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TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF MAN IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT: Exploring the Patristic Concept of Man as *Imago Dei* and the African Concept of *Ubuntu*

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved Mother Agnes

EPIGRAPH

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous; actually who are you not to be? We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

(Akeelah and the Bee-Film)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD...........................*Anno Domini*

ATR………………African Traditional Religion

CCC………………Catechism of the Catholic Church

Col...........................Colossians

Cor...........................Corinthians

CSEL.......................*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*

De Princ....................*De Principiis*

DNA………………Deoxyribonucleic Acid

EAE………………East African Education

Eph...........................Ephesians

Gal...........................Galatians

GCS.........................*Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*

Gen...........................Genesis

Isa............................Isaiah

Jn.............................John

Lev...........................Leviticus

LRA.........................Lord Resistant Army

MCS………………..Madoa Cultural Services

NJBC.......................New Jerome Biblical Commentary

PG ....*Patrologia Graeca*

Rom.........................Romans

Vol(s).......................Volume(s)

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Christian vision of man which is summed up as Christian anthropology has its roots in the creation story, specifically *Gen* 1:26, where it is written that God created man *in his own image and likeness,* meaning God is the fundamental locus of man's origin and *telos*. Many have drawn from this verse every dram of meaning that they can. How Christians understand this verse, and other related texts for that matter, influences heavily their understanding of themselves, their relationship with their Creator-God, with other human beings and with the rest of the created order. The text simply tells us about man. It is an avenue into what man actually is.

The implications of this adage are immense for theology, psychology, ministry and Christian living in general. According to Bruce Demarest, the "ramifications of the *imago* embrace issues of human dignity and value, personal and social ethics, relations between sexes, and the solidarity of the human family."[1]

Some of the biblical passages that refer to the image and/or likeness of God are *Gen* 1:26, 27, and 5:1-2, 9:6, *1Cor* 11:7, *James* 3:9. However in the use of these verses one notices that none of them explicitly define the *image of God*. As C.F.H. Henry notes, "the bible does not define for us the precise content of the original image."[2] Due to this lacuna, numerous differing views have been put forward and volumes of books have been written with regard as to what *image* implies.

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[1] B.A. DEMAREST- J.R. BERK, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Kregel Publications 2005, 27-66.
[2] C.F.C. HENRY, *God, Revelation and Authority*, Wheaton: Crossway Books: 1976, 125.

Despite these ambivalences, certain conclusions are agreed upon by those interested in this field:

I. All persons male and female are *images of God*. The universality of the image in all humanity is fundamental. The verses, while they use man, do not mean male only but rather man in its generic sense meaning humans.

II. We are like God in some unspecified way. Though man belongs to a different order of being from God, who is totally other, divine, immortal, and transcendent, image (*tselem*) and likeness (*demut),* denote that humans are *like* God in some way.

III. As images of God we possess a unique dignity amongst the rest of creation. Only man is created in God's image. He or she has a special place that is not shared by other created beings on earth.

IV. Even after the fall, man still retains the *image of God*. Sin did not demolish the image; it (image) was only corrupted and defiled. Irenaeus of Lyons develops this point further as we shall see later.

V. As the *image of God* belongs to God. His being is determined by God's nature. He is answerable to God.

VI. Lastly, Christ is the perfect image of the Father. Man should pattern his life on Jesus who is the complete revelation of the *image of God*, (cf. *2Cor* 4:4, Col 1:15). It is God's will we be conformed to the likeness of his Son (cf. *Rom* 8:29).

Though there seems to be objective agreement on the above points, different schools of thought have emerged holding divergent views on what the *image of God* actually means.

Firstly we have the *substantive* view, the proponents of which hold that image is identified as some extrinsic element or quality within the makeup of the human being. God's image is an aspect of our physical or bodily make up. It is a literal understanding of *tselem* which can mean "statue" or "form".[3] Some stretch it further to refer to the ability to walk upright. A common agreement among the proponents of this view is that *image of God* is some psychological or spiritual quality in man for example, rationality.

Secondly, there is also the *relational* view of image being the experience of relationships. Here human beings are considered to be in the *image of God* when standing in a particular relationship, which is indeed the image.[4] *Image of God* in this perspective is identified in terms of the human persons' various relationships.[5] This is a popular view among the neo-orthodox and existentialist theologians. For example, according to Karl Barth "the human person is *imago Dei* in that he or she has been created to relate with God and with other humans in community"[6]. While some see engaging in relationship as *image of God*, others hold that the *image of God* is the capacity to have a relationship.

Thirdly, there is the *functional* view which links image with what humans do or ought to do. That *image* is not rooted in one's makeup or qualities but in the person's office or task. The view interprets *image* as the human person's ability to exercise

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[3] Cf. M.J. ERICKSON, *Christian Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 1998, 520-21.
[4] Cf. M.J. ERICKSON, *Christian Theology*, 524.
[5] Cf. B. DEMAREST, *The Human Person*, 143.
[6] K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatics*, New York: Harper Row 1955, 3, 1,192.

dominion over the created order and lower creatures.[7] This suggests that *Gen* 1:28, elucidates *Gen* 1:27. This is a view that is popular with many reformed theologians who have stressed the cultural mandate of *Gen* 1 for humans to *rule* over and *subdue* the earth. According to Hans Walter, "it is precisely in his function as a ruler that he is *God's image*".[8]

It is quite clear from the above survey that since the inception of Christianity, different schools of thought and individual scholars have laboured to plumb the meaning and ramifications of this concept, *Imago Dei*. They have approached it as a way to penetrate the "mysterious" abyss of God and how humans are related to God. The theme has been used to enter into deep reflection as to how man should relate and respond to reality surrounding him, how one can grow spiritually to become more like God and even whether women in their nature are *image of God*. Furthermore, contextual theologies, depending on the reality of the context, have in various ways approached the subject in question with a particular emphasis, hence making it an endless debate. For instance, the question of man, explicitly or implicitly lies at the core of African Christian theology. As a matter of fact, at the heart of African Theology is the call for the recognition and respect for the dignity of the African man. Therefore, one realises that our discussion on this subject does not mean we are making a new exercise but venturing in a field already occupied with questions needing answers.

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[7] Cf. B. DEMAREST, *The Human Person*, 141.

[8] H.W. WOLFF, *Anthropology of the Old Testament,* Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1974, 51.

In the wake of these ambivalences and doubts, we need to go back to the patristic[9] times and explore the Fathers' their understanding of this subject. Our aim in this work is to go back to the Antiochene tradition and try to recover its interpretation of *Gen* 1:26 and other related verses. In the same spirit of recovery, we will also explore the rich Ubuntu philosophy as the African expression of *Imago Dei* and further look at how the concept has anthropologically influenced directly or indirectly the rise and content of African Christian theological conception of the human person as *Imago Dei.*

In the second and third chapters, we will borrow a leaf from the mid twentieth century movement, *La Nouvelle Theologie*, which aimed at going back to the sources. With the aim of understanding the meaning of *Imago Dei,* instead of just relying on scholastic intellectual speculation, we will go back to the sources, the Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church while taking note of history. Why should we use the Fathers? According to B. Ramsey, the Fathers offer us a unique and privileged look at the ancient church and its doctrines.[10] They relied on the Scriptures mostly to remain orthodox. The criteria[11] of determining who a Father is already present us with scholarly figures that lived an authentic holy life. Therefore, we will make good use of

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[9] Cf. B. RAMSEY, *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, New York: Paulist Press 1985, 1-20. Most of the writings in the Early Centuries of Christianity were developed by those who would later acquire the title "Father" and were developed within the context of the writer's cultures. Among the writers, there arose those whose comments, on the existing doctrines, certain extremes were over emphasised. As a result the fathers rose up as Christian polemicists who reacted in a bid to defend and elucidate church doctrines. According to Karen King, "in their refutations, they supplied detailed if tendentious descriptions of their opponents' views and behaviours and occasionally quoted long sections from their writings".

[10] Cf. B. RAMSEY, *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, 1-20.

[11] Cf. B. RAMSEY, *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, 4-7. There are four criteria used by the church to determine who a Father is; that is antiquity, holiness of life, orthodox and ecclesiastical approval.

the original interpretations of *Imago Dei*, as treated by the Eastern Fathers from the two famous ancient schools, Alexandria and Antioch, while paying tribute to their exegetical method which strongly influenced their thought. We will situate the rise of these views within the context of the then existing heresy of Gnosticism.[12]

The last chapter will use the wide range of African writers' literature in trying to express Ubuntu as the African expression of *Imago Dei*. This research is intended to link with the present insights of African theology as captured in the Ubuntu philosophy. As we shall discover the birth of African theology is an attempt to recover the place and meaning of African man in the cosmos. In its attempt to reawaken the deep seated African understanding of man it draws much from African Traditional Religion and its Ubuntu philosophy. We will highlight this possible area of investigation and see whether it will have quite enlightening implications for the present African context of violation of human rights.

We will discover that the anthropological insights of the Antiochene School of thought reveal intriguing analogies with the holistic African understanding of the human person. At the end of this exercise our hope is to be able to find answers to the existential question, whether in the wake of brutality carried out by men against fellow men with an experience of what has taken place in Africa like, slavery[13], Rwanda

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[12] Cf. A.C. McGIFFERT, *A History of Christian Thought, Vol I, Early and Eastern; From Jesus to John Damascus*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1932, 56. In our recuperation of the Fathers meaning of *Imago Dei*, we will realise that they did so by rediscovering the Old Testament meaning from the Jewish culture particularly Jewish anthropology. On the opposite were the Gnostics who generally were hostile to Judaism. Gnosticism dualism was wholly opposed to the Jewish monotheism and its estimate of the world was radically different from that of the Jewish. Gnostics presented a common view to escape this evil world and to enjoy the blessing of a higher world of the spirit.

[13] Cf. P., MANNING, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990, 27-38. In the 1700, slaves were transported from

genocide[14], LRA killings[15] and the Kiamba episode in Kenya[16], what we may call a "culture of death", all men can still be termed as *Imago Dei*. And if so, can we salvage our lost humanity by drawing valuable elements from the two worldviews of man; the Christian *Imago Dei* and the African *Ubuntu*?

Africa to Europe and America. Men and women were bundled in ships with their hands chained and they spend days or even months in ships being ferried to unknown destinations. They were to be used as cheap labour. Africa has never recovered from this grievous wound.

[14] Cf. G., PRUNIER, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers 1995, 192-273. The Rwanda genocide took place in 1994. It was a mass massacre that saw around 800,000 people killed in the course of 100 days just after the assassination of President Juvenale Habyarimana on 6th April. The genocide was the culmination of the long standing ethnic competition and tensions between the minority Tutsi who controlled power for long and the majority Hutu who had come to power in the rebellion of 1959-1962 and overthrown the Tutsi monarchy. Chilling stories are told by those who witnessed the genocide. People attacked their neighbours, husbands killed their wives, wives betrayed their husbands and women were forced to kill their children. Men and women suffered the pain of their private parts being chopped off while still alive; their tongues cut as many women underwent the ordeal of rape before being killed.

[15] In December 2009, the Lord Resistant Army which is a rebel group that has caused so much suffering to the people of North Uganda extended its brutality to Congo where they killed 321 civilians and abducted more than 250 residence including at least 80 children in North Eastern Congo near the border with Sudan. It was a four day vicious attack. Hundreds were hacked to death with machetes and had their skulls crushed with axes and heavy wooden sticks. Women were raped and some killed.

[16]Cf. PeaceNet-Kenya, *Post Election Violence in Kenya*, Nairobi: PeaceNet-Kenya, 2009, 46-51. The Kiambaa church massacre in Rift Valley, took place during the post election violence in Kenya. According to the survivors of that tragedy, victims were ordered to enter the church and all possible escape route were locked shut with metal chains. Mattresses were placed around the outside of the building then doused with paraffin and set on fire. Seventeen people died.

CHAPTER I

THE GNOSTIC PROBLEM AND THE *IMAGO DEI*

One of the very earliest significant doctrinal works of Christianity was the direct result not of any desire to produce a comprehensive theology, but the development of most the doctrines was out of the necessity to deal with a dangerous and persistent heresy: Gnosticism. It was the opposition of Christian thinkers to Gnosticism that created the distinctive combination of biblical authority and traditional interpretation with practical piety that is the hallmark of the early church. Agreeing with this, Harold Brown concludes that Gnosticism is the step mother of systematic theology and heresy the step mother of orthodoxy.[17]

The doctrine of man by the Eastern Fathers was developed against the background of Gnosticism. In fact some will conclude that it is a reply to the Gnostic conception of the human person. Gnostic Docetism had been the enemy of the Eastern Fathers in the second century as it was in the fourth regarding the nature of man. The story of man's nature was captured in the Gnostic myths which described this world as the work of an ignorant creator who desires to keep humanity from realising that its true home lies in a divine world-the *pleroma*- beyond this cosmos.[18] Alongside the nature of man, the Fathers had to battle the Gnostic vision of Christ's nature. Complexity arose with the juxtaposing of Christ's humanity and divinity. With the strong wave of

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[17] Cf. O.J. BROWN, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present*, New York: Doubleday 1984, 42.
[18] Cf. P. PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism*, New York: Paulist Press 1980, 1.

Gnostic ideology that humanity (which is material) is evil and whatever is spiritual is good, the challenge was enormous. Complications arose with the insistence that Christ was perfectly human, perfectly divine, his divinity did not engulf his humanity, his humanity did not dominate his divinity and he was one person. We will consider this discussion much later.

1.1 The term "Gnosticism"

The term "Gnosticism" is problematic. It comes from the Greek word *gnosis* which referred to immediate experiential knowledge that comes from acquaintance in contrast to propositional or factual knowledge. There was a group in the second century who called themselves *Gnostikoi* ("Gnostics"), meaning "those capable of attaining knowledge". But beginning with Irenaeus, Christian heresiologists extended the term to cover opponents in the church in whom they discerned some commonalities yet who had different systems of thought.[19]

First, it is necessary to distinguish between Gnosticism and gnosis. Gnosis is a particular form of knowledge whose object is the divine mysteries, traceable in various religious and philosophical currents and which is reserved to a group of elect.[20] Gnosticism is a movement which arose in the first century of the Christian era, which came into being in the Roman Empire and in the East beyond that empire.[21] It is a form of religious knowledge whose object is man's true spiritual being. This knowledge

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[19] Cf. P. PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue,* 10-11
[20] Cf. G. FILORAMO, "Gnosticism", in *Encyclopaedia of the Early Church*, ed. E. Ferguson, London: Garland Publishing Company 1997, 352-254.
[21]Cf. R.M. WILSON, *The Gnostic Problem*, London: A.R. Mobray 1958, 1.

saves the one who receives it.[22] However, this is a mistake that has been made by several scholars in their attempt to define Gnosticism. They consider it a doctrine emphasizing the importance of knowledge for salvation forgetting that there have been other doctrines of salvation by knowledge that have nothing to do with Gnosticism like Buddhism. In as much as this might appear in the definition, of much importance is its characteristic of anti-cosmic attitude.

Gnosticism was not a single doctrine as it was a name that "covered a large number of widely differing doctrines". It was closely related to Christianity and seems to have existed in a variety of forms, hence complicating its definition. However, despite great differences, the doctrines of all those sects that sum it up betray certain common traits. Therefore, insofar as they have these features in common, they can be placed in the same genre and under the same name.[23] Some of the common characteristics include the notion of the human person.

> If there is one point of agreement in the fantastic plethora of Gnostic systems, it would appear to be that human beings are composite, a mixture of heterogeneous elements, light and darkness, good and evil, spirit and matter, corporeal and incorporeal.[24]

This included their moral teaching, that the body being material is evil. Some Gnostics, therefore, lived very ascetic lives, trying to avoid bodily pleasures as much as possible so as to purify the soul as they considered salvation to be unscrambling of this mixture.

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[22] Cf. G. FILORAMO, "Gnosticism", in *Encyclopaedia of the Early Church*, 352-254.
[23] Cf. R.M. WILSON, *The Gnostic problem*, 1-2.
[24] A.H.B. LOGAN. *Gnostic Truth and Heresy*, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996, 167.

The picture we have of Gnosticism mostly has been handed down by the Fathers of the Church in our Christian studies where we encounter it as a refuted heresy. Lately, this conception has been called into question by modern research.

The Gnostics reject and condemn this world, because he, the Gnostic, knows he is foreign to it. He considers his home to be the *pleroma*, the world of divine fullness. It constructs its doctrinal edifices from materials belonging to different traditions of thought, that is, elements taken from Greek philosophical tradition especially from Platonism. Its world is one of division, confrontation, the ontological abyss which separates, in the cosmos, light from darkness, and, in man, the pneumatic from the material principle rejecting the Christian conception of the unity of the creator as a consequence thus following a dualistic view of reality. It adopts a theory of two worlds hence two gods or two creative principles.[25]

1.2 Gnostic Anthropology

The dualistic view of the world by the Gnostics which is at the centre of their theory of creation, also determines their view of man's nature and destiny. Man, according to the Gnostics is at the centre of history. It is in him that the opposing powers that dominate the cosmos can be exhibited, that is, spiritual and material powers. Just as in its negative view of all that is material, so also is the negative judgement upon the whole bodily existence of man.

The earthly material existence of man, body, like the world itself, "is a product of the Demiurge and correspondingly is a sphere hostile to God, dominated by evil

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[25] Cf. K. RUDOLPH, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism,* London: Harper and Row Publishers 1917, 67-87.

powers which are evident and active in the passions and desires".[26] This is considered

to be a one sided view of man's relation to the world and his imprisonment therein.

However, due to the dualistic influence, the Gnostics present the other side of

man which corresponds "on the macrocosmic level to the kingdom of the 'unknown

God': it is the deep and hidden relation to this higher world."[27] It is described by the

Gnostics as a transcendent level, the highest being with no connection with this world

that is, the soul; at times called, the inner man, spark, seed of light, the self or I.

According to Gnosticism, it is "self" which the *anthropogony* and latter soteriology are

concerned with, because it is capable of transcendence.[28] It is the only component in

man capable of gnosis which guarantees it a release from the cosmos particularly from

the body which is its prison. "The whole Gnostic doctrine of redemption centres upon

the restoration to its origin, of this divine spark of light which through fatal events has

fallen into the world; a restoration mythologically seen as an ascent of the soul."[29] It is

an eschatological act that takes place after death, a real meaning of liberation of the

"self". It is at the point of death, according to the Gnostics, that "the concealing

wrapper of the bodily [...] existence falls away and the potential freedom of the

authentic "I" is realised."[30] It is clear that it is an anthropology reflected in the division

of men into two: body and soul. The one which in each case predominates determines

the type of man to which one belongs. The notion of *imago Dei* is implied in Gnostics

doctrine of the God-man which holds that there's a "kinship of nature between the

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[26] K. RUDOLPH, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism,* 88.
[27] K. RUDOLPH, *The Nature and History of Gnosticism,* 88.
[28] Cf. K. RUDOLPH, *The Nature and History of Gnosticism,* 91.
[29] K. RUDOLPH, *The Nature and History of Gnosticism,* 91.
[30] K. RUDOLPH, *The Nature and History of Gnosticism,* 91.

highest God and the inner core of man."[31] This means that God is interested in man with what images Him, the soul. What of the body?

With an eye on biblical texts, it is a relationship of copy to original, meaning the earthly man is a copy of the divine pattern. In the elucidation of this doctrine, the Gnostics hold that "the highest God produces first of all a heavenly man of like nature (frequently called 'son of man') who is then the direct prototype of the earthly (and therefore third) man."[32] They further explain according to their theory that the second heavenly primal man allows himself to be seduced into taking up residence in the earthly bodily man, later regarded as inner man hence representing the divine substance in man.

The Gnostic anthropology therefore is of the view that humanity is a mixture of divine and anti-divine elements. This humanity is not only the creation of cosmic forces hostile to the unknown Father who is the origin of the divine spark in man, but also under its sway. The task is then to try to save man from this sway so as to preserve the divine uncontaminated.[33]

1.3 Against Gnosticism

The wrong doctrine of the Gnostics did not go unchallenged. Many Christian scholars who lived during this milieu at least had something to comment against the heresy. Irenaeus of Lyons remains to be the most undisputed Apologist to respond to the Gnostics. "He is best known for his attacks on Gnosticism and for many centuries

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[31] K. RUDOLPH, *The Nature and History of Gnosticism,* 92.
[32] K. RUDOLPH, *The Nature and History of Gnosticism,* 92.
[33] Cf. A.H.B. LOGAN, *Gnostic Truth and Heresy*, 168.

his master piece, *Against Heresies,* was the chief source for Gnostic theologies; it is relatively reliable, despite its polemical intent."[34] As a thoroughgoing biblist of his time, when contrasted with his contemporaries, he stands out as a remarkably solid, calm and balanced advocate of biblical orthodoxy. He is best known for his response on Gnostics claims.

Irenaeus' work makes a fundamental attempt to respond to various Gnostic teachings like their doctrine of God, anthropology [doctrine of man], Christology and salvation. On the doctrine of God, the Gnostics as we have seen above denied that the true God is the creator of the material universe.[35] Irenaeus responds by asserting that it is the one God who is the creator of heaven and earth; that there is only one God.

> It is proper then I should begin with the first and most important head, that is, God the Creator, who made the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein (whom these men blasphemously style the fruit of a defect), and to demonstrate that there is nothing either above Him or after Him; nor that, influenced by any one, but of His own free will, He created all things, since He is the only God, the only Lord, the only Creator, the only Father, alone containing all things, and Himself commanding all things into existence.[36]

The doctrine of God is followed closely by the doctrine of man. The Gnostics having designated man as evil, Irenaeus challenges them also on this. He rescues man by affirming that man was created good. He only became corrupt much later by the

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[34] H.O.J. BROWN, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present*, 78.
[35] Cf. H.O.J. BROWN, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present*, 79.
[36] IRENAEUS, "Against Heresies II.I.1" in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D 325,* vol. I, ed. R. Alexander-J. Donaldson, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1925, 309-578.

voluntary act of sinning, that is, when he disobeyed God. He further teaches that man is both free and mortal. His soul is immortal but lacks form unless embodied.[37]

Gnosticism triggered an avalanche of responses from different scholars of the time, hence spurring the beginning of theological interpretations on various subjects. It is to be noted that the Fathers who developed this responses relied heavily on the scriptures as their main source and that is the reason why most of them were great Scripture scholars. However, as we shall see they at times differed in views. Their divergent views were a consequence of different exegetical methods, leading to different interpretations.

We will now have a look at the two schools of the time; Alexandria and Antioch, in chapters two and three respectively. The two differed on various issues in particular on the question of man as *imago Dei*. Their outcome depended heavily on their differing exegetical methods applied on scriptural texts; in this case *Gen* 1:26 and other related texts. Therefore, it will be necessary to have a short look also at their exegetical methods.

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[37] Cf. IRENAEUS, "Against Heresies", VI.XIII.3.

CHAPTER II

THE ALEXANDRIAN THOUGHT

Until the time of Constantine, Alexandria blossomed as the second city of the Roman Empire after Rome. It took pride in its famous library and its reputation as the premier centre for Greek philosophy and learning. It was founded by Alexander the Great in 331BC as a centre of brilliant intellectual life. Though it was dominated largely by the Greek thought, different cultures (Egyptian, Greek and Jewish) gave rise to new civilization and with the rise of Christianity, it (Christianity) came into increasing contact with Hellenism.[38] It is the oldest school in the history of Christianity and it remained distinct because of its metaphysical investigation of the content of faith, spread of Plato's ideas and the allegorical interpretation of faith, which we will look at much later in detail.[39] It protected and deepened faith by making use of philosophy.

Much later, Philo, the Jew, strove to integrate philosophy with Judaism. Early Christians later on followed his leads as they worked to integrate philosophy with Christianity. In that case the Alexandrian School with its Platonic emphasis was the popular school of its time. In its more moderate form it set the Christological pattern for many centuries. Its love of allegorical interpretation was characteristic. The intervention of the divine in the temporal was stressed and the union of the natures of Christ with overriding emphasis on the divine component was dangerously accented. This view was based on Platonic view of what is spiritual and material. This forms the

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[38] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology,* vol. II, Maryland: Newman Press 1950, 1.
[39] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. II, 2.

background of the Alexandrian anthropology. This means that Alexandrians were not left behind in tackling the question that has reverberated down the centuries in history of: what is the meaning of man being in the *image of God*?

Characteristic of the patristic theology is their mode of approach to the scripture which was the source of answers to all their questions. Their differing on a particular subject indicates divergence in interpretation. Therefore, laid on the opposite side of the other were these two schools, Alexandria and Antioch which basically differed in their biblical interpretations. As Alexandria upheld the allegorical method, Antioch employed the literal approach to the bible. We will have an in-depth look at Antioch in Chapter Two. To comprehend the development of Alexandrian thought we ought to go back in history, that is, the first half of the first century where we meet Philo.

2.1 Philo of Alexandria

Philo was the leading representative of Jewish-Hellenistic thought. Despite an unwavering loyalty to the religious and cultural traditions of his Jewish community, he was also strongly attracted to Greek philosophy in which he received a thorough training. He made extensive use of *allegory* as a biblical exegetical method in his writings.

The basic meaning of allegory is "to say another thing". Used as a biblical exegetical method in the "interpretation of the sacred texts, allegory is the assertion that such texts are not saying what they are saying, but saying something different"[40]. It is a method that assigns a special meaning to a passage. While using this method, Philo

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[40] S. SANDMEL, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction*, New York: Oxford Press 1979, 17.

transformed biblical characters or biblical places, names, into universal types of people or universal characteristics of mankind.[41] Worthy of note is the fact that Philo did not invent allegory as alleged by some thinkers. Its origin and development is traced from the stoics. It was a method used by Greek philosophers in the interpretation of myths and fables about the gods. The philosophers who applied it had the intention of attempting to find a deep significance in such stories, the literal meaning of which they considered offensive. However, Philo maintained the validity of both the literal and allegorical interpretations of scriptures because he considered both to be divinely inspired.[42] Further on, according to J. Quasten, the Christian thinkers of Alexandria adopted this method, because they were convinced that a literal interpretation was in many cases unworthy of God.[43]

Philo's copious writings in Greek are primarily exegetical, expounding the books of Moses. This reflects his apologetic strategy of presenting the Jewish law giver, Moses, as the sage and philosopher *par excellence*, recipient of divine inspiration, but not at the expanse of his human rational faculties. In his commentaries he makes extensive use of the allegorical method earlier developed by the stoics. Of philosophical movements, Philo is most strongly attached to Platonism. His method is basically eclectic, but with a clear rationale focused on the figure of Moses. It is apparent from his commentaries, however, that his philosophical sympathies lie with Platonism. He was particularly attracted to the revival of transcendentalism undertaken in the middle

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[41] Cf. S. SANDMEL, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction*, 18.
[42] Cf. S. SANDMEL, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction*, 13- 14.
[43] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. II, 3.

of Platonist movement[44]. Stoics' doctrines in Philo's works are found especially in the area of ethics. Other themes reflect the influence of Jewish thought and so offer interesting contrasts with ideas in Greek philosophy. On the question of man, Philo treats under the doctrine of human nature, the third pillar of his thought, which is based primarily on the two texts in the creation account, *Gen* 1:26-27 and 2:7. Both texts are interpreted in terms of the Greek philosophical ideal of human reason.

He interprets the first (*Gen* 1:26-27) to mean that man resembles God not in terms of the body or what he calls the lower soul with its passions, but through the rational soul or the mind, which is also his (man's) immortal part. In the later text, *Gen* 2:7, Philo takes it that the human body is "inbreathed" by God's spirit, (*pneuma*). This creative act is taken to refer to the formation of the human rational faculty. Borrowing heavily from the Platonic thought, Philo regards the human goal (*telos)* as assimilation unto God. This can be accomplished because of the human image relation to God, that is, it can be accomplished through the power of the intellect. It is by gaining the knowledge of God that humans become like God.

Noticeable from Philo's doctrine of man is the denial of the material body as *the image of God*. This is typically Platonic with regard to the subordination of whatever that is material to that which is spiritual. Further dichotomy of body and soul could be found in the formulation of his ethical ideas which he extracted much from stoicism

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[44] Cf. J.M. DILLON, *Middle Platonists*, Ithaka: Cornel University Press 1977. Middle Platonism is a modern name given to a stage in the development of Plato's philosophy, lasting from about 90BC, when Antiochus of Ascalon rejected the scepticism of the ne academy, until the development of the Neo-Platonism under Plotinus in the third century. Middle Platonism absorbed many doctrines from the rival Peripatetic and Stoic Schools. The preeminent philosopher in this period was Plutarch (c. 45-120) who defended the freedom of the will and the immortality of the soul. He sought to show that God in creating the world, had transformed matter, as the receptacle of evil, into the divine soul of the world, but where it continued to operate as the source of all evil.

though he places it in a basically Platonist framework. In the attainment of the *telos*, Philo observes that the soul takes different types on the paths of the virtues beginning with the struggle against the passions resulting from association with the body. Meaning, the soul which is the image of God must endeavour to free itself from the prison dungeons of the body in order to attain perfection.

Philo narrows the resemblance of God to man's soul and not the body. What leads him to this conclusion is his double creation theory as well as his view of the ideal and corporeal man. He insists that image of God in man is by nature incorruptible, immortal and incorporeal as God himself. Therefore, according to him, the body, which is material, corruptible and mortal, cannot be *the image of God* in man. Philo sets in motion a long-running feud not only between Alexandria and Antioch but also among the Alexandrian scholars themselves.

After the exit of Philo, the Alexandrian school emerged more strongly with the rise of Clement, Origen and Cyril of Alexandria. The three were a force to reckon with since they developed, shaped and dominated the Alexandrian school's thought. Their take on man as *Imago Dei* is based on their biblical exegetical method employed in the interpretation of Genesis.

The Alexandrian scholars after Philo undertook the task of biblical exegesis with the immediate goal of opposing "the cultural predominance of the Gnostics and their interpretation of the Scriptures."[45] While broadening the scope of the traditional typological interpretation of the First Testament, the Alexandrians managed to integrate

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[45]M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, Edinbugh: T&T Clark 1994, 34.

this with its cosmological and anthropological interpretation a technique followed by Philo.[46]

Philo's method of interpretation was taken up by those who came after him. However, some modifications and additions were done to it though largely the Alexandrian hermeneutical method remained strongly stamped with allegorical elements. After Philo, the complexity of finding and settling on a particular method emerged. The reason for this was that Alexandria was exposed to different forms of cultures, religions and thoughts like Christianity, Hellenistic philosophy, Judaism as well as Gnosticism. It became seemingly confusing on which method was adequate.[47] However each scholar developed his style of approach depending on the text in question. For that matter in our presentation of some of the Alexandrian figures in this section we will place their take on *Imago Dei* alongside their exegetical method.

2.2 Clement of Alexandria (150-215)

Much later around 200AD, Clement of Alexandria taught that just as God gave the law to the Jews so he gave philosophy to the Greeks as an instrument to lead them to Christ. He is said to have brought Christian doctrine face to face with the ideas and achievements of the time.[48] Many scholars regard him as the founder of the Alexandrian school of theology which emphasized the divine nature of Christ. The school, through its theologians (Origen, Athanasius and Cyril) took the lead in

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[46] Cf. M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, 34.

[47] Cf. D.S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2000, 80.

[48] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology,* vol. II, 5-6.

opposing Adoptionism and Nestorianism, both of which emphasized Christ's humanity. Clement considered Scripture as the actual voice of the divine Logos and believed truth was to be found in Scripture. But sometimes this truth was hidden and could only be discovered through allegorical interpretation. He held the Gospel to be the fulfilment of the Law and therefore the First Testament should be interpreted in the light of the New Testament. Clement considered the use of philosophy to understand the words of the Prophets. Just like Philo, he saw nothing banal in the Scriptures, that there's an intention for every word.

Clement was in full support for the use of the allegorical method in biblical exegesis. He did so by holding that Christ and prophets used parables which were the same as allegories. The parables were used so as to encourage research and those who are insufficiently prepared would receive more injury than help from the Scripture. What Clement meant was that the sacred mysteries are reserved for the few elect. It is because of this that Scripture favoured allegorical interpretation.[49]

Though Clement recognised that Scripture had a literal historical sense as a primary meaning that had to be respected, he insisted that an allegorical reading could find further, spiritual meanings containing universal and eternal truth, an idea reflecting Plato. However, Clement was well aware of the risks of this method as manifested by the Gnostics during that time.

His take on man as *image of God* is not different from Philo's. He denies expressly that God's image and likeness resides in the human body. To him, what is

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[49] Cf. M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, 36.

mortal cannot image what is immortal. Therefore man *images God* with his mind and soul.[50] He places a slight distinction between *image* and *likeness*. Image was received by man upon creation, while likeness was supposed to be assumed through a gradual process of perfection. Clement's intention is to make likeness perfect than image since man is weak and vulnerable. Therefore, he can only gain perfection by likeness to God.[51]

2.3 Origen (185-251)

Origen was Clement's successor and Alexandria is said to have reached the peak of its success under him. Born about 185 AD probably at Alexandria,[52] Origen made biblical hermeneutics into a real science and in that sense he conditioned decisively all subsequent patristic exegesis.[53] He came to the fore and developed more fully Philo's and Clement's ideas of allegorical interpretation. He demonstrated the inspired character of the Scripture by treating it as a purely historical document that namely, by showing how the First Testament passages like the messianic prophesies are fulfilled in the human person of Christ.[54]

Origen concurs with Clement that Scripture over and above the literal sense, has a deeper spiritual sense which escapes the majority of the people. The difficulty, in penetrating this sense was a deliberate action by the Holy Spirit to prevent profound

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[50] Cf. W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, Maryland: Woodstock College Press 1957, 13.

[51] Cf. W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 3.

[52] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. II,

[53] Cf. M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, 39.

[54] Cf. M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, 41.

truth from being too readily available to those unworthy of them. The spirit who inspired the sacred writers also inspires the interpreters.[55]

Origen makes a threefold division of the meaning of Scripture parallel to the division of the human person into spirit, soul and body.[56] He likens the body with the literal interpretation. It is more obvious and a kind of top-layer understanding of a text that does not demand any deep comprehension. It is the immediate meaning. According to Origen, anyone can do this. One has to go beyond this to uncover the real meaning which he terms spiritual. This factor already hints Origen's conception of man. We are exposed to his trichotomy of man.

Origen further identifies Scripture with Christ, in that "the distinction between Christ as man and Christ as God corresponds to the distinction between the literal and spiritual sense of Scripture".[57] Therefore, according to Origen, while the simple ignorant Christians will stop at the knowledge of the humanity of Christ and a literal understanding of the scripture, the perfect rise to a knowledge of the divinity of Christ and the spiritual sense of Scripture.[58] With this background, Origen's anthropology is hinted. He shows how some earthly realities symbolise heavenly realities. It is from here that he develops his view of man. That humans are heavenly beings weighed down by a material body and fallen to earth as a result of their sin.[59] He promoted his method

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[55] Cf. M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, 42.

[56] Cf. M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, 43.

[57] M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, 43, quoting *Hom. in Levi. 1:1*.

[58] Cf. M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, 43.

[59] Cf. M. SIMONETTI, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, 43, quoting *De Principiis,* IV 3:10-12.

because he believed every biblical story had spiritual significance if interpreted rightly. He held that the Scriptures were the Word of God not locked in the past but addressed to the people of the current time as well through allegorical meanings.

A drawback of Origen's faith in allegorical interpretation is that it often led him into long speculative expositions of Scripture that got so far from the literal meaning as to seem to us fantastical and irrelevant.

Regarding the human person as the *image of God*, Origen reminds one of Philo. *Imaging God* according to Origen rests in the soul's capacities, it is within you.

> This man who scripture says was made to God's image we do not take to mean corporeal man. The reason is, it is not the body's formation that contains God's image; and it is not said that man was made corporeal, but that he was moulded such [...]. Now he who was made to God's image is our inner man, invisible and incorporeal and incorrupt and immortal. It is in such as these, you see, that God's image is more correctly discerned. If, on the other hand, there is anyone who thinks it is this corporeal man that was made to God's image and likeness, he gives the impression of representing God himself as corporeal, in human form - an opinion about God that is obviously irreverent.[60]

He adds that at creation man is made in the image of God, that is, whatever he receives or acquires in his dignity hence the image of God in him places him in a position better to be like God.

2.4 Cyril of Alexandria (375-444)

Cyril is said to have been the architect of patristic Christology. He was born in the small town of Theodosiou, east of Alexandria. His writings show he had a solid foundation in biblical studies.[61] Cyril took over as the Patriarch of Alexandria after the death of his uncle Theophillus. He is associated with the second great Christological

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[60] Origen's *In Genesim homiliae* 1, 13 *GCS* 29, 15 quoted by W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 13.
[61] Cf. L.R. WICKHAM, "Cyril of Alexandria" in *Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity*, ed. E. Ferguson, New York: Garland Publishing 1997, 310-312.

controversy that led to the Council of Ephesus in 431.[62] Regarding his exegetical works, it is evident that his interpretation of the First Testament is strongly influenced by the Alexandrian tradition thus highly allegorical.[63]

2.4.1 Image and Likeness

Cyril was able to point out two reasons why the thesis which held that there is a distinction between *image and likeness* holds no water. He begins by citing two biblical verses used by proponents of this theory that is 1 *Jn* 3:2 and *Gen* 1:27 which have the omission of likeness. These verses support the assertion that image and likeness are different.

> Is there a difference between "according to image" and "according to likeness," or are they identical? For they say that we received the former concurrently with creation but not the latter; this has been reserved for us in the life to come. That is why, runs the argument, it is written, "When Christ shall appear, we shall be like to Him" (1 *Jn* 3:2). And again [...] "Let us make man to our own image and likeness" (*Gen* 1:26), and after man's production [...] "And God made man; to his own image He made him" (*Gen* 1:27), with no mention then of "according to likeness," to show [...] that we had not yet received this, but that it has been reserved for us in that life of blessedness.[64]

It's from this background that Cyril further advances his view of synonymity between image and likeness. To him "according to image" means nothing else than "according to likeness" and vice versa. The two were given to man in the beginning. The omission of one of the words in a sentence is not sufficient to suggest a distinction both in meaning and bestowal. In this case Cyril becomes easy to deal with since to him the terms are indistinguishable as used in Genesis. He holds that no image can fail to

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[62] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. III, 116.
[63] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology,* vol. II, 119.
[64] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 7, quoting Cyril, *De Dogmamatum Solutione* 3 (Pusey, *In Iohanem* 3, 554).

have the likeness of its object just as the Son is the Father's image and has the Father's likeness.

Since Cyril did not see any distinction between image and likeness, he simply went ahead to distinguish different kinds of images.

> [...] the first- is the image of natural identity by reason of exactly the same properties: for example Abel sprung from Adam [...]. A second is the image according to sheer likeness...of distinctive features and the exact modelling of the form in relief: thus a wood carving of the king, or some other manner of artistic representation. Another image has reference to manners and morals and way of life, and one's will in regard to good and evil. In this sense we may say that a person who does good is like Paul, whereas one who does evil is like Cain; for, it is reasonable to suppose, the same activity, good or bad, effects likeness [...] in each, confers it. Another kind of image is dignity and honour and glory and supremacy; for example is someone is to succeed to another's government and should perform with authority everything that could be fit and proper to his predecessor.[65]

According to Cyril one can be image by generation, artistic representation, moral character, dignity or any other way. A further reading of Cyril reveals that he expatiates on image in the real sense when he means the relationship between God and His Son (Jesus). His mention of man as the *image of God* is based on two minor aspects that is, "man's virtuous activity (manners and morals and way of life) and his sovereignty over creation (dignity and honour and glory and supremacy)."[66]

Cyril envisions the imaging of God by man as only by way of participation. This is a theme which dominates his theology of the image of God in man. Man, according to Cyril, is not formed univocally to the nature of God and his glory. "No created thing is substantially and immutably identical with God, naturally and perfecting like God."[67] We are likened to God not in the likeness of nature because we

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[65] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 9-10, quoting *In Ioanem* 2, 8 (ed. Pusey 1, 339-40).
[66] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 10.
[67] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 10-11.

do not take, neither are we transformed, into Son's nature. Since our imaging and likening is not merited by us but rather gratuitously given, it is only an imaging of participation.

While insisting that only the Son is the perfect image of the Father, his likeness to the Father is by nature since the Father inscribes his whole on the nature of the Son; meaning that the Son has in himself the perfection of his Father.[68] Here Cyril echoes the biblical verse, "if you have seen me, you have seen the Father; for it is the Father who sent me and I came from the Father."

However, Cyril is quick to add that a difference exists between the Father and the Son and that is, "the Father is Father and the Son is Son".[69] Cyril emphasis is to show that there is a radical distinction between the image of God that is God and the image of God that is man.

Even after concluding that man's imaging of God is by participation and there exists no distinction between image and likeness, Cyril resolves to further his discourse to find out where the image of God is in man. Is it the whole man or in some constituent part of man?

2.4.2   Body and Soul

Cyril defines man as a rational mortal animal that is capable of understanding and knowledge.[70] This definition is as far as the inmost essence of man is concerned.

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[68] Cf. W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 10.
[69] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 10.
[70] Cf. W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 20.

With regard to the physical constitution of man, Cyril holds that man is a composite being, a blend of two that is, a sensible body and an intellectual soul.[71]

Cyril turns out to be more complex, when he suggests that man's soul had no existence before its union to the body and never ceases to exist. Therefore, the soul comes from God. It is in the soul, that "man's resemblance to his maker is rooted".[72] This resemblance to God in the soul of man explicitly demonstrates man's superiority to the rest of creation.

> Of all living creatures on earth, there simply is none the equal of man... For we have been fashioned by God, as by a potter, from the dust of the earth. But it is not sheerly in this that the dignity of human nature lies; there is something greater in us, a gracious gift of God's artistic skill. The fact is, we have been made to his image and likeness, and have been enriched with the impress of His glory, gleaming spiritually in our souls, even if we are, according to the flesh, earth and earth. Man, then, is not a contemptible but an admirable creature on earth.[73]

Cyril is adamant in his denial of the body of its resemblance to God. He strongly considers the body only as dust and ash. According to him, God cannot honour man by placing his image in the body which is material. Because of the imperfection of this very body, God places his image "in the most facet of the human composite"[74]. It's for this reason that Cyril terms the soul to be more honourable since it is God's image and not the body. Cyril demotes the body only to a colleague of the soul since the soul, as he puts it, provides to the body all its needs.[75] Though Cyril calls for a concern for the body, his flow of argument suggests that man's prime concern should be for the care of the soul, which is the *image of God*.

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[71] Cf. W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 20.
[72] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 20.
[73] Cyril's commentary *In Isaiam* 4, 2 in *PG* 70, 960 quoted by W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 21.
[74] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 21.
[75] Cf. W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 21.

Cyril's polemic against the body as the *image of God* is based on his teaching against anthropomorphism, that is, God has a human form. He insists,

> Man is admittedly according to God's image, but the likeness is not corporeal; for God is not corporeal... But if they think that God...was shaped after the nature of the human body, let them say whether He too has feet to walk, hands to work, eyes to see [...].[76]

Such a predication, Cyril considers absurd since God would be conformed to irrational animals. His position is God is immaterial and incorporeal and therefore cannot be quantified.

Cyril posits another argument in defence of his position. He begins, "if man were formed to his God in the nature structure of his body, it would be impossible for anyone to lose the image"[77]. What Cyril is trying to put across is that man does reject and lose the divine image. Man may be going around carrying on his duties and his natural functions, but he is not the *image of God*. Here Cyril seems to satisfy our personal existential dilemma and quest whether all men are *images of God*. If Cyril was to live in the twentieth century, he would be quick to conclude that Hitler was not created in the *image and likeness of God*. The same would apply to the various incidences highlighted at the beginning of this work, that is, the LRA rebels, the killers during the Rwanda genocide and the arsonists of the Kiamba Church. This line of thought makes Cyril to conclude with no doubt in his mind that it is not in the body that our likeness to God lies.

A reader of Cyril's works is quick to conclude that Cyril does not exclude himself from most of his Alexandrian contemporaries. His view on the concept of man

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[76] Cf. W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 22.
[77] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 22.

as *imago Dei* is an Alexandrian summary that marginalises the body from God's image and likeness.

However, a deeper study of Cyril's concept reveals an inconsistency. According to Burghardt, Cyril's work consists of many passages that express the view that "we have been made in the image and likeness of Christ".[78] That man in his human flesh is in the image of the Incarnate Word- the Son of God.

He further states that our salvation was made possible since we were made like him, he who was made like us. Incarnation, the word becoming flesh, is the mystery through which we have been saved. Therefore, to be scandalised that the Son of God became man destroys the whole idea of incarnation, which is at the core of our salvation. Cyril does not deny the fact that the Son of God became like us in perfect humanity and all men conform to Christ by reason of the human nature common to them (men) and Him (Christ).

Cyril is quick, however, to deny this image's corporeality. He maintains that "our transfiguration to Christ is a spiritual, a supernatural, a divine thing; we are images of divinity".[79] To him, the view that our reformation to Christ involves some corporeal remodelling is to miss the point. He reiterates that "for Christ is formed in us, not as created in created, but us uncreated and God in created and produced nature, engraving in us a new to His own image thru the spirit and transferring the creature, that is, to the dignity that is above the creature".[80] This kind of imaging makes us sons of God and not Sons of God.

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[78] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 23.
[79] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 23.
[80] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 23.

In summary, Cyril and his contemporaries, who formed part of the Alexandrian school, present us with a dichotomised human person; body and soul. Furthermore, their dichotomy places God's image in one, segregating the other. By their falling in love with the New Testament, hence coming across the perceived Pauline ambivalences[81] on the same subject, as well as their employment of some of the strong Platonic views regarding man's nature, the Alexandrians overstretched their thought. Armed with their philosophical knowledge, they read the New Testament in the First Testament instead of going to the sources and considering the historicity and literal meaning of some of the texts.

The Alexandrian view point spread wide and influenced many. The Latin tradition, for instance is almost as inflexible as it. From Tertulian who held that "the lines of man's body vary too much in the breadth and scope of humanity to mirror a God who 'has but one form'"[82] through Hillary of Poitiers, Zeno of Verona, Philastrius of Brescia, Ambrose of Milan and Jerome. It also finds its way into Augustine's

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[81] Cf. J.A. FITZMYER "Pauline Theology" in *NJBC*, ed. R.E. Brown-J.A. Fitzmyer, R.E. Murphy, London: Geoffrey Chapman 1993, 1382-1416. Although Paul did not leave behind a carefully crafted-crafted discourse on human nature, there is an anthropology implicit in his writings. His anthropological terms are a clue that leads us to examine his anthropology. It is relevant to understand Paul's anthropological terms against their appropriate religious-historical background so as to get what Paul intended to mean. His anthropological terms derive from both Hebrew and Greek religious backgrounds. Major anthropological terms that occur frequently in Paul's letters are body (*soma*), soul (*psuche*), spirit (*pneuma*), heart (*kardia*), mind (*nous*), conscience (*suneides*) and flesh (*sarx*). There is a tendency to misinterpret Paul in the way he uses the words and that is why Paul has largely been associated with division of man's nature. In his use of the terms, he either gives them a wider or narrow meaning or a metaphorical meaning depending on the context of the text. Ambivalence could also be seen to occur since addressed people of different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, we can conclude that Paul's view of the human being is that man is a unity of body and spirit. Neither does he suggest that the body is incidental to what a human being is, dispensable and even undesirable. His interest in the resurrection, redemption of the body expressed in his letters is and indication that he did not see the body as incidental to what it means to be a human being, cf. 2Cor 5:4; *Phil* 3:21.

[82] *Adversus Marcionem* 2.5 in CSEL, 47, 340 quoted by W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 18.

theology that solidifies and maintains the same line "that the *image of God* is to be found in man's soul and not in his body."[83] Augustine bases his argument on the Pauline insistence on the interior renewal, meaning that man must endeavour to keep clean that which images God in him, the soul.

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The move by the Alexandrians can be understood by situating it in their historical times. Their attempt was to try not to associate God with sinful man. And they chose what they felt could be saved in man to associate it with the divine. They aimed at protecting God's purity. They could not think of a sinful man imaging God in his totality. And that is why the majority of them concluded that only the soul was the *image of God* in man.

However, no matter how positive we may want speak of the Alexandrians, the implications and impact of their understanding of man as the *image of God* has affected humanity in some negative way. According to John Paul II, the problems we have regarding the dignity of man are based on how we give meaning, value and understanding, or the conception we have of man.[84] With a dichotomy that places much emphasis on the salvation of the soul than the material body, the end result is the subordination and negative view of the body. This view implicitly or explicitly is a recipe for the designation of the body as evil, hence denying man the holiness and transcendence deserved. The view further finds fertile soil in scientific fields which, to a large extent treats man as a mere object and specimen of experimentation in a

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[83] W. BURGHARDT, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria*, 19.
[84] Cf. N.J. RIGALI, "Reimaging Morality: A Matter of Metaphor", *Heythrop Journal* 35 (1994) 1-14.

laboratory. If overstretched, you will notice that lack of respect for human life and, therefore, being able to take it away is because of the wrong conception of the importance of the totality of man. Brutality against man by his fellow man stems from the lack of seeing the *image of God* in the totality of man. The conception is tantamount to treating man as an object of gratification and self interest. Slavery in Africa was orchestrated by this view, by those who saw Africans not as human beings at all. Though an African could speak, his bodily features could not tell whether he was a human being hence fit for manual labour. What is the way forward then? Is there hope for man? Is there possibility of salvaging the authentic meaning of imaging God?

CHAPTER III

THE ANTIOCHENES ON *IMAGO DEI*

In the previous chapter we managed to bring forward the Alexandrian vision of man as the *image of God*. A fact that is obvious among the few scholars we have used in our expose` is that the tendency of dichotomising man was so prevalent that they considered only the spiritual part of man to *image God*. Our analysis was based on their exegetical method which played a major role in most of their conclusions. This view still leaves a lacuna in our thoughts and tempts us to wonder whether this is the reason why man is taken to be an object. In order to fill the lacuna we will in this chapter remain with the Eastern Fathers, but this time with the Antiochene School and find out if we can recuperate the real meaning of the *Imago Dei*. Without bias we will also have a look at their exegetical method as well as the various influences upon this school.

According to the modern exegesis, one is able to note that Antioch is not in sympathy with the Alexandrian view at least as far as the interpretation of *Gen*1:26-27 is concerned. Today's Christian existentialists seem to warm up to the non-Alexandrian interpretation of the verse that the whole empirical man was fashioned to *God's image and likeness*. E.F. Sutcliffe writes, "It is to be noted that man as such, composed of body and soul is made in the likeness of God, not one part of him only."[85] He researches into the life and culture of the Hebrews and finds out that the First

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[85] B. VAWTER, "Genesis", *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. R.C. Fuller-L.J.C. Kearns, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons 1969, 183.

Testament categories of body and soul are intimately one. The body is the soul in its outward form or in other words its external expression.[86] G.E. Wright adds:

> Man "in the image of God" means... that there is a correspondence between the total being of God and the total being of man. ...This, of course, does not exclude the corporeal because the Hebrews did not conceive of pure being in spiritual terms apart from material form. Yet it does mean that the "image" in man must primarily be concerned with the deeper aspects of personal being and not merely with the superficial.[87]

The Antiochene view of man as *imago Dei* is in notable contrast to the Alexandrian school's view. The Alexandrian school was more Western compared to the Antiochene which maintained close affinity with the East.

Our study spans a period of about a hundred years from the middle of the fourth to the middle of the fifth century. This chapter will begin by tracing the Antiochene thought in the works of Irenaeus before analysing the Antiochene literal and historical method of interpreting the Scriptures, which played a major role. We will then look at how the leading Fathers of the School of Antioch, namely Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom, applied their scriptural hermeneutical principles to the passages regarding man as *Imago Dei*. Since Theodore's thought on image is the most developed and stimulating of the Antiochene School a special emphasis will be given to his position. Finally, because these great minds were sons of their time we will spare some few pages to look at some of the factors, people, language, or ides, that might have influenced their views.

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[86] Cf. J. PEDERSEN, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, London: Harper 1920, 171-80.

[87] G.E.WRIGHT, "The Faith of Israel", in *The Interpreters Bible*, ed. G.A. Buttrick, *et al*, New York: 1951, vol.1, 64-78.

3.1 Irenaeus of Lyons- Giving the wings

Irenaeus is considered as one of the most important theologian of the second century. Not much is known about his early life and therefore only bits are picked from his later works. He is known for his writings which came in handy as sermons and refutations of the Gnostic heretics of the time.[88]

His understanding of *imago Dei* shows he relied on the anti-Gnostic works of Theophillus of Antioch.[89] In his approach to the topic in question, Irenaeus employed the terms *image* and *likeness* as synonyms. However, in his response to the Gnostics he made a fundamental distinction between the two words. The Gnostics held that the created man whose body is material could not image God, for God is spiritual and divine. Holding a contrary view, Irenaeus considered *image* to be a material reality possessing a visible form, either similar or the same to one present in its exemplar.[90] In this case what is spiritual is imaged when it is united with what is material. What is spiritual cannot be imaged, quantitatively. Irenaeus intention was to show why the soul, which is spirit and the body which is material are one.

According to his view, to suggest that something is the image of another means that that which is material (image) is similar to the reality it is revealing. Why? Simply because it carries with itself some traits or form, similar to its exemplar. Therefore, man

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[88] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology,* vol. I, 287.

[89] Cf. F.W. NORRIS, "Theophillus of Antioch" in *Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity*, ed. E. Ferguson, New York: Garland Publishing 1997, 122. Little is known of him. He converted as an adult through personal study of the scriptures. He put forward what could be considered today as an argument of from design for God's existence which calls attention to the evident order of the universe. God, according to him, is invisible but his existence is demonstrated by what he does.

[90] Cf. F.G. McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 54-55.

who is body/soul and *image of God* in himself or as himself has something common to his Deity.[91]

The bishop of Lyons stretches the meaning of image further. According to his understanding, *image* could mean to be equivalent to a type prefiguring its prototype, for instance, events and person of the First Testament imaging Christ and his Church. He also likens image to a child who inherits certain characteristics from its parents, hence connoting the process involved in fashioning of the *image.* According to Fantino, as quoted by Fredrick McLeod, "Irenaeus has conceived of *image* as an anthropological category that attests to a relationship existing between a visible material being and its prototype, a relationship that is not coincidental but intentionally caused by God".[92]

Irenaeus, therefore, has a holistic conception of man imaging God. It is the whole of the human being and the whole of humanity that images God and not just a section. Image is the same human nature all humanity shares with the Incarnate Word. Related to image, according to Irenaeus, humans have a similitude with God. This is a kind of analogous correspondence present between man and God. Analogously, humans are reasonable and free as God is. Though Adam sinned, these abilities were not totally lost for they are natural to man. Only that they got diminished.[93]

While trying to differentiate between *image* and *likeness*, he asserts that *likeness* is not connatural to human nature. It can be lost. Likeness to him is an individual's state of holiness that has been produced by God's Spirit. Therefore, in as much as it can be lost by one's disobedience as Adam lost it, so it can be deepened. It is by Christ

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[91] Cf. F.G., McLᴇᴏᴅ, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 53.
[92] F.G., McLᴇᴏᴅ, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 55.
[93] Cf. F.G., McLᴇᴏᴅ, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 56.

reuniting us back with the Father and by our liberation from Satan and death that our likeness is restored.[94]

Irenaeus' soteriology, therefore, suggests a kind of divinisation for man, where man does not lose his identity but he is only raised to a level of a child of God. The Holy Spirit, as an agent of this work of transformation, enables one to become conformed to the Word of God. Hence man is rendered similar to the invisible Father. Christ, according to Irenaeus, is the perfect image of God. It is by him that human beings recover their likeness to God. Human being's likeness was lost by the fall of the first man-Adam. Irenaeus develops this line of thought deeply by his theory of *Recapitulation*. Borrowing heavily from St. Paul, he considers recapitulation as "Christ gathering up of all human beings within his own person, as Adam originally did, in corporate sense"[95]. Adam's fall cost the human being the loss of his likeness to God. By recapitulation, Christ restores the whole human race to the original relationship of likeness with God. It suffices to say, then, that likeness in Irenaeus' interpretation of *Gen* 1:26 is a spiritual way of relating with God, which differs from the way human nature images Christ as the second Adam. In summary, Irenaeus regards *image* as applying to the whole of human nature, hence also, revealing Christ as the incarnate Word. And by recapitulation, Christ restores the spiritual relationship that was lost. Therefore, man grows in his spiritual likeness with God by freely consenting to the Christian spirit in his life.[96]

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[94] Cf. F.G., McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 57.
[95] F.G., McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition*, 57-58.
[96] Cf. F.G., McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition*, 58.

Irenaeus prepares a fertile ground in which the Antiochene Fathers would plant their seed of thought. As we shall see later, his line of thought is further developed especially by Theodore. We come to the Antiochene view on image.

3.2 Imago Dei in the Antiochene Tradition

It will be of great importance before we delve into the Antiochene view to place it in a background. Since their vision is placed or founded on the Scriptures, it is good, first of all, to have a look at their approach to the scriptures especially their method of interpretation.

3.2.1 The Antiochene Exegetical Method

Most of the principle proponents of the Antiochene School were biblical theologians though in different degrees. Scripture according to them provided, and was a source for, answers to the meaning of their Christian life. Scripture language was so dominant in their theology and their entire world view. This was because they hailed Scripture as the revealed infallible Word of God. All other disciplines were subordinate to it.

Since the Scriptures were such a determining intellectual force in their lives, there is need first of all to examine their exegetical method and how this approach was to condition their mindset and their specific interpretations regarding the image of God.

The Antiochene exegetical method was born out of two hermeneutical applications, the old Jewish biblical interpretation that placed much emphasis on historicity and context of the text in question and Philo's moderate allegorical method which sought to combine Platonic and Stoic allegorical principles.

The Jewish exegetical influence was in line with the Palestinian Jewish interpretation of the Hebrew Scripture and in contrast with the strict allegorical Alexandrian method, heavily influenced by the Hellenistic phenomena of the stoics.[97] Christianity was from the Jewish womb and no way could the early Fathers have ignored the Jewish tradition, culture and other useful practices in their biblical analysis.

The Jewish exegetical influence was based on the Jewish belief that the Pentateuch contained a direct revealed truth from God. That no single word in the bible contained any kind of error in the first five books. They were the Torah, which was considered coming directly from God. This inspired the Antiochenes to develop a literal interpretation of the bible. Therefore, in considering Antiochene exegesis, it is necessary to realise that in great measure that exegesis was determined by Jewish ideas on the subject.

The Antiochenes also developed their own moderate allegorical method of exegesis though with a higher percentage of rejection of the Alexandrian view that all scripture had an allegorical meaning. They instead employed a *literal, rational* interpretation of the scriptures. However, it is worth noting that though all the Antiochene Fathers accepted the same hermeneutical principles, this did not lead to uniformity in thought. Some individual passages were interpreted in their own individual manner. We find this well exemplified in the biblical texts regarding *imago Dei*, with Theodore and Nestorius explaining it differently in opposition to Diodore, John Chrysostom and Theodoret.

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[97] Cf. R. GREER, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian*, 86.

The Antiochene exegetical method therefore develops from the earlier Jewish inspiration as looked at before and the Aristotelian methodological principles. They based their interpretation on well reasoned discourses. This method set to establish the literal meaning of the presented text. This did not mean that the style was meant for the unsophisticated and those with little or lack of spiritual outlook but rather the beginning of all exegesis. It first sought what God intended to reveal by establishing which text was authentic and what those very words meant in their own context. There is no doubt how this style could not be in opposition to the pure allegorical exegesis applied by the Alexandrians which according to the Antiochenes was a far-fetched, imaginative kind of interpretation of the Scriptures.[98]

It is from this rich background of biblical exegesis that the Antiochenes developed their theology. This method led them to bringing out some fundamental truth from a scriptural text with certainty. With this at the back of our mind we will try to bring out their understanding of *Imago Dei*. In our treatment of this subject you will notice that even among the Antiochenes themselves divergent views were held regarding the meaning of *Imago Dei*. Though our main focus and special treatment will be given to Theodore's understanding, it is necessary to look at his line of thought within the context of his contemporaries, Diodore and John Chrysostom.

3.2.2   Diodore (330- 394)

According to F. McLeod, not much is known about Diodore's life. Born in 330 AD, he studied theology at Antioch, became the Bishop of Tarsus and died in 394 AD.

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[98] Cf. F.G., McLᴇᴏᴅ, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 16-20.

He is known to have been an outstanding pillar of faith.[99] Diodore founded a monastery and a school near Antioch and was the teacher of Theodore of Mopsuesta and John Chrysostom. He was a great opponent of Arianism. He wrote many commentaries on the epistles of Paul. "His works display the characteristic features of Antiochene exegesis: Diodore opposed allegorism, insisted on the narrative meaning of scripture and saw the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments less as prophecy and more as typological fulfilment."[100]

Diodore's written passages reveal that he understood *image* as being a function God bestows upon man.

> How then is man God's image? It is by his ability to rule and exercise authority. The voice of God is the witness to this, saying: "Let us make man according to our image and likeness," and adding the way this is so, "and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth" etc. Therefore just as God governs over all, so does man govern over earthly beings (...)[101]

There is no doubt that contemporary proponents of the functional meaning of *Imago Dei* have their argument grounded in Diodore's perspective. He clearly states that it is the power given to man by God showing that *Gen* 1:28 explains or gives meaning to *Gen* 1:26. It is basically the exercise of the dominative power.[102]

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[99] Cf. F.G., McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 58-59.
[100] R.A. GREER, "Diodore of Tarsus" in *Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity*, ed. E. Ferguson, New York: Garland Publishing 1997, 331-332.
[101] Diodore, in PG 80:107-110 quoted by F.G. McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 59.
[102] Cf. F.G., McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 59.

3.2.3   John Chrysostom (350-407)

John Chrysostom sparked critical opposition because of his sermons on social justice and the reforms he tried to implement. Not much is known about his early life. Because of his fame, he was made the patriarch of Constantinople.[103] Born in Antioch in Syria Chrysostom is said to have been a great preacher in the early church, hence the name *Chrysostomos* "golden mouth".[104] He acquired the title of "the greatest of Christian pulpit orators" [105]. Chrysostom is considered to be one of the greatest Fathers of the East and a great ecumenical teacher of the Greek Church from Antioch. John's exegesis is shown through his intelligent practical application of even the First Testament for the conditions of the present and the problems of daily life. His quest for social justice is already an indicator to his view of the totality of man as important.

While espousing the same understanding as Diodore that man is the *image of God* in the light of his pre-eminence and dominion, because God made him to rule over all other creatures and all things are under his power, the eloquent Chrysostom introduced a new insight. He excludes the possibility that image is spiritual in nature. His argument was that this would mean invisible creatures like the angels would have to be called image. He further stated and added a new twist to the discourse when he noted that man's image of God strictly speaking applies only to Christ.[106]

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[103] Cf. F.G., McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 60.
[104] Cf. R. WILKEN, "John Chrysostom", in *Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity*, ed. E. Ferguson, New York: Garland Publishing 1997, 622-623.
[105] J. QUASTEN, *Patrology,* vol. III, 424-425.
[106] Cf. F.G., McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 61.

3.2.4 Theodore of Mopsuestia

As a pupil of Diodore and Chrysostom's friend,[107] Theodore is considered to be the foremost exemplar of the theological teaching of the Antiochene School and a figure of singular importance in the history Christian doctrine as he was the first to develop and systematize the theological outlook of the Antiochene School. Because of this, he is considered to be the most typical representative of the Antiochene School of exegesis and by far its most famous author.[108] In his exegetical writings he employed and defended the literalistic, anti-allegorical method of scriptural interpretation favoured in the Antiochene cycles. The Antiochene view and particular characteristic traits of the school were fully and coherently shaped by him as manifested vividly in most of his works.[109]

Theodore brings on stage a very new dimension among the Antiochenes regarding man as *Imago Dei*. However, it is easy to notice Irenaeus' influence on his theology. He begins his analysis by first pointing out that the very notion of *image* implies that it is visible. That every image, while itself seen, points to what is not seen. It is man as a visible creature then who is made in the image of God.[110]

His theology of the image is espoused in his view of how Adam and Christ are God's images and later how the two are interrelated. His starting point is Adam as the image of God. He does not agree with the views of his contemporaries that Adam's imaging of God rests in his ability to rule, reason or think.

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[107] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. III, 401.
[108] Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. III, 402.
[109] Cf. R.A. NORRIS, *Manhood and Christ. A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1963, XII.
[110] Cf. R.A. NORRIS, *Manhood and Christ*, 140.

I have especially to marvel at the inherent contradictions of those who speak wisely (but) ridiculously saying that "man has been made according to the image of God somehow according to an ability to rule, somehow according to an ability to reason and somehow according to an ability to think; those (maintaining this) need to understand that only man (*anthropos*) is said to have been created the image of God.[111]

According to Theodore, such an assumption that *image* pertains to ability to rule and reason amounts to suggest that image should be applied to all spiritual powers mentioned in *Col* 1:16, *Eph* 3:10, 6:12, *Daniel* 10:21, *Psalms* 135 (136):8-9.[112] This alone exposes the difference in thought between Theodore and Diodore and Chrysostom. To him man, in the generic sense of the term, is the only image of God and this image means more than just activities of the rational mind and royalty.

While maintaining that the adage applies to man as *anthropos*, composed of body and soul, Theodore showed that the very godly bestowal of image to man as whole (body/soul) demonstrates the pre-eminence enjoyed by human beings over other creatures. He held the view that man plays a role of a bond, exercised through uniting spiritual and material worlds to each other within the entire cosmos. Man unites all there is in the created world. This power and nature in Theodore's view is unique to man compared to other creatures and places man at the pinnacle of all the created things. In other words, human beings mediate God to all other creatures.[113] He sounds a little bit strange when he says that all creatures worship God or show their glory to God through man, by their care for man's needs. Man therefore provides for them what Theodore calls a 'cultic focus' for them to worship God.[114] Borrowing from Irenaeus we would then say that, in man God *recapitulates* all the created things, material and

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[111] F.G. McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 63.
[112] Cf. F.G. McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 63-4.
[113] Cf. F.G. McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 60.
[114] Cf. F.G. McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 65.

spiritual, visible and invisible. Just as God draws *all* human beings in Christ, so in man, who is His image, all things are drawn to Him as God. Man is drawn back to God by following Christ as other created beings are drawn to God by following and obeying laws laid down by God by means of service towards man.

Theodore concludes by adding that the *invisible*, rational and immortal soul of man and the *visible* mortal body of man play a major role in manifesting the reason why God created man as His image. In wanting to gather all creation into one, creation that consists of diverse nature, God decided to create man (soul/body) in whom all creation is joined together in one bond.

> It is plain that since God purposed to bring the Whole to perfection as a single order, and wanted to gather up the whole creation- composed as it is of different natures, mortal and immortal, rational and irrational, visible and invisible- into a unity, he constituted man as the bond[...] of them all [...] For this reason then he gave him both soul and body- the one visible akin to the visible(creatures), made up of earth and air and water and fire; the other intelligent[...] and immortal and rational, like to the invisible and rational substances, in order that the creation might not be bound to him by need alone, but also by kinship of nature.[115]

Man therefore is akin to the visible beings as well as the invisible. To Theodore, this is man's unitive role.

Besides the unitive role, man is bestowed with a revelatory role. Theodore gives a short story of a powerful king[116], who after building a magnificent city erects a stature of himself in the middle of it for veneration, brings out clearly how man plays the revelatory role. He beautifully shows that the visible human nature reveals the existence of God. Like the venerated king's sculpture, man becomes the shrine where other creatures fulfil their duty: honouring God by caring for human needs. Adam as the first

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[115] R.A. NORRIS, *Manhood and Christ*, 143.
[116] Cf. R.A. NORRIS, *Manhood and Christ*, 142.

man from whom all humans draw their nature, revealed the existence of God, the Creator of all there is.[117] Man, therefore, is an authentic visible image manifesting God thus providing a place for other creatures to worship God, since He (God) is transcendent. However, Theodore reiterates that, in as much as this is a dignity and status of the highest order bestowed upon man, a privilege beyond any comparison, it comes with responsibility. It entails man's response to the given or granted ability. Man is to live up to his revelatory, cultic and unitive functions as demanded by his precious image (*Imago Dei*).

Worth noting from Theodore as he developed his view on *Imago Dei* is that he broke ranks with his contemporaries. As they used Genesis to explain the meaning of *Imago Dei*, St. Paul's writings were Theodore's sources of understanding how Adam as man serves as the *image of God*. In his interpretation he sees the first man- Adam as a symbolic "type", who foreshadows Christ.

Theodore's use of this theme and the fact that he employs it to define the office of man as image of God sets him apart both from his fellow Antiochenes and the rest of the Alexandrian School. His view reveals his interest in the reconciliation of spirit-matter dualism.

The Antiochenes were the sons of their time. Reality around them must have necessitated and shaped their thought. And so it would be mean to consider their views as utopia and independent of influences from other quarters. Let us then make an inquiry to determine the kind of influences and possibly to what extent these impacted their religious and theological outlooks more so regarding the topic at hand- *imago Dei*.

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[117] Cf. F.G. McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 65-66.

3.3 Influences on Antiochene Thought

The cultural matrix of the early Christian centuries milieu serve as a backdrop for the then evolving Antiochene understanding of *Imago Dei*. Since most of the fathers were biblical exegetes and interpreters with a strong scriptural attachment, they were familiar with Hebrew culture particularly Hebrew anthropology. There is also influence from Nemesius' anthropological opinions. Then there is influence from the councils of the time. We will have a look at each of them in detail.

3.3.1   Hebrew Anthropology[118]

According to J. Pedersen, "the Israelitic conception of man is made clear to us through the myth of creation; even though the latter is adopted from other nations, it still preserves the stamp of the Israelitic manner of thinking".[119] The Israelites distinguish between soul and body as used by *Isa* 10:18. However, Pedersen insists that no distinction is made between them as two fundamental forms of existence. They are intimately united that a distinction cannot be made between them. They are more than united as the body is the soul in its outward form.

This same line of thought has been reiterated by Edmund Hill. According to Hill, the Hebrew man is a whole; a unity of body and soul, viewed from three different aspects *flesh, soul* and *spirit (nephesh, basar* and *ruach).* The Hebrew anthropology neither considers the three as substances nor the independent existence of each.[120]

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[118] For an elaborate comprehension of the Hebrew Anthropology, J. Pedersen deals with the subject comprehensively as Hebrew conception of body and Soul in his volume I, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 170-81.

[119] J. PEDERSEN, *Israel: Its Life and Culture,* vol. I, 100.

[120] Cf. E. HILL, *Being Human; A Biblical Perspective*, London: Geoffrey Chapman 1984, 98-101.

The Hebrew understanding of the human person is characterised neither by the anthropological dualism of *body* and *soul*, nor by the metaphysical dualism of *spirit* and *matter* which dominated much of the Greek reflection on the human being and found exaggerated expression among the Gnostics much later. Though spirit and body were recognised as component dimensions, the human being is conceived as a "psychosomatic unity". Man is not made up of body *and* soul as though they were two separate parts or components but one single psycho-physiological organism made up of two elements *nephesh* (soul) and *basar* (flesh). *Nephesh* is the central notion of Hebrew anthropology. But soul and flesh are not contrasted in the Hebrew anthropology. Spirit is not the opposite of body. Man does not *have* a soul and a body. As human beings we *are* soul and body. The whole person is soul; the whole person is body.

Nephesh means more than the English word *soul*; it is better translated as *being* or *self* or *personality*. According to the Hebrew anthropology it is the living self, the living being, the principle of life of any being, human or animal. Therefore, it is the immanent living centre of the human being; the concrete person animated by its own dynamism, hence one's deepest being or self, referring to the whole person. It is considered as the centre of self-awareness, of unity of one's life force, the deepest dynamic element of the living being. But *Nephesh* is not a purely spiritual entity. It is wrong to translate it simply as *psyché* or "soul" since *Nephesh* in the Hebrew anthropology always has a corporal component. *Nephesh* comes from the Semitic root for "throat" or "neck", meaning the organ for breathing, the channel through which breath passes, and hence a metaphor for 'life' itself. When the throat is dry, the whole person is dry. When the throat stops breathing, the person stops living. *Nephesh* came

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to stand for the human person as alive, as living. The whole person is *nephesh* and does not have a *nephesh,* but the whole person is also *basar* and does not have a *basar.* In other words, the Hebrews considered the human person as a psycho-somatic unity, a spiritual body and an embodied spirit. No dualism. No dichotomy.[121]

Basar is the *flesh* of any living being, human or animal. It is the external manifestation of the organic aliveness underlining the biological component shared by all living creatures and hence a certain kinship or solidarity with all living beings. We talk about 'all flesh', embracing humanity as a whole. *Basar* is the concrete manifestation of the *nephesh*, the faculties which display the whole personality in concentrated fashion; heart, eyes, lips, hands, loins. Hence its meaning approximates that of the 'body'. In the Hebrew bible it is used frequently to refer to the whole person.

Basar often refers to the human being in the dimension of weakness, fragility and vulnerability, not just physically but also morally. The human being is mortal, flesh, the whole person under the angle of weakness. Moreover, the psycho-physiological composite, *nephesh-basar,* is animated by *ruach* (spirit), the life-giving force given by God. It implies openness to others, to God.[122]

Hebrew anthropology, therefore, views the person as a complex, dynamic, multi-dimensional psycho-somatic unity and subject of a triple constitutive relationship with God and other creatures. As a whole, the man is considered primarily in his or her relationship with Yahweh the Creator, hence revealing an essentially *religious* anthropology, where the human being is given a religious description (*Imago Dei).* His

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[121] Cf. E. HILL. *Being Human*, 98-100.
[122] Cf. D.W. MORK, *The Biblical Meaning of Man*, Milwaukee: Bruce Publication Company 1967, 19-24.

or her nature is determined by the nature of the Creator, the Archetype and the "Prime analogate."

It is clear that the First Testament theologians paint a picture of human existence in its creatureliness and nobility, autonomy and dependence, vitality and mortality, transcendence and immanence, spirituality and materiality, without implying any ontological contradiction. The breath of God is the life-giving force animating and sustaining the human being as a whole. Without it, he or she is only dust, powerless, inert and lifeless. The human being has to continue to cling to God in order to keep his or her life since human life finds its *raison d'être* in God. This vital dependence on God for life, on the one hand, distinguishes humanity from the rest of creation, and on the other circumscribes its autonomy. The human being is like the rest of creation in materiality, mortality and dependence, but towers above the rest of creation, and is more *like* the Creator in freedom, dominion, transcendence, intelligence, rationality, spirituality, creativity, and, above all, personality, that is, as he exercises his unitive, revelatory and cultic roles.

It is from this understanding of man in the Jewish tradition that the Antiochenes, especially Theodore, based their discourse as the essential basis of the special relationship between man, God and the rest of creation, hence implying also dynamism, possibility, potentiality and becoming

3.3.2 Nemesius' Anthropology

In one of his works, *On Human Nature*, Nemesius[123] gives a synthesis of Christian anthropology. Among other issues related to the subject, he advances a Christian explanation regarding the union between the soul and the body comparing it to the union between the Word and Christ's humanity. It is his view regarding human nature that had influence on Antiochene thought.

He commenced his work insisting that human nature is essentially composed of body and soul. He then notes that man is situated on the boundary line "between the intelligible order and the phenomenal order". He is akin to irrational creatures because of their corporal bodies and to incorporeal beings for their rational faculties. Man, therefore, according to his interpretation, is a focal point where the two world orders of creation intersect and are linked in a unique bond.[124] In his analogy of the ladder, man is assigned the highest rung on the ladder of material creation. However, he insists that this privilege comes with responsibility.

Nemesius simply regards the *imago Dei* as a dignity bestowed on man with royal implications. This is a path taken by most of the Antiochene thinkers who regard man as having been entrusted with power over the material creation.[125] He might not

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[123]Cf. E. FERGUSON, "Nemesius", in *Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity*, ed, E. Ferguson, New York: Garland Publishing 1997, 800. Nemesius was a Christian philosopher and the author of a treatise, *De Natura Hominis* (On Human Nature). Cf. W. Telfer, ed. And trans., *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa*, Philadelphia: Westminister 1995. He was the bishop of Emesa in Syria. Its attempt was to compile a system of anthropology from the stand point of Christian philosophy. He was one of the earliest advocates of the idea that different cavities of the brain were responsible for different functions. His *Doctrine of Ventricle localisation of Mental Functioning*, is a reconciliation of Platonic doctrines on the soul wit h Christian philosophy and also emphasised Greek Scientific interpretation and knowledge of the human body.
[124]Cf. F.G., McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 99.
[125]Cf. F.G., McLEOD, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 99.

have influenced the Antiochenes fully, but on a number of points he is in common in scriptural and theological substratum with them.[126] It is therefore easy to detect, from what we have seen, that Theodore's thought is Nemesius', especially his view of man as being a bond between the spiritual and the material and in whom all creatures are obliged to serve God; a road which Theodore takes and elucidates further.

It should be noted that Nemesius combined Christian revelation with some philosophical insights from Neo-Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Pythogoreanism and the medical writings of Galen.[127]

3.3.3 The Culture and Councils of the time

There is a way in which the Antiochenes wanted to develop their ideas, that is, depending solely on revealed truth, scripture and tradition. However, as said before, they were sons of their time. Though they manifested little interest, according to their writings, in philosophical questions, they could not escape from the influence of the metaphysical concepts of the time.

The Christological and Trinitarian discourses of the time evoked and employed the use of some philosophical terms which no Christian scholar then could avoid incorporating in to his work especially if the work had close affinity with anthropology. The early Fathers, no matter which school of thought they belonged to, in their Conciliar documents they incorporated these concepts and Antiochenes were not immune. They depended much upon the Fathers at the Councils of Nicea and

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[126] Cf. F.G., McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 114.
[127] Cf. F.G., McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition,* 97.

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Constantinople I.[128] Christological controversies concerning whether Jesus had two natures or one developed both a language and concepts that influenced heavily the anthropology of the early Christian centuries.

3.4 Implications of the Antiochene vision of Man as *Imago Dei* for today

The implications of the Antiochene point of view imply two fundamental points with regard to man's life that is, the inviolability of man and the equal worth of all human beings. We will discuss each briefly.

3.4.1 The Inviolability of Man

The Antiochene conception of how man images God has influenced the Christian conscience which has consistently held on the idea of the sanctity of human life in total. It is the same conscience that makes Christianity today to champion for the most fundamental human rights that stem primarily from the preservation of life. Whether born or unborn, young or old, all are human "with the same quasi-absolute value" and none can "be sacrificed either to the interests of other persons, or for the sake of group or community interests and value."[129] If human life is sacred then no matter who you are in terms of age, sex, status, race or creed, all of us have a responsibility to defend it from any kind of abuse, exploitation or/and oppression. We have to protect it from any kind of extinction, famine, war, judicial execution or abortion.

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[128] Cf. J.N.D. KELLY, *Early Christian Creeds,* New York: David Mackay 1972, 231-322.
[129] E. HILL, *Being Human*, 126.

In view of the sacredness, sanctity and value of human life, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith released three most important documents, Declaration on procured abortion 1974[130], Declaration on Euthanasia 1980[131] and *Donum vitae*[132] (Instruction on respect for human life in its origin and the dignity of procreation) 1987.

3.4.2 The equal worth of all human beings

Another consequence from the Antiochene view is the fundamental equality of all human beings. This assertion does not dissolve the obvious disparity between people in ability and virtue, intelligence and spirit, age and sex. However it calls for a certain basic act of faith which is "all human beings are equal in the sight of God."[133] The negative treatment that we have accorded to our fellow men and women suggests a lack

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[130] The document emphasises an attitude of respect for life which is at the same time human and Christian no. 3. That what is immediately willed for man is life and in the visible universe everything has been made for man, who is the image of God and the worlds crowning glory. Thus we understand that human life, even on this earth, is precious [...], it is infused by the creator [...], it is a gift and a responsibility no. 5.

[131] The document insists that human life is the basis of all goods, and is the necessary source and condition of every human activity and of all society. That it must be regarded as sacred [...] a gift of God's love which everyone is called upon to preserve and make fruitful.

[132] Cf. The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Donum Vitae*, Boston 1987. *Donum Vitae* begins by addressing the need for respect for the life of the human being from the first moment of one's existence. It then deals with the moral questions raised by technical interventions on human procreation and finally offers some orientations on the relationship between moral law and civil law in terms of the respect due to human embryos and foetuses. In order to clarify the problems posed today in the field of biomedicine, the document responds by presupposing a proper idea of the nature of the human person in his bodily dimension. That the human person can achieve self-realisation in its nature as a "unified totality". This nature is at the same time corporal and spiritual. And so "by virtue of its substantial union the human body cannot be considered as s mere complex of tissues, organs and functions [...] rather it is a constitutive part of the person who manifests and expresses himself through it." Therefore, an intervention on the human body affects and involves the whole person. To emphasise this aspect the document quotes Pope John Paul II reaffirmation to the World Medical Association when he said; "Each human person in his absolutely unique singularity is constituted not only by his spirit, but by his body as well. Thus, in the body and through the body, one touches the person himself in his concrete reality. To respect the dignity of man consequently amounts to safeguarding this identity of the man '*corpore et anima unus*'".

[133] E. HILL, *Being Human*, 126.

of this act. We have failed on various occasions to recognise that being equal in the sight of God should mean basically being equal in the sight of man. In Christian words this equality is summed us brotherhood. Paul in *Gal* 3:26-28 breaks the barriers of discrimination that in Christ Jesus we are all sons of God.

The world today is in dire need of this radically egalitarian brotherhood. Today, the sense of it is slowly evaporating and having little influence on the society.[134] Men and women have turned into themselves hence no care for the others. We see no face of God in the other, whether suffering or not. The equal humanity of all human beings is cherished as a value of the kingdom of God, of the other world and not as a value of this world.[135]

We must become severe and trenchant critics of the world values of secular society that tend to undermine and overlook the dignity and sanctity of human life. As Christians of the twenty-first century we out to borrow an example from the Fathers who asserted in the most thorough-going manner the equal rights of all human beings and the equality of them all. For instance, "Gregory of Nyssa scathingly condemned the institution of slavery as such, while John Chrysostom among the Greeks and Ambrose among the Latin Fathers were outstanding in their preaching on behalf of the poor and the oppressed."[136]

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[134] Cf. E. HILL, *Being Human,* 127.
[135] Cf. E. HILL, *Being Human*, 128
[136] E. HILL, *Being Human*, 129.

According to J. Quasten, while referring to the difference between the Antiochene and Alexandrian method of interpretation, writes, "The diversity of method was a diversity of mind that had already made itself felt in Greek philosophy. Alexandria's idealism and speculative bent owed its inspiration to Plato while Antioch's realism and empiricism to Aristotle; the former inclined to mysticism and the latter to rationalism"[137]. From this, numerous disagreements ensued regarding various concepts.

The implications of this line of thought are satisfying with regard to respect for human life and the upholding of the dignity of the human person. Contemporary Christian existentialists and humanists have adopted this concept. Antiochene thought is perfectly strengthened by the mystery of incarnation. The taking of flesh by the Word or in other words God becoming man, is a strong signal of the significance of the body just as the soul is. This conception differs greatly with the scientific relegation of man to a mere object of experiment. Strong movements of liberation of man from the most despicable conditions of exploitation and oppression, with the emphasis of man's salvation by Jesus Christ as integral, have their foundation in this view. It's a realisation that man needs to grow spiritually and physically. Antiochene thought, therefore, asserts itself as integral and whole.

Furthermore, this view brings out the novelty of "I"-"Thou" relationship, which is the intersubjectivity that exists between a subject and a subject, characterised by the ability to make the subject recognise the other as human as well. This revitalises the

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[137] J. QUASTEN, *Patrology,* vol. II, 122.

whole meaning of transcendence which is not only the rise of the spiritual in man in search for the "heavenly" (vertical transcendence), but the stepping out of the self, to love, to communicate to share with the other (horizontal transcendence) which is the starting point in achieving the vertical transcendence.

CHAPTER IV

UBUNTU:

THE AFRICAN EXPRESSION OF *IMAGO DEI*

In previous chapters we traced the meaning of the concept of man as *Imago Dei* in the Antiochene tradition, considering the influence from the Hebrew anthropology as well as Antiochene's literal exegetical method in the interpretation of the scriptures. However, we did not exclude the Antiochenes' counterparts in the East, from the Alexandrian school who had a contrary view on the same topic. We have seen the impact on society of the two views continue to this day with varying ramifications. Our interest in this last chapter is to focus on African theology which develops out of Christian Africa as a means of bringing back the African traditional understanding of humanity- Ubuntu.

Ubuntu represents an African approach to a comprehensive understanding of the process of nurturing cohesion and positive human interaction of human beings with one another and with creation in our daily life based on the view that all men and women share a common origin. "The being of an African in the universe is inseparably anchored upon Ubuntu."[138] Desmond Tutu, has, for instance, written the following in support of the African Ubuntu:

> Africans have this thing called UBUNTU... the essence of being human. It is part of the gift that Africans will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, willing to go the extra mile for the sake of others. We believe a person is person through another person. That my humanity is caught up, bound up and inextricable in yours. When I dehumanise you I inexorably dehumanise myself. The solitary

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[138] R.B., MOGOBE, "The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Ubuntu as a Phiosophy", in *Philosophy from Africa; A Text With Readings*, ed., P.H. Coetzee-A.P.J., Roux, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 230-238, 2000.

individual is a contradiction in terms and, therefore, you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own community, in belonging.[139]

4.1 What is Ubuntu?

The word Ubuntu originates from the Bantu tribes. It is part of the Zulu phrase, *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* which literally means that a person is a person through other people.[140] So it is usually shortened to the adage, *I am because you are*. The concept is deeply rooted in the humanist African philosophy which gives priority to community as the building block of the society rather than just an existing independent individual. "The concept of Ubuntu embodies an understanding of what it is to be human and what is necessary for human beings to grow and find fulfilment".[141] It is a concept of common humanity, the oneness of humanity where only you and I give meaning to the "I". According to the concept, it would therefore mean I am what I am because of who we all are. According to Desmond Tutu, a person with Ubuntu is open and available to the others.[142]

From Tutu's observation it means that Ubuntu is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that one cannot exist as a human being in isolation hence suggesting interconnectedness. One cannot be human all by oneself since he/she shares a particular origin and destiny with the rest. Therefore, one's definition of a human being depends on the community. To know a human being is not, therefore, to know how an

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[139] D. TUTU, *No Future without Forgiveness,* New York: Doubleday, 1999, 46.

[140] Cf. D. TUTU, *No Future without Forgiveness,* 51.

[141] A. SHUTTER, *Ubuntu; An Ethics for a New South Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 10-11, 2001.

[142] Cf. R.B. MOGOBE, "The Ethics of Ubuntu" in *Philosophy from Africa; A Text With Readings*, ed., P.H. Coetzee-A.P.J., Roux, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 324-330, 2000.

individual is by itself but to know one's relationship with the others. A human being is he or she that is in relationship with the other.

4.2 Ubuntu as an African Philosophy

Ubuntu as an African philosophy simply means humanness and penetrates the entire African cultural matrix. It is at the base of Africans experiences and belief systems. The Ubuntu philosophy runs across the political, social, economic and juridical cultural matrix of the African people. Its dynamism and vibrancy pervade every sphere and act as a guiding principle in the life of Africans. Most of the Traditional African systems and structures encouraged communal relationships, developed deep respect for human values and recognised strongly one's dignity. This was based largely on the humanism philosophy of Ubuntu.[143]

Apart from a sense of belonging, the philosophy provides Africans a sense of self identity, self-respect and achievement. An African, therefore, draws solutions to his or her problems from the humanistic values of Ubuntu. Ubuntu flows from the African existence and epistemology. It stresses and expresses the generality of oneness and of being human. As an African philosophy, Ubuntu is real, lived and pragmatic. It is expressed in actual life. It is a lived experience and not some kind of philosophical abstraction that has little relevance to lived life. Its very practicality dictates that one must achieve togetherness and reconciliation in order to create a harmonious

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[143] Cf. R.B., MOGOBE, "The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Ubuntu as a Philosophy", in *Philosophy from Africa; A Text With Readings*, ed., P.H. Coetzee-A.P.J., Roux, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 230-238, 2000.

community.[144] The philosophy emphasises that there exists a common bond between all men and women on earth. We discover our own human qualities through this bond which facilitates our interaction with our fellow human beings. The Ubuntu philosophy offers us an understanding of ourselves in relation to the whole world particularly our fellow human beings with whom we share origin and destiny. According to Tutu:

> It is the essence of being human. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness, it speaks about compassion. A person with Ubuntu is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole. They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. The quality of Ubuntu gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.[145]

Ubuntu therefore refers to generosity, consideration and humane-ness towards others in the community. It stands in contrast to the Cartesian philosophy, *cogito ergo sum,* [I think therefore I am]. For Ubuntu it is I am human because I belong, I participate, I share...

As a concept that penetrates the entire African cultural matrix it is good to note that *firstly,* Ubuntu has a religious aspect. The concept has its foundation in the ontology of invisible beings which forms part of African metaphysics. The ontology of invisible beings includes God the Creator, the spirits, the ancestors and the unborn. Ubuntu runs through the diverse African religions since this ontology is the same among them all. The ancestral spirits are the nexus between the living and the divine world. The ancestors are those who lived a worthy and satisfying life, humanity in full.

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[144] Cf. R.B., Mogobe, "The Philosophy of Ubuntu and Ubuntu as a Philosophy", 230-238.
[145] D. Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* , 67.

Therefore, for the living to remain relevant, they must remain in good rapport with the ancestors who intercede for them to God the creator. However, that remains to be seen with the way one is in relation with the living in this life. One must, therefore, ensure harmony by adhering to the Ubuntu principles in the course of his or her life.

Secondly, it has political and social aspects. Politically it is a guiding principle of any leader. The leader shares his authority with the people, lives among the people and does not dictate over the people. All royal or political power according to Ubuntu springs from the people. Therefore, all laws pronounced by the king or ruler must express the will of the people. Ubuntu also strongly acknowledges the rights and duties of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being. This acknowledgement brings a strong sense of unity. It promotes the principle of caring for each other and mutual support within the society. Furthermore, it allows each to have his or her equal say in a discussion or democratic right in whichever political context.

Socially, the concept is very relevant in the vast, cultural, racial, religious, educational and socio-economic differences in Africa and beyond. There is a greater chance of achieving understanding by first regarding the other as a fellow human being. This would minimise or help avoid civil wars, unequal distribution of resources, marginalisation, racial discrimination, the subordination of women or oppression and exploitation of any kind. The socio-philosophical dimension of Ubuntu refers to the fact that we are all equal and connected. Therefore what hurts you could one day come around and hurt me. I should not be selfish with what benefits me for it could bring a whole world of difference in your life too. It also emphasises the fact that "the individual is not conceived as a singular, personal and impenetrable entity, living in

glorious isolation. The individual is meaningless by himself and makes sense only as part of the totality. To be is to participate."[146]

Ubuntu carries with it a multiplicity of virtues that shape the society. It defines a process for earning respect by first giving it and to gain empowerment by empowering others. It encourages people to applaud rather than resent those who succeed. It disapproves of anti-social, disgraceful, inhuman and criminal behaviour and encourages justice for all.

With such fascinating and rich concept of humanism, why are we witnessing the worst and inhuman atrocities in Africa? Certain situations, occasions and incidences confirm our fears that we have lost our humanity. Despite professing a Christian faith that affirms that man is made in the image and likeness of God and coming from a rich culture that has a rich understanding of human relationships [Ubuntu], the magnitude of inhuman treatment with no respect of human dignity is alarming. It then begs the question, what happened to Ubuntu? Have we lost it and how?

4.3 Reclaiming the Lost Legacy

The scramble for Africa by the slave traders, colonialists and the coming of the missionaries with the intention of converting Africans had rather a negative impact on the continent as far as culture was concerned. With the loss of the African culture, the spirit of Ubuntu is no longer in us and if it is there it is no longer active. The colonial authorities did away with all African structures of governance which shaped, monitored and provided laws in the form of guidelines that were illumined by Ubuntu. But how

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[146] B.J. van der WALT, "A Comparison Between Bantu and Western Thought", in D.S Georgiades, ed., *Philosophy in the African Context*, Johannesburg: collection of Essays delivered at a Philosophy Seminar at the University of Witwatersrand, July 1975, 108.

did they manage to penetrate the strong African fabric and tear it apart? And how could a tiny minority rule over an indigenous majority?[147]

They used means such as the drawing up of new frontiers, the manipulation of traditional chiefs and negative attitude to traditional religion to break the existing fabric.[148] On the other hand some missionaries worked hand in glove with colonial powers. They preached the gospel but did so within the frame work of a tainted system. They discouraged African Traditional Religions. These religions were demonised, their sanctuaries and shrines demolished as they were considered to be the devil's dens.[149] Western civilisation turned around everything. Africans were called upon to drop their lifestyles and be "civilised". Meaning they had to do away with all traditions and customs. "Civilisation" was all about living like the Westerners, to dress, to think, and to eat like them. African culture was diluted and violated.[150]

Some African scholars such as Steve Biko and Osaga Odak blame Christianity as preached by the missionaries for interfering with and undermining the African lifestyle. According to Osaga Odak, the decline in African Traditional Religion and the undermining of the African culture in general corresponds majorly to the influence of Western Christianity that came to Africa alongside colonial rule.[151] He writes:

> Further, what interests me most in this book is that Christianity was brought to us in black Africa mainly when we came into contact with the western world during the slave trade or colonialism. The type of Christianity as brought to us from the western world adversely affected the black Africans by creating conditions that led to the

[147] Cf. M. MAMDAI, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, New York: Princeton University Press, 1996, 16.
[148] Cf. B. BUJO, *African Theology in it Social Context*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1992, 38-40.
[149] Cf. B. BUJO, *African Theology in it Social Context*, 37.
[150] Cf. D. POTTER, *The Powers of Colonial States*, 271-279.
[151] Cf. O. ODAK, *Kemeticism: The World Religion for Black Peoples*, 1997, 1.

erosion not only of the significance of African religion but also of the whole fabric of African culture. The Christianity of this type came with the western world's cultural baggage that has led to the cultural mess in which we are at present.[152]

These three factors, the slave trade, the impact of colonialism and the missionaries "drained African societies of their very essence, trampled African culture underfoot, undermined African institutions, grabbed its lands, smashed its religions, destroyed its magnificent artistic creations and wiped out extraordinary possibilities".[153] The colonial powers and missionaries ignored and underestimated the cultural strength of the African people.[154] It resulted in Africans strongly embracing individualism and many found prestige in Western culture, an effect that is still felt even today. However a ray of hope was seen with the clamour for independence. The wind of African revolution that started blowing across Africa with the aim of reclaiming the identity of the African placed a theological compulsion upon African Christians. This turned out into a theological current called African theology. Initially, African theology focused on the cultural-religious dimension of the African. However, it later on included the critical issues raised by political and economic factors.[155] How then does African theology bring back the concept of Ubuntu, the lost legacy? How is it an avenue to an integrally developed society that embraces and recognises the dignity of each human being?

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[152] O. ODAK, *Kemeticism: The World Religion for Black Peoples*, 1997, 3.

[153] E. MARTEY, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation*, New York: Orbis Books, 1993, 8.

[154] Cf. A. CABRAL, *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979, 147.

[155] Cf. E. MARTEY, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation*, New York: Orbis Books, 1993, 8.

4.3.1   African Theology

The contemporary African understanding of the dignity of man, given a theological expression, is moreover a motif in the writings of African theology. African Christian theology harmonises the two backgrounds [the African culture background and the Christian background] with regard to the conception of man. It looks at man through its twin lenses of Inculturation and liberation- the two having different backgrounds. The Inculturation one is rooted in the traditional African conception of man while liberation has its roots in the Christian conception of man as well as the cultural context, that is, a people's social, political and economic lifestyle. The two channels are termed as the major trends in African theology.

African theology therefore, according to Elochukwu Uzukwu, takes seriously the deplorable social conditions prevalent in Africa.[156] At the base of it, is human dignity protected. We will further explore the anthropological concerns of these two trends while exposing the centrality of man as *Imago Dei* as a guiding principle that reveals the source and *telos* of man as conceived by the Ubuntu philosophy.

African theology, the brain child of the interaction between Christian consciousness in Africa and the recognition of the treasures of the intelligible traditional African cultural matrix has the question of man's origin, purpose and destiny at its centre. African theology assumes the task of recovering the treasures of Ubuntu. It does so successfully by having recourse to the traditional African culture and the Christian biblical message. In order to revive Ubuntu, several components provided the

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[156] Cf. E.E. UZUKWU, "Trends in African Theology", 100-101.

relevant context for the emergence of African theology, namely pan-Africanism[157], nationalism[158], negritude[159] and socialism. Pan-Africanism and nationalism form the agenda pioneered by the African theology of liberation while negritude is at the centre of African theology of Inculturation.

The two strands of African theology (liberation and Inculturation) may seem divergent but they are not. They address the same point with the aim of recovering not only the African identity but also the humanity in that identity as created by God. As Inculturation delves into the search for the dignity of man as *Imago Dei* using the traditional African cultural tenets, liberation seeks to emancipate the African from the socio-political and economic forces and powers of oppression. We will therefore have a look at the approach of each trend, its influence as well as implications.

i. *African Theology of Inculturation*

The African theology of Inculturation has recourse to the traditional African beliefs or African Traditional Religion in its understanding of the doctrine of man. African cultures pay particular attention to the question of origins.[160] Many African songs, stories, proverbs and different forms of speech tell how we came to be where we are. Therefore the doctrine of *Imago Dei* explicitly or implicitly, depending on a

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[157] Cf. The fundamental objective of the Pan-African movement has always been the oneness of the African people, commitment to the empowerment of the Africans and their liberation from all forces of oppression. It can therefore be described as a movement aimed at giving people of African descent a sense of identity, self-determination and emancipation.
[158] Cf. AACC, *Drumbeats from Kampala*, 60. In 1963, the AACC saw nationalism as the common desire of people to work together for their emancipation from any form of bondage, whether colonial, economic, social or racial.
[159] Cf. It was a way of Africans proving their cultural maturity. Africans resisted the attempts of colonial administrators and missionaries to dehumanise and obliterate their cultural identity.
[160] Cf. A.E. OROBATOR, *Theology .Brewed in an African Pot*: *An Introduction to Christian Doctrine from an African Perspective*, Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 2008, 49.

particular African creation story is exposed. Unlike the Alexandrian school that sought to jettison materiality from the doctrine of man imaging God, some similarity can be traced between the route taken by the Antiochene Fathers and the African stories of creation. We will develop our discourse by looking at the notion from different perspectives- the creation or origin of the African, the religiousness of the African and the spirituality of the African. In as much as the entirety of the notion of *Imago Dei* might not be clear, these perspectives show at least there is intimation of it in ATR, through the Ubuntu philosophy.

However, it is good to know that the interpretation of the treasures of the African Religion and culture faces a challenge of the new African world view through the Western conceptual schemes. It is not therefore an easy task to distinguish the Western Christian conception of man as *Imago Dei* from the ATR conception of man as *Imago Dei*. Nevertheless, our analysis of the many religious elements of ATR will bear us the fruits we are determined to reap, that is, reclaiming the lost legacy of Ubuntu. For in Inculturation, ATR is indispensable for theological hermeneutics and analysis. It is an important theological source because it speaks to Africans in the idiom and language they understand.

The African sense of personality cannot be properly understood without situating it in the African traditional worldview in which it is deeply integrated. Most of the elements found in such worldview form the content of the African theology of Inculturation. We will therefore have a look at how this arm of African theology brings back the understanding of man as *Imago Dei.*

a. Creation in African Myths

Creation stories in African cultures yield a certain degree of reliable and real knowledge of the Creator- God and the man who reflects God and contemplates creation. This is a non-negotiable truth in ATR. "We are the children of God", is a common phrase used in ATR.[161] Man's relationship with God is seen through the model of father-child relationship. It does not only mean we are his offspring but also stresses God's divine Fatherhood. What is hinted is that in African culture everyman is a child of God. A Tiriki saying goes, *Khuli va Nyasaye, shivala ta*, we are of God, not the world. According to George Litava, such sayings emphasise the vitalising power of the creator in everyone.[162]

The analogy of the father and the child's resemblance of the father explains it well. "The idea that God is father is truly rooted in the African mentality."[163] There is a vital relation of paternity-filiation between God and man. According to African culture the child's DNA or blood relation with the father is irremovable. In traditional Africa, even if the child rejects the father or vice versa, there is no way the fatherhood or childhood could be wiped out as far as the relationship between the two is concerned. A Luhya saying goes, *vukundu vuenya mwene*, which literally means that the bad smell needs the owner. It is used in the context of one returning or being returned to the owner particularly to the father. The whole institutional life of the clan is imbued with this idea of paternity applied to the God-man relationship. Man shares in the divinity of

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[161] Cf. G. LITAVA, *The Seat of Nabongo Mumia*, Eldoret: Phoenix Publishers, 45, 1971.
[162] Cf. J. S. POBEE, *Toward an African Theology*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1979, 94.
[163] J. ILUNGA, "Francois-Marie Lufuluabo Mizeka; A Theologian of the Trinitarian Mystery" in *African Theology: the Contributions of the Pioneers*, eds. B. Bujo and J.I. Muya, Nairobi: Paulines Publication African, 2005, 63.

God as a child of God- he enjoys the vitalizing power. We share in God's paternity as his subjects, his children. He is the source of vital power, life.[164] His act as a Father communicates life which is his fullness ending in the child. This communication begins as a physical-biological one and continues in a metaphysical mysterious form translated into love, love which is supposed to be expressed in our way of living.

Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator makes a contribution towards this topic in his book, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*. According to him creation is attributed to a divine being, God, in traditional Africa.[165] God is the ultimate reason and explanation for all things that exist, spiritual and material. Another significant point is that all that is created is imbued with life- human beings, animals, plants and objects of nature; therefore life is a generic term for creation.[166] Orobator maintains that, "this belief is at the origin of much talked about African respect for creation".[167]

The implication of this is, "besides the respect accorded to human life on account of its sacredness, African religious expressions advocate reverence for nature."[168] This aspect already negates any possibility of a dichotomy between the spiritual and the material since natural elements are considered the abode of the gods, goddesses, spirits, deities and ancestors. For instance the curative power of some plants is considered a spiritual power and not just medicinal. This reveals a primary concern of the African; to be in harmony with nature. Hence, the human being images his creator not only as a steward of the created reality or his viceroy, but as one who shares

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[164] Cf. P. TEMPELS, *Bantu Philosophy.* 42.
[165] Cf. A.E. OROBATOR, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, 51.
[166] Cf. A.E. OROBATOR, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, 51.
[167] A.E. OROBATOR, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot,*, 51.
[168] A.E. OROBATOR, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, 51-52.

in the nature of the created reality and is even in constant relationship. Orobator therefore makes a significant point in his conclusion on this topic when he says that, "for us Africans, creation makes sense from the perspective of the Christian affirmation that in God we live and move and have our being."[169] Creation myths and maxims indicate that ATR through the Ubuntu philosophy also affirms one of the points made by Christianity namely that man is created in the *Image of God.*

In African stories of creation, there is another point to be underlined, namely that all there is in creation was created for human beings and human beings remain supreme above all earthly creatures. This idea is also highlighted by several scripture scholars as presented in the creation of Adam and Eve as the last after all the rest had been created.

According to ATR, this view can be explained well by African ontology. The African religious ontologies are anthropocentric such that they are expressed in relation to man. The categories of God, Spirits, man himself, animals and plants, and phenomena and objects without biological life are expressed anthropologically. According to F. Ochieng' Odhiambo;

> God is the Originator and Sustainer of Man; the Spirits explain the destiny of man; Man is the centre of this ontology; the Animals plants and Natural Phenomena and Objects constitute the environment in which man lives, provide a means of existence and if need be man establishes a mystical relationship with them.[170]

What Ochieng means is that man is the unity or solidarity between the creator and the created. In man, the natural and the supernatural meet. The theme of creation therefore affirms that God is the creator of all, that man shares in God's divinity as

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[169] A.E. OROBATOR, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, 51.
[170] F. O. Odhiambo, *African Philosophy; An Introduction*, Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy Press, 1995, 54.

God's child and all that is created is created for man. It is a maxim that can help us today in not only recognising our single point of origin but also a call for us to see the face of God in the other. It also calls on man to respect nature, which is a positive point that if we adhered to it then ecological degradation would not be there.

b. The African is Notoriously Religious

From the above elucidation we can emphatically say that the explanation of man as *Imago Dei* in African theology of Inculturation is not taken from the Christian understanding, but is deeply rooted in the creation stories of traditional African religion. The very idea of a deity in African culture suggests religion. In our recounting of this fact, John Mbiti's imperative that "an African is notoriously religious" becomes our main premise. He writes:

> Because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion; he carries it to the fields, where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop, he takes it with him to the beer party, or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament. ...it nevertheless accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death.[171]

Mbiti is trying to put across a very fundamental point that sacredness and reverence surrounds and is part and parcel of man's life. This means that, "God is the explanation of man's origin and sustenance."[172] Hence, among Africans, no human thought or action is free from religious considerations.

What is the origin of man? How does African Traditional Religion conceive creation? What is the relationship between God the creator and man the creature?

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[171] J.S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2.
[172] J.S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 92.

According to Mbiti, "practically every African society has its own myth or myths concerning the origin of man. The notion of man imaging God may not be found explicitly in these myths but it is implicit in them. The various creation stories have some things in common. For instance, God as the creator[173], God and man in a close relationship[174] and despite the separation of man from God because of disobedience[175] God still remains with an active part in human history. In this close relationship, he, God, provides them, men and women, with all they need[176] including life fertility, rain, and health.[177] This notion is seen in the close relationship between man and God. Mbiti emphasises:

> We have also seen that African peoples constantly turn to God in acts of worship which in effect constitute man's response to God's interest and active part in human affairs. Indeed further research may reveal that Africa peoples are so dependent on God that they may expect him to do for them even what they can do for themselves.[178]

Therefore to acknowledge one's basis and existential dependence on the Absolute is to practice an act of adoration. "The relational character of the created things then leads the human spirit to an act of adoration, which is the act of religion *par excellence*".[179]

We can conclude that the African has a religious ontology. Religion is all pervasive in the life of an African. Thus a good deal of the communal activities of the African and other social institutions are inextricably bound with religion and the spirit-world. That religion is an ontological phenomenon for the African. It pertains to the question of existence or being. As for an African to live, he or she is caught up in a

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[173] Cf. J.S.MBITI, *Concepts of God in Africa*, 161-167.
[174] Cf. J.S.MBITI, *Concepts of God in Africa*, 168-170.
[175] Cf. J.S.MBITI, *Concepts of God in Africa*, 171-177.
[176] Cf. J.S.MBITI, *Concepts of God in Africa*, 247.
[177] Cf. J.S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy,* 41.
[178] J.S.Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, 247.
[179] J. ILUNGA, "Francois-Marie Lufuluabo Mizeka; A Theologian of the Trinitarian Mystery" in *African Theology: the Contributions of the Pioneers*, eds. B. Bujo and J.I. Muya, Nairobi: Paulines Publication African, 2005, 61.

religious drama. Religion therefore provides the boundaries of the genre in which the African is expected to live and exercise the meaning of who he or she is as *umuntu* or *Imago Dei*.

c. The Spirituality of the African

Spirituality is an African factor and is closely connected to religion. It pervades the reality of the African peoples. It is the animating and integrative power that constitutes the principle frame of meaning for the individual and collective experience of the African.[180] It is the password that leads to the decoding or unlocking of the African's origin, his relation with the creator and other creatures, an African as an individual person as well as a communal being. According to Ilunga all acts in the life of an African, that is, rituals and other practices, at both individual and communal level, "stand the rationale that a person is surrounded by numerous hosts of spirit- beings, some good, some evil which can and do influence the course of human life for good or for ill".[181]

What we may call "African Cosmological thought" is comprised of sacred symbols, ritual practices, particular divinities and ancestral spirits.[182] It is part and parcel of the African's life. According to Richard Gehman;

> In Traditional African Culture, there was no separate compartment known as African Traditional Religion. For Traditional Religion permeated the whole life. One could not point to anything and classify it as secular, for all life was sacred with spiritual dimension.[183]

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[180] Cf. L. KAGABO, "Alexis Kagame: The Trail of an African Theology" in *African Theology: the Contributions of the Pioneers*, eds. B. Bujo and J.I. Muya, Nairobi: Paulines Publication African, 2005, 22.

[181] J. ILUNGA, "Francois-Marie Lufuluabo Mizeka; A Theologian of the Trinitarian Mystery" in *African Theology: the Contributions of the Pioneers*, eds. B. Bujo and J.I. Muya, Nairobi: Paulines Publication African, 2005, 45.

[182] Cf. J.S. POBEE, *Toward an African Theology*, Abingdon: Nashville, 1979, 45.

[183] R.J. GEHMAN, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1989, 50.

Gehman adds that there is no evidence to suggest a belief by the Africans in a distinction between the sacred and the profane. The Africans presumed a sacred cosmos, "that is to say in traditional African thought, all reality (human and natural, animate and inanimate) was thought to be derived from a common, primeval divine source on which its continuing existence depended."[184]

This thought has enormous implications. Since the African viewed everything as sacred, in some respects he saw nothing as totally profane. The creator shares his divinity with all that he creates. Theologically and morally, the implications of this belief are manifold as captured by Holloway;

> Religion was (and remains) a vital part of the lives of most Africans. For some it encompassed their entire existence. It substantiated and explained their place in the universe; their culture and their relationship to nature and human kind; it also dictated their roles in the community and society at large. Religion among most African ethnic groups was not simply a faith or worship system; it was a way of life, a system of social control, a provider of medicine and an organising mechanism.[185]

What Holloway is trying to reveal is that traditional African Religion has a strong foundation in the belief in a sacred cosmos created and preserved by a Supreme Deity; hence African culture transcends any secular-sacred dichotomy. The African creation stories suggest a kinship between God and the people centrering on the parenthood of God as we saw earlier. Just as the son images the father, so does the created man image God. Hence, the life of every man and woman must be protected. All that is created must be cared for by man. The vertical relationship between man and

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[184] Ibid, 50.
[185] J.E. HOLLOWAY, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990, 37.

God can never be authentic without the horizontal relations. Ubuntu demands a holistic relationship and that is true humanity.

d. In search of identity

According to Elochukwu Uzukwu, the African theology of Inculturation appears to be the popular pattern of doing theology in the continent. He therefore sees Inculturation theology as continuous with the affirmation of African identity and culture (negritude) which was championed in the 1930's by Sengor alongside Aime Cesaire. Negritude is the unconditional affirmation of African identity, authenticity and culture over against the racialist colonial denial of it. Inculturation theology affirms the value of African cultures.[186]

While reiterating the same position, Diane Stinton holds that African theology of Inculturation is in search of identity, the real meaning of an African as created by God; the very image of God in me as an African. For that matter, "for many African theologians, the problem of African Christian identity lies at the epicentre of African theology."[187] The African theology of Inculturation therefore germinates out of a context. Unfortunately it's a context beset by an avalanche of problems which makes it look reactionary. However it is not. It is only reclaiming what was lost. As we have seen, African theology is justified in this endeavour. At least this is the only way, at the moment and academically, for Africans to have an opportunity to not only recall the good of their culture but to pick out those elements that shaped and guided the society integrally.

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[186] Cf. E.E. UZUKWU, "Trends in African Theology", in *AFER*, 100-101.
[187] D.B. STINTON, *Jesus of Africa; Voices of Contemporary African Christology*, New York: Orbis Books, 2004, 54.

ii. *African Theology of Liberation*

Liberation has always been looked at as meaning revolution and rebellion. Hence, those in power always feel threatened by the idea of it. However, our use of liberation in this work suggests emancipation or in Christian term; salvation. Jesse Mugambi writes,

> Liberation is the objective task of contemporary African Christian theology. It is not just one of the issues but rather all issues are aimed at liberating Africans from all forces that hinder them from living fully as a human being. In the African context, and in the Bible, salvation as a theological concept cannot be complete without liberation. The idea of liberation is inherent in the concept of salvation.[188]

Liberation theology in Africa rose at the times of political independence demanded by the Africans from their colonial masters. It was through liberation theology that the Church participated in seeking independence. Though the Church's strategy did not involve militantism, it was however not ruled out completely. For instance, the black South Africans who embraced liberation theology like Itumeleng Mosala, John Pobee, Steve Biko and Manas Buthelezi (though in South Africa it was commonly referred to as Black theology) were left with no option but to take up arms and fight the brutal and barbaric apartheid government. What lies behind liberation or what is it starting point?

We said earlier that liberation seeks to affirm and promote that very dignity of the African and to free him from the socio-political and economic forces and powers that denigrate it. Its starting context is the scandals of oppression, exploitation and impoverishment witnessed in the society, the social phenomenon where you meet a

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[188] J. MUGAMBI, "Liberation and Theology", in *WSCF Dossier,* No. 5, June, 1974, 41-42.

mass of socially and historically oppressed people. It is a commitment to life, good life destined for man.

According to James Cone, liberation theology is enriched by ATR and the conviction that the content of the Christian message (the gospel) is liberation. It seriously takes as its content that any talk about the mutual relationship between God as the Creator and man as the creature that fails to take seriously the righteousness of God as revealed in man as his image as well as man's liberation, is not humane.[189] Therefore liberation theology is a historical reality born in the struggle for freedom in which the oppressed people recognise that they were not created to be seized, bartered, and auctioned but as men and women created in the image and likeness of God. For instance, citing the role of liberation theology in the apartheid South Africa, Emmanuel Martey says;

> In confronting the demonic power of apartheid, liberation, as a theological self-understanding, has both challenged black people to discover who they are as people with God's image and given them the determination to be participants in God's liberative activity.[190]

Liberation theology tends to meet the challenges brought about by the vicious circle of oppression in modern society that blackmails man as the *image of God*. According to Martey, "liberation then is the black man's theological choice for anthropological dignity over against anthropological poverty. It is a quest for true humanity" [191] which is at the centre of *Ubuntu*.

To emphasise this point it is important to note that with regard to liberation, the anthropological medium that led to the emergence of liberation theology was that

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[189] Cf. J. CONE, *God of the Oppressed*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974, 155.
[190] E. MARTEY, *African Theology; Inculturation and Liberation*, 95.
[191] E. MARTEY, *African Theology; Inculturation and Liberation*, 96.

which deprived and denied the African his or her human dignity. Therefore it has concerned itself mainly with the emancipation and transformation of the identity of the African as a human being. This is so because liberation relates to the fullness of life; it presupposes a search for humanity and existence as God-given being.

As a hermeneutic procedure, it seeks to interpret the African's anthropological reality in the light of ATR view of Ubuntu. This search is meant to lead to a radical transformation of the dehumanising status quo while, at the same time, focusing attention on the removal of the dehumanising facets of modern life.[192]

Born out of African anthropological awareness, African liberation theology recognises and acknowledges the conflictual nature of the existing reality that is what man was created to be and what he actually is. Due to such conflict-reality, not only a sinful alienation between God and humanity exists but there is brokenness at the horizontal level between races, classes and sexes.[193]

Liberation theology's agenda therefore, is to bring about a radical transformation of the dehumanising social system in an attempt to recover the meaning of *Ubuntu* and *Imago Dei* as envisioned by the Creator. It is a theology that further takes seriously the complete reality of the dehumanised, which it sees as a complete unreality of the human.[194]

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[192] Cf. M. BUTHELEZI, "An African Theology or a Black Theology?" in Moore, ed., *The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa*, 34.
[193] Cf. S. MAIMELA, "Current Themes and Emphasis in Black Theology", in I. Mosala and B. Tihagale, eds., *The Unquestionable Right to be Free*, 102-5.
[194] Cf. E. MARTEY, *African Theology; Inculturation and Liberation*, 97.

A preferential option for the poor (oppressed, alienated, marginalised, abused, exploited) must be anchored in the full concept Ubuntu. If all men and women would hold this fact then these evils would never be or be minimal.

According to Martey, the African's experience under colonialism was a very painful experience. The experience "meant the denial of one's very humanity and the right to determine one's own life and future. Such an anthropological pauperisation of black ontology is a blasphemous denial of the *Imago Dei* in humanity."[195] It is in such an anthropological medium of deprived and dehumanised people that liberation theology emerged.

The concept of *Imago Dei* is also key in liberation theology because this theology makes use of the bible. Apart from the emphasis on the African consciousness of *Ubuntu*, the liberationists make good use of the bible. However, they insist on a distinctive biblical hermeneutics of liberation African theology.[196] Liberation therefore is the process through which the African delves into the search for full humanity, a God-given personhood. Hence the African seeks "to bring radical transformation of oppressive social structures and relationships."[197]

4.4 Towards Recovery

In pursuing this line of thought which we will call for now as African Christian anthropology we believe both the Christian and African perspectives leave us with a profound vision of man. The two concepts, *Imago Dei* and Ubuntu, serve as a point of

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[195] E. MARTEY, *African Theology; Inculturation and Liberation*, 100.
[196] Cf. E. MARTEY, *African Theology; Inculturation and Liberation*, 106.
[197] E. MARTEY, *African Theology; Inculturation and Liberation*, 110.

departure in promoting meaningful life. In discussing the meeting of the two traditions on this topic one sees the effort to retrieve some of the positive elements of ATR and culture, which have for long been neglected, and store them in the new African memory and practical life in Christ.[198] Two central aspects will be a good example in showing how the contemporary man can reclaim his being, that is, life and co-existence. These two are also very central in Christianity.

4.4.1 Life

According to Anekwe Oborji, for the Africans, the concept of life includes not only that of the earthly existence but also the ontological reality of the life after death. This is true even in Christianity. Life is ever the centre of the African person's experience of ultimate reality and meaning.[199]

While discussing creation in ATR we saw God as the creator and giver of life. The human being in the order of creation is the primary and most important beneficiary of God's gift of life. God therefore becomes the ultimate guardian of human life. He does so for the sole ultimate purpose of benefiting humanity.[200] Hence man is morally bound to sustain the work of God by which humanity itself is in turn sustained.[201] How do we rediscover this participation today?

According to Anekwe we can do so by maintaining the link between us as human beings and God who is the ultimate source of this life. Also since we share a

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[198] Cf. F.A. OBORJI, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion; Issues of Interpretation and Mission*, Eldoret: AMECEA GABA Publications, 2005, 181-182.
[199] Cf. F.A. OBORJI, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion; Issues of Interpretation and Mission*, Eldoret: AMECEA GABA Publications, 2005, 2-3.
[200] Cf. F.A. OBORJI, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion; Issues of Interpretation and Mission*, 38.
[201] Cf. P. TEMPELS, *Bantu Philosophy*, 17.

divine origin, we have to recognise and appreciate the life of the other human person. Tempels makes the same point when he asserts that the African ontology is founded on the life-force which is the soul of the African. Life therefore is the central concept of the African. It is a fundamental constitutive element of the larger concept of Ubuntu. Today African Christians are privileged to draw from the two worldviews a rich element so central to each tradition. Through it all men and women, black and white, share in the Supreme Being. Life can only remain to be relevant as a treasure of Ubuntu if we live according to the destiny mapped out by its originator, God.

> One lives an ultimately meaningful life…when he or she follows the "life-lines" (destiny) mapped out for him or her in the community and when he or she participates in maintaining the dynamic relationship with all the realities which ultimately concern life.[202]

This would entail respecting the sanctity of life and preserving its sacredness by ensuring its security, prolongation and preservation. However the magnitude of violence in Africa and the world in general stand contrary to this call. Lives are being lost sometimes in barbaric and brutal ways. Past incidences like the slave trade, Rwanda genocide, LRA killings and the Kiamba Church massacre are just some of the few that reveal that something must be done to reawaken that deep seated *Image of God* in us[203] and the Ubuntu spirit. Surely things would have been much better if life was taken seriously as a share in the being of God. However, the rediscovery of the meaning of life is not enough unless it is practically lived. This brings us to our second element of investigation.

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[202] F.A. OBORJI, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion; Issues of Interpretation and Mission,* 70.

[203] Cf. According to the CCC no. 356, only man among all other creatures was created in the image and likeness of God "to know and love his creator". He is the only creature allowed to share in God's own life. That by being in the image of God man possesses the dignity of a person, not just something but somebody.

4.4.2 Co-existence

Africans have a strong communal sense with far reaching implications as we saw earlier in the definition of Ubuntu. Life is recognised in the community. As Ubuntu holds, we can truly know ourselves if we remain true to our community and an individual's success can only be achieved within the community setting. Anewkwe states that;

> The African worldview presents us with a notion of a universe that is marked by harmony and unity (between the spirit world and world of man/woman), of a human person created by God, signed with a divine mark…who realises his/her destiny through participation in dynamic relationships and communion.[204]

This means that our nature as beings-in-relation is a two way relationship with God, from whom we come and go, and with fellow human beings. Therefore our life can only attain its ultimate fulfilment through participation in a community. It is the same with the Christian view of living a life of love. However with the penetration of a capitalistic system and individualistic ideologies Africa has been ripped apart. Today Africa suffers from two types of cancer: divisive politics and negative or primitive ethnicity. These two account for the escalation of hatred leading to the destruction of life and property. We no longer see ourselves as a community and even sons and daughters sharing an origin. This phenomenon has not spared the church either.[205] Anekwe poses the question, "how this accentuation of both traditions on co-existence would be actualised in contemporary Africa that has been beset by divisive acrimonies of all sorts?"[206] Cultural and ethnic diversity could be a plus in turning Africa into a

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[204] F.A. OBORJI, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion; Issues of Interpretation and Mission*, 70.

[205] Cf. F.A. OBORJI, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion; Issues of Interpretation and Mission*, 103.

[206] F.A. OBORJI, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion; Issues of Interpretation and Mission,* 10.

paradise of some sort. However it has frustrated any kind of progress. Political and even religious power is bought using the ethnic coin.

The way ethnicity is used today is not the way ATR or Ubuntu envisioned. Back then, ethnicity manifested a distinct diverse cultural richness in a particular tribe of people through their values, dress, food, music and so forth. Unfortunately, today it has become a political and religious tool used by insensitive and egocentric individuals who seek power by all means. In the process many lives are lost. To recover ourselves from this, Anekwe proposes the module of a family, the consideration of the entire creation as the universal family of God.[207] This element carries with it a rich awareness of a single parentage, brotherhood and sisterhood, sharing the "DNA", sharing the earthly goods and the protection of one another, being a brother's keeper. The Catechism of the Catholic Church makes the same emphasis that, "because of its common origin the human race forms a unity, for from one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhibit the whole earth" and that "this law of human solidarity and charity, without excluding the rich variety of persons, cultures and peoples, assures us that all men are truly brethren" (*CCC*, 356).

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

The two trends of African theology provide us with a rich resource based on the highest values of the African culture. Ubuntu stands out as one of the values that needs to be recovered and applied in life. We have seen how the inner meaning of Ubuntu could be likened to the Christian concept of *Imago Dei*. These two concepts provide a

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[207] Cf. F.A. OBORJI, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion; Issues of Interpretation and Mission*, 106.

rich background for the Africans to develop a strong sense of humanity that can shape the society as destined by the Creator. The concept Ubuntu captures the notion of the human person taken in the sense of the qualities to which a human subject acquires an honourable condition and deserves esteem from his/her fellow human beings.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Our aim in this work has been achieved. We intended to verify if the Biblical teaching of man being in the image and likeness of God is still relevant today in the wake of this culture of death where human life has become valueless. To undertake this exercise we started by going back to the roots. We sought the meaning of *Imago Dei* by returning to the Eastern patristic explanation with a special emphasis on the Antiochene tradition. As we found out this elucidation of the concept faced challenges from the Alexandrian school of thought as well as from Gnosticism.

It is clear from our investigation that from the early centuries of Christianity, the doctrine of *Imago Dei* is fundamental for the majority of the Greek-Antiochene Fathers. It forms a centre for their defence against injustices against man. For the Fathers who interpreted *Imago Dei* within the context of the economy of salvation as revealed in Incarnation; God taking the human form, imaging God is perfected if it remains in the direction of universal and human brotherhood found in Jesus Christ. For God in his saving plan, according to Edmund Hill, did not do so from the divine vantage point that was external to mankind and outside the human arena. But God saved man from within the human situation, to which end he sent his Son to become Man and share the human condition.[208]

Driven by an existential quest that always guided us, our research reveals that there is more to *Imago Dei*. It goes beyond the spiritual and transcendental faculties in man. It is more than a physical or psychological representation. However, they are part of the explanation. It is full humanity. It is a call and a mandate to be fully human. It is

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[208] Cf. E. HILL, *Being Human,* 29.

a medium of explaining man's deepest relationship with God expressed in love. It is stewardship and seeing God in the other person and the entire creation.

Since we are created in the image and likeness of God, it means that the sense of God should always be our primary focus. Unfortunately this sense of God is lost hence weakening the sense of man. Man remains bare and at the mercy of his fellow man. The call therefore is that man should avoid activities that devalue human life hence reducing man to an object of gratification and self interest.

In order to have a full understanding of *Imago Dei* in the African context we dedicated the last chapter to Ubuntu as the African expression of *Imago Dei*. As we found out, Ubuntu explains who we are as created beings. We have seen that it implies our being-in community, our interconnectedness. Unfortunately, Ubuntu faded away with the destruction of the traditional African institutions by the colonialists and some of the missionaries and by the impact of modernity. The emptiness left was filled by individualism, negative ethnicity and divisive politics. These factors have left Africa with some of the worst crimes against humanity. However, all is not lost as we have seen. African Christians today can develop their own anthropology based on the worldviews of the two traditions, African and Christian views. Two elements which are central to both of them are life and co-existence. With these two it means there is a ray of hope that we can rediscover our lost humanity. From the two elements, other values flow spontaneously.

> While writing on this topic Bujo has asserted that;
>
> From the most ancient times, Christianity has considered the Image of God in the human person as the pillar of its anthropology. It is this dignity which ultimately rooted in the image of God borne by any human that gives us the privilege of organising earthly life, and making this planet habitable by acknowledging our fellow humans as

brothers and sisters. This fact will underline our responsibility for our moral actions in general, for God did not create the human person a puppet to be manipulated at will, or a slave to obey blindly his masters' orders. It is in the name of humans' dignity rooted in their being the Image of God that the Christian is called upon to denounce social injustice, racial and clan discrimination... and called to combat totalitarian regimes which have little respect for human freedom.[209]

We could therefore say, being made in the image and likeness of God is not a dormant rubber stamp waiting to fade away. It is rather a matter for living the call, the call of a loving God who wants you and me to love that much. It is a call to stewardship and being a viceroy of God. It is being in deep relationship with others. The same is taught by Ubuntu which acknowledges the value of life within the community. That man can only be defined as part of the community. Therefore our humanity is practical and our reverence to God is lived through our relationship with others.

The Antiochene Fathers' teaching concerning *Imago Dei* and the African philosophy of Ubuntu therefore contain the basic points of our treaties on human value and equality. Their colourful manner of conceiving of and describing this mysterious reality has a big advantage since it enables us to grasp its richness more easily and live it more directly. Our recovery of the meaning takes stock of the Christian and African belief in this concept in a time of tumultuous experiences. In this meaning, African Christians as human beings living in this world today must find a mission for their Christian life. As his Church, a new people of God, we are to assist in salvation (liberation) of mankind, not from outside concrete human situations but from within.

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[209] B. BUJO, *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1990.

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