

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF AFRICA TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY IN GENERAL

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### **Abstract**

*We must know that a complete re-figuration of cultural heritage in Christian terms today takes place with room for greater flexibility in vernacular Christology. Western Missionaries have accused Africans and Africa to have contributed nothing and have nothing to contribute to the development of Christology and Christianity in general, that Africa is a dark continent. It was obvious the European missionaries at that time reported unwittingly many derogatory remarks about African religion. This has brought disharmony between Western missionaries and African churches or theologians. African are now saying that the image of Jesus Christ so far imported from the West into Africa is grossly inadequate for the life and mission of the church in situations of poverty and injustice. A search has to begin for a Christology which will provide a basis for Christian action in contemporary society. This article determines the truth of African and Africa's contribution to the development of Christology or Christianity in general. Against this background, the study employed the Library research method and reviewed critical literature on the subject. The objective of the study is to harmonize working relationships between the missionaries and the African clergy. Who at present grappling with one of its most trying times as the nations of Africa comes face to face with poverty? The study hinges on the assessment of critical literature, with objectives; finding among others shows that Africa and Africa contributed enormously to the development of Christology and then the study recommends that missionaries should explore the study of African culture very well before denouncing it and now the paper concludes that western missionaries should study Africans and for them to understand African own contribution to Christology and in general Christianity.*

### **Introduction**

To be sure Africans contributed immensely to the development of Christianity, we say in the beginning Paul using what was no doubt a traditional formula, telling the Roman Christians that the good news concerning God's "Son" who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of

holiness by his resurrection from the dead (Romans1:3-4) and in another letter the same apostle explains that the calling of Christians is “to wait (God’s) Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come (1Thessolonican1:10).

These two basic standpoints of the gospel proclamation, Paul’s attention, like that of the speeches attributed to Peter in Acts, is focused on the resurrection and the *eschaton* that is the final day of the Lord; the significance of Jesus is seen in the fact that as the person for whom the resurrection to true life has already happened, he will be God’s designated representative – God’s “Christ” and “Son” – on the last day. As such Jesus is the bearer of salvation. Such a messianic Christology also lies behind the primitive use of the titles “Son of man” and “Lord”. Over the origin, history and sense of the first of this title, there was and is a great deal of scholarly controversy (Williston Walker 1985, 35-36).

This ongoing controversy at this time Africans took part in the scholarly debate that the council later laid down an understanding of the relation between humanity and the divinity of Jesus Christ which became normative in both East and West – that Jesus Christ was to be regarded as one person having human and divine natures. The decision affirms that Christ is one person in two natures, unmixed, unchanged, undivided, and inseparable. This brought to an end the controversy and set what is now known as Christ being known as “God-Man”.

This is one; great advancement made in Christianity that Jesus is now the very embodiment of God’s purposes and the one in whom they are carried out. This conviction – that what God is for humanity and what humanity is for God are both realized and made concrete in Jesus – gave rise to yet another and centrally important, strain in primitive Christology. In this saga, Arius a Bishop of Alexandria in Egypt didn’t believe God could experience emotions. Yet if Jesus was fully divine, God did, through Jesus, feel sorrow and pain. At this point, most church members believe that, in some way that transcends human understanding, God the Son had experience emotion. Arius taught that Jesus was not God; Jesus was instead, the first being that God created. “Once Arius claimed “the Son of God did not exist (Timothy Paul Jones,1999, 30).

This plugs the entire church into the controversy and Africa makes some useful contributions to the resolution of the dispute. This article shows various contributions made by African to the development and

advancement of Christianity. This paper shows how African theologians have set out to demonstrate that the African religious experience and heritage were not illusory and that they have formed the vehicle for conveying the Gospel to Africa. It has helped to give the lie to the supercilious that Africa is a dark continent and their religion primitives, superstition, field with blood and human sacrifices, full of evil, witchcraft, black magic, voodoo and cannibalism and most importantly they have contributed nothing and has nothing to contribute to the development Christology and Christianity in general. It will interest you to note that there are innovations in Africa that African theologians are in research for Christology which will provide a basis for Christian action in contemporary society.

### **Christological Controversy Made Easy**

At the very heart of the encounter between Christianity and African culture is the subject of Christology (John S.Pobee 1979, 9). It is traditionally defined as the doctrine of the person of Christ. The Christian *Kerygma* is the proclamation of the good news of how God through Jesus Christ of Nazareth acts to bridge the gulf between God and man, a gulf existing as a consequence of man's sin and the imperatives deriving there from. And so at the heart of the *kerygma* stands Christ (John S.Pobee 1979, 81). Christians all over encountered the question, who is Jesus Christ, and what manner of man is he? Jesus suffers and dies on the cross. The suffering on the cross by the saviour Arius couldn't believe that God could suffer.

Arius a theologian born in Egypt Bishop of Alexandria didn't believe God could experience emotions. Yet if Jesus was fully divine, God did, through Jesus, feel sorrow and pain. At this point, most church members believe that, in some way that transcends human understanding, God the Son had experience emotion. Arius taught that Jesus was not God; Jesus was instead, the first being that God created. "Once Arius claimed "the Son of God did not exist ( Timothy Paul Jones1999,30). Here lies the whole controversy that set the church looking for a solution.

The controversy was undoubted when Arians, named after Arius, a fourth-century Libyan - born theologian, believed that the Son of God was created and that therefore Jesus Christ was not fully divine. Docetists on their own held that the Word (John 1:1) only seemed to become flesh and that Jesus only seemed to suffer. Ebionites also were Jewish-Christian ascetics, adhering to the Law of Moses and holding that Jesus was humanly born, and Encratites carried asceticism to

extremes...Monarchians safeguarded the authority and unity of God the Father by subordinating the Son and Patripassians were Monarchians who held that God the Father suffered on the cross (James Harper, et l., ed.,1987, 191). There was also Eutycheanism that broke out in 448 AD. Eutyches accused of making Jesus Christ a "*tertium quid*" or 'third something' meaning that he was neither God nor man (Debbie Adegbite2015, 79-81). So many views concerning Jesus Christ were out to discredit our Lord.

But again John Baillie in his book titled "*The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity*" published in 1929, posits that the consequence of the fall of man was that he was dead spiritually but God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extended or withhold mercy as he pleased, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creation, to pass by and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice. But with a certain select number of men and women God, in His love and pity and to manifest His own greater glory, was anxious to deal differently, and to find some means whereby He might without in any way settling aside the proper demands of justice, rescue them from Satan and his Hell and restore them to fellowship with himself in His Heaven ( John Baillie1929, 7).

He goes on to emphasise that the selection was made, not according to any merit or desert on the part of those selected but according to God's mere good pleasure. That what plan of rescue was after all conceivable? All men were bound by the Laws of justice to suffer the pain of Hell during infinite time and God could not infringe the Laws of justice without compromising His glory and acting contrary to His just nature. For there was no way in which He could call upon man to help for nothing man could do however meritorious could avail to wipe out the record against him.

Does he then ask? Was there anything which God might do? The question he asks will be only God that has the answer. But the difficulty here was that if the man had his punishment remitted and given some reparation which had been made by God, the Laws of justice would again be contravened because, after all, it was a man who had incurred the guilt. There was, however, one other possibility. God had a Son, who was of the one essence with Himself and yet a different "person"; this Son is indeed one of the three "persons"--- Father, Son and Holy Ghost—united in the one essential Deity. And now, out of His infinite

pity for mankind and His infinite tenderness towards those whom He had selected for rescue, He proposed that this Son should empty Himself of His celestial glory, and be born on earth as the offspring of a Jewish peasant maiden and suffer death and descent into Hell for three days, before finally rising from the dead and going back to Heaven to His Father.

The death of One who was thus both God and man was the only thinkable means whereby man's rescue could be accomplished; for in the celebrated words of St. Anselm: "God will not do it because He ought not, and man will not do it because he cannot: therefore so that God-and-man may do this, he who is to make this satisfaction must in his same person be perfect God and perfect man; for he cannot do it unless he is very God, nor ought unless he is very man (*Cur Deus Homo*, Bk. 11, Chapter VII).

### **Persons And African In Development Of Christology And Christianity In General**

Christianity in Africa is relatively unknown. As early as A.D145 Africa witnessed a vibrant spread of Christianity. The history of Carthage is known to all as how the North Africans became Roman citizens. How they became Christians is not clear...At the beginning of the third Century, at a council preside over by Agrippinus, Bishop of Carthage, there were present not less than seventy bishops of the Province. A period of cruel persecutions followed and the African church receive a baptism of blood (Alexander Roberts, D.D., & James Donaldson, LL.D2004, 3).

And again the history of Black Africa in the decade ending in 1966 suggests not only that one developing area can indeed learn from another, but that Africa did learn a great deal in the development of Christology, achieving an awareness of the possibilities of great contribution in Christology controversy up till date. So much so that they are even involved in the innovation of finding a new fashion for African Christology. By the second century, the church was stronger in North Africa, where the Bible was first translated into Latin and in Egypt in Alexandria ( James Harper, et l., ed.,1987, 190).

Through scholarship as a uniquely and supremely human activity, Africans are developing and expanding their awareness of the desirable and realizable. Therefore Africa has been contributing to the development of Christology and still putting innovation as it is a revival of Christianity. The history of Christianity or the forefathers of

faith cannot be completed without mentioning the contribution made by African descent. We cannot forget the contribution of Tertullian of Carthage who is practically from Tunisia in Africa.

He was born in C.150A.D and wrote an enormous amount, about thirty books totalling more than 1,500 pages in the space of little more than fifteen years (C.A.D. 196 – C.212). The range of his interest was greater than that of any other Christian writer in ancient times. For that reason, his works are a valuable source of information about church life, as well as about doctrinal and controversial matters, especially Christology. His style is vivid and unconventional, which makes his Latin difficult to translate. His writings were so important to the Latin church that, although he went into schism, his books were preserved and studied by all the great Western Fathers (John D.Woodbridge1988, 49) As for Tertullian the credibility of the incarnation of the Son of God depended on the belief that matter was good and he emphasized that belief at every opportunity (John D.Woodbridge1988, 52-53).

He shows the difference between the Persons that is not one of status but one of *gradus* (rank), an important advance that undercut the general belief of the time, that God the Father was somehow God in a way that the other Persons were not. Tertullian placed the Father first in the order of *gradus* but did not accord Him a kind of divinity that the Son and the Holy Spirit cannot share. Tertullian fundamental orthodoxy is even more apparent in his Christology, where he stressed that the incarnation was an assumption of human nature by the Person of the Son, the Word of God. At a time when it was widely believed that Jesus was inferior to the Father and some were even saying that He was no more than a man whom God had adopted as His Son, Tertullian had the clarity of vision to advocate a fully divine and the same time fully human Christ, the two natures being united in a single Person ( John D.Woodbridge1988, 54). Tertullian theology later formed the substance of the so-called Tome of Leo (449), which was incorporated into the dogmatic definition of orthodox Christology made two years later at Chalcedon ( John D. Woodbridge 1988, 54).

Again the continent of Africa is blessed with a lot of scholars who stood for the church when it matters most. Somebody like Origen of Alexandria who was a scholar and also an ascetic who made a useful contribution to the development of Christianity. He was the best scholar in the Christian church in the first half of the third century. He was born in about A.D185 and died in A.D.254. During the six decades of his life,

he defended the faith against heretics and the Roman authorities, he was active as a Christian educator, he was a witness to the Jewish community and he was a spiritual guide in the church. He was respected but controversial, disliked by some and suspected by others of holding unorthodox beliefs. But through it all, he remained intellectually dynamic and creative, patient, and persevering. He eventually faced the possibility of martyrdom. His place in the history of the church is based upon his biblical scholarship, including his use of the original language of the Bible and his method of exegesis, his pioneering of the theological concepts and organizing those concepts into the first systematic theology and his asceticism which became the seed-bed for monasticism. His writing can still inspire Christians today (John D. Woodbridge 1988, 55).

Cyprians of Carthage C.200–258 took the next turn of Africans who laid a strong foundation for the development of Christianity. Cyprian was Bishop of Carthage in 248 A.D and was born in C.200 A.D, got converted in C.246 A.D. He ranks as the second most important Latin-speaking leader of the church after Tertullian. His ideas strongly influenced Augustine and through him all of Western Christendom.

John D. Woodbridge in recounting great Leaders of the Christian church posits that Cyprian wrote almost entirely on practical matters and derived his theology from a mixture of Scripture, Roman law and pragmatic pastoral decisions. He alluded that although Cyprian aimed at preserving the faith, he sowed seeds of several doctrinal innovations. He was a strong advocate of church order and discipline and had a high view of the objective power of baptism and the Eucharist. Cyprian, John D. Woodbridge conclude, based his theology upon a legalistic reading of the Bible. He was also much influenced by Tertullian. He held a high view of the church, he taught there was no salvation outside the church: "He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother". So he insisted everything must be done as Christ did ( John D. Woodbridge 59-62).

The work of Athanasius was next in the advancement of Christology and Christianity; who fought gallantly against Arius in the great Christological controversy. When talking about one African who built upon the apostolic foundation was Athanasius. Athanasius bishop of Alexandria born between C.296-373AD. He was ordained a deacon in 319 AD elected into the office of Bishop of Alexandria in 328 deposed from office in 335 AD and returned 337 AD, exiled in 355 and exiled again in 362 and died in 373 AD.

Athanasius the great Bishop of Alexandria was a real legend, whose name remained synonymous with Nicene orthodoxy, the faith that was to triumph eight years after his death at the first Council of Constantinople AD381. Later generations came to know him as the archetypal representative of the Alexandrian school of theology, even though he had done little to develop a distinctive theological outlook.

Athanasius's anti-Arian discourses and related works form the bulk of his literary output. His treatise on the incarnation, though faulty in place, has remained a classic work on the subject to this day. In the Christology controversy between him and Arius, his related works are noted for how Athanasius took the favourite proof texts of the Arians, especially Hebrews 3:2 and Proverbs 8:22 and demonstrate that they do not mean what the Arians claimed. Athanasius's refutations are all the more remarkable in that he was not averse to using allegorical methods of exegesis. In particular, he was prone to regard the entire Bible as fundamentally Christology. Although that put him into trouble with some OT texts where a modern exegete would not find any direct reference to Christ at all. But such difficulty did not worry him. He unduly treated such text as a special challenge and often used great ingenuity to demonstrate that Arian interpretations which were also Christological were misleading (John D. Woodbridge, 67)

One more of his contributions was the double treatise against the Heathen and On the Incarnation. The second part of that work is often printed separately and is well-known as a classical statement of Alexandrian Christology. It is remarkable in that it is largely free of anti-Arian statements a fact that has encouraged many scholars to assign an early date to it. The first section is less well-known, but it contains an important refutation of paganism in the traditional style. In particular, Athanasius argued that idolatry and pantheism must be wrong because God and man are distinct essences. However, he accepted the common Greek view that the human soul can have a true knowledge of God in creation because the soul is a mirror-image of the Logos, or Word of God (John D. Woodbridge, 65)

Following Athanasius was the contribution of Clement of Alexandria in Egypt an African citizen to the theological battle at this time. Clement of Alexandria was indeed the first Christian scholar in full command of the knowledge of his time. He warned his students against the errors of the philosophers, and he insisted on accepting from the Hellenes



“whatever is good, whatever is beautiful”. To work all the elements of faith and philosophy into a theological system was the glory of Origen another African.

Clement of Alexandria started with Scripture, establishing a secure text by comparing the various versions and interpreting it, always looking for a deep (often allegorical) meaning of the text. Then he explained the biblical faith further by bringing it into the context of Greek philosophy and presenting it as a systematic unity. Finally, he pointed out the ways of perfection to the Christian soul ( John Baur, “1994, 23).

It is for this reason that he is venerated as the first biblical scholar, theologian and master of asceticism; a man to whom all later theologians, St Augustine included are deeply indebted. In today’s Africa south of the Sahara, we may be less inclined to follow this theological speculation but we have to learn from him as well as from Clement the art of giving to our faith a standing to be respected by the educated elite of our time. We can also learn from him to formulate this faith in the context of our African background and culture

Furthermore, Augustine of Hippo takes his turn among Africans that contributed immensely to the development of Christology and in general Christianity. Augustine is the dominant figure in the history of Christian thought between the close of the New Testament canon and the Reformation. He was from North Africa in 383A.D he crosses the sea to Rome with his mistress and son. Augustine was baptised in 387 A.D. and was ordained as a priest in 391 A.D. and returned to North Africa in 388 A.D. He was sacked in 410 A.D. in Rome and began his writing of “The City of God” in 413 A.D. He dies during the Vandal's siege of Hippo Regius in 430 A.D ( John D. Woodbridge 1988, 85).

Augustine, Roman Catholics during this period (1225-1274). He is rivalled only by that of Thomas Aquinas. Augustine is the only slightly less important in the history of philosophers between Plotinus (third century) and Aquinas. He was the last major thinker of the ancient world and the first philosopher and theologian of the Middle Ages. His work is still a model for those Christian thinkers who would use Platonism as a framework for their Christian world and life view. Among the area of Christian thought Augustine’s ideas are still much studied are the relationship between faith and reason, the problem of evil, divine grace and predestination, the doctrine of the Trinity and the philosophy of history.

So there comes the Christology controversy being laid to rest as there was an understanding of the relation of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ which became normative in both East and West that Jesus Christ was to be regarded as one person having human and divine natures. This African played a more crucial role in the developmental Christology and Christianity in general.

### **African Major Contribution To Christology And Christianity**

There is a remarkable African contribution to Christology and deep advancement to the development of Christianity. John Mbiti from South Africa one of the great scholars of Africa once noted sees African Christianity have made a great contribution to Christendom through scholarship, participating in church councils, defence of the faith, movements like monasticism, theology, translation and preservation of the Scripture, Martyrdom, the famous Catechetical School of Alexandria, liturgy and heresy's and controversies, ( John Mbiti1969, 229-230) just to mention a few.

It is much remarkable that unlike "*The Acts of the Apostle*" There were other apostles that worked beside Peter and Paul, but their work did not bear upon the plan of the author, and so he passed by them. No doubt he was governed in this also by the materials that he had at. I am here govern only by the material at my hand and whatever the reason, it must be constantly remembered that this paper gives us only scenes from the church, not a full history account.

We begin this journey with a selected few Africans to the development of Christianity and Christology. Vibia Perpetual the mother of an infant son born between (181-203) lived in North Africa at Carthage and suffered persecution and death with her maidservant Felicitas and four other Christians under a Roman edict against Christianity. Hers is an authentic record of early Christian martyrdom. Vibia Perpetual was in her early twenties when singing a psalm, she went forth with a joyful, radiant countenance to a martyr's death. She and her Christian companions were condemned to be thrown into the arena among wild animals and then to be killed by a gladiator's sword. But Perpetual had caught a glimpse of Christ's sufferings on the Cross and she was not afraid. Her ties with the world were strong. The devoted mother of an infant son, she was young, beautiful, of noble birth and well-educated. Yet she was willing to sacrifice her life for her faith. Perpetual and her companions were among the first victims of this edit. Perpetual knew the story of how Paul's conversion nearly two centuries earlier had

followed soon after Stephen's martyrdom. Paul had said: "And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed. I also was standing by" (Acts.22:20). Perpetual was confident that their martyrdom would win many in the pagan city of Carthage to Christianity, for they were aware that the blood of these earlier martyrs had become the seed of the church ( Edith Deen1959, 3-4)

Again away from persecution just as, S. O. Abogunrin recounted the situation within the early Christian Church in Africa to be a complex one. That the North African church paraded many of the earliest Christian scholars and also harbour many of the early heretics. Many of the earliest Christian apologists lived and practised in Africa. North Africa was so important that the final definition of the NT Canon took place in Africa in 397 AD. Somebody like Tertullian from Africa whose Christology is its grasp of the two natures of Christ. Tertullian opines that Jesus was composed of two substances and that the Word had already existed alongside the Father from all eternity and as a distinct Person who at any rate from His generation is one with the Father in essence (S.O. Abogunrin., et l., ed.2003, 04,)

The history holds that according to Clement also of Africa the Logos has come to us from heaven and entered into or attached Himself to human flesh. By becoming incarnate, He made Himself visible. He has begotten Himself by creating his humanity. Therefore Christ is both human and divine. He is God and man at the same time. He has clothed Himself with a man, being God in the form of a man unsullied and as such, has suffered (S.O. Abogunrin., et l., ed.2003, 05,). Origen another Africa took his turn to view the Logos of the Father as the wisdom of God Himself which was enclosed within the limits of that man who appeared in Judea, but what entered the woman's womb was more than God's Wisdom. He was born like an infant and wailed like a crying child. Origen argues that the union is as complete as that of lump and iron, with the fire into which it has been plunged, becoming red-hot (1Cor.6:17) (S.O. Abogunrin., et l., ed.2003, 06,). Origen concluded by insisting on the duality of the two natures by speaking of Christ's manhood (*anthropods*) and His divinity (*Theotes*) and of the divine-human nature (*Phusis*) and His (*hypostasis*) as the Only Begotten (Francis W.Beare1981, 407).

For want of space, we tend to say that the Christological controversies in North Africa did not present an edifying spectacle. The passion was often too high and sometimes resulted in unworthy intrigues and violence. Nevertheless, it was these controversies and heresies which

led to orthodox Christological formulations which are still regarded as standard in the present day. The North African church, therefore, contributed both positively and negatively to the development of Christology. (S.O. Abogunrin., et l., ed.2003, 07,)

### **Solution To Christology**

As the debate went on unabated an attempt to understand and interpret the mystery in the idea that Christian God is one while stressing the threeness of the Godhead. Augustine of Hippo 354-4330A.D interpreted the generation of Son (or logos meaning Word) on the analogy of human self-knowledge. This important work was one of Augustine's two major works originally written in the early fifth century. Here, he sets out a distinctive approach to the doctrine of the Trinity; because of his concept which necessarily implies a lover, beloved and their mutual love. He argues for a threefold understanding of Godhead (Debbie Adegbite, 2015,285). Augustine has laid the final debate to rest but others are still looking at Universal Christology.

The likes of Wolfhart Pannenberg according to Veli-Matti Karkkinen whose essays he titled *Revelation as History*, originally written in German in 1961 and his major Christological work published in German in 1964 and later in England under the title "Jesus, God and Man. From the beginning of his theological career, therefore, Pannenberg whom many regarded as the most influential and certainly most hotly debated systematic theologian at the beginning of the third millennium, dealt with foundational issues in Christology. The main focus of Jesus, God and Man methodology and three-volume Systematic Theology which was released in English in its entirety in 1997, he continued the main orientation of the earlier work, even though he did so in a self-critical manner and also moved beyond methodological issues to deal with the major topic of Christology(Veli-Matti Kaarkkainen2003,155).

### **Harmonization Of Western Missionaries And African Mission**

In terms of the Western missionary's world-view according to Kwame Bediako living realities in the experience of vast numbers of African Christians in all the churches and not only in the so-called independent struggle for and feeling after a theological method in a field of enquiry that had hitherto been charted largely by western relating anthropological scholar in terminology relating to Africa that would often be unacceptable to Africa (Kwame Bediako2013,52). Kwame Bediako pointed out the disagreement in terms like fetish, animist,

polytheistic, primitive, uncivilized and lower the Western intellectual categories devised to describe and interpret African religious tradition ( Kwame Bediako 2013,52).

For many years now African theologians have refused to accept the negative view of African religion held by Western missionaries and have shown consistently the continuity of God from the pre-Christian African past into the Christian present (Bolaji Idowu,1962,). It is all remarkable that the practitioners of African theologians took on the challenge of re-interpreting African Primal religion, approaching the subject not as historians of religion do, nor as anthropologists do, but as Christian theologians and arriving at some startling conclusion ( Walls, Andrew F.,1996, 5-15).

So when you see African theologians describe African Primal religions in terms of monotheism or diffused monotheism, as Bolaji Idowu did about Yoruba religion (Idowu, 1962, 1973:168) or when John Mbiti reversing the verdict of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, called African pre-missionary religious experience a *preparation Evangelica* (Mbiti 1970:36); they are to be understood as drawing on their sense of belonging with Christian tradition and using categories that described their understanding of their pre-Christian heritage to relate to their Christian commitment ( Vinay Samuel & Chris Sugden1983, 52-53).

Before these African theologians took on the challenge the European missionaries and their cohorts have accounted African religion of the unbelievable blacks, concentrated on cannibalism that was to be common then. For example, a lot of it exists but let's take that of the Ibu Battuta report; a visit of a group of blacks Sulta Mansa Sulema in West Africa who demonstrated his hospitality to them by offering a slave woman whom they slaughter and ate. Some of the blacks told him (he claimed) that the testiest meat is the flesh of women and the palm and the breast ( Hamdium and King 1975, pg 51). This report of Ibu Battuta may be true or not Ibu Battuta is one individual who cannot represent the whole of Africa as a whole. The judgment of Ibu Battus on Africa is false it cannot hold because he does not represent the religion of Africa as a whole; not everywhere in Africa is thus practised.

Davidsonnarrated the cannibalism myth was widespread; outstanding evidence that lends credence to the view that black Africans ate human flesh taste and preference of Cavazziis description of the kingdom of Congo, Motemba and Angola. The article of that fine quarto volume which he published to this popular belief in Europe in 1678 gave a vivid

expression to this popular belief in Europe. He offered a splendidly graphic line engraving of a cannibal scene in which several Angola were butchering human limbs and cooking them in gridiron (Davidson, 1961, 100).

Ironically Africans held similar views of cannibalism against Europeans as well. Cannibalism is not the only domicile in Africa alone. The unprecedented brutality that the slaves suffered, confirmed their suspicions and fears. John Barbot who was an Agent of the Royal Company of Africa which shipped slaves to the New World had once remarked in 1633 that among the slaves that they came to America. Were many were positively proposed to the opinion that we transport them into our country in other to kill and eat them and believed that Europeans were great and irredeemable cannibals ( John Barbot, 1746, 10). It is gratifying to the Europeans that De Barros considered the greatest authority on Portuguese. African and Asiatic travels of his time writing about 1539 left no objective impression and R.Haklut's principal Navigator claim to have a list of European travellers close to EI Mina and Benin by mid-1550s who also left an awful impression on the religions of Negroes of west Africa. Some include the unknown Duch man, D.R. Peter, D.Marees and De Bry Pinteado among others.

The missionaries themselves about a century away came Dr. Flammond Doffart D apper and from then came the greatest discoveries which began to be made in science, a new set of ridiculous remark on the Negroes of West Africa and their religion. What came up though basically without any significant change from those given earlier on. The 7th century period was one of the greatest rushes for new areas of commercial interests in Europe. To them and the missionaries Africa was a confused mass of ridiculous superstitions. A kind of unbelievable absurdity. For David Nyendel it was so ridiculous and such a mass they profess to worship God and Devil in human and brutal images ( Roth, 1903, 49 ).

So as we can see John Barbot's involvement in the slave trade probably influence his derogatory views of African religion. To him, African religion is a gross superstitious paganism, though most acknowledge a Supreme Being, but in a very erroneous manner being thus prepossessed, they put all their confidence (John Barbot, 1746, pg 352). But one thing we the Africans themselves were extremely sensual, knavish, revengeful, impudent liars, gluttonous, extravagant, so intemperate that they drink brandy, as if they drink water, so deceitful

in their dealing with the Europeans. They rob and commit murders on the highway. The blacks are so dexterous and expert in stealing that they will rob a European before his face without being perceived by him (John Barbot, 1746, pg 352)

John W. Burton wrote that Africa is still at the rude dawn of faith-fetishism and has rarely advanced to idolatry. He has never perhaps the idea of a personal deity, a duty in life, a moral code or the shame of lying. He rarely believes in a future and punishment which whether true or not are infallible indices of human progress. At the best of times inclined to be cantankerous fame, whether and personal happiness was still eluding him ( John Barbot, 1746, pg 352). Above all, Mary Kingsley who perhaps could be described as a great Africanist believed that many African institutions could not be properly understood because of the false and exaggerated view of them by stray-travellers missionaries and officials who for their aggrandizement made the stay-at-home statement think that Africans are still awful savage or silly children (Kingsley. 1964, XVII).

A good number of these amateur ethnographers are still under the influence of those theories at home in her view, many African institutions are not properly understood because of false and exaggerated views given of them by stray-travellers missionaries and officials. A good number of the armature ethnographer of that period who painted an awful picture of Africa includes Milligan Leonard, Robert H. Nassau, and Dudley Kidd. Kidd published "The savage childhood (London 1960) while Robert H. Milligen publish the jungle folk of West Africa (1908) and The Fetish Folk of West Africa (1912) (Nassau, 1904; Kidd, 1906, 1905)

To let the missionary know that time and again African theologians have set or begun to demonstrate that the African religious experience and heritage were not illusory and that they should form the vehicle for conveying the gospel verities to Africa. Both Western missionaries and African theologians should be looking critically is what Apostle Paul in his letter to Romans chapter 1; what it means by the ungodly are not systems at all but men and women. It is men and women who hold down the truth in unrighteousness, who are given to dishonour God, who are given to dishonourable passion. It is upon men and women who commit ungodly and wicked deeds both West Missionary and African that the wrath of God is been revealed.

Just as Lawrence O. Richards would always say that the Church both the missionaries and the Africans or the rest of Christian communities, the Church is designed by God for the ministry of transformation: for communication and nurturing the development of Christ's life to men. That relationship within the body is essentially discipline one. Whenever the church gathers as the church (as the two, or three, or as the hundreds) the concern is nurture (Lawrence O. Richards 1975, 120). The missionaries and the African brethren may take the discipline and nurturing process which God has designed into Christ's Body to operate both in the individual and the local group to undergo progressive transformation. Love becomes a visible mark of Jesus' presence. The fruit of the Spirit is produced within individuals. Understanding this will bring harmony and a good working relationship between the missionaries and the African clergy or theologians.

### **Conclusion**

The challenge facing Africa today is not vernacular Christology but rather an authentic Christology which is capable of meeting the needs of our African brethren and the current challenges facing the church in Africa. Western Missionaries should study Africans and Africa's contribution to the development of Christology and Christianity in general, and not derogate Africa as a dark continent. Missionaries should know it is men and women who hold down the truth in unrighteousness, who are given to dishonour God, who are given to dishonourable passion. It is upon men and women who commit ungodly and wicked deeds both West Missionary and African that the wrath of God is been revealed.

It is known today Christology in Africa will be without a look at Christology yesterday in Africa. Today is meaningless without yesterday. Twice the church came to Africa and twice the church withered away. Little is known of when Christianity came to North Africa. Acts 2:10 states that among the people present in Jerusalem were people from Egypt and part of Libya near Cyrene. The church first came to Africa in the apostolic age, an African Vibia Perpetual was confident that their martyrdom would win many in the pagan cities to Christianity, for they were aware that the blood of these earlier martyrs had become the seed of the church



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