

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**LUDOVIC MADALITSO BAFUTA, OCD**

**COMMUNICATING CHRIST MOMBOLI TO THE**

**LOMWE PEOPLE OF MALAWI**

**Moderator**

**Rev. Fr. Maina, IMC**

**Long Essay Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the**

**Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in Theology**

**NAIROBI 2005**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents who taught me how to read and write, I don't forget their love and care.

## EPIGRAPH

If theology, as Bernard Lonergan writes, ‘mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix’, then our task today must focus on understanding the ways that theology characterizes communication because communication forms an undeniable part of our own cultural matrix. (PAUL SOUKUP, *Media Development*, 30)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the end of my theological studies in Tangaza I would like to sing with Simeon the *nunc dimittis* “at last, all powerful Master, you give leave to your servant to go in peace according to your promise.” In my rejoicing I would like to thank my moderator, Fr. Maina, all Tangaza lecturers, my co-friars in Carmel, all my friends and relatives for supporting me all through.

To all my classmates in Tangaza most especially my fellow Carmelite students I say guys you are great, “were not our hearts burning every time we shared academical and spiritual matters?”



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The very year I joined Tangaza College 2001, I was challenged by the assertion my teacher of Christology made. I quote: “the cultural and life experience of the people express what kind of saviour they need”.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately I reacted and said to myself, “surely this is my vocation in this college to find out the kind of saviour the Lomwe people of Malawi need.” It is by knowing the type of saviour the people need that we can preach to them effectively. In trying to give an answer to this problem, I had an opportunity to link the two fields of theology and communication. Thanks to the Tangaza program of studies, which made it possible, some students should be able to specialise in communication, whether it be print or electronic media.

Although some people are not yet convinced of the value of this combination of studies, I feel that communication and theology go hand in hand.<sup>2</sup> This is one of the points the essay is trying to put forward, especially the second and third chapters, as I attempt to find out the source and solutions to the already existing problem.

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<sup>1</sup> FR F. DOMINGUES, “Christology” *Class Presentation*, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Theology and Communication do share a long-honoured alliance in their practice. One needs only recall the essential uses of communication by all religions, but especially by Christianity. For more information refer to P.A. SOUKUP, *Media Development*, 30-33.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

Despite of being Christians, the Lomwe people of Malawi have not fully accepted Christ as their Saviour. They only believe Christ will bring them salvation at the end of time. Hence, they live in perpetual fear of witches and magicians. This has made them resort to Momboli, one they believe will bring them instant salvation as needed in their daily life.

### ***Working Hypothesis***

Communication principles if applied in evangelisation can make Christ effective to the local people who are being evangelized.

### ***Structure***

This essay is divided into three chapters. The first chapter develops the Christology that can be applicable to the Lomwe people of Malawi. The view presented here is that Christ was not presented in such a way that the local people could understand him and his role in the mystery of salvation. It is in this line that the Christological title of Momboli has been proposed so as to make Christ effective in the lives of the local people.

Chapter two focuses on the impact of Momboli on the Lomwe people in relation to what Christ does to those who believe in him. It also looks ahead to the source of problem, the reason why Lomwe people do not believe fully in Christ.

Chapter three aims at giving a solution to the current problem by indicating the ways in which the problem can be avoided in future evangelisations.

The general conclusion gives a summary to the whole essay. The author makes an assertion that Christ is truly the Momboli of the Lomwe people.

# Chapter I

## Christ Momboli

### 1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to develop a Christology that can be applicable to the Lomwe<sup>3</sup> people of Malawi, by looking at the Christological theme of “Momboli” as found in the cultural experience of the people. It is an attempt to discover an authentic and meaningful face of Jesus Christ that will respond to the questions posed by the Lomwe people themselves.

### 2. The Quest for Lomwe Christology

African Christology has many models. All of them aim at developing a clear conception of the person of Jesus Christ. African theologians are seeking to make Jesus Christ effective within the framework of the ordinary experience of African Christians. The implicit question behind the typical African mindset is, “God we know, ancestors we acknowledge; but who are you for us, Jesus Christ?”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lomwe people are an ethnic group found in the Southern region of Malawi. They are found in the districts of Thyolo, Mulanje, Phalombe, Chiradzulu and Zomba. Although they have many things in common in their approach to life, in this particular study, I have focused on the Lomwe people of Mulanje district, where I conducted my research and made some interviews.

<sup>4</sup> UDOH, as quoted by Emmanuel Orobator in *Hekima Review* No. 11, 78.

Many African theologians hold the view that “Africans are notoriously religious”;<sup>5</sup> this means that Africans were already familiar with the existence and worship of God prior to the coming of Christianity.

“Africans knew God but they did not know God’s Son, Jesus Christ”.<sup>6</sup> It therefore follows that the only<sup>7</sup> new thing the missionaries brought to Africa is Jesus Christ. This shows the need for contextualised Christology so that the image of Christ may be relevant to the local people. Udoh, as quoted by Emmanuel, had this to say: “The problem of faith in Africa is fundamentally Christological and it concerns essentially the dilemma of combining Christian principles with African traditional religion”<sup>8</sup>.

It is within this trend of thought that I have put forward the other title of Christ as Momboli, so as to make Christ effective within the framework of the Lomwe people of Malawi.<sup>9</sup> This shall help us to see the place of Christ in the Lomwe setting of life.

### ***2.1. Philosophy of Momboli among the Lomwe people***

Among the Lomwe people there is great belief in witchcraft and magic. It is typical among them that deaths are not interpreted as natural. Instead, it is always assumed that there must be someone who has caused them. Usually what provokes

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<sup>5</sup> John Mbiti and Laurent Magesa among others have also made this assertion.

<sup>6</sup> E. OROBATOR, *The Quest for an African Christ, Hekima Review No. 11*, 80.

<sup>7</sup> “Only” in the sense that most of the new things that were brought by Christianity were to be understood pertaining to the Christ event and all its consequences. These new things include the sacraments, the understanding of sin, eschatology and many others.

<sup>8</sup> E. OROBATOR, 78.

<sup>9</sup> In this perspective I concur with Emmanuel Orobator in his article “The Quest for an African Christ”, who disagrees with Kofi Appiah-Kubi’s claim that there is no difference between God and Jesus in the minds of African Christians; Cf. J. PARRAT, Ed., *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, 70. In fact Africans knew God but did not know God’s Son.

the people to call Momboli<sup>10</sup> is the frequency of the occurrence of deaths and other misfortunes in the society, like sicknesses. He is called to cleanse witches from the village who are regarded as the source of these misfortunes. The word “Momboli” has the connotation of a saviour.

The *sing'anga*<sup>11</sup> is called “Momboli” because he is seen as a guarantor of temporal salvation to the people in the village. He ensures security, which the people longs for. Here salvation is conceived of as security. Momboli comes with his *mtela*<sup>12</sup> and washes (cleanses) the whole village of evils of witchcraft and black magic<sup>13</sup>. Many people flock to Momboli to get this salvation. It is a common phenomenon among the Lomwe people to go to the *sing'anga* and look for the temporal comfort of security from the evils of magic and witchcraft. The surprise is that even Christians go to Momboli to seek this salvation. The question that comes to my mind is: “Can’t Christ be presented as Momboli?”<sup>14</sup>

I feel that Christ presented as Momboli and at the same time as one who supercedes the Lomwe Momboli, shall help the Lomwe people to live their

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<sup>10</sup> Momboli is a witchdoctor but at the same time is considered one above other witchdoctors.

<sup>11</sup> This term refers to the medicine man who uses herbal medicines to cure diseases. Some times Momboli is also understood as *sing'anga*, but one directly linked with the cleansing of villages. Hence, considered as above *sing'anga* in terms of the efficacy of his herbs (*Mankhwala adzitsamba*).

<sup>12</sup> These are herbal medicines, which are believed to have mystical powers in cleansing witches from the village.

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Gehman defined black magic as the type of magic that destroys life and is used to the detriment of people. Cf. Dr R. GEHMAN, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*, 94.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas W. Waruta, in trying to encourage people to inculturate Christology, had this to say, “In spite the fact that Jesus Christ is taken seriously and followed by a large segment of the African population, very little effort has been made by Africans to define and establish who Jesus Christ is to them”. This question has given me courage to look at Christ from my own cultural perspective in the way that He can be effective among my people according to their life experiences. Cf. J.N.K. MUGAMBI AND L. MAGESA, Eds., *Jesus in African Christianity*, 45.

Christianity radically without combining it with traditional practices.<sup>15</sup> Faith in Christ has to make the difference in the life of the believer, as Monika Hellwig puts it: “The first and all inclusive question that Christians must ask about Jesus is: what difference does Jesus make *in my life*?”<sup>16</sup>

## **2.2. The Influence of Momboli among the Lomwe People**

Witches and magicians are conceived of as having corrupted the world with evil. People realize and know that the world by nature is supposed to be good and peaceful. Once this peace and goodness has been lost, the Lomwe people always attribute atrocities and calamities to magical powers, which are capable of diverting nature.

Momboli is looked upon as someone who brings back the goodness of nature and the peace of the world. When he comes to the village, people are very happy that things shall be restored to their original state. In this case Momboli is needed because something has gone wrong. Things are not happening in the way they are supposed to be.<sup>17</sup>

## **3. Christ as Momboli**

The life of Christ as presented in the Gospels has stages. These include his birth, ministry, death and resurrection. On the level of Momboli, Christ’s ministry is clear in the offering of temporal salvation<sup>18</sup> to the people (“in his ministry Jesus

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<sup>15</sup> We shall discuss the uniqueness of Christ as Momboli and the reasons for which the Lomwe people should resort to him in the last part of this chapter and in the first part of the second chapter.

<sup>16</sup> M. K. HELLWIG, *Jesus the Compassion of God*, 21. The Italics are my own addition.

<sup>17</sup> Author’s Interview with Brother Peter Mkumbira, OCD, on 17 September, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> But of course the way to this temporal salvation is through the cross, which often seems like the calamity that Momboli is supposed to eliminate. This means that the Lomwe people have to understand the role of the cross in their Christian life. They will be able to grasp how Christ brings them this temporal salvation through the cross.

proclaimed the reign of God”<sup>19</sup>). Some have referred to it as Jesus’ inauguration of the kingdom on earth that shall come to its fullness at the end of time.<sup>20</sup> “Everything else in his message and ministry serves a function in relation to that proclamation and derives meaning from it.”<sup>21</sup>

Jesus did a lot of healing, but he was not a physician or a medicine man. His role is related to the healing power of God’s reign. “Jesus’ healing is a sign that God’s reign is a present reality”.<sup>22</sup> In his ministry Jesus was able to cast out devils (Lk 11:14; Mat 12:22), to heal the sick (Mk 2:1-5; Mt 9:1-3; Lk 5:17-25), and even bring the dead to life (Lk 8:49-56; Jn 11:1-44).

The preaching about the kingdom was not peculiar to him. There were many other people who preached about the kingdom. Jesus’ preaching was different in that he told the people, looking straight into their eyes, that the reign of God is theirs (Lk 6:20; Mt 5:3).<sup>23</sup> This was something out of ordinary. By saying that the kingdom is theirs, Jesus affirms the direct link between God’s reign and people, particularly those oppressed, exploited, downtrodden, and marginalized in body and in spirit; those human persons treated inhumanly and to whom injustice is done.<sup>24</sup> This proves that the salvation which Jesus offered in his ministry, was holistic, covering human wholeness in all its dimensions.

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<sup>19</sup> G. BORNKAMM, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 64.

<sup>20</sup> Jesus sees his work as a fulfillment of the prophecies (Mt 11:4-15) and of the whole hope of salvation (Mt 13:16-17). He places himself at the end of Old Testament Salvation history (Mt 23:37-38).

<sup>21</sup> N. PERRIN, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 54.

<sup>22</sup> C.S. SONG, *Jesus and the Reign of God*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> C. S. SONG, 20.

<sup>24</sup> C. S. SONG, 21.

In his ministry Jesus took this pain of helping people realise how close they are to God's reign, that they and the reign of God exist for each other.<sup>25</sup> Jesus was aware that people's temporal salvation was essential in his preaching about the presence of the reign of God. This should be a support and an encouragement to the Lomwe people who are Christians and yet resort to Momboli in times they feel not supported by Christianity.

In terms of time, one can say with no doubt that Jesus refers to the kingdom as present on several occasions. For example, "the kingdom is at hand"<sup>26</sup> (Mk 1:15) and the kingdom is in your midst (Lk 17:21). In the line of Momboli, Jesus proclaimed the presence of the reign of God now; this in essence is the heart of his ministry and the focus of his mission.<sup>27</sup> In other words, he proclaimed that the grace or gift of God was not being promised for the future and withheld from the present, it was present empowerment of God already there. We can only talk of the future event of the kingdom in so far as there are, in present existence, some tangible anticipations and symbolic intimations of what is to come.

Jesus in his ministry offered salvation to men and women living in the world. Malcolm Muggeridge calls it tasting eternity in time.<sup>28</sup> Jesus' very life and ministry made it clear that salvation is not only a matter of religious areas of life but that it also involves liberation from what oppresses and enslaves people and detracts from human wholeness in all its dimensions.<sup>29</sup> The good news of Jesus was that God was

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<sup>25</sup> C. S. SONG, 23.

<sup>26</sup> This could mean "already but not yet" or that the kingdom is drawing near.

<sup>27</sup> M. K. HELLWIG, *Jesus the Compassion of God*, 87.

<sup>28</sup> M. MUGGERIDGE, *Jesus the Man Who Lives*, 67.

<sup>29</sup> J.N.D. KELLY, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 460.

not simply a past figure in the history of Israel<sup>30</sup>. Nor was God in some remote place in the firmament sending sickness and disabilities as punishment for sin. Rather God's reigning power was present as Consoler, Healer and Restorer.<sup>31</sup> Jesus' miracles serve as a dynamic sign that point to and reveal the presence of this prevailing power of God in the world.

In Palestine, an extraordinary strong fear of demons prevailed in the times of Jesus, as it does today among the Lomwe people of Malawi. Illnesses of all kinds were attributed to demons. The healing of such a person was seen as a victory over the demon that had him in his power.<sup>32</sup>

It is on this level that Christ should be understood as Momboli, one who is able to relieve people from their temporal problems and sufferings and offer them security from all evils of the world. Jesus' words and deeds during his ministry proved that he is capable of doing this.

#### **4. Christ Supercedes Momboli**

Christ supercedes Momboli as he is the presence of God in the world.<sup>33</sup> All things were created for him. He comes not because things have gone wrong but because the world was created for him. In the process, he makes things anew.<sup>34</sup> Hence he is not on the same level of Momboli as understood by the Lomwe people.

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<sup>30</sup> Biblical writers have emphasized the predominant importance of Yahweh in the Old Testament as the giver of salvation. In concrete instances he saved his chosen race the Israelites (Ex 15:2; 14:23). The outstanding men in the history of Israel such as Judges and kings delivered the nation from distress and oppression and were regarded as instruments of God's saving action. God was his people's salvation. Cf. K. RAHNER, Ed., *NCESE*, 1504.

<sup>31</sup> B. HILL, *Jesus the Christ: Contemporary Perspective*, 91.

<sup>32</sup> J. JEREMIAS, *New Testament Theology, Vol. 1*, 93.

<sup>33</sup> A. GELIN, *Son and Saviour*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> Author's Interview with Br. Peter Mkumbira, OCD, on 17 September, 2004

This can be well understood by looking at his, birth, death, resurrection and ascension. Here lies his uniqueness as one above the Lomwe Momboli. In fact the Lomwe Momboli can offer only temporal security to the people. Christ offers security to the people beyond this earthly life. The security he offers on earth is an anticipation of that what shall come to its fullness in the future.

#### **4.1. The Trinitarian Foundation of Christ Momboli<sup>35</sup>**

By definition, the mystery of Christ and his salvific ministry imply the Trinity.<sup>36</sup> This is because Christ is the Father's eternal Logos, who became man in the power of the Spirit (Lk 1:35) and was sent by the Father to redeem us in the power of the same divine Spirit. This shows the connection between Trinity and man. As Karl Rahner puts it, "the Trinity is a mystery of salvation, otherwise it would never have been revealed"<sup>37</sup>. This signifies that in the Trinity there is Momboli.<sup>38</sup> Hence Christ's status as Momboli is intimately linked to and rooted in the mystery of the Trinity.<sup>39</sup> This is why the name of Jesus is extremely important in matters of salvation.<sup>40</sup> While in the Old Testament salvation was by God's interventions using human and other agents, in the New Testament salvation is focused on Jesus. His very name connotes Momboli (Saviour).

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<sup>35</sup> Of any Christology the Trinitarian foundation is very important for various reasons. Firstly it helps to see the primary importance of the person of Jesus Christ and the consequent relevance he has for us. Secondly the relevance of Christ who is both true God and true man is radically and essentially different from that of a Jesus who is a mere man, however perfect a man he might be. Cf. J.N.K. MUGAMBI AND L. MAGESA, Eds., *Jesus in African Christianity*, 31.

<sup>36</sup> J.N.K. MUGAMBI AND LAURENTI MAGESA, Eds., *The Church in African Christianity*, 129.

<sup>37</sup> K. RAHNER, *The Trinity*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> Karl Rahner note that the Father is God; that the Son is God, and comes to meet us as such; and that the Holy Spirit is God and meets us as such; yet that in these three beings, who are God, only one God is given. Cf. K. RAHNER, *The Trinity*, 52. This means that the Son who became man and understood as Momboli, is part of the Trinity.

<sup>39</sup> J.N.K. MUGAMBI AND L. MAGESA, Eds., *The Church in African Christianity*, 129.

<sup>40</sup> J. S. MBITI, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, 165.

#### 4.2. *The Salvific Birth of Christ*

In Jesus Christ, God became man. He was a man who really felt thirsty on the roads of Samaria, who wept at Lazarus' tomb, who felt himself crushed in the garden of agony, and who suffered on the cross.<sup>41</sup> It is only God who could offer us this salvation. The denial of Christ's divinity can lead us to conclude that we are not yet saved then. "The Word descended from heaven so that men and women can ascend with him. Jesus descends into the flesh so that humanity can be elevated to share his divinity".<sup>42</sup>

In his task of bringing salvation to humanity, Jesus unites the two worlds once more by descending from heaven (Jn 1:4,11). By becoming man in the nothingness of the flesh and ascending once more to the heavenly world (Jn 6:62), he made the same way possible for all people who believe in him and follow him.<sup>43</sup>

By coming from above Jesus enabled humanity to participate in the life of the above. Christ is the saviour because he comes from the above. There could not have been salvation if Jesus was not God and one from the above. This is what the Church fathers called *admirabile commercium*, the wonderful exchange.<sup>44</sup>

Christ saved us by taking our human weakness and offering us what is his own, that is divinity. In his own life, divinity and humanity came in contact; hence salvation takes place in the very person of Christ. He saves us by descending from on high<sup>45</sup>, assuming all that we have, including our emotional and physical life.

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<sup>41</sup> A. GELIN, *Son and Saviour*, 30

<sup>42</sup> D. A. LANE, *Christ at the Centre; Selected Issues in Christology*, 130.

<sup>43</sup> R. SCHNAKENBURG, *The Gospel According to John, Vol. 1*, 157.

<sup>44</sup> F. DOMINGUES, "Christology" *Class Presentation*, Tangaza College, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Of course this "on high" is metaphorical language: Not "high" in a special sense but in a sacred sense.

When he ascends he takes everything with him.<sup>46</sup> He was born in human history knowing that man cannot exist outside history. “What Christian faith affirms is that in him God has entered into time and history”.<sup>47</sup>

The Saviour should come from God and should be a human person. It is in this sense that Jesus is the absolute bringer of salvation. He was a human person, because we are human beings; only a human person similar to us can fulfil our needs. Someone capable of radical solidarity with every human being and with the one who is infinite can do this. He needed to come from God, being one who profoundly shares in the communion of God. In the person of Jesus, God has answered all the needs of humanity. All this was possible because of the Incarnation.<sup>48</sup>

It is from this understanding of Christ as the absolute bringer of salvation that he supersedes the Lomwe Momboli, who is just a human being, one seeking powers from nature. Christ, on the other hand, has powers from above and not from below.

### ***4.3. The Connection of Incarnation and Paschal Mystery***

As we have already seen, Jesus descends to earth so that men and women can ascend to heaven.<sup>49</sup> This was possible only through Jesus’ identification with sinful humanity. This links the Incarnation intimately to the Paschal Mystery. Jesus

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<sup>46</sup> F. DOMINGUES, “Christology” *Class Presentation*, Tangaza College, 2002.

<sup>47</sup> W. V. DYCH, *Karl Rahner*, 51.

<sup>48</sup> For Karl Rahner, the manner in which the Incarnation took place entails the possibility of a real communication, in salvation history, of the whole Trinity as such to the world. This means that for our salvation, the Trinity is present and has to be present. Only by this condition, then, can we claim, we are saved. Cf. K. RAHNER, *The Trinity*, 27.

<sup>49</sup> It is from this perspective that we talk of Christ as mediator (organic medium) between God the Father and the whole of creation. Since everything was created through and for Christ, the Incarnation is the supreme expression of the cosmotheandric relationship in the universe. Cf. J.N.K. MUGAMBI AND L. MAGESA, Eds., *Jesus in African Christianity*, 19.

becomes man so that he can die for us. Only in this way can we ascend with him. The Incarnation is the first step toward Jesus' descent among the dead.

The Paschal Mystery, in every sense, is the fullness of the Incarnation. Even in his humanity, Christ is entirely begotten by the Father. At its end, but also, it seems, at its beginning, the Incarnation is a mystery of death and glory.<sup>50</sup>

#### ***4.4. The Salvific Death and Resurrection of Jesus***

The death and resurrection of Jesus is the affirmation of the divine filiation, it is there that Jesus is beloved of the Father (Jn 10:17). It is in the anticipation of the Paschal Mystery (at his baptism and transfiguration) that he is proclaimed the beloved Son.<sup>51</sup>

The death of Jesus is redemptive. And as St. Paul puts it, without resurrection, faith and preaching are useless; there is no hope except in the resurrection of Christ and with him (1 Cor 15:12-19). God showed his power in weakness. Satan and evil were totally defeated by Christ on the cross. Hence Jesus defeated death on the cross by defeating the devil. It is in this sense that the failure of Jesus is turned upside down and becomes the triumph of God's word of hope and consolation in the world.<sup>52</sup> Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross was the ultimate proof that he had fulfilled his work and ministry in obedience to God's will. It was after his death on the cross that reference to the resurrection was the basis for the faith of the primitive church.<sup>53</sup> The essence of the church's faith in Christ was that

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<sup>50</sup> F.X. DURRWELL, *NCESE Vol. 12*, 161.

<sup>51</sup> F.X. DURRWELL, 161.

<sup>52</sup> M. K. HELLWIG, *Jesus the Compassion of God*, 99.

<sup>53</sup> J.N.K. MUGAMBI AND LAURENT MAGESA, Eds., *Jesus in African Christianity*, 54. This does not suggest that we are saved through Christ's death, but by death and resurrection of Christ. However, it is through the death that we are able to talk of the resurrection. And it is the resurrection that gave meaning to death. The two are correlative in so far as our salvation is concerned and none of them can be ignored.

Christ had come from God and had returned to him and that it was God himself who in Christ reconciled the world to himself.

Most African Christologies have concentrated on the functions of Jesus and not on his person. Though some people criticise this approach,<sup>54</sup> I feel that this methodology has been adopted in light of the needs of Africans themselves. Usually the starting point is with the humanity of Jesus followed by his divinity and its role in our human life. In this essay both the humanity and divinity of Jesus are seen in the light of his mission to save humanity from the evils of the world and grant them eternal life in God's kingdom.

In this paper the real question about the resurrection of Jesus is not the question concerning what the experience was for Jesus, nor even the question of whether the tomb was indeed empty, nor whether Thomas touched flesh-and-blood wounds with his hands. The real question here has to do with God's self-revelation in Jesus through his death and resurrection and whether anything had really changed in the human situation.

There is a link between what Jesus experienced and what other human beings have experienced and will experience.<sup>55</sup> Jesus' resurrection is an exemplification that we too will be raised. According to the conviction of some people like Fr. Domingues, faith in resurrection has its own implications<sup>56</sup> that include: 1) What happened to the body of Jesus will also happen to us; 2) what was assumed in the Incarnation lives in the Trinity; 3) the body of Jesus became absolutely perfect on

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<sup>54</sup> This is also a contentious point for Mugambi and Magesa in the book, "Jesus in African Christianity". Cf. 55-58.

<sup>55</sup> D. J. GOERGEN, *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus*, 72.

<sup>56</sup> These implications are according to what Fr. Domingues presented in the class of Christology, Tangaza College in the year 2002.

the cross in the sense that he identified himself fully with humanity, hence his communion with us became total on the cross; 4) Christ as the beginning of all humanity carried the sins of the whole humanity upon himself and hence suffered more. I personally agree to this assertion. It is only by Christ's uniqueness being God and fully human that we received salvation. Nobody else could do this but only God.

This lead us to the theology of ascending mediation of Christ and descending mediation of Christ. This is what the Lomwe people win by their faith in Christ. In him they have a mediator with God and then they can be called children of the Most High through Jesus.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this chapter we have seen that the presentation of Christ as Momboli can fit in the Lomwe people's setting of mind. He is Momboli in that is able to offer salvation to those who believe in him. This salvation is from all worldly evils including witches and black magic. However, by his ability to offer eternal salvation, Christ supersedes Momboli. In the next chapter we shall look at the influence of Momboli in the life of the Lomwe people. There after we shall try to find out the root cause of the misconception of Christ among the Lomwe people that lead them to put him aside in time of need.

## Chapter II

### Christ, Momboli of the Lomwe People

#### 1. Introduction

In the first chapter we have seen how effective Christ is among the Lomwe people, if understood as Momboli. In this chapter we shall look at the impact of Lomwe Momboli on the society. This shall be done in relation to the salvific mission of Christ, and the atmosphere which Christ brings to his people.

We shall also look at the source of the problem that caused the Lomwe people not to accept Christ fully as their Saviour and hence indulge themselves in a double standard of life.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> This means that though the Lomwe people embraced the Christian faith with unbridled eagerness, they soon discovered that the image of Jesus Christ, as it was introduced to them, was clearly insufficient. While many writers have blamed Africans that have fallen in this double standard of life, I feel it is more important to bring forward solutions to the problem than just exposing the problem and leaving it there. Placid Temples as quoted by D.A. Masolo had this to say, "the civilized Christians among the Bantu return to their old ways because their ancestors left them their practical solutions to the great problems of life and death, salvation and destruction" (Cf. D.A. MASOLO, *African Philosophy In Search of Identity*, 131). Again Placid Temples was only able to see the problem of double standard of life among the Bantu people and did not bother going deeper to find out the reasons, which make people to leave their Christian faith aside and resort to traditional practices. I shall attempt to resolve this problem in the third chapter of this essay by applying communication principles in evangelisation. In my observation I think the way Christianity was presented to the people has also a role to play in the way the people conceived it.

## **2. The Influence of Momboli among the Lomwe people and the uniqueness of Christ**

From the bible we read that the Israelites were always afraid of the sea. They said it is the source of evil. For them, evils come out of the sea. Jesus walked on water to show his supremacy over evil. Again the people of Israel believed that demons could possess and have control of a person. In this situation Christ presented himself as an exorcist and above the other exorcists. Now the question comes, what if Christ were born among the Lomwe people? For sure he could not have walked on the water because it has no significance among the Lomwe people. Rather he could have presented himself as Momboli, and already in his ministry Christ showed some traces of being Momboli.

Among the Lomwe people the idea of Momboli includes the following items:

### ***2.1. Strengthening relationships***

If there is a belief that there are witches in the village, the presence of Momboli relieves people from fears of these witches<sup>58</sup>. This is because Momboli has power to sweep<sup>59</sup> all witches from the village. Once the village has been cleansed every

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<sup>58</sup> Van Breuguel defined witchcraft as the personification of something which is believed somehow to exist and is certainly feared but which is essentially a product of mind by which people explain suffering and which points to evil in men as the cause of such suffering. Witches are believed to eat human flesh. Cf. VAN BREUGEL, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, 212. In my opinion, I feel that witchcraft has to do with the possession of mystical powers, which are used in order to harm or destroy other people, super human powers above those of the ordinary people. Hence being feared by others who don't have such powers.

<sup>59</sup> In the old days all the people in the village were forced to drink poisonous herbs. Those who could vomit and escape death were regarded as righteous and not witches, those who could not survive this poison and die were regarded as witches. Hence this action in itself was called *kutsesa mudzi* (sweeping the village). These days no poison is given but Momboli disarms the tools of the witches so that they can no longer practice witchcraft. Cf. Author's Interview with Mr Chikapa, Mulanje, 17 June 2003.

person becomes free with the others. There is no more suspicion of thinking that the other one can be a witch.<sup>60</sup> This atmosphere strengthens relationships.

The enmities that were created because of suspicions are brought to an end. People who stopped sharing meals are brought together again.<sup>61</sup> This means that although Momboli gives confidence to the people, the salvation he offers is from fear. On the other hand Christ saves us not only from the evils of the world but also from eternal damnation, and this is unique.

Through baptism we partake in the Sonship of Christ Jesus. We all become the children of one Father, who is God. “The primary effects of baptism are purification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit (CCC 1262), a new birth that makes one a co-heir with Christ (1 Cor 6:15) and the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6: 19).”<sup>62</sup> The water of Baptism unites us and strengthens our relationship with each other. Christian relationship is a call to go beyond our blood relationships. It is also an invitation to realize our unity in God the Father.

In baptism we die and rise with Christ. According to Pauline theology the resurrection of Christ has cosmic significance. This means that the Spirit, in which Christ was raised up, is being sent by him, not only to bring about the present and future resurrection of all who belong to him, but also in order to restore the whole of creation.<sup>63</sup> Just as Momboli, Christ restores all the broken relationships in the Spirit.

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<sup>60</sup> Author’s Interview with Mrs Kaliati, Mulanje, 31 July 2003.

<sup>61</sup> Author’s Interview with Mrs Kaliati, Mulanje, 31 July 2003.

<sup>62</sup> *NCESE*, 65.

<sup>63</sup> C. E. O’NEILL, *Sacramental Realism*, 123.

## ***2.2. Appeal to People's desire for life***

Among the Lomwe people witches are seen as enemies of life. They enslave people with sickness and death.<sup>64</sup> With this idea at the back of their minds, people feel the need to call Momboli whenever sicknesses and deaths in the village are on an increase. It is as if to say, Momboli brings back the missing vital force of life in the village.

The amazing thing is that usually deaths don't stop. People continue to die even after Momboli has cleansed the village of witches. This reality is in itself a challenge to the Lomwe people and indeed a call to deepen their understanding of Momboli. It is in this quest for life that Christ as Momboli, suffices for their needs.<sup>65</sup> Christ is concerned not only with temporal salvation but the salvation that goes beyond this earthly life.

The name Jesus was given to him because it is he that shall save his people from their sins (Mk 1:21). He is distinctively the Saviour (Lk 2:11). His work on earth was to seek and save the lost (Lk 9:10). His death and resurrection were a means to salvation (Rm 5:9). He is exalted as leader and saviour to give repentance and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31) and there is no salvation in no one else but him (Acts 4:12).<sup>66</sup>

The type of salvation which Jesus gives is integral. It is both spiritual and bodily. The strong desire to live among the Lomwe people has also to be extended to the coming kingdom of God as Christ proclaimed it.

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<sup>64</sup> Author's Interview with Mrs Chikapa, Mulanje, 23 June 2003.

<sup>65</sup> John Mbiti discovers that the idea of *Christus Victor* (miracle worker and risen Lord) is particularly relevant, for such a Christ is the conqueror of those evil powers (spirits, magic, disease, death) feared by an African, and is a guarantor of immortality. Cf. J.N.K. MUGAMBI AND L. MAGESA, eds. *Jesus in African Christianity*, 18.

<sup>66</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 460.

He proclaims the kingdom as something that has already started taking place in his very person, and yet shall come to its fullness in the future.<sup>67</sup> J.N.D. Kelly puts it that Jesus' ministry was a constant witness to God as Saviour.<sup>68</sup>

John's Gospel summarises the mission of Jesus by saying that he came so that humanity may have life and have it to the fullest. This is the type of life that goes beyond this earthly living. To think of living life to the fullest is to think of living in Christ, the one who gave living water to the Samaritan woman<sup>69</sup> and living bread<sup>70</sup> to those who were seeking him. It is this type of life that the Lomwe people of Malawi are looking for, and cannot be found in anyone else but in Christ. It is by accepting Christ as their Momboli that they will be able to live life to the fullest and quench their thirst for life.

### ***2.3. The symbol of Judgment***

Among the Lomwe people Momboli is also looked upon as the symbol of judgement. He is able to see who is in the right and in the wrong by identifying witches.<sup>71</sup> He brings out hidden things and put them in the light that everybody is able to see. All the tools, which witches use in carrying out their witchcraft, are exposed. It is said that once a witch has been found, he can no longer continue with witchcraft because his ways have become known by everyone. They are supposed to work in secret and not be known.

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<sup>67</sup> In Jesus' words and deeds God's salvation was already a matter of experience as the sick were healed (Mk 3:4; 6:56) sins were forgiven (Lk 7:50; 19:9) and the disciples were rescued (Mt 8:25; 14:30) Cf. M.K. HELLWIG, *MCE*, 784. Fr. N. Fogliacco holds that Jesus was different from his contemporary preachers about the kingdom because they preached of the kingdom while Jesus proclaimed the presence of the kingdom, which means that he is the kingdom. His miracles were an anticipation of this kingdom. (Cf. FR. N. FOGLIACCO, "Eschatology", *Class presentation*, Tangaza College, 2004.

<sup>68</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 498.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. AB-Jn 4:1-26.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. AB-Jn 6:22-33.

<sup>71</sup> Author's Interview with Mr Chipongwe, Mulanje, 14 August 2003

All the witches who refuse to dispose of their tools are threatened with death. Another important thing to take note of is the way witches behave once they have seen Momboli. Usually it is not Momboli who goes around searching for witches. It is the witches themselves who bring their tools to Momboli so that he can burn them. Once these tools have been burnt, the witch is given a sort of medicine that helps him no longer to indulge in witchcraft. It is said that if a person goes back to practicing witchcraft, he dies just because of the medicine he was given by Momboli.

The gospel of John has also presented Christ as a judge. “Then Jesus said, I came into this world for judgement, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind”<sup>72</sup>. Again “while I am in the world I am the light of the world” (Jn 9:5). All these texts refer to Christ as one that brings about judgment.<sup>73</sup>

According to John’s gospel, Jesus brings people to light and makes them able to see their true self in front of him. “Light” is used symbolically in the bible to describe God’s presence.<sup>74</sup> In the presence of Christ every human being comes to light and one is able to see oneself either as a sinner or righteous one. Christ does not carry out judgment as such; rather his very presence is a judgment in itself, because people are brought into light and are seen as they are.

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. *AB-Jn* 9:39.

<sup>73</sup> The entire messianic ministry of Jesus, in all its phases, was judicial. His very appearance as “light of the world” already imposed a decision on his onlookers, who by their response of faith and unbelief brought down judgement on themselves right in their own time. Cf. FR. N. FOGLIACCO, “Eschatology” *Class Notes*, Tangaza College, 2004. 120.

<sup>74</sup> *AB*, Foot notes on John 9:5.

The question that comes to mind is: If Jesus can offer such security to the Lomwe people as we have seen above, how is it that they could not profess him radically in their life?

### **3. Source of the Problem**

These are reasons for the weak Christianity among the Lomwe people. How is it that despite accepting Christ as their Saviour, the Lomwe people still live with the dilemma of combining the Christian principles with their traditional practices? We have to recall that any person who claims to believe in Christ, yet has recourse to other spiritual, cosmic or metacosmic forces, has not yet succeeded in identifying who Jesus Christ is, that he or she may profess him radically.<sup>75</sup> We are looking at the reasons that have prevented the Lomwe people from professing Christ radically in their Christian life.

#### **3.1. Missionary Approach**

To attract people to mission, missionaries were distributing gifts like safety pins, needles, hooks, salt or pieces of cloth, more especially for the catechumens who accepted to be baptised.<sup>76</sup> This means that people could join Christianity not out of conversion but so that they could receive these gifts. This methodology helped to increase the number of Christians without considering the depth of their faith.

All the people who accepted baptism were called no longer to indulge themselves in traditional practices.<sup>77</sup> This made the Lomwe people Christian pretenders from the beginning. It means people were able to go to church, and when

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<sup>75</sup> E.J. PENOUKOU as Quoted by EMMANUEL OROBATOR in the *Hekima Review* No. 11, 79.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. INITIATION TO MALAWI, *Land-People-Customs*, 15.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. INITIATION TO MALAWI, 16.

they went back home, to put into practice their traditional beliefs and values. Already this caused a double standard of life among the people.

It was not a wrong idea to prohibit people from doing traditional practices. But it was wrong to let them leave what gave them security without ensuring them of their security in Christianity. This is one of the reasons that have been given to the difficulties which the church had in establishing itself in the central region of Malawi, where *Nyau*<sup>78</sup> traditional practice was stronger, particularly in Lilongwe district.

It is said that some Catholic priests did not adopt the right attitude and showed too much opposition to traditional practices. Here and there fathers burned *Nyau* images or destroyed their drums. This created an attitude of hostility on the part of many chiefs and in retaliation they burned Catholic schools and prayer houses.

In the case of Lomwe people, they just continued practicing their traditional ceremonies in hiding while remaining Christians.

### ***3.2. Poor Knowledge of the Traditional Practices of the People***

Before starting their work of evangelisation the Catholic priests were supposed to study the people and know their attitude towards reality and the world as a whole. The people's cultural practices reveal their attitude towards reality.

It is essential that a gospel communicator should seek to know and locate the alleged powers of the people he is seeking to reach.<sup>79</sup> Since this aspect was ignored, though people accepted Christianity, they still felt the need to go back to their

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<sup>78</sup> The *Nyau* are closed societies in which men are dominant and are typical of the Chewa people in Malawi.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. S. NGEWA, M. SHAW, T. TIENOU, Eds., *Issues in African Christian Theology*, 138.

traditional practices in matters they felt Christianity did not give an answer. Elizabeth Dreyer insists that theologies should be conditioned by situation and location.<sup>80</sup> She reaches this conclusion after seeing the serious problems created when only one face of Christianity was imposed on all.

### ***3.3. Concept of Christianity as Culture***

“If Christianity does not become culture, it has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not faithfully lived out.”<sup>81</sup> Christianity is a culture, a way of life that people have to live.<sup>82</sup> From its very beginning, it has been an inculturated culture. That is why Jesus had to be born in a particular culture of a particular ethnic group. Inculturation started at incarnation, God taking upon himself human nature so that he could pitch his tent among the people. In the book of Acts both Jews and Gentiles embraced Christianity, but circumcision, a Jewish traditional practice, was ruled out as one of the prerequisite for a person to become a Christian. This was the battle which St. Paul the missionary to the Gentiles, fought all through.<sup>83</sup>

Most missionaries who evangelised the Lomwe people came from Europe. This meant to some extent their Christianity was wrapped in a European culture. “The European purveyors of the Christian faith did not take it to the continent as

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<sup>80</sup> E. DREYER, *Manifestations of Grace*, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, Autobiography Letter of Foundation of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 20 May 1982, AAS, 685.

<sup>82</sup> Aylward Shorter maintains that culture is essentially social. It is the whole way of life, material and non-material of a human society. This means that Christianity, to be understood as culture, has to reach this level in the way people live it. Cf. A. SHORTER, *African Culture an Overview*, 22.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. One can read in Paul's letters to Romans and Galatians just to mention but a few passages, where St. Paul is making a distinction between works of the law and faith in Christ crucified. We are saved by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law.

pure and unalloyed, but rather carried it there clothed in Western European garb.”<sup>84</sup> The difficulty was to differentiate the Christian essentials from what were purely their own traditional practices.<sup>85</sup> This problem led to some cultural misunderstandings and hence poor conceptions of Christianity on the side of the local people.

### **3.4. Unqualified Catechists**

Catechists were chosen among the young men who attended mission school if they showed a good character and a minimum zeal.<sup>86</sup> They were instructed for a certain period in religion, reading and writing, in order to acquire descent knowledge and become teachers.

Every year, before the reopening of schools, all the catechists were called to the mission for a refresher course, in order to increase their spirit of faith. They were not always very zealous; some were not well qualified for their job. On the whole, they did a tremendous work for the implantation of Christianity in the villages. Some says that it would have been impossible for the fathers to recruit many catechumens and have a deep influence on the population without the collaboration of those old catechists. However, their incompetence in Christian doctrine affected the quality of Christianity among the people they evangelized.

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. S. NGEWA, M. SHAW, T. TIENOU, Eds., *Issues in African Christian Theology*, 25.

<sup>85</sup> Of course it's not possible to have a "pure" Christianity with no cultural accretions. But missionaries have to be open to allowing the gospel to be "inculturated" in different cultures. For example, water don't exist without anywhere in a pure shapeless form. It always bears the shape of its container. But when you pour it from a European glass into an African calabash, you can't expect it to retain the old shape.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. INITIATION TO MALAWI, *Land-People-Customs*, 16.

### 3.5. *Intercultural Communication*

If Christianity is an inculturated culture, as stated above, it is also very important to note that all the theologies are contextual.<sup>87</sup> Patrick Ryan puts it that, in one sense, all theologies, even the most irrelevant ones, are contextual.<sup>88</sup> This is because all theologies have been thought out in some context or other; all theologies have their roots in a context and are shaped by it, even if those who produced them are blissfully unaware of it.

If theology is to be lived not just a matter of mental assent, the contemporary social cultural factor must come to the foreground, which must then provide the theologian with the constantly changing data which represent man's situation in life.<sup>89</sup> Theology should give meaning to the life of the people living it.

Then it follows that respect for other people's culture is one of the rules to be observed in evangelisation.<sup>90</sup> Different cultures have different images that represent it.<sup>91</sup> They express the values that build the people together over a long and persisting time. They make a set of conventional signs, which only the people that belong to that particular culture are able to get meaning out of. It is this meaning that the images lose when they have been removed from their context and culture to be imposed on other peoples.

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<sup>87</sup> Victor Cole in his article "Africanising faith" referred to contextualisation as a theological formulation from exegesis of biblical texts within a social-cultural context, and a living out of that theology within the given cultural context, utilising the bible as one of the authority while recognising the progress of biblical revelation. Cf. S. NGEWA, M. SHAW, T. TIENOU, Eds., *Issues in African Christian Theology*, 13.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. PATRICK RYAN, *Pastoral Insertion as a Component of the Theological Studies Curriculum*, *Tangaza Time Paper No. 10*, 73-74.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. NGEWA, M. SHAW, T. TIENOU, Eds., *Issues in African Christian Theology*, 20.

<sup>90</sup> The leader should seek to define, strengthen and articulate those enduring values, beliefs and cultural strands that give the institution its unique identity over time. DR. KAWASONGA, "Leadership" *Class Presentation*, Tangaza College, 2003.

<sup>91</sup> A. SHORTER, *African Culture an Overview*, 23.

For a person to appreciate the culture other than his or her own, there is a need for a lot of study of that particular culture. Fr Bouchy, a Missionary of Africa in Malawi at *Mua* Parish of *Dedza* has managed to reach this level.<sup>92</sup> It is the stage whereby one is able to understand other people's culture from within and not by standing at a distance. This requires time, which means that evangelisation is not a one-day job, "Human beings can only be effectively addressed and personally touched within their own cultural and psychic worlds".<sup>93</sup> This can only be achieved over time. If time is not respected, the effects of evangelisation will not be deep in the lives of the people. Consequently it brings a sense of deep dissatisfaction in their lives.

### ***3.6. Problem Traced to a Single Root***

Looking at the above sources of the problem one can reduce them to a single root: a poor knowledge of communication principles. The third chapter of this essay has further developed on this link between evangelisation and communication. It shows the different degree of effectiveness between the evangelisation that can be carried out by a person who knows principles of communication, and that done by a person who doesn't know anything about communication. The fact that some people have been asking if there is any link between communication and theology expresses their ignorance in one of the two fields. Again, it is a proof that the past mistakes, made in evangelisation, can be repeated in our own times if missionaries fail to integrate communication principles in their task of evangelisation.

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<sup>92</sup> He collected most of the materials used in Chewa traditional practices that involve the masks and put them together in the museum. He also inquired more about their meaning to the people. This has made the local people very close to him. He has used this opportunity to know more about the people and hence it is easy for him to evangelise them.

<sup>93</sup> C. MCGARRY, *Inculturing the Church in Africa*, 198.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this chapter we have seen some of the attributes of Momboli among the Lomwe people in relation to those which Christ offers to his believers. From this comparative study of Christ and the Lomwe Momboli we have discovered that Christ is indeed the real Momboli who can quench the thirst for security of the Lomwe people. Again we looked at the source of problem for the misunderstanding of Christ's salvation among the Lomwe people. If Christ can offer the salvation Momboli does, and even something more, how is it that Christ has not yet been accepted fully by the people?

The following chapter has focusses on the need for communication principles in order to make evangelisation effective to the local people wherever the good news is proclaimed. It is also proposes solutions that can help the Lomwe people to profess Christ radically in their lives and forget about their traditional Momboli.

## **Chapter III**

### **Communicating Christ Momboli to the Lomwe people**

#### **1. Introduction**

In the first chapter we have seen that although Christ is not effective among the Lomwe people, still something can be done so as to make the people know and understand his role in their lives as Christians. One way is that of preaching Christ to the Lomwe people as their Momboli. The second chapter has presented the influence of Momboli among the Lomwe people in relation to the uniqueness of Christ as one that supercedes the Lomwe Momboli. This last chapter aims at giving practical solutions to the already existing problem among the Lomwe people, ways in which the people can be helped to believe fully in Christ and leave aside their traditional practices of Momboli.

#### **2. Principles to be Observed when Communicating Christ Momboli**

These are factors to be kept into mind before the actual work of communicating begins. They are helpful because they determine the way the message will be received by the people. They can help one to be an effective or competent communicator in the sense that he is able to achieve the desired effect. This also means that every communicator should have objectives and goals he needs to achieve. We don't communicate for communication's own sake.

## **2.1. Audience as the Center**

“Audience” means the people who are being addressed. To make them the center means to consider their uniqueness, peculiarity, context and culture. The question that should come to the mind of every communicator is, for whom is this message I would like to convey? In trying to give an answer to this question, the person should be able to define his audience. The audience determines the method to be used for delivering the message. It will also determine the language to be used, the idioms, the images and the ideas themselves.<sup>94</sup>

The cultural model of communication states that the message has to be read through the perception of its audience who construct meanings out of them (messages).<sup>95</sup> It is by trying to contextualise Christ that we shall be able to convince and reassure the local people of Christ’s effectiveness in their lives and cultures. It is not enough to stop people from practicing their traditional beliefs that gave them security without ensuring them of their security in Christianity.

## **2.2. Balancing the method and the content**

Often people take much time to prepare the content of their presentations. Very rarely do they consider the methodology of delivering it. In other words, much effort is put into preparing for the content and less or no effort at all is put into preparing the methodology. However, in any act of communication

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<sup>94</sup> Once you have known your audience you can plan the appropriate message and the appropriate manner of presenting that message. It means the message is never appropriate until the audience has been defined. This is one reason why the good preacher in the parish is the priest who knows his people and visits them in their homes. Cf. AMECEA AND IMBISA, *Basic Human Communication, Vol. 1.*, 44.

<sup>95</sup> MCQAIL, *Audience Analysis*, 19. It is not enough to ensure that the content of a homily, a catechetical program, a penitential service, etc. are theologically and spiritually correct. Also of crucial importance is to know how to deliver the content in a manner that our audience can understand and identify with it. Cf. AMECEA AND IMBISA, *Communication, Culture and Community, Vol. 2*, 115.

content and method occur together. Both are important elements of communication.<sup>96</sup> Hence every time a person would like to convey a message, there is a need to coordinate between the two. A great teacher is the one who can prepare the content, giving it to the children at primary school, youth of secondary school, uneducated parents and university students and yet all of them being able to grasp and understand the message. On my side, this great achievement entails great preparation of the method applied so as to fit the audience. The impact the message can have on the audience to some extent depends on the way it is communicated.

The General Directory for Catechesis says that the principle of fidelity to God and fidelity to the human person should lead to the avoidance of artificial separation or presumed neutrality between method and content.<sup>97</sup> It affirms their necessary correlation and interaction. Although the Directory points out that method is at the service of revelation,<sup>98</sup> it is clear that the two should not be separated as giving priority to one over the other because a good catechetical method is a guarantee of fidelity to content.<sup>99</sup>

The church does not propose any method as the most suitable to be used in catechesis. One of the reasons is that there might be a variety of methods that can be used for teaching the faith. However, the main reason for not proposing a particular method is to let circumstances determine the method. I feel this is what Patrick Ryan meant when he said, “experience should shape our theology, not theology our

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. AMECEA AND IMBISA, *Basic Human Communication, Vol. 1*, 26.

<sup>97</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *GDC*, 112.

<sup>98</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, 113.

<sup>99</sup> CONGRTEGATION FOR THE CLERGY, 113.

experience”<sup>100</sup>. It is only in following this principle that fidelity to God and fidelity to the human person is achieved.

### **2.3. Desired Effect as Backbone to Communication**

Desired effect is the reaction which the communicator would like his audience to have. It is one of the most forgotten items among the communicators, yet marks the backbone of communication. Unless the audience shows the desired reaction, the message has not touched them in the way the communicator hoped.

Every time a person has prepared the message to be conveyed to others this question should not be omitted, “what do I want my audience to do with my message?”<sup>101</sup> If this question is not answered, the whole message might only be a source of entertainment. At the end it does not leave any impact on the people. Such type of communication defeats its objectives and hence needs to be evaluated.

## **3. Recommendations for Preaching Christ Momboli to the Lomwe people**

### **3.1. Second -evangelisation**

Second-evangelisation should be understood in the sense of new evangelisation. The core of this evangelisation should remain the name, teaching, life, kingdom and mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.<sup>102</sup> Evangelisation should lead to the transformation of the one who has accepted the good news. It should lead to a new manner of being, of personal living and of living in community, which the gospel inaugurates.<sup>103</sup> This new evangelisation, if done following the doctrine of the church, can help the Lomwe people to understand what it entails to accept Christ as a Saviour.

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<sup>100</sup> P. RYAN, *Pastoral Insertion as a Component of the Theological Studies Curriculum*, *Tangaza Time Paper* No. 10. 72.

<sup>101</sup> AMECEA AND IMBISA, *Basic Human Communication Vol. 1*, 44.

<sup>102</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 22.

<sup>103</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 23.

### 3.1.1. *The People to Carry Out the Task*

Every person who has been evangelised is called to go and evangelise others.<sup>104</sup> It is unthinkable that a person should accept the word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn. "The whole church is missionary and the work of evangelisation is a basic duty of the people of God."<sup>105</sup> Bearing this in mind every baptized Christian has the duty to witness to what she or he believes. This is what some documents have referred to as a living preaching. "Modern man listens more willingly to witness than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."<sup>106</sup>

This is a challenge to all who preach the good news to the Lomwe people. These people may include the catechists, priests, religious, deacons and seminarians. In one way or the other people look to them in order to take a leaf out of their lifestyles. Their witness can help the Lomwe people to apprehend Christian faith in truth and profess Christ radically in their lives.

### 3.1.2. *Qualification and Sound Faith of the Teachers*

The summit and dynamism of evangelisation lies in the proclamation that in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all people as a gift of God's mercy.<sup>107</sup> The knowledge and belief in this core message is essential to all who carry out evangelisation. Unless you have a message there is no way you can communicate.

The content of evangelisation is simply the good news of Jesus Christ. However, the way people will understand it depends on the way of its presentation

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<sup>104</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 24.

<sup>105</sup> *Ad Gentes*, 35.

<sup>106</sup> Pope John Paul VI, Addresses to the members of the *Consilium de Laicis* (October, 1974), AAS 66 (1974) P. 568

<sup>107</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 27.

and the conviction with which it has been presented. If a person is trying to teach something he doesn't believe in, which is also not clear to himself, the message becomes even more obscure to the audience. Truly the effort of evangelisation will profit greatly only if those giving catechetical instruction have suitable texts, updated with wisdom and competence, under the authority of bishops.<sup>108</sup>

### 3.1.3. Procedure for Delegating the Teaching of Catechism

Often in parishes there are only one or two priests. It is evident that on their own they cannot teach<sup>109</sup> all the catechumens and other people who need their teaching services. Hence delegation<sup>110</sup> becomes very important. However, the people to be delegated need a good training. This training will make them competent to teach and impart the authentic Catholic doctrine. The training will empower them and make them know more about Catholic teaching.

The tendency of some parish priests who just pick secondary school students to be teaching catechism without giving them any kind of training has drastically degraded the depth of people's faith. Piety is not enough of a qualification to teach catechumens. Something more has to be done, that is to train those to be delegated so that success of their work is assured.

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<sup>108</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 44.

<sup>109</sup> Yet we should keep in mind that by the virtue of his ordination, the priest has a triple *manus Christi* and the first one of the three speaks directly about the role of the priest as a teacher. The rite of ordination of a priest states that, "you must apply your energies to the duty of teaching in the name of Christ, the chief teacher..." Cf. *The Rite of Ordination of a Priest No. 14*. This means that the priest has a vital role of teaching through his preaching office. He must make every effort to ensure that his role is an effective one. Cf. M. CLAY, *Priestly Identity and the Role of the Priest, Catechumenate, Vol. 24, No. 1, January 2002. 5*.

<sup>110</sup> To entrust power (In this case the teaching of catechism) to other lower authority while still maintaining a strong link between the one delegated and the one who delegates. Cf. DR. KAWASONGA, "Leadership", *Class Presentation*, 2004.

### 3.2. *Sunday Preaching*

Homilies have a catechetical purpose. Although limited by time and the theme of the day, out of necessity, the content of the homily should be prepared according to the needs of the people. Unless the homily addresses the people's needs, it does not touch their lives, the natural life to which it gives new meaning.

Preachers and listeners are caught up in a world much larger than their own experience. They walk in the world of God's word, which surely ought to touch and shape their experience, but also remains, in some sense, 'above' their experience.<sup>111</sup>

The homily, especially if given during the Sunday liturgy, should be simple, clear, direct, well adapted, profoundly dependent on the gospel teaching and faithful to the Magisterium, animated by a balanced apostolic ardour coming from its own characteristic nature, full of hope, fostering belief and productive of peace and unity.<sup>112</sup>

Those who preach to the Lomwe people should keep in mind their need for Christ Momboli. Therefore the role of Christ in our salvific mystery has to be emphasised. His uniqueness as the fullness of revelation and absolute bringer of salvation should be taught to the people. In this way we shall prevent the Lomwe people from practicing what is not Christian and resort what is Christian. This should also rule out all superstitious thoughts about Christianity. St Paul's axiom which says that "faith comes from what is heard", retains its relevance because it is the word that is heard which leads to belief.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> L.J. CAMELI, *Chicago Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 19.

<sup>112</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 43.

<sup>113</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 42, Cf. Rm 10:17.

For communication in the parish this means, among other things, to use the technical means in a proper way.<sup>114</sup> This begins with the correct installation and use of the microphone if it is really needed in a given situation.<sup>115</sup> It presupposes the priest knows or tests the type of microphone best fitted for his church, including the proper amplifier system. This depends also on the size and acoustics of the church.

Sometimes in small churches preaching can still be done without a sound system, provided the priest has a properly trained voice. Proper reading techniques, too, are of importance.<sup>116</sup>

If the word of God has to be incarnated anew in our time, the preacher has to translate this word into the situation and concerns of the people of today. This means that in his homily he must do everything possible to meet the people where they are in their daily life.<sup>117</sup> An example or experience from daily and, possibly, local life will immediately catch the interest of the people and keep them open for God's word into their situation.

The journalistic rules on the importance of news can be helpful. The closer a happening is to the people both in space and in time the more newsworthy it is.<sup>118</sup> The person wounded at the doorsteps of the parish house this morning is of greater interest to the listener than some happenings somewhere in the world.

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<sup>114</sup> We should keep in mind that more than emphasizing the use of instruments of communication, in an African context we must stress the establishment of relationships, the creation of meaning, the building of understanding and communication. This is the richness of the African communication experience. Cf. AMECEA AND IMBISA, *Communication, Culture and Community Vol. 3*, 115. Here we are trying to find a way to integrate traditional and modern means of communication in such a way that we maximize the potentials of both for relevant and effective communication within the African context.

<sup>115</sup> F. EILERS, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 83.

<sup>116</sup> F. EILERS, 84.

<sup>117</sup> F. EILERS, 84.

<sup>118</sup> F. EILERS, 84.

To those preaching among the Lomwe people taking into consideration the people's need, there is no way the problem of Christ can be dodged because it is what the people are living. By following the above principle in preaching, the problem may be reduced and with time be eradicated.

### ***3.3. Holding Seminars***

People being prepared for baptism in the parish are often many. Hence, they are divided into groups which form classes and each class has a teacher. During this period it becomes very difficult for the priests or other well-trained people to teach in all the classes. They need other people apart from catechists to help them teaching. Usually those chosen are not very competent in matters of Catholic doctrine. It is in this sense that seminars may help since priests themselves will be involved in teaching the Christians.

These seminars should be held on an outstation level. This will enhance participation on the side of Christians. They will be able to feel that they are part of the church. Whatever can be shared during the seminar can hold power of transforming the people and bring their Christian faith to maturity.

The people to be involved in teaching during the seminars should include the priests, sisters, brothers, seminarians and catechists. The procedure should be that when preparing their talks, they have to meet and discuss their topics, to see the way the topics should link and coordinate the methods of their presentation. They should evaluate the content together according to the people's needs and the purpose of the seminar itself.

### ***3.4. Empowering the Priests and the Catechists***

Empowerment means to equip a person with the necessary means that would transform his/her life and that of others.<sup>119</sup> The means to empower them may include sound education, knowledge of the people they administer and inclusion of communication skills in their education. This has to be done by keeping into mind that all ministries of the church are basically also communication and have a pastoral communication dimension.<sup>120</sup>

#### ***3.4.1. Empowering the Priests***

Most of the priestly studies are doctrinal, centered on the dogmatic teaching of the church. There is also a need to incorporate studies that may help them to deliver what they have, by using the modern technologies that require knowledge of communication principles.<sup>121</sup> As a step towards this positive approach Vatican II reoriented seminary education by emphasising the pastoral preoccupation which should characterize every feature of the students training.<sup>122</sup>

In a seminary, a variant of the liberal tradition has been predominant for a very long time. The thinking has been: if we can produce a certain type of character then he will be adaptable to any priestly situation. While priestly work was very rigidly controlled, this worked admirably. But now in a time of change, when pastoral situations are much more open, when a priest has a greater scope and less detailed guidance, a different approach is perhaps necessary.<sup>123</sup>

This does not rule out the inclusion of intercultural communication in the training. They should learn respect for the cultures of other people especially those they are evangelizing, so that they may be able to challenge them well. This will

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<sup>119</sup> A.K. SSEMUGONA, *African Christian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 46.

<sup>120</sup> F. EILERS, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 82.

<sup>121</sup> Education and training in Communications should be an integral part of the formation of pastoral workers and priests. Cf. *Aetatis Novae* (1992) as quoted by F. EILERS, 81.

<sup>122</sup> *Decree on Priestly Formation*, No. 19.

<sup>123</sup> K. NICHOLS, *Education and the Formation of Priests*, *The Clergy Review*, Vol. LII, No. 4, 297.

lead to openness and acceptance on the side of their people. All the challenges that can be posed to them can be easily accepted in good faith.

It will also be important, for the priest to make a commitment of continuing with his education beyond his seminary days. Having study days, intensive short courses and regular theological reading can do this. The faithful and the catechumens in the parish, seek spiritual, moral and intellectual information and the priest is the source of such formation.<sup>124</sup>

### *3.4.2. Empowering Catechists*

Catechists should be given a sound education in matters of church doctrine. It is very sad that some catechists have been working in parishes for years and yet have not undergone any professional training. Education to some extent determines the ability of the person in what he can deliver. This means that not much can be expected from a catechist who has not been trained for his work.

Programs of studies in catechetical centers should not only be centered on the church doctrine. Catechists should also be prepared well in the way they should interact, communicate and impart their doctrine to the people. If well trained, catechists can be the experts of teaching in the parishes because they are more in touch with people; hence they know the people's needs.

## **4. Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have seen principles that can help in communicating Christ Momboli to the Lomwe people. We have also tried to see ways in which communication can be improved on the parish level, most especially if we want the church doctrine to be effective in the lives of the people. Apart from using technical

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<sup>124</sup> T. FITZGERALD, *What is Happening to us?: How Initiation Affects the Community, Catechumenate, Vol. 24, No. 5, 13.*

equipment and modern technologies, the empowerment of the people who teach church doctrine is also very important.

Among the Lomwe people the problem of Christ as Saviour can be solved if the above-proposed principles are respected and implemented. This is a call to realize that communication is not an optional concern as some people think, rather is an essential aspect for preaching Christ to the people.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

This essay has tempted to answer the question why Lomwe people resort to traditional practices in times of crisis despite of being Christians. We have found that the image of Christ as it was presented to them was insufficient. Hence the first chapter has developed the Christology that can be applicable to the Lomwe people. This has been done by looking at the Christological theme of Momboli as found in the cultural experience of the people. It is an attempt to discover an authentic and meaningful face of Jesus Christ that will respond to the questions posed by the Lomwe people themselves.

The second chapter has presented some of the attributes of Momboli among the Lomwe people in relation to those, which Christ offers to his believers. From this comparative study of Christ and the Lomwe Momboli we have discovered that Christ is indeed the real Momboli who can quench the thirst for security of the Lomwe people. Again we looked at the source of problem for the misunderstanding of Christ's salvation among the Lomwe people. If Christ can offer the salvation Momboli does, and even something more, how is it that Christ has not yet been accepted fully by the people? One of the problems I have discovered is that, the way Christ was communicated to the people has influenced the people's concept of who Christ is.

The last chapter has presented some principles of communication that can be helpful in communicating Christ Momboli to the Lomwe people. We have also tried to see ways in which communication can be improved on the parish level, most especially if we want the church doctrine to be effective in the lives of the people. Apart from using technical equipment and modern technologies, the empowerment of the people who teach church doctrine is also very important.

Among the Lomwe people the problem of Christ as Saviour can be solved if the above-proposed principles are respected and implemented. This is a call to realize that communication is not an optional concern as some people think, rather is an essential aspect for preaching Christ to the people.

## **APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS**

1. When did you join Christianity?
2. How were you initiated into Christianity?
3. Who is Jesus Christ for you?
4. Why don't people resort to him when in crisis?
5. Do you know anything about Momboli?
6. Why is he invited by the people of the surrounding villages here?
7. Do you go to the ceremonies of Momboli? Why?
8. Why do other people go to Momboli?
9. What are the effects of Momboli in the village according to your own opinion?

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Mr Chikapa, "On the reasons why people go to Momboli", 17 May 2003.

Br. Peter Mkumbira, "On the reasons why people go to Momboli", 17 September, 2004.

## **APPENDIX 2: ABBREVIATIONS**

A-B	African Bible
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
Cf.	Confer, Compare
Cor	Corinthians
Ed.	Editor
Eds.	Editors
GDC	General Directory for Catechesis
Jn	John
Lk	Luke
Mat	Mathew
Mk	Mark
NCESE	New Catholic Encyclopedia Second Edition
Rm	Romans
TTD	The Theological Dictionary
Vol.	Volume

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