used to formulate systematic theology,

Relate and evaluate the relevance of systematic theology to Christian living

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

Module 1

- Unit 1 Meaning and Scope of Systematic Theology
- Unit 2 God the Father
- Unit 3 God the Son
- Unit 4 God the Holy Spirit
- Unit 5 The Triune God

Module 2

- Unit 1 Various Views of Creation
- Unit 2 Biblical Teaching on Creation
- Unit 3 The Spirit World
- Unit 4 Providence (Part I)
- Unit 5 Providence (Part II)

Module 3

- Unit 1 Uniqueness of Humankind
- Unit 2 The Fall/Sin of Humankind

Unit 3

Redemption of Humankind

Unit 4

Divine Responsibilities of Redeemed Humankind

Unit 5

The Relevance of Systematic Theology

The first five units examine the basics of theology and theology of Trinity. The next five units address the theology of creation and providence. The last five units discuss the theology of humankind and the relevance of systematic theology in general.

Each unit contains a number of self-tests. In general, these self-tests question you on the material you have just covered or require you to apply it in some ways and, thereby, help you to gauge your progress and to reinforce your understanding of the material. Together with tutor-marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual units and of the course.

Set Textbooks

These textbooks are recommended. The first one is compulsory for your study of this course.

The Holy Bible (RSV or NIV).

Milne, Bruce (1998). *Know the Truth*. Second Edition Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press.

Grudem, Wayne (1994). *Systematic Theology*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press.

Komonchack, Joseph A. and Others (1987) *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India.

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 CRS840 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.

Assessment	Marks
Assignment 1-4	Four assignments, best three marks of the four count at 30% of course marks
Final Examination	50% of overall course marks
Total	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.

Module 1	Title of work	Week's Activity	Assessment (end of unit)
Unit	Course Guide	1	
1.	Meaning and Scope of Systematic Theory	1	Assignment 1
2.	God the Father	2	Assignment 2
3.	God the Son	3	Assignment 3
4.	God the Holy Spirit	4	Assignment 4
5.	The Triune God	5	Assignment 5
Module 2		6	Assignment 6
Unit			
1	Various Views of Origin of Life		
2	Biblical Teaching on Creation	7	Assignment 7
3.	The Spirit World	8	Assignment 8
4.	Providence I – Preservation, cooperation and Government	9	Assignment 9
5	Providence II-Theocracy, miracles and prayer	10	Assignment 10
Module 3		11	Assignment 11
Unit			
1	Uniqueness of Humankind.		
2	The Image of God in Humankind	12	Assignment 12
3	Communal life in Africa	13	Assignment 13
4.	Alienation and Redemption of Humankind	14	Assignment 14
5	Consummation of Humankind	15	Assignment 15
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 try 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

CRS840 intends to introduce you to the basics of systematic theology. Upon completing this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

What is the meaning of theology?

What is the role of the Bible in formulating systematic theology? What are the proofs of the existence of God?

What is the significance of the Virgin birth?

What is the role of the Spirit in Christian life?

How can you explain the Christian doctrine of Trinity?

What is the unique biblical understanding of creation of the world? What is the meaning of the creation of human being in the image of God?

What is the relevance of systematic theology to Christian faith, life and ministry?

Of course, the questions you will be able to answer are not limited to the above list. Christian theology is an exciting study. We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.



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MODULE 1

INTRODUCTION

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- Unit 2 God the Father
- Unit 3 God the Son
- Unit 4 God the Holy Spirit
- Unit 5 The Triune

UNIT 1 MEANING AND SCOPE OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Systematic Theology is a very interesting study and it touches every aspect of Christian faith, life and ministry. The various issues that will be examined in this unit to introduce you to systematic theology are the definition, levels, types, presuppositions, methodology, tasks and sources of theology.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Define theology from etymology,
Discuss the three levels of theology, Mention
various approaches to theology, Explain
different themes and types of theology, List
presuppositions of theology,
Discuss the methodology of theology,
Describe the tasks of theology,
State the sources of theology

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Theology

From the viewpoint of etymology, theology is derived from two Greek words, theos (“God”) and Logos (“Word, or discourse” or “reason”). Therefore, literally speaking, theology means “Discourse or reason concerning God,” or put in another way, “thinking about God,” the “study of God,” or study about God. We observe that this definition is very limited and needs to be expanded.

It will be an interesting and rewarding exercise to state and analyze the definitions of theology of some eminent theologians. Our working definition of theology for this course is: an interpretative analysis of the revelation of God involving church doctrinal tradition and human experience from a particular worldview.

The following elements are significant in this definition and need to be elaborated upon:

1. As an interpretation, theology should be logical, clear and coherent;
2. The revelation of God is usually studied in nature, Scripture and Jesus Christ;
3. Every theology ought to be informed by the history and theological tradition of the church;
4. The human experience includes both personal Christian experience of the individual theologian as well as the societal/corporate social, economic, political and religious situation; A theologian is free to agree or disagree with other theologies/theologians but no theologian has the right to ignore other theologies/theologians.

5. Theology is always done in a particular context of culture, philosophy and time. This is the meaning of “particular worldview.”

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

What is the etymology of the word theology? State and discuss one definition of theology.

3.2 Levels of Theology

Having attempted to define and explain theology in the last section, the next issue to deal with is “who is a theologian”? Of course, simply put, a theologian can be said to be a person who does theology, who theologises, who engages in interpretative analysis of the revelation of God. However, and more practically, we can talk about a theology/theologian on three levels which can be described as popular, pastoral and professional following the classification of liberation theology by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff (1987, 11).

Popular Theology: This is the common, everyday theology of every Christian. It is the theology of daily Christian faith and life. Every Christian is expected to be able to explain his/her faith (1 Peter 3:15). That kind of explanation can be regarded as theology though often simple, loose and unprofessional. So at elementary level, every Christian can be regarded to be a theologian.

Popular theology is the level of discussion in Christian meetings like Bible study groups Sunday School, House Fellowship, some other organizational meetings, teaching/training sessions of church worshippers, workers, officers, testimonies, counseling. It is thus a good thing to expose church workers and officers to the rudiments of Bible interpretation. Biblical hermeneutics is an integral part of biblical theology. Family worship also includes bible reading and teaching. This is also a popular theological task.

Pastoral Theology: Another level of theologising is done by Christian workers – pastors, educationists/teachers, counselors, musicians, children / student / youth workers, evangelists / missionaries, deliverance ministers, etc. This is pastoral theology, the theology of church life and Christian ministry. Every pastor is a church theologian and every form of Christian preaching and teaching involves theological exercise.

The formulation and explanation of the doctrine of a church or denomination is essentially a theological task. Every kind of specialized

ministry also requires a particular theology as well as theological methodology and training.

For instance, so much pastoral theology is involved in church music and drama to communicate the gospel. This is often real, practical theology. It must also be pointed out that the pastoral theologian brings together oral, informal, popular theology with his/her formal professional theology.

Professional Theology: This is the most technical form of theology and the highest level of theological formulation. Professional theologians are the ones that can be considered to be “experts” in theology. Erroneously, these are the only people we always think of as theologians. These are usually teachers/lecturers in bible schools, colleges of theology, theological seminaries, departments of religious studies in universities.

These scholars and academicians use a variety of forum like lectures, seminars and conferences. Professional theology is a detailed and vigorous level of theology. They (theologians) carry out and publish their researches in journals and books.

While this distinction between popular, pastoral and professional theologies is helpful, it should be clarified that the three levels interact and interpenetrate. For instance, laypersons (popular theologians) who take courses in theology, teach bible study and discipleship lessons (which are essentially pastoral ministries) are combining the first two levels in theology. On the other hand, a church pastor is expected to engage in daily Christian devotion for personal spiritual enrichment (popular theology). He also prepares sermons and counsels parishioners which involves pastoral theology. Such a person may also get involved in teaching and training of student pastors in a theological institution and participate in theological education conferences. Such a person, therefore, within a period of time engages in popular theology, pastoral theology and professional theology.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Discuss the three levels of theology.

3.3 Approaches to Theology

Systematic theology is related to other theological studies. Christian theology can be done from various approaches: biblical, exegetical, historical, philosophical, pastoral and systematic. These approaches are also sometimes called divisions or disciplines of theology. Graeme Goldsworthy (1991, 34-38) and other theologians have given concise definitions of these different ways of doing theology:

1. Systematic Theology “involves the systematic organization of truths of doctrines under certain headings or topics.” It is also sometimes called dogmatic. This course follows the systematic theology approach.
2. Historical Theology “is an historical study of the way theology has been done in the Christian Church over the centuries.”
3. Pastoral Theology concerns “the mutual relationship between theology and pastoral work.” As a theology of ministry, it is closely related to practical theology which is “concerned to relate theology to the practice of ministry.” Subject matters of pastoral and practical theologies are worship, homiletics, missions, administration, pastoral care/counseling, hermeneutics and stewardship.
4. Biblical Theology could mean a” historical study of the theology found in the Bible itself. It is also related to exegetical theology which involves getting out of the Bible what it actually says in its original setting.” Biblical and exegetical theologies employ the following critical tools of biblical introduction/studies: textual criticism, historical criticism, literary and source criticism, form criticism and reaction criticism.
5. Philosophical Theology “is theologizing that draws on the input of philosophy rather than using merely biblical materials.” It uses philosophical ideas, metaphysics and logic extensively.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Mention five different approaches to the study of Christian theology.

3.4 Themes and Types of Theology

The major themes (doctrines) within Christian, systematic theology are: The doctrine of Revelation; The doctrine of the Bible (Bibliology); The doctrine of God the Father, Jesus Christ (Christology), the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology), Trinity; The doctrine of creation/providence; The doctrine of humankind (Anthropology); The doctrine Angels, Satan/Demons (Demonology); The doctrine of the Church (Ecclessiology); The doctrine of Evangelism/Mission (Missiology); The doctrine of the last things or the future (Eschatology). Across the ages and in response to needs, Christians in different denominations have developed theologies of various types with diverse concerns. Four examples are Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal and African Christian Theologies.

Roman Catholic Theology: This theology is comprehensive and it is presented in dogmas covering the doctrines stated above. Roman Catholic theology also emphasizes revelation, discipline of faith, a centralized priestly authority, and seven sacraments instituted by Christ and bestowed through the priesthood.

The major features of Protestant theology are: deep commitment to the centrality and power of the Bible, justification by grace through faith, the priesthood of all believers and the church that is composed of believers.

The core of Pentecostal theology is that every Christian ought to have a post-conversion experience (a second blessing or work of grace) of Holy Spirit baptism with speaking in tongues as the initial and authentic evidence.

African Christian theology is concerned with the interpretation of the Christian faith in the context of African worldview. The theology reckons with African historical, religious, social, economic and political experience.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Name four themes and examples of types of Christian theology.

3.5 Presuppositions of Theology

Presuppositions are assumptions that must be self-attesting. Every theology is based on certain assumptions and every theologian works with certain presuppositions. In the Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa, Osadolor Imasogie (1983, 43) argued “there is no such thing as a presuppositionless theology . . . the theologian must be aware of the cultural influences that shape him and equip him with his conceptual tools.”

Our five basic presuppositions in this course are:

1. That God is sovereign and self-proving.
2. That there is harmony and coherence in the mode of God’s unveiling of himself.
3. In view of these two presuppositions above, God’s Word is accepted “as true, simply because it is his Word” and the teaching of canonical Scriptures is not only substantially true, but it is also coherent.
4. That the tradition of the Church is an important “guide to what the bible means.” Tradition can be negative or positive. It can be accepted or rejected but it cannot be ignored.

5. That the integrating method of systematic theology, which involves interpreting Scriptures in a particular culture, is both valid and relevant to our African context.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.5

State four presuppositions of systematic theology.

3.6 Methodology of Theology

Every discipline has a method. It is also imperative for a systematic theologian to have a method that is valid. When used broadly, theological method “refers to an array of decisions every Christian theologian must make in the course of doing theology.” One very important question of methodology is whether to start theological formulation from above (revelation, word of God) or from below (human situation, social analysis, etc).

This course will also adopt contextual approach to theology and we will try to strike “a balance between emphasis on the authority of biblical revelation and the need to reckon with the receiving audience of that revelation.” This method is based on our concern “to interpret the word of God in the light of our own historical context for the sake of Christian obedience.” This method is also the logical implication of some of the basic presuppositions stated earlier on.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.6

Discuss the methodology of systematic theology.

3.7 Tasks of Theology

Why do we need to develop and study systematic theology? Different theologians have stated the tasks, purposes or values of theology in different ways. Paul Tillich (1973, 3-9) considers the two principal tasks of Christian theology to be “to state the eternal Christian message and to relate it to the existing cultural situation.” According to Gustavo Gutierrez, the three classical permanent tasks of theology are: theology as wisdom, to promote spiritual life; theology as rational knowledge, a meeting of faith and reason; theology as critical reflection on Christian praxis.

These various primary tasks of theology can be classified as theoretical and practical: to ensure correct Christian belief, faith, teaching, doctrine (orthodoxy); to promote authentic Christian worship, life, living, practice (orthopraxis). Another secondary task is to dialogue with some other fields of study like history, ethics and philosophy.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.7

What are the tasks of Christian theology?

3.8 Sources of Systematic Theology

The following resources are required to formulate systematic theology:

The Bible: This is the most reliable means of the interpretation of the revelation of God in Christ Jesus (Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17). You are encouraged to read the Bible references cited in this course as you study systematic theology.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible. Every interpreter needs to depend on the Spirit for insight to discover the truth of the word of God (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Church doctrinal tradition: Nobody interprets the revelation of God in a vacuum. Every theologian should benefit from the efforts of other interpreters.

Human experience: The particular context of culture and time for the receipt and interpretation of divine revelation also provides a particular colour to every theology.

Reason: The Lord expects us to reason out our faith. We must recognize however that faith is limited to analyze God.

Traditional Religion: God has given Africans a general revelation of himself to prepare them for the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Culture: Culture is a way of life of a group of people and it includes the language, customs, philosophy and religion.

Nature: Certain lessons can be derived from nature to interpret God. For instance regularity and changing of seasons show the faithfulness of God.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.8

State and discuss five formative factors of systematic theology

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have explained that systematic theology involves discourse, or thinking about God. The Bible is the primary source for that exercise. In systematic theology, all the various sources together with ideas form the totality of Biblical revelation on a subject are systematized to formulate a theology. Systematic theology is also mindful of the worldview or context of every theology.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have dealt with the meaning and scope of systematic theology by looking at the following aspects: definition, levels, approaches, types, presuppositions, methodology, tasks and sources.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What is Christian theology?
2. List and explain the major concerns of four types of theology
3. State four formative factors (sources) of theology. Discuss two of them.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

The Holy Bible (RSV or NIV)

Grudem, Wayne (1994) *Systematic Theology*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, pp. 21-37.

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UNIT 2 GOD THE FATHER

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since theology is an interpretative analysis of the revelation of God, the doctrine of God is the first major doctrine usually discussed in systematic theology. The three aspects of the doctrine of God the Father that will be examined in this unit are various beliefs about God, the proofs of God's existence and the attributes of God.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- State and discuss various beliefs about God,
- Explain the traditional philosophical and theological proofs about the existence of God,
- Enumerate the perfections, incommunicable and communicable attributes of God.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Various Beliefs about God

The emphatic opening declaration of the Bible implies that there is but one God, that God is the Creator and Father of the universe, that God is apart from the world, that the entire creation depends upon God (Read Genesis 11:1). This is an affirmation of theism and monotheism and a refutation of atheism, deism, polytheism, henotheism, pantheism and panentheism.

Genesis 1:1 is both a declaration of theism and a refutation of atheism and deism. Psalm 14:1, “The fool says in his heart ‘There is no God’, “can thus be interpreted in two ways. To say “there is no God” could mean emphatic denial of the existence of God. This is atheism. As a “denial of the being of God ... **atheism** necessarily stands for the denial of the existence of a personal Creator and moral Governor.” It is also a form of deism “arguing practically with every action of life that God does not care and will not act.” While deism is etymologically synonymous with theism, it “designates a system admitting the existence of a personal Creator, but denying his controlling presence in the world, his immediate moral government, and all supernatural intervention and revelation.”

The assertion that there is but one God also affirms monotheism and refutes polytheism and henotheism. An important idea of God in Judaeo-Christian tradition is monotheism, “the study that there is but one Supreme Being who is personal and moral and who seeks a total and unqualified response from human creatures.” The Bible emphasises repeatedly that the God who is revealed as the Creator is not an additional one to be believed and worshipped along with other gods and divinities (Read Exodus 20:1-3; Deut. 6:4-5; Matthew 22:37-38). This God is the only true God, the God of gods, the Almighty God who is sovereign over the entire universe.

Genesis 1:1 does not accommodate polytheism which “distributes the perfections and functions of the infinite God among many limited gods.” While polytheism is common among ancient peoples, it has been observed by John Hick (1994, 5-6) that it reaches “its classic expression in the West in Ancient Greece and Rome, that there are a multitude of personal gods, each ruling a different department of life.” Very close to polytheism is henotheism which believes that there are many gods but holding one to be superior and which generally is “the god of one’s own tribe or people.” The next beliefs about God are philosophical in nature.

As a doctrine of God pantheism “is absolute monism, maintaining that the entire phenomenal universe is the ever changing existence-form of the one single universal substance which is God. Thus God is all, and all is God.” This excessive identification of God with the universe

“denies several essential aspects of God’s character. If the whole universe is God, then God has no distinct personality. God is no longer unchanging because as the universe changes, God also changes.” Grudem explains further that in pantheistic systems God has no distinct identity and human personalities also have no individual distinctiveness. Thus, pantheism negates the personal identity of God and also that of human beings as well.”

Panentheism is closely related to pantheism. It “is the view that all things exist ultimately ‘in God.’” The evaluation of pantheism offered by Grudem (1994, 267) applies to panentheism as well: “The Bible teaches that God is distinct from his creation. He is not part of it, for he has made it and rules over it. The term often used to say that God is much greater than creation is the word transcendent. Very simply, this means that God is far “above” the creation in the sense that he is greater than the creation and he is independent of it.” The Biblical description of God and creation thus shows that the two are distinct. In addition to this the created world also depends upon God.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

State seven various beliefs about God. Discuss three out of these beliefs.

3.2 The Proofs of God’s Existence

Whatever is known about God is known on the basis of His self-revelation. The Bible merely points to the unquestionable reality of God and does not attempt to offer a rational proof of God’s existence. The major traditional philosophical and the theological proofs of the existence of God are ontological, cosmological, teleological and moral. These proofs will now be highlighted.

The ontological argument was first given by Anselm (1033-1109). In philosophy ontology is the study of being. Note that in traditional theology God is described as the Supreme Being, the source of all other beings like human beings. God is therefore defined as a being “greater than which nothing can be imagined”. God is thus the most perfect being existing in reality and in the mind.

The classical form of the **cosmological argument** is associated with Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274). The argument is derived from **cosmos**, the whole world or universe.

The reasoning is that every event in the world has a cause, which will also have a cause that should be traced to a first cause. Consequently, the universe as an event must also have a cause. God is the cause. This

means that, theologically, the existence of the world is accounted for by a supreme being.

While the **theological argument** dates back to the ancient time it is ascribed in its modern form to William Paley (1743-1805). The word teleological is derived from telos which means “end” or “goal” or “purpose”. The argument is that the evidence of design, purpose, harmony and order seen in the universe imply or require a universal designer. Since the existence of the watch is accounted for by an intelligent watchmaker, there must be a purposeful God who created the universe to function orderly and purposefully.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is linked with the **moral argument** of the existence of God. The contention is that the existence of objective moral values like senses of right, wrong and justice implies the existence of a transcendent ground of values. God is therefore the source of human moral values.

What is the value of these arguments? They help to overcome some of the intellectual objections of people who do not want to believe in the existence of God. They are construed to establish a very strong probability of the existence of God. Suffice it to state at this juncture that in accordance with the biblical declaration many people believe that God exists, know God and relate with God by faith (Read Hebrews 11:6).

What has been done above is only to introduce you to the subject of the arguments for the existence of God. These arguments have been hotly debated by philosophers through the ages. You are encouraged to read more on this subject in some references and recommended books indicated at the end of the unit.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Name four major proofs of the existence of God. Discuss one of them.

3.3 The Attributes of God

The last aspects of the theology of God the Father that will be considered in this study unit are the perfections and attributes of God. God has revealed himself as a God who is perfect in glory, lordship, holiness and love.

In many instances in the Bible, the glory of God conveys the visible manifestation of the being, presence and power of God (for instance, read Ezekiel 1:28b; John 1:14). The glory of God also speaks of the transcendence of God. This means that God’s being, existence, power

and manifestations transcend that of creation. God is above and greater than the universe.

The covenant name of God in the Old Testament is Yahweh (Jehovah) and it is usually translated as THE LORD (Read Ex. 3:13-15). The **lordship** of God implies his sovereignty over the entire universe. God rules the world with power and authority that cannot be challenged (Read Isaiah 45:6).

God is perfect in holiness. The most basic idea of holiness is to be separate, distinct, different, and peculiar. Therefore God is separate from all other beings (Read Lev. 11:44). As stated in the vision of both Isaiah and John, the holiness of God is very close to the glory of God (Read Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8). God is thus, pure and perfect without any immorality, wickedness, evil or sin.

One very popular biblical definition of God is **love**. “God is love” (I John 4:8). The love of God is in his sacrificial goodness, mercy, kindness and grace towards the unworthy or even the worthless (Read Deut. 7:7). The death of God for the redemption of humankind is the supreme manifestation of the love of God (I John 4:9-10).

The **incommunicable attributes** of God are the perfections that God does not share with any other being: **self-existence**, immutability and infinity. The Self-existence of God means that the existence of God depend on God himself and no other source (John 5:26). Another one is Immutability, that is, that God does not change in His being, purposes or promises (Ex. 3:14; Heb. 13:8); God is trustworthy. **Infinity** of God includes eternity and immensity, God is free from all limitations of space and time (Job 11:7-10; Psalm 145:3; Matt. 5:48; Psalm 90:2; 102:12; Eph. 3:20). The **Unity** of God refers to his oneness and uniqueness (I Kings 8:60; I Cor. 8:6; I Tim. 2:5).

The communicable attributes of God speaks of the character of God that may be reflected in other beings. These include spirituality, intellectuality and morality. **Spirituality means** that God is Spirit (John 4:24). **Intellectuality** includes the ideas of knowledge, wisdom and veracity of God (I Sam. 2:3; Job 12:13; James 1:5-6; Exodus 34:6; John 14:6).

Morality is an umbrella term that combines the attributes of goodness, grace and mercy (Psalm 145:9, 15, 16; Matthew 5:44, 45), holiness (I Sam. 2:2; Isaiah 6:3) and righteousness (Ezra 9:15; John 17:25). The overall emphasis of these attributes is to convey the supremacy of the one almighty God.

We will end this unit on the study of God the Father with the three most common attributes of God, which are: his **omnipresence**, God is always present with his people (Psalm 139:7-12); his **omnipotence**, God is all powerful (Gen. 17:1); his **omniscience**, God is all knowing (Psalm 139:1-12).+

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

1. Enumerate: Four perfections of God, Three incommunicable attributes of God, Three communicable attributes of God. Discuss one in each category.
2. What do you understand by the omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience of God?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The perfections and attributes of God indicate both ideas of transcendence and immanence of God. God is transcendent, above, over and greater than creation. This is a radical discontinuity between God and the universe. Yet, God is immanent with creation, present with us and is dwelling among us. This revelation is a part of the mystery of God.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have examined three important aspects of the theological study of God the Father: various beliefs about God; the proofs of the existence of God; the perfections and attributes of God.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Define the following beliefs about God: Monotheism, Polytheism.
2. Write a short note on the cosmological argument for the existence of God.
3. List the following: Two perfections of God, Two incommunicable attributes of God, Two communicable attributes of God.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 GOD THE SON

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3.2	Some Christological Views
3.3	The Virgin Birth
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3.5	The Work of Christ II (Atonement)
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Having examined the doctrine of God the father in the last unit we shall now focus on the doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ, called Christology. The doctrine will be dealt under the person of Christ, some Christological views, the virgin birth and the work of Christ (the three offices and atonement).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Explain the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ,
- List some early christological views/debates,
- Discuss the significance of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ,
- Describe the work of Jesus Christ (the three offices and atonement).

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Person of Jesus Christ

At the very heart of the Christian faith is the teaching of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. One of the distinctive Christian doctrines is that Jesus Christ was truly, fully man and truly, fully God.

According to Bruce Milne (1998, 161-164) the evidences for the full humanity of Jesus as found in the Bible are:

His religious life. He engaged in worship communion and prayer with God the Father (e.g. Luke 4:3-21; 16; 6:12);

His limited knowledge. As a human being he confessed his ignorance of certain knowledge (e.g Mark 13:32);

His temptation. Jesus was tempted to commit sin like every other human being (Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15). However, he resisted and he did not fall into sin.

Some other aspects of his life that reveal his humanity are:

His human genealogy (Luke 3:23-28),

Normal birth growth and development as a child (Mark 6:1-6),

Physical limitations like: weariness (John 4:6), hunger (Matt. 21:18), thirst (Matt. 11:19) and physical death (Luke 22:63; 23:33).

He experienced and demonstrated human emotions: joy (Luke 10:21) sorrow (Mt. 26:37), love (John 11:5), compassion (Mat. 9:36), astonishment (Luke 7:9) and anger (Mark 3:5).

Milne also gave the following biblical evidences to support the full divinity of Christ (1998, 165-179).

Direct statements of his deity (John 1:1-2; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13).

Identity of the name of Jesus with Yahweh/Jehovah, the Creator, Redeemer, Covenant God in the Old Testament (Rom. 10:9; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11).

The glory of God (I Cor. 2:8; 2 Cor. 4:4).

Worship and prayers are addressed to Christ (Matt. 28:17; Acts 7:59f; 9:13f; I Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20).

Jesus is the creator of the universe (John 1:1, 3; Heb. 1:3).

Jesus is the saviour of humanity from sins (Matt. 1:21; Luke 7:48).

Jesus will be the righteous judge at the end of the age (Mark 8:38; John 5:22-30; Acts 17:31).

It should be stated that these biblical evidences prove the divinity of Jesus Christ. However, the doctrine is a confession of faith that is made possible by the ministry of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3).

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.1

Explain three biblical evidences/references each that support: the humanity of Jesus Christ, the divinity of Jesus Christ.

3.2 Some Christological Views

At this point I think it is necessary to introduce you to some christological views and debates of the early centuries. Actually, it can be said that christological controversy started during the life, times and earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. In response to his question “Who do people say the son of Man is?” (Matt. 16:13) his disciples replied that various people thought he was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets (v.14).

Some views, attempts to explain the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, in early church history that have been rejected as discussed by Grudem (1994, 554-563), are:

Arianism: The view that Christ was “begotten” (John 1:14) and so was only “like the Father” or similar “to the Father”. This view denied the full divinity of the Son.

Apollinarianism: The view that Christ had a human body, but he did not have a human mind or spirit. Whereas human body and divine nature meet in him, this view denied the full humanity of the Son (Heb. 2:17).

Nestorianism: The view that there were two separate, independent parts (human and divine) in the one person of Jesus Christ. We affirm that Jesus is one person but with both a human nature and a divine nature (John 14:23).

Monophysitism (Eutychianism): The view that Christ had only one (mono) nature, the human nature was absorbed into the divine nature. This view means that Christ had a third nature that was neither truly God nor truly man.

Some other views are **eblonism, docetism** and **gnosticism**.

It was at the Chalcedonian council in A.D 451 that the church finally agreed on the doctrine of full humanity and full divinity of Jesus Christ. Some of the errors of the past may show up with new names today. We need to affirm the historic Christian faith. Jesus is fully God and fully human. That is why he is the mediator between God and humanity (I Timothy 2:5).

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.2

List some early christological views. Analyse and evaluate one of them.

3.3 The Virgin Birth

Matt. 1:18 & Luke 1:35 teach the virgin birth clearly. No portion in the New Testament denied the doctrine. An objective interpretation of the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke leads to one conclusion and that is, they are historical narratives (they are meant to be historical). One basic difficulty, however, in the interpretation of the virgin birth, is the question of whether it supports humanity or divinity of Jesus Christ.

It should be admitted that while we accept the doctrine of the virgin birth, it does not necessarily solve the problem of the mystery of the union of humanity and divinity in the person of the Lord Jesus. The virgin birth however has the following significance according to Bruce Milne (1998, 177):

1. It proclaimed the unique character of the baby Jesus (Lk. 1:5-22).
2. It shows the operation of the supernatural in the incarnation.
3. The coming of the H.S upon Mary shows that God has completely entered the human experience.
4. “Christ is the second Adam in whom there takes place a new beginning to the moral history of the human race” (Rm. 5:12; I Cor. 15:22).
5. The story of the virgin birth is very consistent with the pre-existence of the eternal Son of God. Jesus had existed in the eternal past before the historic conception in the womb of Mary (Lk. 1:35).
6. In the virgin birth we have an analogy of redemption described as a “new birth” (Jn. 1:12; 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:2; Titus 2:5).

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.3

What is the significance of the virgin birth?

3.4 The Work of Christ I

All that has been discussed so far in this unit concern the person of Jesus Christ. We shall now briefly consider the work of Christ in terms of his ministries as prophet, priest and king as well as atonement.

As **Prophet** Jesus Christ reveals God to us, speaks God's words to us and also embodies the revelation of God to us. He is truly and fully a prophet. Some Old Testament prophets prefigured him (Deut. 18:15-18; Luke 7:16).

As **Priest** Jesus Christ offered himself as a perfect, once-for-all sacrifice to God on our behalf and for our sins. As a matter of fact Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14; 9:26).

As **King** Jesus Christ is our Lord. He rules over our lives, and the church and over the entire universe, including all ruler, authority, power and dominion (Philip 2:9-11; Eph. 1:20-22).

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.4

Describe the work of Jesus Christ as a prophet, priest and king.

3.5 The Work of Christ II

Originally, atonement meant “at-one-ment” or “a making at one” or “reconciliation”. In contemporary usage, atonement refers to the reconciliation of God and man. The word occurs in Rom. 5:11, as a translation of the Greek word **kattalage**. Atonement can be defined as “the entire process of what is involved in the work of God in Jesus Christ through which God is reconciled to man”.

In the Old Testament, the usual Hebrew word for atone is **kpr** used in the general sense of removing the effect of sin by means of sacrifice (Lev. 17:11). We need to explain however, that it is the love of God that is evidence in putting sin away through the blood of the animal victim (Heb. 10:4). God asked for repentance on the part of the worshippers (I Kgs 8:47; Ez. 18:30-31).

The idea of the atonement can be found throughout the New Testament. The atoning work of Christ is viewed from many angles in view of the multiple facets of sin, atonement and salvation.

The words used in the New Testament to describe what Christ has done to reconcile sinners to God include: substitution (Matt. 20:28), propitiation/expiation (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:5), redemption (Gal. 3:13), justification (Rom. 4:25) and reconciliation (Rom. 5:10-11).

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.5

Describe the work of Jesus Christ in terms of the atonement.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our discussion of the person and work of Jesus Christ the Son of God shows that he is fully God in nature, power and function. However, according to the biblical revelation Jesus is also fully human. Some Christological viewpoints that fail to equally assert both divinity and humanity of Christ are inadequate explanations of the mystery of his person and work. As prophet, priest, king and saviour, Jesus is the Lord of the universe.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the doctrine of God the Son. The person of Jesus Christ was studied through his humanity and divinity. Four early Christological debates dealt with are arianism, appollinarianism, nestorianism and monophysitism. The work of Christ was considered from his prophetic, priestly and kingly ministries and the atonement.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Explain three biblical evidences/references each in support of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ.
2. Write a short note on the atonement with special reference to the work of Jesus Christ.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Milne, Bruce (1998) Know the Truth, pp. 161 – 164, 176-177.

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UNIT 4 GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

CONTENTS

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 - Baptism/Fullness of the Spirit
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will examine the third person of the Triune God, the Holy Spirit. The study is usually called pneumatology from the Greek word **pneuma**, spirit. We will examine the person and general activities of the Holy Spirit. This will be followed by some aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian life: regeneration, sanctification, gifts, fruits, baptism/fullness of the Spirit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that, by the end of this unit you should be able to:

Describe the person of the Holy Spirit,

Discuss the general activities of the Holy Spirit,

Explain the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian life, namely, regeneration, sanctification, gifts, fruits and baptism/fullness.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Person of the Holy Spirit

Many Bible scholars agree that the Holy Spirit is a person. Billy Graham (1978, 21) teaches that Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit in John 14, 15,

and 16 as He a person who has intellect, emotions, and will. In the Bible personal properties are predicated of the Spirit: He is endowed understanding or wisdom (I Cor. 2:10) and will (I Cor. 12:11). The Holy Spirit also loves (Romans 15:30). C. I. Scofield (1973, 19-20) says “men are said to act toward the Spirit in ways which would be impossible or absurd if he were not truly a person.” (Isaiah 63:10; Matthew 12:31; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 10:29).

Real personal actions are also attributed to the Holy Spirit: He speaks (I Tim. 4:1; Rev. 2:7); He teaches (Luke 12:12; John 14:26); He commands or exercises authority (Acts 13:2); He intercedes (Romans 8:26). He supervises (Acts 1:2; 8:29; 16:16; 13:4; 20:28; 5:28); He reveals (Acts 1:16; 10:19; 13:2; 21:4, 11; 28:25); He testifies (Acts 20:23); He comforts (Acts 9:31).

The following passive personal properties are also ascribed to the Holy Spirit; He can be tempted (Acts 5:9) and lied to (Acts 5:3); He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:39); He can be blasphemed (Matthew 12:31, 32); He can be insulted (Heb. 10:29).

Personal characters are also ascribed to the Holy Spirit as: the Comforter (John 16:7); the witness (Heb. 10:15; Rom. 8:16); the Justifier and Sanctifier (I Cor. 6:11). Since the “same words, implying personality, are used of him in scripture which are used of other persons,” we affirm therefore that the Holy Spirit is a Person, as distinguished from an energy, power, force, influence, emanation, or manifestation.

However, the Holy Spirit is not only a person, He is a divine person; the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is expressly called God (Acts 5:3, 4; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19, 20). The Holy Spirit is called Jehovah (Luke 1:68, 70 cf. 2 Peter 1:20). The attributes of God the Father and the son are equally ascribed to the Holy Spirit: He is eternal (Hab. 9:14); He is holy (Rom. 1:4), Omniscient (I Cor. 2:11, 12; John 14:26), Omnipotent (Gen. 1:1, 2; Job 33:4), and Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10).

The following works of the Holy Spirit further demonstrate His Godhead: Creation (Job 26:13), Providence (Isaiah 40:13-15; Acts 16:6, 7). Inspiration of the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16 cf. 2 Peter 1:21).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Describe the person of the Holy Spirit using ten (10) bible passages

3.2 The General Activities of the Holy Spirit

Wayne Grudem (1994, 634-649) discussed the work of the Holy Spirit in the world and in the church under some topics, which include: empowering, purifying, revealing and unifying. These activities will now be highlighted.

The Holy Spirit empowers. He gives and sustains life of nature, human and animal (Ps. 104:30; Job 34:14-15). He also gives new life in regeneration (John 3:6-7; 6:63).

He also empowers people for service. For instance, he gave leadership skills and wisdom to Joshua (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9). He anointed and empowered Jesus (Matt. 3:16; 12:28). He also empowered the disciples for ministry (Acts 1:8) as well as for spiritual warfare (Acts 13:9-11).

The Holy Spirit purifies. He convicts the world of sin (John 16:8-11; Acts 7:51). He sanctifies and purifies Christians (I Cor. 6:11).

The Holy Spirit reveals. Human authors of scriptures spoke and wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21; John 16:13). He gives evidence of the presence of God. Examples are the Spirit as a dove descending on Jesus (John 1:32) and as the sound and rush of a mighty wind (Acts 2:2-3). He also guides and directs God's people (Mark 1:12). He provides an atmosphere of peace (Rom. 14:17), and assurance (Rom. 8:16). He teaches and illuminates (John 14:26; 16:13; I Cor. 2:12).

The Holy Spirit Unifies. In the prophecy of Joel (2:28-32) and the fulfillment on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-18, 44-47) we see the Spirit unifying people. The church is thus a fellowship of the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14; Philip 2:1-2).

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.2

Mention four general activities of the Holy Spirit. Discuss one.

3.3 The Work of the Holy Spirit in Christian Life

The aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian life that will be discussed are regeneration, sanctification, gifts, fruits and baptism/fullness.

3.3.1 Regeneration of the Spirit

Lehman Strauss (1976, 35) defined regeneration “as that sovereign act of God whereby He imparts new life to the believing sinner.” Since the natural man is spiritually dead, lacking any spiritual life, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit imparts new life to the believing

sinner. However, since the existence of life logically precedes its birth, this initial operation of the Spirit within the sinner occurs when the Spirit quickens the spiritually dead soul (John 6:63; Romans 8:11).

Once there is a “new creation” (II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10), this “new creature” is stirred into existence by means of faith and the word of God. According to James 1:18, I Peter 1:23 the regenerated soul is then able to act from life and is induced to love and obey God by means of the word of Truth.

3.3.2 Sanctification by the Spirit

After being born of the Spirit (John 3:5) the Spirit also gives the Christian assurance of salvation (Rom. 8:16). The Spirit also helps to conform a Christian to the image of God in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 3:17-18). This involves a process of moral transformation called sanctification. The Christian thus grows in the experience of being “set apart,” “consecrated” to live for God. This comes through a life style characterized by holiness (separation from sin, worldliness, evil, wickedness) and godliness, Christlikeness and spirituality.

3.3.3 Gifts of the Spirit

John Stott (1964, 87) defines spiritual gifts as “certain capacities bestowed by God’s grace and power, which fit people for specific and corresponding service.” The gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed in the following Bible passages; I Cor. 12:4-11, 28-30; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:7-12; I Peter 4:10f. Twenty or more gifts of the Spirit are referred to in the New Testament. Various classifications of spiritual gifts have been made but they fall most simply into two main categories – those that qualify their possessors for the ministry of the word and those which equip them for practical service (cf. I Peter 4:10f).

The nature and use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit show that the Christian life should be characterized by manifestation of spiritual gifts for personal maturity, for edification of the church, and for the fulfillment of the evangelistic task of the church.

3.3.4 Fruit of the Spirit

The Christian lives and grows in the Spirit and in Christian character (Gal. 5:25-26). The Christian growth in the Spirit will manifest in the fruit of the Spirit, a Christlike, spiritual, godly character, characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). A particular manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit is love. It is more excellent than faith, hope and gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 13:1-3, 13). Indeed the operations of the gifts of the spirit need to be governed by/with matured character, fruit of the Spirit. This was the thing lacking in the Corinthian congregation. This is the cause of much tension and schisms in the body of Christ today.

3.3.5 Baptism/Fullness of the Spirit

At conversion a person is regenerated, born and sealed with the Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). The Christian drinks of the Spirit and is baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13). However, apart from this initial experience of the ministries of the Spirit at the beginning of the Christian life, the Christian is expected to be led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14) grow and mature in the Spirit.

The growing Christian who submits to the leadership of the Spirit will experience a post-conversion power and ministry of the Spirit variously described as “baptism”, “fullness” “unction”, “anointing”, “slaying” and “power” of the Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit prophesied by Joel (2:28-32), promised by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11-12) and Jesus (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8) was experienced and fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in the disciples who were full of the Spirit (Acts 2:4).

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.2

Name five aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian life. Discuss two of them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Christianity is life in the Spirit. Along with God the Father and the Son, the Spirit is the author and sustainer of creation and life in general, new creation and life in particular.

Every Christian ought to thirst for the spirit, abide with Jesus and appropriate the blessings of the Spirit (John 7:37-39).

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have engaged in a theological study of the person and work of God the Holy Spirit. The personality and divinity of the Spirit was studied with several biblical passages. The general work of the Spirit in empowering, purifying, revealing and unifying was also

considered. With regard to the Christian life the ministries of the Holy Spirit were examined in regeneration, sanctification, gifts, fruit, and baptism/fullness.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

1. Write a short note on The Person of the Holy Spirit. Use four Bible passages.
2. Highlight two aspects of the work/significance of the Holy Spirit in Christian life.

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UNIT 5 THE TRIUNE GOD

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives

- 3.1 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Nature of Revelation
 - 3.2 The Doctrine of the Bible
 - 3.3 The Doctrine of the Trinity
 - Definition/History
 - Biblical Evidences
 - Explanation of Oneness/Threeness
 - Difficulty/Analogies
 - Importance/Implications
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit concludes the first module on systematic theology with emphasis on the Christian study of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We will first consider the nature of revelation and the doctrine of the Bible. The major part of the main content will deal with the doctrine of the Triune God. We will examine the definition, history, biblical evidence, explanation of the oneness and threeness, difficulty, analogies, importance and implications of Trinity.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Highlight the nature of revelation,
- Describe the characteristics of the Bible,
- Define Trinity and state the Biblical evidences,
- Explain the oneness and threeness of God,
- Discuss the difficulty, analogies, importance and implications of the doctrine of Trinity.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Nature of Revelation

The meaning of revelation is to unveil “something hidden, so that it may be seen and known for what it is.” The principal Old Testament word for

revelation is derived from *gala* which means “nakedness” (Exodus 20:26). The New Testament word is *apocalypso* meaning to make known a religious reality (e.g. Eph. 3:5).

Revelation of God is indispensable for two reasons, if we will know God: we are creatures, and we are sinners. There is thus a wide difference between the being and knowledge of God and that of human beings. These are ontological and epistemological gaps. Sin has also rendered humanity to be spiritually ignorant of God. Therefore God has to reveal himself to us.

The two main branches of God’s self-revelation to man are general and special. The general revelation of God is made to people everywhere through creation/nature, history, and moral experience. The following bible passages support this assertion:

Creation/nature (Psalm 19:1; Rom. 1:20; Acts 14:17).

History (Psalm 47:7-8; 66:7).

Moral experience/conscience (Acts 2:14-16).

Special revelation concerns the miracle of incarnation (the peak or complete modality of revelation (John 1:1, 14) as well as the Bible (the material form of special revelation (John 10:35; Rom. 3:2; 2 Tim. 3:16).

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.1

Write a short note on the nature of revelation from Christian understanding.

3.2 The Doctrine of the Bible

The Bible is the means through which we receive the special revelation of God. The characteristics or attributes of Scripture are:

1. Inspiration can be defined as the “supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God.” (2 Peter 1:19-21). A discussion of the theories of inspiration (Dictation, Accommodation, Supervision) is beyond the scope of this course.
2. Inerrancy: the Bible is “infallible, implying the absence of error.” The Bible as originally given “is fully truthful in all of its teachings.”(Num. 23:19; Psalm 12:6; 119:89, 96; Prov. 30:5, Matt. 24:35).

3. Authority: “all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.” Authority and inerrancy are related. The basis of inerrancy is that God cannot lie or speak falsely (2 Sam. 7:28; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). All Scripture is historically authoritative while some of Scripture is normatively authoritative. This means that while all scripture is inspired and profitable for doctrine some scriptures are culturally conditioned and so may not have universal application. Examples are:

Holy Kiss: Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20;

Christian communism: Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 34-37.

Head covering in public worship: I Cor. 11:4-6, 13-15.

Some other characteristics are: clarity, necessity and sufficiency. More discussion on Bible interpretation is done in Biblical Hermeneutics course.

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.2

Name six characteristics of the Bible. Discuss two of these attributes.

3.3 The Doctrine of the Trinity

The one Supreme God of and in the universe is revealed in the Bible as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, a distinctive feature of Christian theism “is the belief that the personal Creator is as truly three as He is One,” that is, that God is three persons in one substance or essence.

Definition/History

Wayne Grudem (1998, 226) has defined the biblical, Christian doctrine of The Trinity concisely: “God eternally exists as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.” Each person of the Godhead is divine and God is unity in Trinity because the “Godhead is possessed by all three persons equally.”

God is three distinguishable persons. The three persons are the Father, the Son and the Spirit. This means that all the perfections and attributes of God the Father (omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience etc) apply equally to the Son and the Spirit.

The word Trinity means “tri-unity” or “three-in-one”. The term describes an idea that is found and taught in many bible passages. Some of the church Fathers who were at the forefront in leading the church to formulate the doctrine were Tertullian and Athanasius. After series of

discussion and debates the post-apostolic church concluded with the Athanasian creed (Milne, 1998, 76-77): “We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither conforming the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.”

Biblical Evidences

The doctrine of the Trinity is not fully developed in the Old Testament. However, some of the passages that suggest or imply the plurality of the existence of one God are:

God referred to himself in plural terms (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah. 6:8)

One person called “God” or “the Lord” is distinguished from another also said to be God (Psalm 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8; Psalm 110:1 cf. Matt. 22:41-46).

In the New Testament we find a more complete revelation of the Trinity in several events and passages. Some of these are:

At the baptism of Jesus Christ the Son, the Father spoke from heaven, the Spirit descended like a dove (Matt. 3:16-17),

Jesus Christ asks his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19),

The Trinity (Spirit, Lord, God) is the source of spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12:4-6),

The benediction is a Trinitarian expression (2 Cor. 13:14).

Some other relevant passages are: John 14:15-23; Eph. 1:1-14; 4:4-6; I Peter 1:2; Jude 20-21.

Explanation

In the Bible, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons (John 1:1-2; 17:24). As distinct persons the Son and the Spirit intercede for us before God (I John 2:1; Rom. 8:27). The word of God also asserts that each person of the Godhead is divine: The Father is truly God (Gen. 1:1; Matt. 6:8f; Gal. 1:1); The Son is fully God (John 1:1-4; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:8-10); The Holy Spirit is clearly God (Psalm 139:7-8; Acts 5:3-4; I Cor. 2:10-11).

However, while each member of the Godhead is divine there is one God. Both the Old and New Testaments affirm the oneness of God. (See Deut. 6:4-5; Ex. 15:11; Isa. 45:5-6, 21-22. Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:6; I Tim. 2:5.).

Some scholars make a distinction between the Father as the Creator, the Son as the Saviour and the Spirit as the Comforter. However, all the three persons are equally involved in creation (Gen. 1:1; John 1:3; Isa. 40:13). The three are also involved in recreation/ redemption (Eph. 1:4, 5, 11 – the Father; Eph. 1:3, 7, 8 – the Son; Eph. 1:13, 14- the Spirit). We affirm, therefore, that while the role of one may be emphasized at a particular period in a particular time the three are always together.

Difficulty/Analogies

One reason why it is difficult to adequately explain the doctrine of Trinity is that it has no equivalence in nature and human experience. Human language is not adequate to describe the revelation of God. Some analogies have been used in church history to describe the revelation of the Triune God. Some examples will be cited:

The memory, understanding and will in the individual human person are united and yet distinct;

A tree has three parts: the root, trunk and branches;

Water exists in three forms (steam – gas, liquid and ice-solid);

An egg is made up of: yolk, white and shell.

While these analogies may be useful they are inadequate and may even be misleading. They may be wrongly interpreted for tritheism (a belief in three Gods) or modalism (God exists in only one form at a time).

Importance/Implications

According to Grudem (1994, 256) Trinity teaches us unity in diversity. This lesson applies to human relationships. In Christian marriage union, two distinct peoples are joined together to become one (Matt. 19:5). In the church many members constitute one body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12).

The doctrine of Trinity also has implications for the biblical understanding of sin and salvation. The reason Jesus can forgive and atone for our sin is because he is God (Mark 2:5-7). It is also the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that makes a person to become a child of God (John 1:12-13). There is communion and fellowship within Godhead. Human beings are created in the image of God. As a community concept, human beings are thus social and relational beings like God. This is the communal importance of the Trinity.

Self – Assessment Exercise 3.3

How will you explain the doctrine of the Triune God to a non christian?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Perhaps the best approach to explain the Trinity is to accept it as a paradox, and a mystery. God appears to be more complex than we realized. We admit that the nature of God is not a mystery to be resolved. It is an ontology (existence, life) to imitate. In humility we admit that we do not understand God completely (Deut. 29:29).

We cannot but agree with the submission of Bruce Milne (1998, 79): “For all its difficulty, the Trinity is simply the price to be paid for having a God who is great enough to command our worship and service”. This revelation of God should inspire us then to worship God as in the vision of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:3) and John (Rev. 4:8) and sing with Reginald Heber:

Ho-ly, ho-ly, ho-ly, Lord God Al-might-y!
God in three Per-sons bless-ed Trin-i-ty!

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied the nature of revelation and the doctrine of the Bible. The Christian doctrine of the Triune God was also examined under: definition/history, biblical evidences, explanation of oneness/threeness, difficulty/analogies, and importance/implications.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Write a concise essay on the doctrine of Trinity with emphasis on: Definition, Biblical Evidences (at least eight from both the OT/NT) and Importance.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 2

INTRODUCTION

- Unit 1 Various Views of Origin of Life
- Unit 2 Biblical Teaching on Creation
- Unit 3 The Spirit World
- Unit 4 Providence 1 – Preservation, Cooperation

- and Government
- Unit 5 Providence I – Theodicy (Evil), Miracles and Prayer

UNIT 1 VARIOUS VIEWS OF ORIGIN OF LIFE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Main Content
 - 3.1 Theories of Origin of Life I
 - 3.2 Theories of Origin of Life II
 - 3.3 The Theory of Evolution I – Definition and Explanation
 - 3.4 The Theory of Evolution II – Evidence and Reflection
 - 3.5 African Myths of Creation
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Readings
- 7.0 Tutor – Marked Assignments

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Having examined the theology of Trinity in the last module this module will consider the theology of creation. The two major parts are the work of God in creating the universe and in sustaining it. The module begins with this unit by studying the various views of the origin of life with particular emphasis on biblical account of creation and the scientific theory of evolution. Angels, Satan and demons will also be considered as The Spirit World. The module will end with two units on the doctrine of continuing work of God called providence.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of the word theory with regard to the origin of life,
- Mention the four categories of “theory” of origin of life,

Define and discuss the theory of organic evolution,
State the sources of evidence in support of evolution,
Evaluate the theory of evolution,
Describe and critique African myths of creation.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Theories of Origin of Life I

The origin of life is one of the most fundamental and least understood issues of human existence. The issue is central to many scientific and philosophical problems. Various disciplines do encounter one another at this point. How life originated is of interest in religious studies as well as to biological sciences. A study of the origin of life also has potentials for dialogue between the Christian faith and various sciences.

Before we highlight the different theories of origin of life it is necessary for us to first of all consider the meaning of the word theory. A theory can be defined as “a reasonably or scientifically acceptable explanation for a fact or event, which has not been proven to be true” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, New Edition, 1987, p.1100). Think about that definition.

Many theories of the origin of life have been formulated across the ages. The four categories, according to Carl (Edward) Sagan (1983, p. 900) will now be discussed. They are:

That life originated from a supernatural event. This is the traditional view of some philosophies and most religions. Almost every religion use creation stories to explain how life originated. In this unit I will also touch on creation myths in African worldview.

That simple forms of life arose “spontaneously and readily from non-living matter.” For instance, The Theory of Panspermia, according to Harold J. Morowitz (1986, 244), “states that spores from some other part of the universe landed on the earth and began to develop.”

The concern that is yet to be adequately answered is how life got into those spores from some other parts of the universe. It is yet to be established if there are living things on other planets.

This theory runs into the problem of how living things can arise from non-living matters. It has been proven from various scientific experiments from 1600s through 1800s that life can only come from existing life. The other two theories will be considered in the next section.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

What is the meaning of “theory” with regard to the origin of life? Give one example.

3.2 Theories of Origin of Life II

Two more theories of origin of life will be presented in this section. They are:

That life originated through some chemical reactions. This biochemical theory “claims that life developed through a series of spontaneous chemical reactions in the atmosphere and oceans in the earth’s history.” (Morowitz, 1986, 244-245). It is theorized that sunlight, lightning and volcanoes produced energy that powered reactions among compounds like ammonia, methane and water. Those reactions produced biological molecules like sugars and amino acids which formed complex molecules and in turn were organized into the first microscopic, unicellular organisms.

Another related theory is that early forms of life must have developed in ocean or pools. This is “because of a rough similarity between the salt contents of blood and of sea water” (Sagan, 1983, 902). It is yet to be experimented and practically demonstrated, however, how biological molecules can be organized into cell-like organisms.

That life as we know it started at the same time with matter when the earth originated. This theory differs from most others that suggest that there was a wide period between the time the earth was formed and when life began. The theory on the other hand almost equates matter with life. This excessive identification of non-living nature with living things and beings led to the beliefs about God described as pantheism and panentheism (Refer to Module 1, Unit 2, Section 3.1.1).

From the study thus far we can make a preliminary comment, namely, that science is not sure of the origin of life. The theories are yet to be scientifically proven. More will be discussed in the next section about the theory of evolution.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Mention the four categories of theory of origin of life.

3.3 The Theory of Evolution I – Definition and Explanation

While the word evolution refers to any change and development that takes place gradually over a long process we will use it in this study, in the most popular sense, to refer to how life was formed and had developed on the earth. Whereas Charles Darwin built on the work of others, the theory of evolution is usually associated with his publication of **Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection** in 1859. According to Brown (1980, 330) Darwin's theory of organic evolution is "The idea that living things evolved from non-living matter and changed through the ages."

The theory of evolution explains that after the crust of the earth has formed and cooled about three or four billion years ago, the first simple single-celled organisms appeared. These organisms later turned to complex, multi-cellular living things as they developed necessary characteristics to adapt to their environment. It is proposed that this is the process that produced thousands of species that we see on the earth today.

Two fundamental facts of nature explained by evolution are: variety of living organisms and their basic similarities. The two processes that govern evolution are Natural Selection and Heredity. Natural selection is commonly known as the survival of the fittest. The organisms that survive and leave descendants are those that are best suited to their environment. Characteristics are passed on from parents to offspring through hereditary.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Write a short note on the theory of organic evolution.

3.4 The Theory of Evolution II – Evidence and Reflection

The theory of evolution is based on certain evidence. Brown (1986, 333-335) and Gavin De Beer (1983, 8-10) offer the following sources of evidence that support organic evolutionary process:

- Paleontology – the fossil remains or traces of past organisms preserved in rocks.

- Adaptations in organisms to their environment,

- Geographic distribution of species. Many species of plants and animals are distributed randomly throughout the world,

- Structural similarities e.g. the forelimbs of a human being, a bird and a frog. While these have different sizes and functions they have the same bones, muscles and nerves,

- Biochemical similarities of species. For example similar molecules of insulin are found in cattle, sheep, horse and pig,

Embryology. The study of the way organisms develop during the early stages of life. Embryos of frogs, chickens and pigs are nearly identical.

Behaviour. “Similarities between different species affirm their community of descent,” e.g. nest building in ants, bees and wasps.

We will now reflect critically on the theory of evolution as an explanation of the origin of life. The reflection will consist of both observation and evaluation.

Evolution is not only a biological science. It is also a philosophy of reality as a process. It is based on the old idea that everything is always in the process of change, and that change is reality. A good example is the philosophy of science of Henri Bergson as seen in his metaphysical concept of creative evolution.

The evolution theory lacks adequate scientific proof. That is why it is a theory and not a law. Unfortunately, according to *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (1983, 8), many people today do not know that “Darwin himself never claimed to provide proof of evolution or of the origin of species; what he did claim was that if evolution has occurred a number of otherwise explicable facts are readily explained.”

Some people think that evolutionary theory is in direct conflict with the biblical account of creation, some others think that the two are compatible. The relationship between the theory of evolution and the Bible account of origin of life will be explored more in the next unit.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

State five sources of evidence that support the theory of evolution. Evaluate the theory as well.

3.5 African Myths of Origin

In everyday use, a myth is “an ancient story that is based on popular beliefs or that explains natural or historical events” (**Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English**, New Edition, 1987, 689). Virtually every ethnic group in Africa has a myth of origin or creation. Most of the myths according to Joseph Hearley and Donald Sybertz (1996, 62) concern: “a. Creation of the world, especially human beings, animals and the universe. b. Separation of God and human beings. c.

Origin of death.”

African myths of origin acknowledge God as the creator of the universe. While there are differences in the myths of creations most of them in Yoruba land in Nigeria, assert that the world as we know it now was initially a body of water. God used an animal (such as hen or pigeon) to spread loose earth that solidified as ground. God also molded human beings directly or gave the task to his arch-divinity “Obatala” who fashioned the physical frame while God gave the breath.

What is the significance of African myths of origin? Laurenti Magesa (1997, 249) reasons that the issue of creation is a fundamental element of African religious life. He said it means that, “Created reality, including humanity, exists on account of the will of God. To continue to live peacefully, therefore, created reality must organize itself according to that will which God established for it from the very beginning.”

Creation myths like these are not only the basis of African religion but also of African life, morality/ethics and relationships. If God did not bring the universe into existence how do we account for African value of relationships with God, with other beings and with non-living things?

It is necessary at this juncture to state that this myth of origin and other myths are been critiqued today as being merely symbolic. It is sufficient for us to assert that even if the historicity of the creation myth is rejected, in the African worldview, the validity remains. The myth teaches an abiding lesson, namely, that God is the Creator/Maker, Sources, Owner, Giver and Sustainer of life and the entire universe. More will be said about demythologization in the next module on the theology of humankind.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.5

Most African myths of creation teach that life originated from God. Discuss.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The existence of so many theories of origin of life shows that the subject is of interest to human beings. Since the issue is approached from diverse angles the theories are also difficult to synthesise or reconcile. While natural science explains that matter and life arose on its own, religious studies affirm a divine origin of non-living and living things.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have examined some theories of origin of life: from a supernatural event, spontaneously from non-living matter, through some chemical reactions, matter and life arose together. Particular emphasizes

were given to the theory of evolution and African creation myths, which were described, followed by brief critical comments. The study of origin of life continues in the next unit with the biblical study of creation and its relationship with the scientific theory of evolution.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What is a theory? Mention four categories of theory of origin of life.
2. Most African myths of creation teach that life originated from God. Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 BIBLICAL TEACHING ON CREATION

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Features of Biblical Teaching on Creation I
 - 3.2 Features of Biblical Teaching on Creation II
 - 3.3 The Creation Doctrine and Some Scientific Issues
 - 3.4 Attempts to Reconcile Creation Doctrine and Scientific Evolution
 - 3.5 Productive Dialogue Between Faith and Science
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignments

7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Having examined the various theories of origin of life in the last unit we will now study the Biblical teaching on creation. This will include implications and significance of the doctrine. The approaches taken by various theologians with regard to the relationship between the Bible account of creation and the theory of evolution will also be highlighted. The unit will end with an evaluation of the relationship between the scientific investigation and religious interpretation with references to the understanding of creation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- State the features of the biblical teaching on creation,
- Discuss the concept of “ex nihilo” in the Christian doctrine of creation,
- Identify the scientific issues involved in the creation doctrine,
- Explain the attempts to reconcile creation doctrine and scientific evolution,
- Describe the concept of progressive creationism,
- Analyse and evaluate the relationship between Christian faith and science.

3.0 CONTENT

3.1 Features of Biblical Teaching on Creation I

A categorical assertion of the Bible (in Genesis 1:1-2) is that the Supreme God is the Creator of the universe (the heavens and the earth). Christian faith teaches that the world came into existence by creation. Genesis 1:2-3:25 further elaborates on Genesis 1:1-2 and provides a detailed explanation of the work of creation. There are at least four important elements in the Genesis account of creation. They will now be highlighted:

The word translated “God” is the Hebrew Noun “Elohim” which is plural. In the Old Testament this was a normal usage to refer to the one true God. It is instructive that in this very first sentence we have hint of the plural nature of God. The entire Biblical revelation ascribe the work of creation to God the Father (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 96:5; Jer. 10:11-12), the Son (John 1:2; Heb. 1:10) and the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Isaiah 40:12-13).

The Hebrew verb “bara” translated “create” is used only of divine activity, never of human action. This observation is interpreted theologically by Erickson (1998, 394) thus: “the verb expresses the uniqueness of God’s work as contrasted with human fashioning and making various objects out of already existing materials.”

God also created “out of nothing,” without using any preexisting material. Nothing is not something. The idea is called creation “ex nihilo” and it is found in several other Bible passages. (Rom. 4:17; 2 Cor. 4:6; Heb. 11:3). This means that the world or creation as we know it now did not exist prior to that time. God did not use any pre-existent matter to create the world.

God merely spoke according to his will and the universe came to pass. Some other features of the creation account will be examined in the next section.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Write a short note on the biblical concept of creation “ex nihilo”.

3.2 Features of Biblical Teaching on Creation II

In this section we shall continue to consider some other elements of the creation record found in the Bible.

God created “the heavens and the earth” means that God created everything that is part of creation. The universal, all inclusive nature of the creative work of God is affirmed in several other bible passages such as Isaiah. 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24; Revelation. 10:6. In John 1:3 we find a denial to the contrary, to show that there is no part of the universe that has come into existence through any other person or means. The last two features to be examined are implications of the doctrine.

When God created everything, everything is declared good (Gen. 1:9, 12, 18, 25, 31). No part of creation is inherently evil. While the devil and his agents may corrupt different aspects of creation, God's majesty is: sovereign over the entire creation (Ps. 97:1; 99:1). This theology of creation indicates that God is above creation. This is called the Transcendence of God. However, God is present, Immanent with the creation to sustain it. Therefore, every part of creation, living and non- living, ought to worship and glorify God (Ps. 19:1; 150:6).

This doctrine implies that God is the Only and Ultimate reality in the universe. God is the source of being, existence and life of living creatures. God is however self-existent. The being of God is supreme and it does not depend on any other being (John 5:26).

Human life thus has meaning only in God and through God. A life that is not God-centered is thus truly vanity, meaningless, a mistake, and a tragedy (Ecc. 1:2; 2:11, 26; 3:19; 4:8). One of the greatest achievements of human existence is to fear God (Ecc. 12:13-14). This is a practical significance of the doctrine of creation.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

State the four main features of the biblical teaching on creation.

3.3 The Creation Doctrine and Some Scientific Issues

The task of this section is to highlight some conflict issues between the scientific theories of the origin of life and the biblical teaching on creation.

For a more exhaustive discussion of this subject I refer you to Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (1994, 273-307). Some of the problem issues that he dealt with are:

Is there a "Gap" between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 or between 1:2 and 1:3? (Read the verses. Can you see the problem?)

The age of the Earth. Is it about 4½ billion years as proposed by scientists or about ten to twenty thousand years?

Are there gaps in the genealogies of the Bible? For instance compare 1 Chronicles 3:10-12 with Matthew 1:8-9.

What is the correct age of the human race? Is it 2.5 million years as claimed by science or 12 thousand years (10,000 B.C. from geological evidence)?

Did dinosaurs become extinct about 65 million years ago or did they perish in the flood in the days of Noah? (Gen. 6-9). Why is it that the name is not found in the list of animals in the Bible? Was it named by Adam? (Gen. 2:19-20).

Are the six days of creation twenty-four hours each? Or did the “day” stand for a period of time that may be as long as a week, month, year(s)? (see Gen. 2:4; 2Peter 3:8).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Mention six scientific issues involved in the creation doctrine.

3.4 Attempts to Reconcile Creation Doctrine and Scientific Evolution

In view of the conflicts stated in the last section some biblical scholars have held tenaciously to the biblical account of creation without any concession for the scientific theories. Their view is sometime called fiat/direct creationism. At the very opposite direction some natural scientists do not see any merit in the biblical account of creation. They stay completely with their theory of organic evolution. Their position is called evolutionism. However, some theologians and scientists try to combine the merits of the two approaches. The three are called deistic evolution, theistic evolution and progressive creationism.

Progressive creationism is the idea that “God created in a series of act over a long period of time. He created the first member of each “kind.” That grouping may have been as broad as the order or as narrow as the genus.. for example, God may have created the first member of the cat family. From it developed lions, tigers, leopards and just plain domesticated cats” (Erickson, 1998, p. 409).

In other words, this view affirms that God created the universe but gives allowance for micro evolution (development within kinds) to have taken place. To me this kind of evolutionary creation is a compromise that makes both biblical faith and scientific sense.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Describe “progressive creationism” as an attempt to reconcile creation doctrine and scientific evolution.

3.1.5 Productive Dialogue Between Faith and Science

Whatever positions anybody holds on creation or evolution prejudice must be avoided in this matter. God is the source of all truths, religious or scientific. I believe that ultimately there is no clash between

faith/religion and science, between creation and evolution. Religion and science are two different spheres of human endeavours that can compliment each another. Science investigates, experiments, proposes and theorizes. Religion interprets on the basis of revelation. Each must accept its limitations.

It is wrong to interpret the Bible as a document of natural, physical science. David and Pat Alexandria (1973, 127) cautioned well: It “is not a treatise on geology, biology, or any other science. We are not told when creation took place, nor are we given details as to how God brought the earth and life into being, nor how long it all took.” As a systematic study of truth, theology can also be defined as “the science of religion.” However, it is wrong to try to study the Bible account of creation (a theological subject) with the tools of biological sciences. The truth of the matter is that the physical scientific method is valid only for those realities which are measurable in physical terms. Science must admit its limitation to carry out empirical investigation on some matters of religion and revelation. It is unscientific to ignore or reject a concept just because it is beyond a particular scientific approach. This attitude, according to David Cairns (1967, 24), is due to: “The prestige of science and technology which tempts man to think that scientific thought is the paradigm of all knowing and that statements which cannot stand up to a scientific kind of verification are illusion or nonsense”.

An important valid theological emphasis of Genesis narration is that God created the physical and spiritual universe out of nothing (Latin: *ex nihilo*). The creative acts of God are introduced by a special verb (Hebrew *bara*) of which God is always the subject. The verb never has an object naming material out of which God creates. He creates from nothing. How can science investigate that kind of revelation?

In this context, all scientists, even evolutionists, must admit that evolution calls for creation. From the point of view of science, the species of life and the entire universe could not have evolved from nothing. New species can develop from old species. An objective reading shows various stages from creation *ex nihilo* (Genesis 1:1) to the appearance of man (Genesis 1:27). The days of Genesis may be periods of time after all. Science must be accorded its own respect. Religion must not be afraid or skeptical of scientific efforts.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.5

Analyse and evaluate the relationship between faith and science (in the context of creation and evolution).

4.0 CONCLUSION

As a theologian who has had a little exposure to the study of biochemical science the writer holds the opinion that generally there is no fundamental conflict between Christian religion and scientific investigation. There is a merit in the thought that “the so-called conflicts of science and the Bible are often conflicts between interpretation of the facts,” conflicts between dogmatic biblicism and irrational scientism (a philosophic interpretation of facts).

B. A. Coulson, a Professor of Applied Mathematics at Oxford University and an eminent Methodist has also asserted (1955, 9) “that our science and our religion need not be at loggerheads, and that each can help the other to an enrichment of human life.” Evolution theory has not disproved creation and some aspects of the two views are reconcilable.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit you have been introduced to the Christian doctrine of creation. The unit started with features of the biblical teaching on creation with particular attention on the Genesis account. Some scientific issues that relate to the doctrine of creation were then highlighted. This was followed by a discussion of the attempt being made to reconcile creation doctrine and scientific evolution. The last section of the unit is productive dialogue between faith and science.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. State the four main features of the biblical teaching on creation.
2. Write a short note on “Progressive Creationism.”

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 THE SPIRIT WORLD

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Existence, Groups and Nature of Angels
 - 3.2 Activities of Angels
 - 3.3 Angels and African/Euro-American Worldviews
 - 3.4 The Identity and Activities of Satan
 - 3.5 The Identity, Activities, Types and Origin of Demons
 - 3.6 Biblical Doctrine of Satan Demons and African Belief
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Bible affirms the reality of the spirit world. The beings who inhabit this world other than human beings according to Milne (1998, 98) are “angels, spirits, demons, cherubim, seraphim, sons of God, principalities, powers, thrones, dominions (Isaiah 6:2f; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 6:12f).” This section will concern itself with creation in relation to angels, Satan and demons.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the existence, groups and nature of angels.
- Highlight some of the activities of angels.
- Explain if the Biblical doctrine of angels is compatible with African and Euro-American worldviews.
- Describe the activities of Satan.
- Discuss various types of demonic affliction.
- Explain the relationship between the biblical doctrine of Satan/Demons and African belief.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Nature of Angels

The existence of angels is affirmed in the teaching of Jesus, Paul and other disciples. The Bible is the chief source for the ideas about the spirit world presented in this unit. Angels are part of the spirit beings called the heavenly hosts that were created by God before he created the universe nor human beings (Psalm 148:2-5).

The word “angel” is derived from Hebrew (malak) and Greek (angelos), which always mean “messenger.” Angels are God’s messengers and do his work and will (Heb. 1:14). They are also referred to sometimes in the Bible as ‘stars’ (Job 38:4, 7; Rev. 12:4, 9) or ‘sons of God’ (Job 1:6; 38:70). It should be clarified however that the phrase “angel of the covenant” or “angel of the Lord” is usually identified with God or the Second Person of the Trinity (Gen. 31:13; 32:30; Jud. 2:1-5; 6:11).

The two main groups of angels described in the Bible are holy angels and the evil angels. The holy angels are large in number. They are servants of God (Psalm 103:20-21; Mark 8:38). The evil angels, identified as evil spirits or demons, are the ones that fell in rebellion along with Satan and may be one third of the total number of angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:4). What will be said in particular section concerns the holy angels.

Angels were created to be holy and beautiful (Eze. 28:12-13; Mark 8:38). They worship and serve God in heaven (Isaiah 6: Rev. 5:11, 12; 8:3). They are pure and swiftly follow and obey the orders of God (Psalm 103:20). They possess great knowledge, might and power (Luke 1:13-17; Acts 12:7, 10; Isaiah 37:36; Psalm 103:20; Rev. 20:2, 10; 16:3-4; Rom. 6:22; Matt. 28:2). Angels can appear to men in their heavenly glory (Dan. 10:4-8; Rev. 10:1-2) as well as in human form (Gen. 18:2; 19:13) and in other ways (Matt. 1:20; Luke 2:13; I Cor. 6:3).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Write a short note on the nature of Angels.

3.2 Activities of Angels

Angels perform many activities to help the people of God.

They guard the nation of Israel (Dan. 11:1; 12:1; Ezekiel 9:1);

They minister to the Church of Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:14);

Angels guard and protect the people of God in many situations (Psalm 34:7; Psalm 91:11; Acts 5:17-19; 17:22-24);

They strengthen the people of God physically and mentally (2 Kings 19:5-8; Dan. 10:16-18; Luke 22:43);

They guide Christian believers in the task of evangelism (Acts 8:26; 10:3-7);

They protect and deliver from danger (Gen. 19:9-11; 16; 2 Kings 6:17-18);

They act as agents to help saints receive answers to their prayers (Dan. 10:12; Luke 22:42-43; Acts 12:5, 7);

They can affect human events and nature (2 Samuel 24:15-16; Isaiah 37:36; Rev. 7:1; 8:6-7; 16:3-4, 8);

They escort Christian believers who die to heaven (Luke 16:22);

They will accompany Jesus Christ at his second coming (Matt. 13:41-42; 25:41, 46).

We have no reason to restrict the activities described above to the past. Several contemporary stories of people who have encountered angels have been told.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Highlight six activities of angels with biblical support.

3.3 Angels and African/Euro-American Worldviews

There is a need for us to consider the biblical teaching on angels from the viewpoints of African and western cultures. There are similarities and differences between the biblical teachings about angels and the African beliefs about divinities and nature gods. The Bible makes a distinction between the spirits of the departed dead and the angels (Luke 16:22; 20:34-36; Hebrews 12:22-23). Angels should not be identified with the spirits of the dead.

In African Traditional Religions, the spirits can be persuaded, especially, through the offer of sacrifices to act on behalf of man. In contrast to this practice the Bible strongly warns and forbids human beings not to worship angels (Col.2:18; Rev. 29:10; 22:8-9).

It should be pointed out as well that much of what have been described above conflict with the “Western worldview which has a blindspot” concerning “subjects related to spirits, mediums, apparitions and the like.” The typical Euro-American is preoccupied with the things he can see.

This is quiet unfortunate as William Evans complained (1974, 215): “It would be sad indeed if we should allow ourselves to be such victims of sense perception and so materialistic that we should refuse to believe in an order of spiritual beings simply because they were beyond our sight and touch.”

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Is the Biblical doctrine of angels compatible with African and Euro-American worldviews? Explain.

3.4 The Identity and Activities of Satan

Satan is “the personal being who is the source of all evil,” and the head of a kingdom of the spirit world, an organised system that is opposed to

God, God's plans and God's purposes. Satan is called various names in the Bible: prince of devil (Matt. 9:34; 12:24); prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2); prince of this world (John 14:30; 1 Cor. 2:6-8); the god of this age or world (2 Cor. 4:4).

Some of the activities of Satan are to steal, kill, destroy, deceive, tempt man to sin and do evil. Satan deceived man and made man to disobey God. According to Edward N. Gross (1990, 112), "The great weapon that Satan employs in his attacks is sin in all its forms. The sinful nature of every human being, Christian and non-Christian, leans towards obeying Satan's commands and suggestions (Matt. 16:23). The devil captures and leads people to commit sin, to do evil. Scanlan and Cirner explain further (1980, 15): "Sins, unwanted habits, physical illness, emotional wounds, psychological problems, "bad luck," disunity in relationships, problems in relating to God, fears, and compulsions are just some of the ways Satan wages war against the children of God."

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

State and describe three activities of Satan.

3.5 The Identity, Activities, Types and Origin of Demons

The identity and activities of demons (also called evil, foul, unclean spirits) are very close to that of Satan. Demons are evil angels or spirits who sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world. They possess traits normally applied to personality: knowledge, emotion, speech and will (Matt. 1:24; Acts 19:15; James 2:19; Matt. 12:44).

L. Grant McClung Jr. (1990, 207-208) has suggested the types and orders of demons, from his study of Pentecostal literature. While it is traditional to think of Satan and his evil agents as angels who sinned and lost their place in heaven in view of some Bible references, there are three principal theories for the origin of demons. The three theories are as follows:

1. "That demons are disembodied spirits of inhabitants of a Pre-Adamic earth" (Gen. 1:1-2; Ezek. 28:14; Isa. 14:13-14; Rev. 12:8, 9),
2. "That demons are the offspring of angels and antediluvian women" (Gen. 6.1-4; Jude 6, 7; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7)
3. "That demons are fallen angels" (Matt. 12:24; 25:41; Rev. 12:4, 7, 9; Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4)

When a person has “a demon” (Matthew 11:18), or is “demonized” (Mark 5:15), he is often described as being demon possessed. The nature and extent of demonic affliction can be classified as oppression, depression, obsession and possession. The torture and affliction of Job (1-2) is an example of Satanic oppression. Prophet Elijah became depressed (1 Kings 19:1-5) when Jezebel threatened him by her gods. King Saul was obsessed by continue torture of evil spirits (1 Sam. 16:23; 18:10). A good example of demonic possession is found in Luke 8:2. Prayer is the major weapon of the Christian in spiritual warfare against Satan and demons. In prayer, evil spirits are cast out in the name of Jesus.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.5

Mention four types of demonic affliction. Give one biblical example of each.

3.6 Christian Doctrine of Satan/Demons and African Belief

Much of what have been presented as the biblical doctrine of Satan and demons correspond with the African understanding. It is necessary however for us to further comment on the identity of Satan and the spirits from the perspective of African Traditional understanding.

It appears as if the biblical and Christian concept of Satan is not present in African Traditional Religion. For example, in Yoruba mythology, Esu (usually thought of as the biblical Satan) is one of the principal divinities of God. In other words Esu is not outright evil. Esu’s chief function is to run errands (good or evil) for both men and divinities. This means that in the words of Awolalu (1979, 28), “the Yoruba world does not know of totally opposing forces – one representing evil and the other good.

Esu is not the personal embodiment of evil standing on opposition to goodness.” Witchcraft is the embodiment of evil in African societies.

In a similar manner, it is wrong to equate the biblical idea of evil spirits (demons) with the belief in divinities and spirits of the traditional African worldview. While the intention is not to justify the worship of the divinities and spirits, it should be stated nonetheless that they are more of nature gods and goddess which are equivalent to gods like Chemosh, Molech, Dagon, Ashtoreth and Nisroch in the Old Testament.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.6

Explain the relationship between the biblical doctrine of Satan/Demons and that of African belief.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The study of the spirit world that has been done in this section shows that angels, Satan and demons are part and parcel of the universe. Not only this, their existence and activities affect human beings both positively and negatively. Satan was especially involved in the biblical story of the fall of human beings that will be discussed in the next module. It is sufficient at this juncture that we should be open to receive any divine help through angelic beings. We should also learn how to lead a victorious life over Satan and demons.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied an important aspect of creation called the spirit world. The existence, groups, nature and activities of angels were examined. The unit also studied the identity, activities of Satan as well as the identity, activities, types and origin of demons. This biblical teaching on the spirit world was also examined in relation to African and Western cultures.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- 1 Highlight six activities of angels with biblical support.
- 2 Mention four types of demonic affliction. Give one biblical example of each.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Milne, Bruce (1998) Know the Truth, pp. 98-100.

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UNIT 4 PROVIDENCE I – PRESERVATION, COOPERATION AND GOVERNMENT

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Meaning of Providence
 - 3.2 Providence as Preservation
 - 3.3 Providence as Cooperation
 - 3.4 Providence as Government
 - 3.5 The Significance of Providence
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary

- 6.0 References/Further Readings
- 7.0 Tutor – Marked Assignments

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of this module it was discussed that, while there are various views of the origin of the universe, Christian theology affirms that God is the creator of the world. God is also the Owner, Sustainer and Controller of the world. Moreover, physical and material elements as well as spirit and human beings cannot thwart the purpose, plan and intention of God for the universe. This is the background to the study of providence that this unit and the next examine.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define the Christian doctrine of providence,
- State the three aspects of the doctrine of providence,
- Explain preservation as an aspect of providence,
- Discuss providence as cooperation with some biblical evidences,
- Describe the governmental activities of God in the universe,
- State the significance of the doctrine of providence.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Meaning of Providence

In theological use providence is derived from the Latin word ‘providere’ which means that God foresees the future and God is directing the affairs of the world according to his intention for the future. Millard J. Erickson (1998, 413) defines the Christian doctrine of providence as “the continuing action of God by which he preserves in existence the creation he has brought into being, and guides it to his intended purposes for it.”

Providence is therefore the part of Christian theology that deals with the continuing relationship of God with the creation. In line with our previous discussion of the sovereignty and omnipotence of God providence means that God is able to sustain what he has created. The

doctrine refutes the ideas of deism and determinism or fatalism. Deism denies the controlling presence of God in the world. We believe that God is actively involved in the preservation of the creation. Determinism is the idea that happenings in the world are determined by chance or by impersonal fate.

The three aspects of the doctrine of providence are: preservation, that God is sustaining the world; concurrence or cooperation, that God is operating the creation; and government, that God is directing and guiding the universe. Some theologians, however, prefer to discuss and combine the first two aspects together as preservation. In the subsequent units you will be introduced to these various dimensions of providence.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Define the Christian doctrine of providence. State the three aspects of the doctrine.

3.2 Providence as Preservation

A very important aspect of providence is preservation, that is, that God is keeping or maintaining all created things in existence. One major means of preservation is protection against harm and destruction. The Bible is our source for the formulation of the doctrine of providence. Please read some of the references for each aspect of providence that will be presented now.

Creation is not self-sufficient and neither do created things have innate power to keep themselves going. God is responsible not only for origination but also for the continuation of all things. The universe is preserved by God (Read Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).

Individual living things (plants, animals and human beings) also depend on the care of God for their preservation (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 145:16). The Lord created and preserves plants as seen in the creation story (Gen. 1:11-12; 2:5) and in the experience of Jonah (4:6-7). We also learn the same lesson in one of the teachings of Jesus (Matt. 15:13). The Lord also preserves all animals, as well as men and women (Psalm 36:6 cf. Matthew 10:29).

God's preserving hand is especially seen on human beings created in his image. When God's people pass through difficult and dangerous experiences, trial or persecution God preserves them. In Isaiah 43:2 God promised to see his people through waters and fire of life. This verse probably alluded to the experience of the Israelites made to cross the Red Sea and the Jordan River (Ex. 14:21-22; Jos. 3:14-17).

It was also fulfilled literally in the experience of the three Hebrews (Dan. 3:25-27).

More Examples of Preservation

1. God preserved the life of Joseph through difficult experiences (hatred, slavery and prison). Read Gen. 50:20.
2. God preserved the life of Moses miraculously through the faith of his parents (Ex. 2:1-4; Heb. 11:23) and the favour of Pharaoh's daughter (Ex. 2:5-10).
3. God preserved the Israelites in diverse ways: tyranny and oppression in Egypt (Ex. 1:1-22), protection and provision in the wilderness (Deut. 29:5), protection from extermination while in Persia (Esther 8 and 9) regathering from different parts of the earth (Matt. 24:32-33).
4. God preserved Daniel when he was thrown into a den of lions such that he was not harmed (Dan. 6:16:23).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Explain preservation as an aspect of the Christian doctrine of providence.

3.3 Providence as Cooperation

Concurrence or cooperation is the aspect of providence and preservation that deals with how God maintains the world by providing for the needs of the elements or members of the creation. Wayne Grudem (1994, 317) defines concurrence as "God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do." We will now give the biblical evidence for this doctrine as done further by Grudem.

God is responsible for natural events of life. He makes the sun to rise and sends rain (Matt. 5:45). This is why human beings pray to God for rainfall when there is famine (2 Cor. 7:13-14). God commands snow, ice, lightning (Job 37:6-13; Ps. 135:7).

God provides food for birds of the air and animals of the field (Matt. 6:26; Ps. 104:27-29; 145:15). While human beings work, they are expected to also look unto God to bless their efforts and meet their needs (Gen. 2:15; Matt. 6:11).

Events of life are not happening arbitrarily, haphazardly or by chance. God determines them (Prov. 16:33). Human beings can plant and water a seed but only God can make it germinate, grow and bear

fruits (1 Cor. 3:6-7). This shows that human efforts are vanity without the blessing of God (Ps. 127:1-2).

The relationship between the providence of God and evil in the world will be considered in the next section.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Discuss providence as cooperation with three bible passages.

3.4 Providence as Government

The third aspect of providence is government, how the activities of God control the events of the universe so as to fulfill his purposes. The providential government is based on the omnipotence and sovereignty of God. Scriptures declare emphatically that “power belongs to God” (Psa. 62:11; RSV). God is the ultimate ruler of the world and he causes and controls all events to a desired end (Ps. 103:19; Rom. 8:28). We will explain the governing activity of God by highlighting the demonstration of God’s power over nature, over animals, over individual persons and over nations.

Both in the Old and New Testaments we see the power of God in controlling nature directly as well as through human beings. The waters of the Red Sea were divided when Moses stretched his hand over it (Ex. 17:21). The sun and moon stood still by the word of Joshua (Joshua 10:23-43). Prophet Elijah called down fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:10). Jesus spoke and made the storm to abate (Mark 4:39). In these instances the sovereignty of God over nature were demonstrated.

The Lord is also sovereign over the animal creation. The Lord made the donkey of Balaam to speak when the seer was on a wrong mission to go and curse the Israelites (Num. 22:26-30). God also arranged for ravens to feed Prophet Elijah with bread and meat during a period of famine (I Kings 17:1-6).

The providential government is also demonstrated in various aspects of the lives of individuals. Among some others Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were chosen to become the patriarchs of the nation of Israel (Gen. 12:1-3; 25:23, 27:36). In their experiences as well as in their songs we also see the providence of God in Hannah and Mary (1 Sam. 2:6-7; Luke 1:52). King David (Ps. 31:14-15) and Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:15-16) also asserted God’s providence.

With regard to nations, God directs the hearts of the rulers (Prov. 21:1). He determines who serves as king as well as the period (Dan. 2:2). King Nebuchadnezzar made the same confession after the Lord has dealt with him (Dan. 4:34:35). God indeed is the King of the nations individually and collectively. The Psalmist thus exhorts the Lord reigns let the earth be glad and let the people tremble (Psalm 97:1; 99:1).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Mention four realms of the governmental activities of God in the universe.

3.5 The Significance of Providence

The doctrine of providence is an integral part of the doctrine of creation. Providence is significant because, as stated by Millard J. Erickson (1998, 413), “Providence is in certain ways central to the conduct of the Christian life. It means that we are able to live in the assurance that God is present and active in our lives. We are in his care and can therefore face the future confidently, knowing that things are not happening merely by chance.” In the doctrine, therefore, we have a reason to trust God, obey God and submit to his will for our lives. It is also necessary to make certain distinctions at this juncture concerning the will of God.

The first is that primary causality of God “refers to events in which God acts directly without human means, as in the resurrection of Jesus” while secondary causality “refers to events in which God acts through the agency of creaturely factors” (Milne, 1998, 102).

The second is that while directive or perfect will of God describes activities purposed, caused and initiated by God, permissive will refers to those which God merely allows to happen. I believe that God is not the cause of evil in the world, they happen by the permissive will of God.

The third is that moral (or “revealed”) will concerns moral standards and commands required of the people of God, while “secret” will concerns “all the events of history that God has ordained to come about.” An example of the secret will is the crucifixion of Christ by “lawless men” (Acts 2:23) (Grudem, 1994, 332).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.5

State three directions in the will of God with regard to the significance of the doctrine of providence.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Christian doctrine of providence affirms that creation is not on its own. God who is the owner is sustaining, operating and guiding it. The world can never go haywire beyond the ability of God. The Creator is in firm control of His universe. The providential care of God is a logical implication of the doctrine of God as the creator of the earth.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the work of providence of God. The three aspects of the providence studied are preservation, cooperation and government. Preservation is the work of God is sustaining and protecting the world. Cooperation involves God working and providing for creation. Government is the work of God in controlling the world. The relationship of this doctrine to evil, miracles and prayer is the concern of the next unit.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- 1 Define and explain the Christian doctrine of providence. State the three aspects of the doctrine.
2. Mention four realms of the governmental activities of God in the universe.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Erickson, Millard J. (1998) Christian Theology, Second Edition, pp. 412-435.

Grudem, Wayne (1994), Systematic Theology, pp. 315-354.

Milne, Bruce (1998) Know the Truth, pp. 101-105.

UNIT 5 PROVIDENCE II – THEODICY (EVIL), MIRACLES AND PRAYER

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Meaning, Types and Causes of Evil
 - 3.2 Victory Over Evil
 - 3.3 Meaning and Purpose of Miracles
 - 3.4 More Studies on Miracles
 - 3.5 Meaning, Basis and Types of Prayer
 - 3.6 Principles and Benefits of Prayer
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The biblical teaching on providence discussed in the last unit has many implications for Christian faith, life and ministry. Three issues that are usually considered along with providence, which will be studied in this unit, are theodicy (the problem of the presence of evil, pain and suffering in the world, miracles and prayer.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- State the meaning, types and causes of evil.
- Discuss the biblical teaching of victory over evil.
- Explain the meaning and purpose of miracles.
- Highlight the role of miracles in the ministry of Jesus and biblical caution about miracles.
- State the meaning, basis and types of prayer.
- Describe the principles and benefits of prayer.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 Meaning, Types and Causes of Evil

Theodicy is one of the issues usually studied along with the Christian doctrine of providence. Evil can be defined as “that which is not in harmony with the divine order.” (Porcella, 1963, 264) The problem issue of theodicy is how do we account for the presence of evil in a world created and sustained by God who is good and powerful? We must admit that it is not always easy to reconcile the existence of evil in the world with the goodness and holiness of an infinite, wise and powerful God.

The two aspects of evil are: **Moral** evil or sin, “any lack of conformity to the moral law of God; **Physical** or **natural** evil such as floods and earthquakes.

Why does God permit evil in the world? One possible answer is to manifest the justice of God in the punishment of evil and His grace in its forgiveness (Rom. 9:22-23). For instance, the blindness of a man in the Bible is said to display the work of God (John 9:1-3).

How did evil come into the world? God did not create evil. I believe that evil should not be ascribed to God (James 1:13-15). God did not create evil or the devil. Lucifer was created beautiful, he turned to the devil/Satan after rebellion against God (Isaiah 14:12-15). God created the world to be good (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 25). The world, as we now see it including the suffering, pain, wickedness, sin and evil is not as God made or intended it. Human beings chose evil by sinning. Evil comes from the devil and sin.

The sin of man (Adam and Eve) also brought curse (Gen. 3:14, 17a), sorrowful toil, pain and suffering (Gen. 3:16, 17b-19) into the world. After the event of the fall of man we see concrete examples of evil in the wickedness of Cain and Noah (Gen. 4:8-11; 9:24-27). Indeed, many natural disasters (floods, whirlwinds, tornadoes, earthquakes) are caused by moral evil of human activities-deforestation, pollution and irrigation among others.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Write a concise essay on the meaning, types and causes of evil.

3.2 Victory over Evil

A very important observation is that the approach of the Bible to the problem of evil is not theoretical but practical. The life of genuine Christian faith, godliness and righteousness may not be free from perplexity, anguish or suffering as seen in Job, Job 1:1-2:10, Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-7) and Paul (2 Cor. 10:16-33). The concern of biblical revelation is not so much to explain the presence of evil but to witness to its conquest by Jesus Christ.

According to Bruce Milne (1998, 103-104), two victorious contexts of the Bible concerning suffering and evil are: (1) The nature and destiny of man and (2) The work of Christ. Sin, pain, suffering, curse and evil were not God's original intention for man. Also, they are not a permanent feature of his experience. Man is destined to overcome these tyrannies (Rev. 21:3-4).

Through the experience of pain, sorrow, suffering and death of Jesus on the cross, God in Christ identified with our human weakness. The resurrection of Jesus and the hope of his second coming turned the agony of the death on Calvary to forgiveness, joy and life. It also speaks

of the triumph of God over all forces of evil and darkness that brought pain into human experience. Is this not a good reason why Christians can rejoice even while suffering? (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Discuss the two biblical reasons for victory over evil.

3.3 Meaning and Purpose of Miracles

A miracle can be defined as an extraordinary event, a supernatural act of God (I Cor. 12:10a). Two other terms that are often used in place of miracles are signs and wonders. The purpose of miracles include the following: to lead people to faith and strengthen people in faith by; authenticating the revelation and message of God (John 5:36; 10:37-38), teaching and edifying people (John 20:30, 31) and glorifying the name of God (Exodus 14:18; John 2:11).

Miracles have some other benefits as recorded in the Bible. God used the miracle of resurrection to prove that He has provided salvation for all mankind through Jesus (Acts 17:31). Miracles also bore witness to the work performed by the apostles (Heb. 2:3, 4). Like other spiritual gifts miracles help to build up the body of Christ numerically and spiritually (I Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:12).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Mention five purposes/benefits of miracles recorded in the Bible.

3.4 More Studies on Miracles

Miracles featured prominently in the ministry of Jesus for salvation (Luke 19:1-10), healing (Luke 4:31-35), provision of physical/material needs (Luke 9:10-17), and even the dead was raised back to life (Luke 7:11-17). It was like that also in the ministry of the apostles like Peter (eg. Acts 3:1-10) and Paul (e.g. Acts 16:16-28) and it should be in our own ministries.

Jesus rebuked the Jews who merely desired the spectacular (Matt. 12:38-40). Violent enthusiasm is a mark of evil and adultery (Matt. 16:4). Jesus refused to perform miracles to entertain Herod (Luke 23:8-9). Paul focused on the preaching of the gospel (I Cor. 1:22-23; 2:2-5). Extreme passion for miracles and the consequent deception is a characteristic of the end of the age (Matt. 7:22-23; 24:24; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev. 13:14; 16:14).

The exercise of miraculous power is a part of God's instrument to evangelize unbelievers (John 4:48) and to nurture believers (John 2:11). We should be aware of two wrong views (extremes) to the question of miracles today: one, doubt and unbelief; two gullibility and deception. We must avoid and overcome hindrances to miracles-sin, unbelief and doubt (Matt. 13:53-58). Let us seek genuine miracles through faith and prayer (John 11:40).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

“Two wrong views to the issue of miracles today are unbelief and gullibility.” Discuss.

3.5 Meaning, Basis and Types of Prayer

Prayer is an integral part of Biblical religion and Christian faith. Prayer is communion and fellowship with God. In prayer the Christian relates with and fellowships intimately with God. Scripture therefore “assumes the necessity and effectiveness of man's communication with God.” According to Vernon C. Grounds (1963, 679). “Prayer, essentially, is communion, a desire to enter into conscious and intimate relationship with the Thou Who is our life (Ps. 63:1-8; Ps. 73:25-26; Luke 6:12; I John 1:3). And the astonishing corollary of this truth is that God hungers for man's fellowship”.

People can offer prayers to and communicate with God because God is personal. Moreover prayer is based on faith in God who is “living, active, all-knowing, all-wise, and all-powerful.” The power, love and interest of God is the basis for the practice of prayer. God takes the initiative by creating human being in his image, we respond in communion with him. Prayer is an act of spiritual worship, a high activity of the human spirit. Therefore, we worship God through prayers of adoration, confession, praise, and supplication.

Through prayer of adoration we praise God because of His character and attributes: greatness, goodness, kindness, mercy and holiness, (Exodus 34: 6-7; Psalm 145). As we adore God for who He is in prayer, we also praise him for his loving acts (Ps. 150:2; 119:164). Confession of sin involves acknowledging our disobedience to God, God's word and wrongdoing to over fellow human beings (Psalm 51; Isaiah 6:5; I John 1:9).

Prayer also involves thanksgiving both for upholding the world and the good we have received and are even yet to receive (Col. 3:17; I Thess. 5:18). We also request for personal help through a prayer of petition for food, forgiveness and victory (Matt. 6:9-15). Prayer of intercession is to

offer petition on behalf of others. Abraham and Moses are two of the greatest intercessors in the Bible.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.5

Explain why communion with God is the basis of prayer.

3.6 Principles and Benefits of Prayer

Principles and conditions that determine or regulate answered prayers are:

Faith (Heb. 11:6; Matt. 17:20; Mark 11:23-24; James 1:6).

The name of Jesus (John 14:13; 15:16). This implies union with Christ and practical Christlikeness.

The will of God (James 4:2-3).

Direction of the Holy Spirit (Jude 20; Rom. 8).

Confession and renunciation of sin/iniquity (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9; Isa. 59:1-2),

Harmonious relationships with other people (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:19; I Peter 3:1-7).

Importunity (Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8).

Concentration and intensity (James 5:16).

These principles altogether constitute the required attitudes for prayer, which is more important than posture, language, place or time of prayer.

Prayer meets many needs in the lives of human beings, including:

Freedom from fear (Ps. 118:5-6)

Strength of soul (Ps. 138:3)

Guidance and satisfaction (Is. 58:9-11)

Wisdom and understanding (Dan. 9:20-27)

Deliverance from harm (Joel 2:32)

Reward (Matt. 6:6), Good gifts

(Luke 11:13), Fullness of joy

(John 16:23-24)

Peace/freedom from anxiety (Phil. 4:6-8; I Pet. 5:7).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.6

Describe five principles or conditions of answered prayer.

4.0 CONCLUSION

God responds to human prayers to change nature and physical bodies. Prayer also change and help people to submit to the will of God (Luke 22:42). Prayer is the source of vision, power and blessing for individual Christian faith and corporate church life.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined three issues related to the Christian doctrine of providence. The three issues are theodicy, miracles and prayer. This study brings to the end of our study of the theology of creation in this module. The next module will introduce you to the theology of humankind.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Discuss two biblical reasons for victory over evil
2. Mention three purposes of miracles recorded in the Bible
3. Communion with God is the basis of prayer. Explain.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Porcella, Brewster (1964) "Evil" The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, p. 264.

Milne, Bruce (1998) Know the Truth pp. 101-105.

Grounds, Vernon C. (1963) "Prayer" The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, pp. 679-682.

MODULE 3

INTRODUCTION

- Unit 1 The Nature of Humankind
- Unit 2 The Image of God in Humankind
- Unit 3 Communal Human Life in Africa
- Unit 4 Alienation and Redemption of Humankind
- Unit 5 Consummation of Humankind

UNIT 1 THE NATURE OF HUMANKIND

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Various Views of Human Beings I
 - 3.2 Various Views of Human Beings II
 - 3.3 The Constituent Nature of Human Beings I

- 3.4 The Constituent Nature of Human Beings II
- 3.5 The Constituent Nature of Human Beings III
- 3.6 The Duties and Purpose of Human Beings I
- 3.7 The Duties and Purpose of Human Beings II
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The first two modules of this course dealt with the theologies of Trinity and creation. In this module we shall examine the theology of humankind. This is technically called anthropology. The first unit will begin with a consideration of the views of human beings in various disciplines followed by a study of the biblical teaching of humanity in the next two units. The last two units will discuss the alienation, redemption and consummation of human life.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- List the various approaches to the study of humankind,
- Highlight the focuses of the study of humankind in philosophy, bible and theology,
- Explain the constituent nature of human beings as soul, spirit, flesh, heart and body,
- Describe the human composite nature as trichotomy, dichotomy or monism,
- State the basic duties of humanity,
- Discuss the purpose of humankind.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Various Views of Human Beings I

Human beings have been studied from a wide range of sources – Bible, philosophy, religion, culture, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and biological sciences. Most of these disciplines have discovered

something about human nature that will enrich our theological understanding of human kind. The various views of human beings will be highlighted as done by A. O. Dyson (1983, 23-26).

In philosophy with particular emphasis on existentialism, the human is seen as a thinking, intelligent, rational being that is capable of thinking through and formulating ideas to make for the progress of the universe. Existential philosophy has especially studied human beings as a responsible being with power of choice.

In natural sciences human kind has been studied as part of nature. Of course while he is very advanced in his anatomy and physiology he shares certain characteristics with other living beings and things. Modern ecological studies have also helped to explore and restore human relationship with nature.

In psychology a lot of the study of human sexual nature has been done. It is now being recognized that sexuality is not basically evil or sinful. In redemption and family life erotic love does not necessarily oppose agape sacrificial love. Feminist consciousness is also contributing to a fresh understanding of the male and female relationships in the family, in the church, and in the society.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Highlight the focus of the study of human being in philosophy.

3.2 Various Views of Human Beings II

This section will complete the survey of different approaches to the study of humankind started in the last section.

The **social and political** nature of man has been considered afresh in political theology and liberation theologies (including feminism and black consciousness). The over emphasis of the privatizing, individualistic and subjective tendencies of people in the tradition of Christian thought is being questioned and challenged today. Theologians are calling for corporate, public dimensions of life to be explored the more.

The **moral, cultural and religious** aspects of the human being have been studied. The ethics of love, faith and justice have been proposed to enrich authentic life. At different periods, the value of mysticism for individual and for corporate life have been proposed and practiced. While religion itself is difficult to define some scholars have shown interest in the study of the human awareness of the holy.

The human nature as created in the image of God has been the traditional concern of biblical and theological studies. Social and communal dimensions of that understanding provide new ideas for application to the contemporary human experience. Of course this is the major approach of the rest of the module.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

List six approaches for the study of humankind. Highlight the focus of the study in the Bible and theology.

3.3 The Constituent Nature of Human Beings I

We will begin a detailed study of human being by considering the human in relation to self. We will do this by trying to understand the constituent nature. Various words that are used in the Bible to describe the human being include soul, spirit, flesh, heart and body.

Soul (Hebrew *nephesh* and Greek *psyche*) “emphasise individuality and personal consciousness.” According to P. S. Johnston (2000, 564). Sometimes it “indicates inner desires, from physical appetite to a longing to serve God (Pro. 23:2; Deut. 6:5).”

Human being is a soul, a living being. Plato was the first philosopher who attempted to prove that the soul of man is immortal. (Hick, 1994, 120). The immortality of the soul is also supported by various evidences like resuscitation of corpses in cemetery, possibility of communion between the living and the dead in parapsychology, and cases of appearance of the figure of people who have recently died, as done in psychical research.

However, theologically speaking, immortality of mankind (and the soul) designates the “state of man in which he is entirely free from the seeds of decay and death.” The question of the origin of the soul will not be examined in this work. The classical traditional arguments are creationism, traducianism and pre-existentialism. I advise you to read about these terms in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 484-486.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Write a short note on the constituent nature of human beings as soul.

3.4 The Constituent Nature of Human Beings II

Human beings have spirit (Hebrew *ruah* and Greek: *pneuma*) in relation to the Spirit of God but they cannot be regarded as spirit. The basic sense of *ruah* is ‘breath’, ‘wind’, ‘spirit’. It frequently “denotes non-

physical attributes such as ability and thought (Exodus. 28:3; Isaiah. 29:24).”

Humankind is flesh (Hebrew basar and Greek: sarx). As flesh they “share in the helpless dependence of the creation on the mercy of God”. Apart from this man is flesh “in his connection with the realm of nature and with humanity as a whole, not only in its weakness but also in its sinfulness and opposition to God” (Psa. 63:1).

When the human being is described as heart in the Bible (Hebrew leb) it “is often used to describe the seat of a wide range of activities including thinking and choosing as well as feeling emotion” (Psa. 84:2). Finally the use of body (Greek soma) to describe humankind emphasizes “the historical and outward aspects of his life” (I Thess. 5:23). It should be noted that these various words (soul, spirit, flesh, heart and body) “do not describe separate parts of the human constitution, but rather draw attention to different aspects of a person’s activity.” These various ‘parts’ cannot be separated. Every human being is a unity.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Explain the constituent nature of human beings as spirit, flesh, heart and body.

3.5 The Constituent Nature of Human Beings II

In the historical development of theological anthropology three basic views of human constitution are trichotomy, dichotomy and monism. Scholars who are trichotomists teach that humanity is made up of body, soul and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23). Dichotomists think that ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ are used interchangeably in the Scriptures and that mankind is made up of only body and soul/spirit (Gen. 2:7). Monism recognises the human being only as a physical person. Monism is not a biblical view of human nature.

The writer shares the opinion that the overall biblical emphasis of human composition is dichotomy with unity. When God made mankind he “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). Here Adam is a unified person with body and soul living and acting together.” J. W. Cooper cited in Johnston (2000, 565) considered this to be ‘holistic dualism’ such that “man is understood as a psychosomatic unity.”

Millard J. Erickson has similarly suggested that human beings should be seen as a conditional unity. He argued (1998, 555): “The full range of biblical data can best be accommodated by the view that we will term “conditional unity.” According to this view, the normal state of a

human is as a materialized unitary being. This monist condition can, however, be broken down and at death it is, so that the immaterial aspect of the human lives on even as the material decomposes. At the resurrection, however, there will be a return to a material or bodily condition. The person will assume a body that has some points of continuity with the old body, but is also a new or reconstituted or spiritual body.”

On the whole Erickson’s argument sounds plausible. His proposal recognises the merits in both dichotomy and unity (which he calls monism). This blend of dichotomy and unity which he has described as conditional unity is better referred to as diunity, di-unity (a shortened form of dichotomy – unity).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

In one sentence each state what it means to describe the composite human nature as trichotomy, dichotomy and monism.

3.6 The Duties and Purpose of Human Beings I

The account of creation of human being in the Bible also includes some statements concerning the basic duties of humanity: ruling, management and relationship. Genesis 1:26 - 28b state that humankind was given the responsibility to rule other creatures and to subdue the earth. Delegated sovereignty (kingship) was bestowed on the human having been created in the image of the divine King. This witness “to man’s dominion and centrality in creation” is so important that it is repeated again and again in Scriptures (Amos 4:13; Isa. 42:5f; Psa. 8:5f; 104:4ff) and it is supremely given in the incarnation (cf. Hebrews 2). When human being exercises dominion it is done “entirely at the service of life and creativity.”

Another duty of mankind stated in Genesis 2:15 is to work, to take care of creation. Trigo (1991, 229) states that “In human work God was sharing a part of His responsibility to care for the world He created. Labor is a normal part of the responsibility of God’s people.” Humankind is required “to serve nature, tend it, and bring it to fruition.” These two duties show the original plan of God for humanity to be his representative in the world and to be a manager. This is a stewardship responsibility. “God placed humans in charge of His material world to manage and care for it. Under God’s authority we must fulfill His purpose in our lives. Being a manager for God is the foundation of

stewardship” (NIV Disciple’s Study Bible, 5). These two duties also provide some hints to develop a theology of work.

The third responsibility of human being in the creation story concerns relationship as shown in marriage and family life. Human kind was created as male and female (Gen. 1.27b). Eve, the woman, was especially created to help the man, Adam (Gen. 2:18, 21-25). This duty shows the evil of aloneness, negatively and the value of relationship positively. Human beings “are created with the capacity for relationship with God as Creator and with each other as fellow humans.”

A particular application of this duty is on marriage and family life. “God intended marriage to meet the basic human need of love and companionship.” Since the essential threefold purpose of God for marriage is for companionship, sexual purity and procreation, “without female companionship and a partner in reproduction, the man could not fully realize his humanity” (The NIV Study Bible, 1985, 9). We can also infer from the creation of Adam and Eve that “The divine intention for husband and wife was monogamy.”

These three basic responsibilities of humankind also have wide cultural and social relevance. The duties constitute the foundation for the development of human culture and civilization in general and that of agriculture and economy in particular. It has been reasoned that human culture is actually “the expression of man’s bearing of the image of his Creator, and sharing as God’s servant, in God’s kingly rule.”

Likewise family life makes a unique contribution to the social development of humankind. “Human life is inherently social and needs human relationships for satisfactory development. Marriage is the fundamental response to this need, but more generally human beings need interaction with other people to become whole persons”. We agree with the thought that the “image of God” is a community concept and that true reflection of the image of God is to be found in family, cultural and social relationships.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.6

State the three basic duties of humanity.

3.7 The Duties and Purpose of Human Beings II

In spite of the significance of the relationship of humankind with creation and other human beings, the real purpose of humanity is to be found in relationship to God. This point is of crucial importance. It has been observed significantly that one of the names used for God in the

Old Testament is “Yahweh (Jehovah) Elohim, God in relation to his people.”

The overall purpose of human life is not to acquire knowledge and wisdom. It is not to seek pleasures or toil. It is not to acquire riches or position (Ecc. 1-11; Matt. 16:26). Meaning and satisfaction cannot be found in any of these pursuits. The ultimate purpose of humanity is to seek God, to relate to God, to worship and glorify God, to live for God, to reflect the image, power, glory, honour, goodness of God, to please God, to serve God and to obey God. King Solomon reflected critically on human life and he concluded with this note: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13, NIV).

Erickson also suggested that the purpose of humankind can be found in the life of Jesus Christ, who is human as humanity should be. The chief purposes of humankind as seen in Jesus are fellowship with God, obedience to God’s will and love for humans. His ultimate future destiny is eternal fellowship with God.

This is why Stanley J. Grenz (1998, 229) asserts that while “it may be multifaceted in its connotations at the heart of the divine image . . . is a reference to our human destiny as designed by God.”

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.7

Write a concise note on the purpose of humankind.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The diversity of approaches to the study of human beings shows that the human nature is complex. The human is composed of both physical and non-physical parts, material and immaterial elements. Human beings are therefore able to communicate with God and other spiritual realities in the universe. We observe that the human is spiritual and so resembles other spirit beings – God, angels, Satan and demons. However, while these do not have bodies, humankind is a spiritual being with physical bodies. This is one uniqueness of our humanity.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have highlighted the nature of human beings from diverse directions – philosophy, natural sciences, psychology, social sciences, the Bible and theology. The constituent nature of humankind was studied as soul, spirit, flesh, heart and body. The unit ended with an examination of the duties and purpose of human beings.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. List three various approaches to the study of humankind.
2. Write a short note on the nature of human beings as soul.
3. State and explain briefly the three basic duties of humanity.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 THE IMAGE OF GOD IN HUMANKIND

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - The Image of God in Human Beings I
 - 3.1 The Image of God in Human Beings II
 - 3.2 Implications of the Image of God in Human Beings
 - 3.3 Human Beings as Male and Female I
 - 3.4 Human Beings as Male and Female II
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Readings
- 7.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment Questions

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study continues the essential nature of human being started in the last unit. The first two sections will consider the meaning of the image of God followed by certain implications of the study. The last two sections will examine the creation and existence of human beings as male and female. From the viewpoints of the Bible, theology and

African culture it is necessary for us to also consider what it means to be communal as human beings. The next study unit will examine that aspect.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

State the three general/classificatory views of the image of God in human beings,

List the various explanation of the image of God in humankind,

Discuss the implications of the creation of humankind in the image of God,

Describe the significance of creation of human beings as male and female,

Apply the understanding of the image of God in humanity to marriage, family and communal lives.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Explanation of the Image of God in Human Beings I

Any serious Christian anthropology must consider the issue of creation of mankind in God's image because this is what makes us to be really human. The meaning of humanity is not to be found in his close relationship with nature, but rather in "being made in God's image (Gen. 1:27). Man is placed in a unique relationship with the Creator. God's word, by which he lives (Matt. 4:4), lifts him above the rest of creation and confers on him the dignity of being a child of God."

Apart from Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:7 the Bible contains some other references to mankind as the image or likeness of God in both Old Testament (Gen. 5:1-2; 9:6) and New Testament. (2 Cor. 3:18;11:7; James 3:9; Rom. 8:29). Humanity was created in the image and likeness of God as male and female. This is one of the things that distinguish mankind from all other creatures.

What does it mean to describe man as being created in the image of God? Pedro Trigo (1991, 228) believes that "the concept of image "indicates that, antecedent to any relationship struck by human beings with God, an irrevocable relationship is already bestowed by God on them." Some scholars in the past have suggested a distinction between the image (Hebrew tselem) and likeness (Hebrew demut). However,

most contemporary theologians now consider the two to be equivalent terms. Louis Berkhof (1939, 203) reasoned that the two words “are used synonymously and interchangeably, and therefore do not refer to two different things.”

Apart from this basic agreement scholars have tried to explain the meaning of the image of God in different ways. The three general/classificatory ways of viewing the nature of the image of God, according to Erickson (1998, 520), are the substantive view, the relational view and the functional view. The substantive view of the image of God sees it as certain physical, psychological or spiritual characteristics within the human nature such as morality or spirituality. The relational view sees it as the experiencing of relationship by the human with God or other human beings. This is the social, communal interpretation. The functional view sees it as something the human does such as dominion over creation. This work identifies with the relational view for the reason that will be explained soon.

Grudem (1994, 445-450) has identified the following aspects of human existence that show us to be more like God than the rest of creation: moral, spiritual, mental, relational and physical. More specifically, some theologians have tried to identify certain characteristics of man considered to be the image of God. Examples are intellectual ability, moral purity, creation as male and female, dominion over the earth. None of these educated guesses is a satisfactory explanation of the image of God in man.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

State the three general/classificatory views of the image of God in human beings.

3.2 Explanation of the Image of God In Human Beings II

Before we present what is considered to be a more credible explanation of the image of God in mankind another particular clarification is necessary. Theological honesty requires that we recognise that the task is a difficult one. It is difficult because, since mankind was created to be like God, our knowledge of mankind cannot exceed our knowledge of God. In the words of Grudem (1994, 443) “a full understanding of man’s likeness to God would require a full understanding of who God is in his being and in his actions and a full understanding of who man is and what he does.”

In contemporary scholarship, biblical and systematic theologians are now postulating that the image should be thought of as what man is and not what humanity possesses. One of such theologians proposed: “The image is something in the very nature of humans, in the way in which they were made. It refers to something a human is rather than something a human has or does.” Grudem’s own idea corroborated the above explanation: “The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God.”

While this new trend of thought is a welcomed one, it should be realised nonetheless that, beyond academic exercise, in practical experience we cannot draw a perfect distinction between what man is and what he has or does. Issues of personality and responsibility of man are closely interwoven. It is in order to think of the image as “the powers of personality that make humans like God, beings capable of interacting with other persons, of thinking and reflecting, and of willing freely.” This implies that it is better to find the image of God “in his responsibility towards his Creator.”

Therefore, the communicable attributes of God which constitute the image of God in man has to do with the total human nature, “all that constitutes personality or selfhood: intelligence, will, emotions.” According to Erickson (1998, 533), “This is the image in which humans were created, enabling them to have the divinely intended relationship to God and to fellow humans, and to exercise dominion.”

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

List six explanation of the image of God in humankind.

3.3 Implications of the Image of God in Human Beings

The doctrine of creation of mankind in the image of God has some profound implications. The first one is that human life is valuable and even sacred. This is the reason given for prohibition of murder, even after the fall of man (Gen. 9:6). In view of the sacredness and dignity of human life, ethical and social implications of genetic engineering, purpose and methods should be considered. The purpose of genetic engineering may be therapeutic or eugenic (preventive). The most popular methods are in-vitro fertilization, cloning, genetic screening and recombinant DNA. An irresponsible and wrong use of some genetic engineering methods could lead to biological and chemical warfare. The World Council of Churches has therefore warned with justification, “A view of humanity as an object to be manipulated may reduce the mutual respect of people for each other and consequently increase the risk of additional exploitation of people by people”(1982, 8). Genetic

engineering researches should be conducted and applied responsibly for the benefit of mankind. It should not be allowed to manipulate life and destroy human dignity.

Another implication of mankind been created in God's image is that the meaning of human existence is to be found only in God. Erickson put it this way: "We experience full humanity only when we are properly related to God." Human being is fulfilled only in the Being of God. The best person can be in life is to achieve godliness, Christlikeness and spirituality. The Scriptures is therefore full of exhortation for humanity to imitate God, to be holy because God is holy (Eph. 5:1-2; 1 Peter 1:16), to look onto Jesus Christ and be like Him (Heb. 12:2; 1Peter 2:21), and to seek to live in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:16, 25).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

What are the implications of creation of humankind in the image of God?

3.4 Human Beings as Male and Female

A part of the account of the creation of mankind in the Bible is: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." (Gen. 1:27; 2:22-23, NIV).

These verses provide some additional insights into human existence. The first is that both male and female equally reflect the image of God. Women as well as men are images of God. Moreover, since sexuality belongs to the order of creation and whereas God is above creation, sexuality should not be ascribed to God. While both masculine and feminine imagery are used in the Bible to describe Jehovah (Yahweh), as in. Matt. 6:9, John 17:1 cf. Isaiah. 49:15; Ps. 22:9-10, we must add quickly that God is a spirit and not to be depicted as either male or female." Elizabeth Achtemeier (1993, 18) explains: Biblical scholars agree universally that the God of the Bible has no sexuality. Sexuality is a structure of creation (Genesis 1-2), confined within the limits of the creation (Matthew 22:30), and the God of the Bible is consistently pictured as totally "other" than all creation. This is another biblical and theological paradox: While both male and female reflect the image of God, God is neither male nor female as seen in creation. It may be enough to assert that one of the privileges and responsibilities of being

made in the image of God is that "the two sexes together make up our full humanity."

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Write a short note on the significance of the creation of human beings as male and female.

3.5 Human Beings as Male and Female II

It is also significant for us to observe that man and woman were created for marriage/family life in particular, and communal life in general. Both Wayne Grudem and Stanley J. Grenz made this same point. Let us start with Grudem (1994, 454): "Although the creation of man as male and female is not the only way in which we are in the image of God, it is a significant enough aspect of our creation in the image of God that Scripture mentions it in the very same verse in which it describes God's initial creation of man." After making this assertion Grudem went on to discuss how the creation of man as male and female shows God's image in marriage relationship.

Grenz (1994, 232) expanded the theme a little more: "Implicit in Genesis 1:26-28 and more explicit in the second narrative is the theme that God creates the first human pair in order that humans may enjoy community with each other . . . God's will for his creation is the establishment of a human society in which his children enjoy perfect fellowship with each other, the created world, and the Creator."

This means in essence that mankind was created as male and female for community and the creation as male and female is the very basis of all human relationships and communal life. This is a significant observation concerning the nature of humanity. "Man is not made for a solitary, self-sufficient existence. Neither birds nor animals provide the kind of companionship he needs." Eve was a human complement and partner to Adam. This shows that from the very beginning mankind was formed to be a social being."

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.5

The Image of God is a Community Concept with implication for Communal Human Life. Discuss.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Human beings share many characteristics with other living things and beings. The creation as male and female for relational, social and communal life makes mankind to be like many other advanced animals. However, the study brings out a significant difference between

humankind and other creation. Because only humankind possess the image of God only humanity is capable of glorifying and worshipping God. Humanity is unique in this regard.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied the explanation of the image of God in human beings in diverse ways. Three classificatory views of the image as substantive, relational and functional were also considered followed by certain implications of the presence of God's image in humankind. The unit ended with two sections on the examination of the human beings as male and female.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. State and explain three classificatory views of the image of God in human beings.
2. Write a short note on the creation of human beings as male and female.

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UNIT 3 COMMUNAL HUMAN LIFE IN AFRICA

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Communal Human Life
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this section the place of community in human existence will be considered including a presentation of some traditional African social values. Some features of modern life in Africa will be examined with particular attention given to the problems of globalization, urbanization, secularization and individualism.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the importance of community in human life,
- List social and cultural values in traditional African life,
- Discuss African values of relationship and hospitality,
- Analyse and evaluate the values of accompaniment and greetings,
- Describe the major characteristics of the modern African life.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Communal Human Life

In social anthropology a community is seen to be “an observed social interaction of individuals.” As it was pointed out in the explanation of the human creation in the image of God, some scholars like Grenz (1994, 231) believe that “God’s program for the world and hence for humankind as God’s representative in the world focuses on the establishment of community.” Human beings need community. Human life can be fulfilled only in community.

The community is important. This is especially true in Africa where human being is existentially a being-in-relation. An important perspective of mankind as a social being “is that an individual human is fundamentally a member of society. Membership in and interaction with a group of persons is what really distinguishes humanity. Someone who does not interact with other social beings is less than fully human,” as stated by Erickson (1998,493).

John R. W. Stott stated that in the modern technocratic society which destroys transcendence and significance there is a quest for community. He reported: (1992, 234) “At least since the sixties, some have been breaking away from Western individualism and experimenting with communal styles of living.”

The chief requirement for community building is quality relationships characterised by mutual trust, listening, helping, sacrifice, self-denial, equality and personal freedom. To some extent the individual “person is the set of relationships in which he or she is involved . . . Through a fostering of these relationships the individual can become fully human.” Without growth-nurturing relationships a community breaks down. The place of personal, social and group relationships in the development of humanity cannot be over-emphasised. Human redemption therefore

involves restoration of the broken relationship of humankind with God and with other human beings.

3.2 Traditional African Life I

African social and cultural values are closely related. Some of them are relationships, respect for elders, sacrifice, unity, cooperation, self-denial/sacrifice, participation, hospitality, inclusiveness, celebration, accompaniment and greetings.

One Sukuma proverb in East Africa says, “To make marks on the trees,” means “to build good relationships with people is a very important priority in our lives.” By implication a life that is not spent to build up human relationships is a wasted life. Emphasis on personal relationships is also connected to family values. A particular example is respect for elders. Among the Yoruba, absolute respect for parents and elders is an aspect of traditional value “that was in vogue before the advent of foreign, modern culture.” Boys prostrate to greet their parents, and girls kneel to greet their mothers. They are required to do the same to elders within and outside extended families.

This culture corresponds very strongly with the fifth commandment: “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you”(Ex. 20:12, NIV). This commandment is “a principle for effective living in the family. It has a universal quality that strengthens family relationships even among people who do not know the Lord.”

Another basic value in developing relationships is selflessness, self-denial and sacrifice. An African proverb says: “The hen with chicks doesn’t swallow the worm.” The theme is parental care, helping others, sharing the necessities of life. Sacrifice is an important aspect of African community life.

Participation, unity and cooperation are also core values of African life. Kofi Appiah-Kubi is reported to have affirmed: “For an African the centre of life is not achievement but participation.” Individualism is seen as evil in traditional African society. “Ka fi owo we owo ni owo fi mo,” is a Yoruba proverb meaning “Two hands wash each other better”. It is found almost all over Africa: as it exists among the Akan; Runyankole, Rukiga, Uganda; Zulu, South Africa. This proverb teaches the value of unity, cooperation, strength and success. It is important for people to share and work together in a community.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

List ten social and cultural values of traditional African life.

3.3 Traditional African Life II

Hospitality is an African “way of life,” an important cultural and social value. It is always a joy to welcome unexpected visitors particularly once it is known “that the stranger is not an adversary.” There is always food and room for one more guest. In a typical Nigerian home a guest is a blessing. Hosts and hostesses in Africa gladly give their own food to their guests.

African hospitality to visitors and strangers is a commendable practice in view of this biblical exhortation: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb. 13:2, NIV). While this is a reference to Abraham, Gideon and Manoah in the Old Testament, (Gen. 18; Jud. 6, 13) only God knows if some African families have not hosted angels without realising it.

Somehow this I believe that there are righteous Africans who will be among those to be commended by Jesus the King at the end of the age: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.” (Matt. 25:33-34). African hospitality is a kingdom practice.

God has blessed Africans with the spirit of inclusiveness and fellowship. A person does not eat alone. He invites others to share in his meal. No one is excluded. Excluding people is seen as very bad. The key African value of inclusiveness is demonstrated concretely in expressions of hospitality.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Write a short note on hospitality as an African way of life.

3.4 Traditional African Life III

Celebration is another social value that is also connected with hospitality and special events. Africans celebrate with food, drink, music and dancing. Important events of life are celebrated – naming, marriage, funeral and house warming. “The local people always seem to rise to the occasion in the planning and preparation of celebrations and feasts.”

The social and cultural values of accompaniment and greetings will be considered last. Healey and Sybertz (1996, 181) explained and interpreted as follows: “In rural areas when friends came to visit, the host or hostess would walk them at least half-way back to their home or to their next destination as a gesture of friendship and respect . . . This practice combines the African values of personal relationships, sharing, community, hospitality, saying good-bye in a personal way and gratitude. The custom bears witness to the core value of maintaining relationships. The amount of time spent, the personal discomfort, and the work that is left behind are all secondary. The person comes first.

This theology of accompaniment is also linked to the ministry of counseling through presence. When people are experiencing bereavement and some other kinds of grief like terminal illness, one of the best ways to share their pain is through silent accompaniment.

Greetings are another interesting African social value. Among every people group there are special greetings when people wake up, during the day, in the evening, when people are at work and even while they are relaxing.

It is an offence not to offer the right kind of greetings appropriate to and for an occasion. These various values described in this section will be fulfilled one day when God would greet and welcome his children home: “Well done, good and faithful servant! . . . Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matt. 25:21).

It is unfortunate to report that these meaningful values described above are being eroded daily by Western education, modernization and urbanization. The resultant issues of globalization and urbanization leading to secularization and individualism will be presented in the next section.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Analyze and evaluate the African social and cultural values of accompaniment and greetings.

3.5 Modern African Life I

In place of the traditional African communal culture the world is developing a pseudo-culture of globalization, also called economism and modernization. Globalization is a process of modernization, as explained by Amalorpavadas (1999, 202), that is producing new values such that: “Especially through modern transportation and mass media, we are producing an international culture as all societies are becoming

part of a worldwide network of economic and political, military and strategic, ideological and cultural relationships.”

The world has become a global village. It is sometimes argued that the emerging culture is an international and not necessarily western culture. The truth of the matter is that globalization has had so serious an impact on Third World culture that it is better seen as cultural domination and neo-colonialism. This universal Coca cola culture is destroying the cultural objects, customs, symbols and meaning of life in the Third World.

Urbanization is one particular feature of modern life that deserves special attention. Urbanization is an aspect of modern change in Africa. As rightly stated by Mbiti (1969, 224), “the movement from the country to the cities is so rapid that many towns mushroom in a matter of a few decades.” He explained further: “Most of the problems of the emerging society are concentrated on people living in the cities. There are questions of housing slums, earning and spending money, alcoholism, prostitution, corruption and thousands of young people roaming about in search of employment.”

As a result of urbanization, communal values like hospitality that gave meaning to traditional African life have been eroded. “Today in African cities, such as Nairobi, strangers are suspects. Visitors are screened carefully by security guards.” In Lagos, Abuja and other urban centres in Nigeria people live in houses with high wall fences looking like prison yards. Conspicuous announcements discouraging strangers and visitors are displayed an example in “Beware of Patrol Dogs” notices. People live in fear. They “are nervous about the increasing theft and violence. Thus, many practices of African hospitality are falling by the wayside due to urbanization, excessive individualism and secularization “as observed by” Healey and Sybertz (1999, 197). These two developments (globalization, urbanization) and others have impacted every aspect of modern human existence. Two areas will be highlighted in the next section - secularization and individualism.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.5

Mention four major features of modern African life.

3.6 Modern African Life II

Unfortunately the contemporary international community, Africa inclusive, is becoming more and more secularised, with “religious institutions, actions and consciousness” losing their social significance. Religion is no more “central enough to supply society with a sense of

cohesion.” Modern life is concerned with only temporal things. There is a loss of sense of awe and worship. There is absence of family, social and communal togetherness leading to sub-human existence.

This analysis relates to the modern problem of individualism. Whereas the traditional African philosophy of life is one of community, relationship, togetherness, sharing, the culture is giving way to one of individualism in practice. Africa is imbibing the Western philosophy of existentialism characterised by rebellion and revolt, standing out against the crowd, the society, the world, subjectivity and radical individualism with the thought that the social order has a negative impact upon the individual.

Mbiti (1989, 219) described the individualism that resulted from modern African life due to urbanization so graphically: “This sudden detachment from the land to which Africans are mystically bound, and the thrust into situations where corporate existence has no meaning, have produced dehumanized individuals in the mines, industry and cities. The change means that individuals are severed, cut off, pulled out and separated from corporate morality, customs and traditional identity. They have no firm roots any more.

They are simply uprooted but not necessarily transplanted. They float in life like a cloud. They live as individuals but they are dead to the corporate humanity of their forefathers.’

Modern individualism has produced many lonely people, alone in the crowds of cities. Urbanization has produced orphans, weak and poor members of community lacking security and starving for food, drink, shelter, clothing, human dignity, the types that did not exist in traditional rural societies.

Street children now roam our cities in tens and eat, begging and picking, from the dustbins and refuse heaps. Hundreds of jobless youths are living as area boys and sleeping under bridges. Our teenage girls who should be training for motherhood tomorrow have taken to professional prostitution at home and abroad. Such inhuman existence was not known in our traditional African community.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.6

Write a short note on secularization and individualism in modern Africa.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Modern civilization has impoverished African culture, values and life. The time has come for the third World to exercise a critical attitude to

the emerging global culture. While African culture must grow and interact with Western culture it must do so with readiness to evaluate and reject any dehumanizing elements of the new culture. Africans must balance openness to civilization with commitment to the valuable elements of our cultural heritage. I identify with the concern of Amalorpavadass (1999, 202): “Thus, while technology is indispensable for material prosperity and human progress and for that reason should be available to and shared by all people, technology without cultural values, especially religion and spirituality, will be a reality without a soul.”

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have examined the communal human life in Africa. The unit started with the importance of community in human life. Some social and cultural values that promoted healthy relationships in traditional African life were studied. The unit ended with two sections on the effects of modernization on African life.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write a short note on the importance of community in human life.
2. List eight social and cultural values of traditional African life.
3. Mention four major features of modern life in Africa.

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UNIT 4 ALIENATION AND REDEMPTION OF HUMANKIND

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Fall of Humankind – Various Views
 - 3.2 The Fall of Humankind – An Evaluation
 - 3.3 Humanity and the Problem of Sin
 - 3.4 The Meaning of Redemption
Atonement, Reconciliation and Salvation
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 References/Further Readings
- 7.0 Tutor – Marked Assignments

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the past three units we have studied the essential human nature. The studies center around the creation of humankind in the image of God, and the implications for harmonious relationships and communal living. That is what human life ought to be. However, we see in humanity a defect, a kind of alienation between people and God, between people

and nature even between people and their fellow humans. This experience of alienation is due to the fall of human being, which account for the presence of sin as seen in humanity. The study will also include the way out of that alienation, described as redemption.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

State the major views on the biblical account of the fall of humankind,

Evaluate the biblical story of the fall of humankind from the viewpoint of African worldview,

Describe the problem of sin confronting humanity,

Explain the biblical, theological concept of redemption,

Discuss the meaning of the terms atonement, reconciliation, salvation with regard to the redemption of humanity.

3.0 MAIN CONCEPT

3.1 The Fall of Humankind-Variou Views

Genesis 3:1-24 tells the story of how sin entered the human race. The account is traditionally regarded as the fall of humanity. Satan, appearing as serpent, deceived humankind to doubt the word of God, to disobey God and so sin against God. He attempted to alienate humankind from God. Elsewhere the Bible portray the devil as acting to alienate God from humanity (Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1). Through this experience fear, curse, greater experience of pains, knowledge of good evil, and death came into creation.

Today, Christian scholars view the account of the fall in various to ways. Three views of the fall according to Bruce Milne (1998, 128-130) are literal, mythical and historical. The literal view treats the record as an exact historical description. This is the popular traditional position in the history of the church. The mythical view considers the story to teach the essence or validity of sin. They question the historical reliability of the account. This is the argument of many Western existential theologians. The “historical” view reasons that, though not everything can be interpreted literally in Genesis 1-3, the story certainly recounts some space-time events. The view therefore stand between the first two stated above. In the next section I will offer a brief evaluation of the views.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Mention the three major views on the biblical account of the fall of humankind.

3.2 The Fall of Humankind-An Evaluation

In the New Testament the fall is accepted as a real historical event. Adam is not treated as a mythical figure. He is even set in historical continuity with Abraham and Jacob (Gen. 4:1; 5:4; 11:27; Lk. 3:38). The fall is the background and rationale for the problem of sin and the need for solution of salvation provided by God. Apostle Paul thus argued that just like disobedience, sin and death came into the world through the first Adam, the second Adam (Jesus Christ) brought obedience, righteousness, grace and life (Rom. 5:12-14 cf. 15-19).

Some philosophical theologians like Paul Tillich reject the story of the fall and consider it to be a myth, a symbol of the moral condition of humanity. While they affirm the validity, they deny the historical truth of the account. In the demythologization project of Rudolf Bultmann he also tried to free the core of the gospel from what he considers to be the “mythological framework. The problem is that with the use of historical-critical reasoning like these theologians have also denied the historicity of miracles like incarnation and the resurrection, the core of the Christian faith.

We should observe that the Genesis story of the fall sounds like common African myths of separation between God and humanity. Most African versions narrate that God withdrew into heaven because of a certain act of wrongdoing of humankind. This means that for Africans, as argued by Magesa (1997, 42), myths constitute a part of primary, symbolic language used to express “truths of human existence in a way that rational language cannot.” Thus myths play an important role in the African worldview. They contain elements with great religious significance for people.

We assert therefore that demythologization is not helpful to the task of theological formulation in Africa. While it may benefit some people whose culture do not believe the supernatural, it is not very valuable to Africans whose worldview accommodate myths.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Write a concise essay to evaluate the biblical story of the fall of humankind from the viewpoint of African worldview.

3.3 Humanity and the Problem of Sin

The Bible presents sin as a big and complex problem. The complexity of the nature of sin is seen in the explanation of sin in diverse terms. The important key biblical terms for sin are: debt (Matt. 6:12), backsliding (Hos. 14:4), trespass/guilt (Lev. 26:40), transgression (Rom. 4:15), disobedience (Rom. 5:19), lawlessness (1 John 3:4), iniquity (Ps. 51:5), others are failure, missing the mark and estrangement.

This universal problem of sin is serious since it separates a sinful person from the holy God (Ex. 20:3-11; Isa. 59:1-2) and it also leads to a breakdown of relationship among people (Ex. 20:12-17; Eph. 2:16). Sin, therefore, prevents humankind from experiencing a meaningful life since it affects harmonious relationship among people as beings-in-relation. Therefore because of this separation from God and estrangement with other persons God will judge and punish the sinner who does not repent (Hebrews 10:27).

Unfortunately, mankind cannot deal with this serious problem of sin. He can neither hide his sin from God (Numbers 23:23) nor cleanse himself of it (Proverbs 20:9). Infact one very important evidence of the helplessness of humanity concerning the problem of sin is the call for redemption. "If the Son of God came to earth to save men, then men were sinners and their plight serious indeed." We therefore affirm that, as it has been done throughout church history, the atonement is necessary because of the nature, problem and consequence of sin.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Write a short note on the universal problem of sin confronting humanity.

3.4 The Meaning of Redemption

Having studied the creation and alienation of humankind we are left with redemption and consummation. This section will deal with the redemption of humankind, what God has done to deal with and overcome the problem of sin and as it is experienced in humankind which is variously described as redemption, reconciliation, atonement, salvation, and some other terms. These terms will be discussed in this section and the next.

Redemption connotes a release brought about by the payment of the price. The idea is to set a person free from a situation from which the person is powerless to liberate himself/herself or from a penalty which

the person could never have paid. The words ‘redeem’ and ‘ransom’ are related. A slave or soldier captured in battle could be redeemed by a ransom. As a biblical term, redemption is “liberation from sin and death”, and this is one of the New Testament terms which describe the salvation which Jesus Christ provides. When the human problem is understood as slavery to sin and death, salvation is described as redemption or liberation.

The phrase “redemption through his blood” (in Eph. 1:7), mean that the redemption was effected by the blood of Jesus Christ. His blood is the means and price by which the release was effected. The blood actually means the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:1-10:25). The death of Jesus was an infinity price that God had to “pay” to buy our redemption. This is why Paul counseled the Corinthian Christians, “You are not your own; you were bought with a price.” (1 Cor. 6:19b, 20a). The blood of Jesus has power to set free from the guilt and wages of sin.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Explain the biblical/theological meaning of redemption.

3.5 Atonement Reconciliation and Salvation

In biblical and theological usage the word atonement is usually used to describe the priestly work of Jesus Christ. Atonement is interchanged with reconciliation in Rom. 5:11. Atonement describes “the process by which the hindrance to reconciliation are removed.” The purpose of the atonement is thus to make God and mankind “at-one-ment”, to reconcile them.

According to L. L. Morris (1982, 1012) reconciliation applies “to the doing away of an enmity, the bridging of a quarrel. It implies that the parties being reconciled were formerly hostile to one another.” Humanity has sinned and have become ‘enemies’ of God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21; Jas 4:4). Jesus Christ died to put away the enmity between God and humankind. Jesus made the way open to remove the alienation for humanity to come back to God. This is what is described as “reconciliation.” It should be emphasized that God in Christ has provided the reconciliation. Human beings only have to accept the provision and be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20).

The atonement made salvation possible and secure for the sinner. The consequence of atonement includes the forgiveness of sin that comes through repentance and the restoration of humanity with God. All the benefits associated with the atoning work of God in Christ are summed up in the word salvation.

So far we have emphasized the alienation and reconciliation between God and humanity. The restoration of vertical relationship between the holy God and sinful people ought to reflect in horizontal relationship among human beings. Redemption places a person into the body of Christ for growth in Christlikeness, spiritual nurture and maturity. Moreover, it gives hope, which will be considered as part of the consummation of mankind.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.5

Three of the terms related to the idea of redemption are atonement, reconciliation and redemption. Discuss them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

An integral aspect of biblical anthropology is that humanity was created in the image of God for worship and glory of God. However sin has alienated humankind from God. This is bad news. The good news is that God in Christ has provided atonement, reconciliation and salvation for humanity.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied the alienation and redemption of humankind. After considering three major views on the biblical account of human fall from innocence into sin, the story was critically evaluated. The universal problem of sin was also considered. The unit ended with a study of the redemption, atonement, reconciliation and salvation provided by God.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. State and explain the three major views on the biblical account of the fall of humankind.
2. Write a short note on the biblical/theological concept of redemption of humankind.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Milne, Bruce (1998) Know the Truth, pp. 128-130.

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UNIT 5 CONSUMMATION OF HUMANKIND

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study unit has double significance both as the end of the study of this module on Christian anthropology as well as the end of this course. The first three sections will deal with the consummation of humankind while the last three will consider the qualities, value and approach to the study of theology. The questions, which the unit will seek to answer are:

What should humankind live for? What are the immediate and ultimate destinies of humanity? What are the desirable qualities of systematic theology? What is the value of theological efforts? How should we study theology?

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Explain why the immediate destiny of humankind may be described as vanity,
- Explain the plan of God that concerns the immediate destiny of humankind,
- Analyse and evaluate the tension between desire for prosperity and spirituality in contemporary African life,
- State major aspects of the ultimate destiny of humankind,
- Discuss eternal fellowship with God as the ultimate fulfillment of humankind,
- List the desirable qualities of Christian theology,
- Explain the value of theological studies,
- Describe how we should approach the study of Christian theology.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Immediate Destiny of Humankind I

While physical death is a reality in human experience the immediate destiny of human beings is life before death, life as it is meant to be now. The writer of Ecclesiastes in the Bible reflected deep on the question of how life is to be lived. He concluded that life outside God is vanity and meaninglessness. Legitimate pursuits of life include: wisdom (1:12-18; 7:1-8:1), pleasure (2:1-11), toil/advancement (2:17-26; 4:13-16) and riches (5:8-20). However, these are all vain outside God. He reached some important conclusions through his philosophical and theological reflections.

The first is that human life is vanity because physical death will always terminate human achievements, however great (Ecc. 2:12-16). The second is that “Life not centered on God is purposeless and meaningless. Without him nothing else can satisfy (2:25).” The third is that with God all of life and his other good gifts are to be gratefully received (see Jos. 1:17), used and enjoyed to the full (2:26; 11:8)” (The NIV Study Bible, 1995, p. 984). The fourth is that mankind should fear God (Ecc. 12:13-14). This loving reverence for God is the foundation, content, and goal of wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; Job 28:28). This is the only thing

that can give satisfaction to humanity. Unfortunately, rather than live for spiritual aspirations humankind vigorously pursue physical and material achievements.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Is human life vanity? Explain with some passages in Ecclesiastes.

3.2 Immediate Destiny of Humankind II

The plan of God for human life is for us to experience comfort, goodness and blessing. After creating mankind God pronounced blessings on both male and female for fruitfulness, multiplication and fullness of life (Gen. 1:28).

The Lord Jesus Christ also stated that his mission in the world is to save, heal, deliver the poor, the blind, the prisoners and the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). He came to give human beings fullness of life now (John 10:10) and eternal life beyond this time (Mark 10:29-31).

Humanity appears to be greatly concerned about life as it is meant to be now. The pursuit of material provision, blessing and prosperity is a major preoccupation of humankind. For instance Pederson, cited by Edmund Jacob (1958, 179), has suggested three fundamental aspects of blessing in human life in the Old Testament. These are: Numerous offspring (Gen. 1:28:9:1) as seen in Abraham and David; Riches and many possessions (Gen. 24:35) as seen in Job and Solomon; Victory over enemies (Gen. 27:29; 49:8-12, 22-26; Deut. 28:7) as seen in Joseph and David. The blessed person is seen as one who has power to maintain and augment life.

In addition to the universal problem of sin Africa is ravaged with poverty, illiteracy, sicknesses/diseases, suffering, corruption, dispossession, marginalization, misgovernment and inauthentic existence. Because of this unfortunate sub-human existence Christian preaching in contemporary Africa runs the risk of over-emphasising material dimension of prosperity and physical welfare over and above spirituality-enrichment and prosperity of the soul (Matt. 6:33; 16:26). As the church apply the gospel to meet the health and wealth needs of Africa one major concern is how to strike a balance between prosperity and spirituality.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Analyse and evaluate the tension between desire for prosperity and spirituality in contemporary African life.

3.3 Ultimate Destiny of Humankind I

Three aspects of the ultimate destiny of humankind that will be examined in this concluding section of the theological study of human beings are: God's plan to liberate the creation, Christian hope and eternal fellowship with God. We will not be able to study the final states of humanity about hell in this course. This is due to lack of space as well as the fact that it is outside the immediate focus of the study.

Bruce Milne asserts that humanity in glory is the final dimension of the new being. He explains (1998, 152), "this is the fulfillment of the renewal and restoration of God's people begun by grace in this age; humanity shall rise once again to the heights from which it has fallen."

Apostle Paul taught that an aspect of redemption will be experienced only at the fullness of time (Eph. 1:9). That redemption at the end of the age (the eschaton) will also include the cosmos, the whole universe (Rom. 8:18-25).

These eschatological and cosmological dimensions of the gospel will liberate the creation and unite all things in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10). This wisdom, insight and mystery is difficult to conceive at the moment. Yet, Christian theology affirms this consummation of God's plan for the world. T. Renz (2000, 855) also explains: "The logical and appropriate consequence of one God's provision of salvation through one human is one world confessing this God to be the Lord."

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

State three major aspects of the ultimate destiny of humankind.

3.4 Ultimate Destiny of Humankind II

There is more to the destiny of humankind than God's plan for the world stated above. The Christian hope "takes us over the boundary of moral existence." The resurrection of Jesus implies that we have hope beyond this life (1 Cor. 15:19). In theology hope has two senses. It can be defined as the object of hope (Christ and his final coming) and the attitude of hoping. Christian hope is related to the coming of the kingdom of God in particular and eschatology in general. S. H. Travis (1988, 321) explained that "Hope is not a merely private matter for the scope of God's Kingdom is universal." While the Kingdom of God has come by its inauguration in the life, ministry and death of Jesus (Matt. 3:1; 4:17; Luke 11:2) we are to prayerfully await its fulfillment (Matt. 6:6).

The ultimate destiny of humankind is perfect relationship and spirituality which will be experienced only in the presence of God in

eternal life and heavenly worship. The life of humanity in glory will be characterized by perfect relationship “to God (Rev. 21:3; 22:4); to our neighbour (Eph. 4:13; Rev. 21:10); to ourselves (Rev. 21:4); to our environment (Rom. 8:21-23; Rev. 22: 1f) and to time (1 Peter 1:3f; Rev. 21:4)” according to Milne (1998, 153). In heaven the perfection of “the spirits of righteous men” (Heb. 12:22-24) will make for a perfected spirituality with some kind of community among believers.

Mankind was created to worship and glorify God. Human destiny will be fulfilled in heaven. Heaven is the place of satisfaction, fulfillment and rest. Millard J. Erickson explains (1998, 1237): “Rest... is not merely a cessation of activities, but the experience of reaching a goal of crucial importance...

Heaven, then will be the completion of the Christian’s pilgrimage, the end of the struggle against the flesh, the world, and the devil. There will be work to do but it will not involve fighting against opposing forces.” The life of heaven in fellowship with God is the consummation of our humanity and will be characterized by:

Rest (Heb. 3:11, 18; 4:9-11).

Purity and Perfection (Rev. 21:27; 22:1-5).

Celebration, Fellowship and Joy (Rev. 19:7; Heb. 12:22).

Eternity (Rev. 22:3-5).

Knowledge of God (Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4).

Service (Matt. 19:28; 25:14-30; Luke 22:28-30; Rev. 22:3).

Worship (Rev. 19:1, 4; 22:3).

Revelation 19:1, 4 gives a hint of the worship life in heaven. Participation in that glorious experience along with the elders, living, creatures and angels is the ultimate destiny of humankind. We were created in the image of God for this very purpose, to worship and glorify our maker:

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,... The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: “Amen, Hallelujah!”

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Eternal fellowship with God in heaven is the consummation of our humanity. Discuss.

3.5 Qualities of Theology

I believe that your study of this course has helped you to gain a better understanding and appreciation of Christian theology. However, I also hope that the study has equipped you to make a contribution to the formulation of theology. I encourage you to strive to develop theologies that will be:

Scriptural. Faithful to the revelation of God in Christ as seen in the scripture. This is the concern usually dealt with in hermeneutics.

Logical. The analysis, synthesis and interpretation should be clear and coherent.

Global. It should affirm the fundamental, historic, universal truths of the Christian faith.

Contextual. It should be relevant to the needs and situation of a particular receiving audience.

These qualities also offer basic criteria to evaluate theologies of others.

3.6 The Value of Theology

Theological study is a valuable exercise. We need to continue to study theology for the following reasons:

To ensure correct belief, teaching, doctrine (orthodoxy) which is a part of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). According to Millard Erickson, (1998, 1250) “Right belief is imperative”.

To promote authentic Christian worship, faith and service. Theology should help us to relate to God, to worship God, to serve God. Theology is to be learned, understood, appreciated and communicated as a servant of the Church.

To aid Christian life and living. Theology should be put into practice to promote right living (orthopraxis), to lead to growth, Christlikeness and godliness (I Tim. 6:3). Grudem (1994, 16) proposed, and I agree, that “Theology is meant to be lived and prayed and sung.” Theology should be life-related, having practical value. We must beware of hypothetical, speculative theological knowledge that is not pursued for faith and practice.

To dialogue with some other fields of study like history, ethics, philosophy, sociology and anthropology.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1.6

Is theological studies a valuable exercise? Give four reasons.

3.7 How to Study Theology

How should we approach the study of Christian theology?

Prayerfully, depending on the Holy Spirit to give us illumination, to lead, guide, reveal truth to us (John 14:26).

As Christian Worship. Understanding and living doctrines should give us joy (Deut. 6:5, Psalm 19:8). The study of theology should not be “dry and boring.”

Logically. There is a need for logical, rigorous, coherent thinking to formulate and develop systematic theology. This is one way to renew our mind for transformation (Rom. 12:2). It is not wrong to use God given “human understanding, human logic and human reason.” We must, however, recognize the limitation of the abilities of human reasoning.

With humility. Pride is one of the dangers that face theologians. Theologians must not intimidate others with theological jargons and become intellectual bullies.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.7

You have just been assigned to lead some young pastors in a study of systematic theology. Describe how you will like them to approach the study.

4.0 CONCLUSION

I will like to conclude this theological study of humankind by stressing the need for God-centered existence. Created in God’s image humanity will find meaning only in God. What gives satisfaction in human life is to relate with God, to fear God, to obey God, to live for God, to serve God and to worship God. Outside God human life is a fruitless pursuit in search of purpose. A godless humanity is vanity. It has no meaning. It is futile.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this course we have studied the theologies of the Triune God, Creation and Humankind. The concern of this particular module has been the study of the creation, alienation, redemption and consummation of humanity. There is more to study in theology. I encourage you to

engage in a mere detailed study of sin, salvation, mission and eschatology.

You will find these to be equally revealing, educative and enriching. It will prosper your faith, your life and further equip you for ministry. God bless you and your aspirations.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. State and discuss three aspects of the ultimate destiny of humankind.
2. List four desirable qualities of a Christian theology.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

The NIV Study Bible (1995) p. 984.

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