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THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**MISSAWO, JULIUS MISSANGIA, C.P.**

**“SAVED IN HOPE”: INVESTIGATION INTO THE  
MEANING OF SALVATION**

Supervisor

**Rev. Dr. Fr. Oliana, Guido, M.C.C.J.**

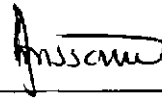
A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in theology

**NAIROBI 2011**

## 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 Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate 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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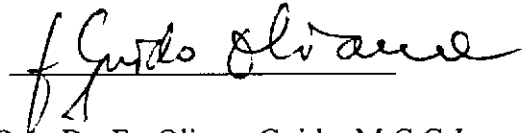
Missawo Julius Missangia

Date:

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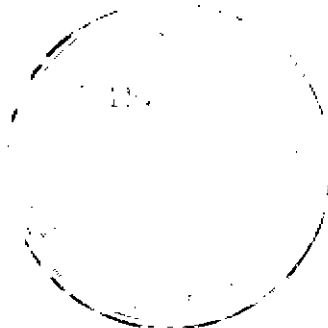


Name of Supervisor:

Rev. Dr. Fr. Oliana, Guido, M.C.C.J.

Date:

8-4-2011



## **DEDICATION**

To my parents, siblings and my friends.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank Rev. Dr. Fr. Guido, OIiana M.C.C.J., the moderator of this essay. Through his provocative questions and helpful criticisms, he made me work to enlarge my horizons. My love and gratitude go to the Passionist family for their friendship and inspiration especially during the time of this research. Special thanks go also to my superiors, formators, Sr. Judianne Beltz SND, confreres and friends who corrected my English and formatted this work.

## **EPIGRAPH**

“For in hope we were saved. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience”

*(Rom 8:24-25).*

## ABBREVIATIONS\*

- AG* Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church. *Ad Gentes* (7 December 1965)
- ATR* African Traditional Religions.
- C. Century
- CCC* *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications - Africa 1994
- DV* *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965)
- e.g. *Exempli gratia*. for example
- GS* *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965)
- i.e. *id et* – that is
- LG* *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964)
- NJBC* BROWN, R.E.- FITZMYER, J.A.- MURPHY, R.E., ed., *New Jerome Biblical Commentaries Jersey*: Prentice Hall 1990, 883-890.
- NT New Testament
- OT Old Testament
- SS* BENEDICT XVI, *Encyclical Letter "Spe Salvi" On In Hope We Were Saved* (30 November 2007), Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa 2007.
- ST* *Summa Theologica* (Ilae-IIae QQ 1-189. IIIa QQ. 1-90), New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc. 1947.

\*For the biblical abbreviations we shall follow those indicated in the *New Revised Standard Version*.

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## INTRODUCTION

Are Catholics saved? This is the most vital question, I suppose, to many Catholics or other Christians. It certainly crosses denominational lines. The inspiration to take up this research resulted from a significant incident I encountered during my pastoral experience from June to August 2009 in Tonga Parish in Western Kenya.

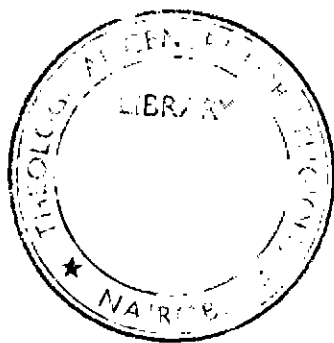
As a young Passionist religious, interested in having an enriching pastoral ministry, I had an opportunity of meeting various people in the Small Christian Communities. One of the main questions that came up very often in such meetings was: Are Catholics saved? People were looking at me for an answer.

The concern of people in these Small Christian Communities is raised by Christians of other denominations who look down to the Catholic in the area. They refer to the Catholic Church as *gunda* (Luo term), which means a place that was once inhabited, but now is abandoned and un-inhabited. The common phrase used by the members of these religious groups when introducing themselves is, "I am so and so and I am saved". This is a provocation for some Catholics, who are tempted to do the same. Provoked by this situation, I feel motivated to engage myself in a systematic research on the Catholic concept of salvation.

The study is divided in three chapters. Chapter one investigates on the biblical meaning of salvation. Particular attention will be paid to the soteriology of St. Paul, certainly the most mature doctrinal stage in the New Testament.

Chapter two in a more historical perspective examines the main post-biblical soteriological ideas employed by the Church; mainly focused on Christ's salvific work as described in St. Paul. We shall present the thought of the Church Fathers, the Middle Ages, and the Reformers in particular Martin Luther.

Chapter three in a more systematic manner offers a comprehensive response to the issues discussed in the previous two chapters. This will be elaborated in the light of Second Vatican Council, post-Vatican II theology and the reflections of the twenty first century theologies.



## Chapter I

### SALVATION IN THE BIBLE

The language of salvation is as old as human existence itself. This makes it a key theme not only in the Hebrew's Scripture, but even stronger in the Greek Scriptures. The development of the salvific event begins in the very early chapters of Genesis, when God rescued Noah and his household from the great storm of rain, which flooded the earth (*Gen 6-9*). The same trend goes along with the story of Isaac, rescued from being the sacrificial lamb himself by the angel of the Lord and of Jonah's rescue from the fish's belly (*Jon 2:9*). The theme of salvation either of individuals or of group, moves through the Old and New Testaments. Israel, in the Old Testament, is first of all seen as a group of chosen people who are saved by God in order to fulfil God's plan of salvation.<sup>1</sup> This happened not for any gain on the part of God, but out of God's superabundance love for his people Israel.

Beyond doubt, anybody else might have wondered, why only a particular race or group was to receive God's salvation. This doubt however, will be solved in the New Testament, in the light of Jesus Christ, who came to save all people in all ages. This is the outstanding difference between salvation in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, salvation is selective and demanding, while in the New Testament it is free and for all, across all ages and borders.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. RICHARD, *The Mystery of the Redemption*, 27.

This brings about different understandings of salvation for a Hebrew person and or any other person during and after Christ. It leads to a number of words and expressions used in both Old and New Testaments to express the same salvific event. It will be of great significance to examine some of these with some great care and interest so as to discover what this important experience meant for all who experienced it. For the same reason, we shall also explore the meaning of salvation, which will be the key that unlocks the other discussions that will attempt to answer the question of concern: whether we can boast of our salvation or not?

## **1.1 Salvation in the Old Testament**

Christian salvation takes as fact Jewish salvation and develops out of it. Only a detailed examination of their different understanding of salvation will enable us to detect lines of continuity and areas of difference between our Christian understanding of salvation and the Jewish one. Starting with the Old Testament, we will sketch the source of the Jewish complete salvation thinking of the post-exilic era. This can be captured well in their images and terms of salvation.

### ***1.1.1 Salvific Terms and Images in the Old Testament***

To understand Jewish salvation, most attention and care must be paid to the context, word itself, usage, and the Semitic definitions<sup>2</sup>. We shall examine *haya*, *yashu'a*, *go'el*, *padah*, and *kopher*, as some of the words and images that are used in the Jewish tradition to depict salvation

#### ***a) Hayah***

*Hayah* is "A word which used statively (*qal*) means 'to be alive' but in the causative sense (*pi 'el* and *hiph 'il*) means 'to preserve', to keep alive or to give full

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 13.

and prosperous life to someone”<sup>3</sup>. *Hayah* is used both in religious and secular sense, but what is interesting, in its religious usage, is that it is used for God alone; it is only God who spares, gives life. It is basically seen as the proper work of God to save; no human person would save. In the few instances that this word was secularly applied, deeper spiritual meanings accompanied the episode. This is because of the refusal of the Hebrews to separate the secular and the spiritual life.

When we say *hayah*, it means to preserve life. We refer to life in a very natural sense as opposed to death. This is echoed in *Genesis* where it is frequently used. Basically, as we have seen, it means “to preserve”, or intransitively, “to live”. It is used in this natural sense perfectly in the book of *Genesis*. “Adam lived a hundred and thirty years” (*Gen* 5:3). We can say that Adam was saved from an early death. In *Gen* 45:7; 47: 25; 50: 20; the lives of Jacob and his tribe are saved from death by famine through the providential position, which Joseph occupies as controller of the granaries of Egypt<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, *hayah* would imply God preserving one’s life from death, keeping a life free from any death.

b) *Yasha* (*Yashu'a*, *Yesha*)

“The word *yasha* and its cognates has the basic meaning of bringing into a spacious environment, being at one’s ease, free to develop without hindrance”<sup>5</sup>. It is a common theme that accompanied the prophets, which begins from their very naming related to the word *yasha*, *yashua*, *yesha*. This case in point applies to prophets like Isaiah, Hosea, Joshua and supremely Jesus<sup>6</sup>.

As with the word *hayah*, it is only God that was believed to *yasha*, brings one to a free state, at ease. It is God’s doing, he alone had the power to do this. This

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<sup>3</sup> E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 15.

is very cogent in prophecies of the prominent prophets like Ezekiel, Hosea, Isaiah. “It is God who saves his flock” (*Ezek 34:22*). “Who rescues his people” (*Hos 1:7*). “He alone can do this” (*Hos 13: 10-14*). There is none else (*Isa 43:11*). “In short, the whole Old Testament revelation portrays a God who intervenes in the field of history on behalf of his people”<sup>7</sup>. This is strong in the prophet Hosea, especially when he speaks on behalf of God saying, “I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me, for there is no saviour besides me” (*Hos 13:4*).

The same trust in God as the only saviour cuts through the Old Testament and the word *yasha* or *yashua* is used to express this. God and saviour are synonymous throughout the whole of the Old Testament and not only in Deutero-Isaiah and other prophets. The words God and Saviour could be used interchangeably. This would imply *yashua* means God, the one who sets free, the remover of the stumbling block. “There is often a suggestion of release, freedom and complete well-being, not only in the root meaning of *yasha* but also in the context in which it appears”<sup>8</sup>.

### c) *Go'el*

This is a relational word used for those who are related by blood or for the good of the other person, without any personal gain. Every time this word is employed, it has with it the concept of effort on the part of the doer. “*Go'el* primarily means to act the part of a kinsman. It is a family word. The Kinsman vindicates his relative; very often he has the duty of avenging his blood, sometimes he buys a member of the family out of slavery or reclaims his field by payment of a

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<sup>7</sup> E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 16.

<sup>8</sup> E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 28.

price”<sup>9</sup>. This is addressed in many parts of the Hebrew Scriptures like *Num* 13; 19; 21; 24, *Josh* 20: 3, 5, 9, where we find the avenging of the Israelites’ blood clearly witnessed. In *Lev* 25:48, slaves are acquired back not to fall into slavery anymore and similarly in *Ruth* 4: 4, 6. In *Lev* 25; 26; 32, a land is reclaimed by paying a price.

In the famous episode of the Israelites’ deliverance from the Egyptians, God is considered a great Kinsman of his beloved nation. In the difficult moments after the return from exile the *orante* recalls God’s favours saying, “You are the God who does marvelous deeds, brought nations to acknowledge your power and with your own arm redeeming your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph” (*Ps* 77:14-15). The same form of praise is frequent in many parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, like *Ex* 6: 6; *Jer* 50:34; *Isa* 41:14; 43:14; 44: 6; 47: 4. In the prophet Isaiah this is very apparent when he says, “Yahweh has bared his holy arm for all the nations to see, and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God” (*Isa* 2:10).

One would ask whether God paid the Egyptians, the oppressors, a price to let the Israelites go free. “It cannot be said that God paid to the Egyptian oppressors any price for the redemption of his people. On the other hand, the idea of the exhortation of a mighty force, the idea that the redemption costs much, is everywhere present”<sup>10</sup>. Probably the metaphor *go'el* was attributed to God to emphasize His Kinship with Israel and his superabundant love, to the extent of buying them back from slaver.

#### d) *Padah*

*Padah* “Basically means to acquire by giving something in exchange. It is mainly applied to the redemption of a life by the surrender of another life to die in its stead”<sup>11</sup>. It is best understood in the example of the killing of the Egyptians’ first-

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<sup>9</sup> E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 29-30.

<sup>10</sup> E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 31.

<sup>11</sup> E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 31.

borns, in order to save the lives of the Israelites. The lives of the Egyptian's first-borns were in exchange to safeguard the lives of the Israelites.

All the human first-born, however, those of your own race, you will redeem. And when your son asks you in the days to come, what does this mean? You will tell him, by the strength of his hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt, out of the place of slave-labour. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, Yahweh killed all the first-born in Egypt, of man and beast alike (*Ex* 13:14-15).

Subsequently, when *padah* is used, the substitution impression is strongly intended but the overtones of costliness remain. It really cost God to rescue the Israelites from Egypt, from sin, from grave powers, and from troubles that dehumanized them. For this reason, it is noticeably pointed in the book of Samuel, "Is there another people on earth like your people, like Israel, whom God proceeded to redeem, to make them his people and to make a name for himself by performing great and terrible things on their behalf, by driving out nations and their gods before this people" (*2Sam* 7:23). In using the word *padah*, the Biblical writers seem to deliberately avoid applying *go'el* or any other word close to it because *padah* emphasizes the costliness, in exchange, and in the process of deliverance even though they might leave themselves open to some misunderstandings and misinterpretations<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, we can summarize the meaning of *padah* as simply a very costly exchange of life for life - taking one life to endorse the other life.

#### e) *Kopher*

"It means a 'ransom price' normally it is paid by a man for his life which has become forfeit, in order that he may go free"<sup>13</sup>. In the instances where this word is used, it is God who pays the ransom price in favour of his people who then become free. The word is used strongly to give emphasis to the concern God has for his people. He created them and does not forsake them in times of trouble. He

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 32.

<sup>13</sup> E.M.B. GREEN, *The Meaning of Salvation*, 32.

redeems and rescues them when they call on to Him. “Since they are your servants, your people, whom you have redeemed with your mighty power and strong hand” (*Neh 1:10*).

The same word *kopher* as we have pointed out is also used for one paying a ransom for his or her own life so as to be free. This is applied when Yahweh spoke to Moses, “When you count the Israelites by census, each one of them must pay Yahweh a ransom for his life, to avoid any incidence of plagues among them while you are holding the census” (*Ex 30:12*).

The small fraction of rich Hebrew terms and images that we have addressed hitherto indicate a substitutionary subject matter that is applied to God in his work of salvation. What the usage of these terms and images suggests is that there is liberation or redemption from some form of imprisonment or slavery. “For the Bible, this is ultimately that slavery of Sin”<sup>14</sup>. In God, there is freedom, there is life and when one acts contrary to God command, then he or she lacks the freedom and becomes a slave or prisoner. Sin is a personal refusal to enjoy God and the good that accompanies God’s self. “Jeremias, who lived in personal intimacy with God, saw sin as a refusal, a resistance to the impulse of God, in the heart of man”<sup>15</sup>.

### ***1.1.2 God’s Initiative in Human Salvation***

One thing that we can learn from the images and the terms we have addressed is that, once one has fallen into slavery of sin, he or she cannot come out of it by his or her own power. Human beings cannot liberate themselves, God has to come in, but he demands the sacrifice of a contrite heart<sup>16</sup>. As the *orante* has it, in the *Miserere* psalm, “Give me back the joy of your salvation sustains in me a

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<sup>14</sup> L. RICHARD, *The Mystery of the Redemption*, 42.

<sup>15</sup> L. RICHARD, *The Mystery of the Redemption*, 43.

<sup>16</sup> L. RICHARD, *The Mystery of the Redemption*, 44.

generous spirit. I shall teach the wicked your paths, and sinners will return to you” (*Ps* 51:12-13).

When God comes in into one’s life, he has to prevail over sin, and wipe away the blemish of sin, but the individual too is to rely exclusively on God for his salvation. P. De Rosa puts it well, “Only God can intervene to save man from his sins, but first he must intervene to show him what sin is”<sup>17</sup>. Since evil is a privation of the good symbolized in the covenant, God has to triumph over it by revealing an abundance of his goodness to overpower the evil, just before taking control of the good in the person already saved.

## **1.2 Salvation in the New Testament**

What is the significance of Old Testament salvation for the New Testament? Old Testament salvation provides the framework of the New Testament in its completeness. *Haya*, *yashu’a*, *go’el*, *paduh*, and *kopher*, all these images and terms taken together, imply the pre-understanding of Christ’s salvific event. When the New Testament presents Jesus as saviour, it makes use of these terms and images from the Old Testament. Under the same token, when Jesus tries to infer the meaning of his own work of salvation, both for himself and his contemporaries, he falls back to the Old Testament salvific terms and images.

### ***1.2.1 Salvific Terms and Images in the New Testament***

*Apolutrōsis*, *Katallage*, *Hilastērion*, *Eleutheria*, *Dikaiōsis* or *Dikaiosynē*, and *Soteria* - are some of the images and terms that the New Testament claim Jesus has effected for us in his salvific activity. As G. O’Collins says, “These terms are not used alone but in biblical and liturgical texts, prayers, creedal statements, poems,

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<sup>17</sup> P.DE ROSA, *God Our Saviour*, 9.

novels and literature of other genre”<sup>18</sup>. If we try to put into summary their general meaning then possibly, we will go back to their lexical range of meaning.

a) *Apolutrôsis*

The Greek word *apolutrôsis*, with the verb *apolutrô* is used for redeeming of a slave. The similar forms *lutron* (ransom) and *lutroô* to redeem are also frequently used<sup>19</sup>. In the Greco-Roman world, there was a tendency of buying back a member of a family taken into slavery. In the Scripture, or religious usage, it is applied to the redeeming work of God. “St Paul speaks of Christians being justified by the free grace of God through the redeeming (*apolutrôsis*) that comes in Christ Jesus (*Rom 3:24*)”<sup>20</sup>.

The word redemption frequently overlaps with the word salvation and are used interchangeably with each other. This happens even in cases of mere physical rescue from disease or death. “Associated with this usage is the image of God as *go'el* (redeemer), the divine kinsman or closest relative who fulfilled the duty of buying back an enslaved or captive relative (*Isa 41:14; 43:14; 44: 6; 47: 4*). In the Old Testament as we have seen, God was seen as such a divine ‘Redeemer’ when he set Israel free from the slavery of Egypt (*Ps 111:9*) and ‘acquired’ a people as his own special possession (*Ex 15:16. 19:5*)”<sup>21</sup>.

In the New Testament, God does this through his grace in Jesus Christ, and Jesus is given the title saviour, the one who saves, in fact salvation itself. “The New Testament calls God the Father ‘saviour’ eight times, and calls Jesus Christ ‘saviour’ sixteen times, as in the angelic message to shepherds: Today there has been born for

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<sup>18</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. D. EDWARDS, *What are they Saying about Salvation ?*, 7.

<sup>20</sup> J. FITZMYER, *Pauline Theology*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> J. FITZMYER, *Pauline Theology*, 4.

you a saviour who is Christ the Lord (*Lk 2:11*)”<sup>22</sup>. Salvation and redemption exist as synonyms, and using either of them is just a matter of choice. To differentiate the use of the two overlapping words, the language of the hymns supports the idea that salvation refers to the present or future work of Christ, while redemption points to the past, the result of the work of Christ<sup>23</sup>. St. Paul in his writing to the Romans, accentuates the coming aspect of our salvation. “Besides, you know the time has come: the moment is here for you to stop sleeping and wake up, because by now our salvation is nearer than when we first began to believe” (*Rom 13:11*).

Seeking to separate salvation from redemption and vice versa, brings more confusion than precision, because when we say that redemption refers to the past and salvation to present and future activities of Christ, there are instances where salvation is used for past actions of Christ. The letter to Titus declares that the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all human beings (*Titus 2:11*). This leaves us with a fact beyond any contradiction that the languages of salvation and redemption are synonyms, because if one buys another from danger, he or she saves him or her. When God buys us back from the slavery of sin in Jesus out of love, he saves us, he redeems us. Therefore, God is our saviour and redeemer, as the post-New Testament Christians combined the two words.

As it is cited in the book, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, “In Post-New Testament Christianity, the early third-century *Apostolic Tradition* combined ‘saviour’ and ‘Redeemer’ and showed how they shared the same basic meaning”<sup>24</sup>. This we can admit as one of the best illustrations to understand what lies in the words salvation and redemption. When we talk of salvation, we should have redemption at the back

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<sup>22</sup> G. O’COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Cf. D. EDWARDS, *What are they Saying about Salvation ?*, 7-8.

<sup>24</sup> G. O’COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 7.

of our minds and vice versa. This is because when one talks of either of them, he or she talks of the other as well. We can say in simple terms, that salvation is redemption: Jesus is both redeemer and saviour. He is qualified to be called so, because he has paid the price for us so we can go free. The price of sin is death; Jesus perfectly paid the very price.

#### *b) Katallage*

*Katallage* is a Greek noun, which has been translated in different versions as either reconciliation or atonement. To begin with the scrutiny of the word atonement, we would suggest that it is understood well when it is broken into its simple components: at-one-ment. This is a completely English word with purely Anglo-Saxon origin<sup>25</sup>. It has a very strong interpersonal relation origin with the verb 'atone' (at-one), the state of being at one with the other person. "The noun 'atonement' (at-one-ment) first appeared in the early sixteenth century and originally meant the state or condition of being at *one* with others in a harmonious unity, or the action of setting at one after discord and strife"<sup>26</sup>.

In its usage in the religious idiom, a new interest emerged, - the one who is responsible for undoing the separation. This brought some sense of reconciliation. As a matter of fact, English being one of the richest languages, with many synonyms, has atonement and reconciliation. In Greek atonement and reconciliation bear the same noun *katallage* and verb *katallassō*<sup>27</sup>. St. Paul probably more than anybody else in the New Testament, uses these words, especially when he talks of cosmic reconciliation in the letter to the Romans and the second to the Corinthians. It is well argued when O'Collins says, "It makes better sense to think of this

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. G. O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. G. O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 11.

reconciliation (cosmic) not as primarily establishing friendly relations between personal agents but as Christ making ‘all things’ conform to the divine plan”<sup>28</sup>.

As we have pointed out above, the subject of reconciliation took a central stage in the theology of the New Testament. For Paul, it is the death and resurrection of Christ that has made all things to conform to the initial plan of God.

For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, how much more can we be sure that, being now reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. What is more, we are filled with exultant trust in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have already gained our reconciliation (*Rom 5:10-11*).

The same passage on God’s reconciliation in Christ’s death and resurrection is repeated in *2Cor 8:18-20*. These two passages can be called relational passages because they present God’s plan, to reconcile human beings to change to a life of unity with him and human beings among themselves. This does not affect God but human beings. “In the New Testament, ‘reconciliation does not point to God being changed or reconciled to human beings, rather it is God or God through Christ who affects reconciliation by changing us’<sup>29</sup>.

St. Paul doesn’t leave this work of God for our reconciliation at this point. Instead, he goes ahead to insist on our obligation in this work of reconciliation that is entrusted to us. After being reconciled to God and one another, we become the agents of reconciliation in the world. “This reconciliation means bringing hostility to an end or uniting those who were formally separated and necessarily causing to be friendly *again* or bringing back into harmony”<sup>30</sup>. J. A. Fitzmyer does not limit this reconciliatory act to God and human beings alone; rather he extends it to the whole of the created universe – reconciliation between God and human beings, human beings among themselves as well as human beings and nature.

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<sup>28</sup> G. O’COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 14.

<sup>29</sup> G. O’COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 15.

<sup>30</sup> G. O’COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 12.

### c) *Hilastērion*

*Hilastērion* is a Greek word translated as expiation in English, which in secular Greek meant to appease, to propitiate or to placate. It appears only four times in the New Testament in the letters to *Rom* 3:25 *Heb* 9:5 *1Jn* 2:2 and 4:10. The translation of *hilastērion* into English as expiation was influenced by the Latin translation of *hilastērion* as *propitiatorium*, wherein some scholars present Christ as a propitiatory victim to whom God directed all the weight of righteous wrath which sinners deserved<sup>31</sup>. “God did not destine us to wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (*1Thess* 5: 9).

Additionally, “In the LXX version of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, ‘*hilastērion*’ occurs twenty-one times to designate the ‘mercy seat’ (Hebrew *kappôret*) or golden cover on the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies”<sup>32</sup>. *Yom Kippur*, the day of atonement when the high priest smeared blood on the mercy seat, the day of expiation, in which it was believed that blood of animals wiped away the sin that defiled the mercy seat.

In the New Testament, the mercy seat is replaced by Jesus Christ and his blood wipes away the sin of the world. This is cited in the two chapters of *1 John* 2:2 and 4:10, that we have quoted above. Wiping away the sin of the world became typically the work of God; sinners had completely nothing to do for their cleansing. They didn’t have to appease or placate God. It is rather God who expiates, and deals with sin and not sinners<sup>33</sup>. As it is well presented by G. O’Collins in his synthesis of St Paul, “It is God who through Christ lovingly deals with our sins. This says much

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<sup>31</sup> G. O’COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 16.

<sup>32</sup> G. O’COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. D. EDWARDS, *What are they Saying about Salvation?*, 9.

about the image of God we should nourish and cherish”<sup>34</sup>. God simply removes our punishment for sin through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

d) *Eleutheria*

*Eleutheria* is a Greek noun which describes a liberative event, which in English it would mean both liberation and freedom<sup>35</sup>. The two words normally go together, freedom as a subsequence of liberation. Liberation is very significant in understanding salvation. The root meaning of the word to save is close to the verb *eleutheroō*, to liberate or to set free. “In this sense, redemption becomes almost a synonym for liberation, as may be inferred in particular from the Old Testament terms *padah* and *ga'al* (but also in the New Testament *apolutrōsis*)”<sup>36</sup>.

Many people, if not all, would agree with us that it is very difficult to ignore freedom when talking about liberation. At least on the basis of biblical salvation, these terms are very close to each other to the extent that an author can use them interchangeably. The main theme of Jesus in the New Testament is the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of freedom, as opposed to slavery. Reflection in this direction is fitting for Christians in understanding of the Reign of God. “The biblical message of freedom starts not from a concept of freedom but with liberation as an event, freedom as a gift”<sup>37</sup>. The biblical history of salvation has liberation as an incident at the beginning and freedom as its culmination. Freedom is realized only when liberation has been effected and this is the salvation *par excellence*.

St. Luke reminds us that one of the main objectives of Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry was to proclaim liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free (*Lk 4:18*). The biblical message of liberation is freedom

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<sup>34</sup> G. O'COLLINS, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. D. EDWARDS, *What are they Saying about Salvation?*, 10.

<sup>36</sup> J.M. LOCHMAN, *Reconciliation and Liberation*, 113.

<sup>37</sup> J.M. LOCHMAN, *Reconciliation and Liberation*, 120.

from dehumanizing realities like slavery, death, law, anxiety, fear, sin, hopelessness, anger, sickness, poverty, war, guilt, oppression, injustices, pain, obsessions and the like. It is to be free for a life of kenosis, truth, justice, trustworthy hope, right relationship, and happiness. The liberation effected for us in Jesus Christ frees our freedom in all dimensions of our life. Jesus liberates our freedom – he sets our freedom free<sup>38</sup>.

e) *Dikaioun, Dikaiōsis or Dikaiosyn*

Justification is a word derived from the Roman's law courts – *dikaioun, dikaiōsis* or *dikaiosynē* meaning uprightness. For St. Paul, righteousness is one of the major attributes of God with the Hebrew link *Tsaddiq* - The Just, which was always understood as a possessive genitive, an active attribute of God, counterpart to his justifying activity. For that reason, when the Bible talks of one being justified by God, it means that, God in his righteousness out of his sheer love and concern transforms that particular individual, who has faith in Jesus, to share in his own righteousness. It refers to the gratuitous declaration of forgiveness and acceptance by God<sup>39</sup>.

According to St. Paul, God made Jesus as a reconciler, the one to amend the broken inter-human relationship. God appointed him as a sacrifice for reconciliation, through faith, by the shedding of his blood, so showed his justness: first for the past, when sins went unpunished because he held his hand; and now again for the present age, to show how he is just and justifies everyone who has faith in Jesus ( *Rom 3:25-26*).

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. D. EDWARDS, *What are they Saying about Salvation ?*, 81-91.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. D. EDWARDS, *What are they Saying about Salvation ?*, 710.

As D. Edwards puts it in his book, "It is God who makes us righteous, through the free gift of love lavished on us in the death and resurrection of Jesus"<sup>40</sup>. On account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God validates categorically that we are reconciled to him. Instead of our own effort to make ourselves acceptable to God, Christ's righteousness is credited to our account. Justification then is an act of God, declaring us innocent of our sins, affirming us to be in right relationship with him, ourselves, neighbour and nature.

### f) *Soteria*

The Greek noun *soteria* from the verb *sōzō*, *sozein*, in its original sense means wholeness, goodness, well-being, health, or life. "σώζω and σωτηρία in the Greek secular world means saving, keeping, benefiting, preserving the inner being and in the religious sense, it refers to deliverance, help, salvation that comes from God to human beings"<sup>41</sup>. *Soteria* enjoys a wide application that expresses the idea of rescue from jeopardy and misery into a state of safety. "The NT uses the very *sōzō* ('save' keep from harm, rescue, heal, or liberate) 106 times, and its compound '*diasōzō*' 9 times. The corresponding nouns *soteria* (salvation) and *sōtēr* (saviour) and *sōtērion* (salvation) turns up 45, 24, and 4 times respectively"<sup>42</sup>. For example in: *Lk* 1:69; *Jn* 4:22; *Acts* 4:12; *Mt* 1:21; *Lk* 1:47; *Jn* 4:42. *Heb* 5:7 etc)

From these terms and images, we realize that salvation is an event, an experience, which makes whole, well, integrated life. Now that we understand salvation as well-being, wholeness, integrated life, why is it a quandary that some feel more well, whole, integrated than others; why are the Catholics hesitant to boast of their salvation? These are the problems that we need to look into.

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<sup>40</sup> D. EDWARDS, *What are they Saying about Salvation?*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> W. M. FOERSTER, "σώζω, σωτηρία, σωτήρ, σωτηριος", 965-1024.

<sup>42</sup> G.G. O'COLLINS, "Salvation", 907-914.

To consider our actual predicament; there is an endless list of questions that keeps the need of salvation indicated around us today. If we assure ourselves completely healthy, integrated, whole, then there is something that we are taking for granted. D. Edwards insinuates that the climate, sickness, illness, every-kind of physical and mental pain, broken relationships, poverty, oppression, injustices, losses of valuable things, guilt, anxiety, fear about the future , absurdity, boredom, loneliness, hunger of the human heart, addiction, obsession, disorder, war, natural disasters, death, are examples of some of the realities we need to be saved from<sup>43</sup>.

This list is never-ending. Can somebody amidst of all these stand erect and boast of overcoming all these? Basically, we want to be saved from sin, all forms of suffering and death. In our present age, and more so in this study, we question the credibility and the very concept of salvation. What do we claim Jesus Christ has saved us from while this excessive violence, monstrous cruelty, injustice, pain, and suffering remain and even worse? Why do some feel already saved and boast of it while others are hesitant, and yet all are historically and culturally conditioned?

In our struggle to give meaning and to throw some light onto the effect of the salvific action of God, let us also recall the experiences of the early Christians - in the light of their experiences in the enigma of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus who was available to them. There exists in the New Testament the saving work of God in Jesus Christ, captured in terms and images that we have addressed so far. The idea is now to try to establish the salvific action of God in Jesus Christ according to St. Paul.

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. D. EDWARDS, *What are they Saying about Salvation ?*, 81-91.

### ***1.2.2 Salvation and Being Saved in St. Paul***

The useful way to understand salvation in our time, for both Catholics and non-Catholics is to confront our contexts in the light of St. Paul. This we suppose is better than rushing into any present attempts because in Paul's thought, Old and New Testaments themes of salvation are condensed. While we are talking much about Paul's thought of salvation, we are also called to substantiate the past, present and future dimensions of salvation. In his letter to the Romans, Paul gave his key message to the Romans. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Rom 5:1*).

#### **a) Human Predicament in need of Salvation**

For Paul, sin means refusing to do God's will and failing to do all that God wants. Since Adam rebelled against God as presented in Genesis, our nature is to disobey him too. Our sin cuts us off from God. Sin causes us to want to live our own way: we mind our own business than God's business and ways<sup>44</sup>. Since God is perfect, just, and fair he is rightly condemning our sin. In the first eleven chapters of the letter to the Romans, Paul vividly shows the sinfulness of all humanity, but he doesn't stop at that; he portrays and explains how forgiveness is available through faith in Christ, and believers realize it through their new faith. Without faith, there is no hope in life. In the understanding of Paul, there is need to be forgiven and be cleansed. Again, the hitch is, we don't deserve it, we are justly punished. But in view of the fact that God is kind and loving, he extends these qualities and forgives us. He gives the opportunity for our salvation through Christ's death and resurrection<sup>45</sup>. This is extremely good news to hear, that God saves us, but in order

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. M. A. GETTY, "Sin and Salvation in Romans", 89-93.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. M.E. MCIVER, "The Cosmic Dimension of Salvation in the Thought...", 156-164.

to attain this wonderful opportunity that God offers, we must believe that Jesus died for us and that he forgives our sin.

In *Rom 3:9*, Paul is trying to paint a picture where everybody accepts that he or she is sinful because of Adam's fall. He continues in verse ten onwards, probably influenced by *Ps 14: 1-3*, which says there is no one righteous, which means no one is innocent; we are all guilty. He is making references to the Old Testament to show the universality of humanity in its present and future sinful condition as unacceptable before God. This is a lesson to be learnt; no one is to deny that he or she is a sinner. Instead we should allow our desperate need for salvation to lead us towards Christ.

#### b) Paul's Condemnation of Self Justification

“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*Rom 3: 23*). This statement is an inclusive one. Some sins look greater than others, probably because of their immediate and heavy consequences. For example, adultery as compared to lust, killing as compared to hatred. According to this verse twenty three, however less serious sin is, it still denies us eternal life. No one is called less sinful, or more sinful. Every time we commit sin, it affects us on two levels - the *ontic* level and the level of the act. The level of the act is forgiven when we repent but on the *ontic* level it remains because we have an attachment to sin. We have the knowledge of sin, and we cannot go to heaven unless this attachment to sin is removed. That is why Jesus said that even if you look at a woman lustfully, you have sinned (*Mt 5: 28*). It means we have a habit, tendency of sinning. “Sin's reality impresses itself upon us every time we read newspapers, watch evening news, or

even experience evil in our daily lives”<sup>46</sup>. All Sin cuts us off from our Holy God, and therefore leads us to death, because it is a disqualification from living with God who is life itself, regardless of how great or small the sin might seem<sup>47</sup>.

The Jews were proud to be called progeny of Abraham, and through law and circumcision, they considered themselves automatically saved. In *Rom* 4: 10-12, Paul disputes this by saying that ritual did not earn Abraham salvation; Abraham found favour by faith. Our self-reliance is futile; all we have to do is to cast ourselves on God’s mercy and grace. There is not any historical or present merit that we can rely on to attain our righteousness unless it is faith<sup>48</sup>. It is Jesus Christ who saved us, and not our feelings, actions, or convictions. Jesus offers us salvation as a gift because he loves us, not because we have worked for it through our powerful faith, preaching, or showing off. Otherwise, what will be the point of faith? What is faith then? In the terms of Vatican II, developed from the letter to the Romans that we are treating, the fathers put it so well. “The obedience of faith, (*Rom* 16: 26. *Rom* 1: 5. *2Cor* 10: 5-6) must be given to God as he reveals himself. By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals and willingly asserting to the Revelation given by him”<sup>49</sup>.

Somewhere else, St. Paul states Faith, Hope, and Love as the heart of the Christian life (1 *Cor* 13, 13). Believers should live a life of faith and hope, along with Love and we can get rid of our guilt. Paul presents King David, who had terrible guilt, of adultery and murder, lies, and injustice; yet he experienced the joy of forgiveness. How did this happen? King David did three fundamental things: first, he stopped denying his guilt and recognized that he has sinned; second, he admitted

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<sup>46</sup> M. A. GETTY, “Sin and Salvation in Romans”, 89-93.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Life Application Study Bible*, 1886 (*Rom* 3: 23).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Life Application Study Bible*, 1888 (*Rom* 4:10-12).

<sup>49</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, 5.

his guilt to God and asked for his forgiveness; third, he let go his guilt and believed that God had forgiven him (*Ps* 32: 1-2). It is the reality of our nature, that it can be sometimes difficult to admit our sinfulness, especially when it has taken root and developed into a habit. We should remember the first letter of St. John, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives” (*1Jn* 1: 9-10).

c) St. Paul on the Transition through Adam, to Life through Jesus Christ

A controversial issue is how the sin of Adam, committed thousands of years ago, can still affect us. Many justifiably question our judgment because of Adam’s sin. Some say Adam’s sin affected only him. “In his teaching on the pervasive influence of sin in the world before Christ, Paul depends on the Old Testament and current Jewish ideas about the character of sin and death”<sup>50</sup>. What St. Paul is trying to highlight is that we are made of the same stuff as Adam and therefore vulnerable to miss the target and as a result we are judged for the sins we commit. We die when we sin because death is the result of Adam’s sin and of the sins we all commit, even if they are not similar to Adam’s.

*The Life Application Study Bible* presents in its footnote commentaries on *Rom* 5, what we have as Adam’s children and what we have as God’s children. We will present the dichotomy as it really is, because putting it into our own words might lessen its arrestive structure.

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<sup>50</sup> J. FITZMYER, *Pauline Theology*, 54.

What we have as Adam's Children

Ruin (*Rom 5:9*)  
Sin (*Rom 5:12; 15:21*)  
Death (*Rom 5:12, 16, 21*)  
Separation from God (*Rom 5:18*)  
Disobedience (*Rom 5:12, 19*)  
Law (*Rom 5:20*)

What we have as God's Children

Rescue (*Rom 5:8*)  
Righteousness (*Rom 5:18*)  
Eternal Life (*Rom 5:17, 21*)  
Relationship with God (*Rom 5:11, 19*)  
Obedience (*Rom 5:10, 11*)  
Grace (*Rom 5: 20*)

We are very aware that the very choice of non-Catholic biblical commentary is delicate, but it is because sin and salvation is an important topic not only in the Catholic Church but in all Christianity. The pattern above presents Adam as the counterpart of Jesus Christ, Adam as the presentation of typical created humanity, prone to sin, and Christ as a representation of a new spiritual humanity. We were all born in the sinful clan of Adam that leads to death; however, because of Jesus there is an opportunity to be reborn into his spiritual clan (*Rom 5:15-19*).

In the spiritual clan of Christ, God has done a lot about sin through Christ. According to *The Life Application Study Bible*, footnote commentaries on the letter to the *Rom 6: 1-16*, he has given us three precious things. One, he has given new life. We died to sin, how can we live any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from death through the glory of the father, we too may live a new life (*Rom 6:2-4*).

Two, has given new nature. "If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection" (*Rom 6:5*). Again elsewhere, "In the same way, count yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ

Jesus (*Rom* 6: 11). It is indeed a new human nature, sharing in the very life of the resurrected Christ, looking at the old life as dead and ourselves as alive to God.

Three, he has given new freedom,

Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life: and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace (*Rom* 6: 12-14).

It is important therefore to commit ourselves to obey Christ in perfect freedom, since he is our new master. This does not mean one who has Christ as his master cannot sin, but when Christians belong to Christ, though they sin, they are no longer slaves to sin, since they belong to God. This is indeed good news. Eternal life is a free gift from God, it is not something that we earn, claim, or boast of. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works so that no one can boast" (*Eph* 2: 8-9).

d) The Idiom of Salvation According to St. Paul

"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the spirit have their minds set on what the spirit desires" (*Rom* 8:5). St. Paul divides the whole of humanity into two groups – Those bathed by the spirit and those who swim in the pool of sin. In those who have accepted Christ as the centre of their life, the Holy Spirit takes the lead and they are called Christians, sons and daughters of God. When we sin, we cease to become children of God, and we become slaves. We relate in God's household as slaves, we lose the sense of belonging. Through Christ, we are no longer slaves but sons and daughters of God's household<sup>51</sup>. "For you did not receive

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Life Application Study Bible*, 1894 (*Rom* 8:5-27).

a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, *Abba, Father*” (*Rom 8:15*).

St. Paul is using adoption or sonship to show the believers’ new relationship in the God’s household. An adopted child has the right to share in the treasures, including inheritance. St. Paul is using the picture-word of adoption to refer to our salvation. St. Paul’s interest is turned more to the Father, as we can see, who saves us in Christ Jesus. He puts this throughout his letters but more when he addresses the hopeless Ephesians,

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ before the world was made, to be holy and faultless before him in love, making us out for himself beforehand. to be adopted sons, through Jesus Christ. Such was his purpose and good pleasure, to the praise of the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved, in whom through his blood, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins (*Eph1: 3-7*).

It seems an exaggeration, but as it is well put. Nowhere in the scripture is there a more thorough expression of the central place of Christ in world history than this<sup>52</sup>. When Jesus talks, he doesn’t speak about God, it is God speaking when he speaks, because he is inseparably one with God. That is why Second Vatican Council, tells us that whoever follows after Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more of a man<sup>53</sup>. This is because it is in Christ that we find true God and true man. In him therefore, we become more Godlike and more human. “The truth is that, apart from Jesus not only are we ignorant of God but we do not even know what perfect manhood is”<sup>54</sup>.

When Christ came into the world, he added the role of salvation of the world, for all the ages. Christ bears the sin of the world, of past, present, and future. It is past because we are saved the moment we believe in Jesus as saviour. “Therefore,

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. P.DE. ROSA, *God Our Saviour*, 69.

<sup>53</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

<sup>54</sup> P.DE. ROSA, *God Our Saviour*, 75.

since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand” (*Rom 5:1-2*). Salvation is also in the present because we are being saved; our sanctification is a process by the Holy Spirit that accompanies us. “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you” (*Rom 8: 11*).

Our salvation is as well in the future, because we have not fully received all the fruits of salvation that will be ours when the Reign of God is completely established. This gives us a trustworthy hope of our salvation. This point is important to the theme of our study. Can we claim we are already saved? This was the spiritual situation of the Romans. What was St. Paul’s response as their pastor to this? “For in Hope we were saved. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (*Rom 8:24-25*). These two verses carry the weight of all the responses that we will gather in our study task.

#### e) The Demands of Christian Living According to St. Paul

The ultimate aim of God is to make us like Christ. Those who have been incorporated into Christ are called Christians. Christians, when they become more and more like Christ, discover the truth about themselves. How can a Christian conform to Christ? For this to happen there are demands; this is the concern of this sub-title. The letter to the Galatians is one of the best letters of St. Paul, for Christian instruction on how to live a free Christian life.

St. Paul, who spoke as none other than a pastor with the strongest words possible, said, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved

me and gave himself for me” (*Gal 2: 20*). Such a passage of the scripture might lead someone to wonder why we struggle in life, if it is really Christ living in us. This is not a new concern, it was asked by the Romans, Galatians and Corinthians, and Paul knew this very well. That is why he says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is –what is good, pleasing and perfect” (*Rom 12:2*).

St. Paul is faultlessly aware of the struggle between the earthly life and the life of the spirit. “Paul’s admonition urges us to be watchful, warning us that in the judgments of our conscience the possibility of error is always present”<sup>55</sup>. But he always exhorts his pastorants to treasure the spiritual life. “This double polarity that characterizes Christian life is why Paul insists that the Christians activated by the spirit of God (*Rom 8: 14*) can no longer live a life bound by a merely natural, earthly horizon”<sup>56</sup>. In some cases, Paul becomes very much categorical and points out some of the earthly horizons that a spiritual person should keep away from. He has a special interest in slavery, virginity and marriage. He advises slaves to obey their masters in everything. “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart just as you would obey Christ” (*Eph 6: 5*). Paul’s interest, as we can see, is not to change the status of a slave to a “better” life, but he does point the way to the Christianization of the existing status<sup>57</sup>.

Concerning virginity, it is very important to understand the setting of St. Paul. He lived at a time when everybody expected the immediate second coming of Christ, the Parousia. Therefore, St. Paul has two major reasons to advocate for

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<sup>55</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 62

<sup>56</sup> J. FITZMYER, *Pauline Theology*, 78.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. J.D.G. DUNN, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 699.

virginity. “First, in view of the present distress i.e., because of the impending *Parousia* for which Paul longed (1 *Cor* 7:26-31; 1*Thess* 4:15, 17; *Rom* 13:11). Second, because the unmarried person can devote his undivided attention to the Lord’s cause (*ta tou kyriou*, 7:32-34)”<sup>58</sup>. Paul is explicitly clear about celibacy. He advocates it for only those who can honestly live it; otherwise one should marry. However, he conditions marriage to one wife and one husband, without divorce. “In *Eph* 5:22-33 he teaches the subordination of the wife to the husband (as in 1*Cor* 11:3), but he also clearly tempers it with the instruction to the husband to love his wife, just as Christ loves the church and gave himself for her (*Eph* 5:25)”<sup>59</sup>. This is where the sacredness of marriage is depicted, it signifies the love that Christ has for the Church. “Against the background of the Ancient Near East sacred marriage of gods, the author presents Jesus as the bridegroom *Mk* 2:19-20 par.) who cleanses the Church, his bride, in the waters of baptism so that clothed in her dowry of holiness and purity, she may now appear before him”<sup>60</sup>.

There is little doubt, therefore, that all the way through the letters of Paul, though we have addressed only slavery, virginity and marriage, he recommends the purity of heart for every Christian. That is why he is firm on Christ’s life as the template of every Christian’s life. For that reason, the demand for every Christian living is to live as the creator by imitating Christ’s life. In his instruction and assurance to the Colossians, Paul held that in accepting Christ, they should strip off their old-self and acquire the likeness of the creator (*Col* 3:10). “Significantly, with all his emphasis on Christ, Paul once again refers the Christian ultimately to the Father – through Christ”<sup>61</sup>. This could simply mean that the more we know Christ

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<sup>58</sup> J. FITZMYER, *Pauline Theology*, 81.

<sup>59</sup> J. FITZMYER, *Pauline Theology*, 81-82.

<sup>60</sup> P. J. KOBELSKI, *NJBC*, 883 - 890.

<sup>61</sup> J. FITZMYER, *Pauline Theology*, 82.

and his work, the more we are being changed to be like him and finally like God. And this explains in a nutshell the process of our self - making towards our complete salvation.

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In this first chapter of our study, our aim was to provide an understanding of the background of salvation in the Bible. In trying to achieve this goal, we began by finding out some of the Hebrew picture words, terms and images that carry with them the concept of salvation as it was understood in the Old Testament. We addressed the words *hayah*, *yasha*, *go'el*, *padah* and *kopher*. We noticed in the course of the investigation into these terms and images that God was the initiator and responsible for these salvific processes. Salvation is completely God's activity according to the Hebrew's understanding.

To investigate the terms and images of salvation in the New Testament, the study dwelt on the words *apolutrōsis*, *katallage*, *hilastērion eleutheria*, *dikaiōsis* and *soteria*. The meaning of salvation looked hard to grasp because it is captured in many images and terms, but we found out that its meaning from both Latin and Greek is well-being, good health, wholeness, integration, complete, good relationship and the like.

The detection of the terms and images for salvation in the New Testament led us to Pauline theology of salvation in relation to the concern of our study: can we boast of our salvation? The letter to the *Ephesians* 2:8-9 and many other Pauline epistles proved helpful to us to realize that salvation is forward looking and forward moving, with a beginning in the past towards a triumphant end.

We also recognized that the New Testament salvation still highlights God as the initiator of salvation but, he does it in the person of Jesus Christ as the fulfilment and perfection of the Old Testament salvation. We have realized that there are incidences in the Old Testament images and terms of salvation, which are accomplished and perfected by Jesus in the New Testament. The second chapter therefore, is looking forward to trace the growth of the meaning of salvation in history. We will focus on how some of the key soteriological figures tried to integrate the biblical salvation into their own worldviews.

## Chapter II

### SALVATION IN HISTORY

Chapter two of this study is basically historical. After looking into the biblical indications of salvation in chapter one, we are now to follow the development of salvation through the centuries. Immediately after the biblical time, come the Greek Christians in the East, struggling to understand the mystery of the Christ-event as it has been recorded in the Holy Scripture. They are well acquainted with the Greek language, which is the language of the New Testament, they pay a special attention to the New Testament, and they have a special contact with the instruction of the Gentiles through the twelve<sup>62</sup>. Being a new people of faith, developing from the apostle, they are trying to understand, defend and hold their faith. "During the first two centuries the Christian writers concentrated their efforts on defending the faith"<sup>63</sup>.

Different approaches developed because it is not particularly easy to approach the teachings of Jesus due to diverse records in the biblical accounts.

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. S. LYONNET -- L. SABOURIN, *Sin Redemption and Sacrifice*, 188.

<sup>63</sup> S. LYONNET -- L. SABOURIN, *Sin Redemption and Sacrifice*, 193.

## 2.1 Salvation in the East – The Greek Fathers (I - IV c)

One of the ways of explaining what Christ has done, probably borrowed from St. Paul, is becoming Christ-like. This became a key concern of the first Greek Christians, St. Irenaeus of Lyons (+ 130-202), in his *Adversus Haereses*, said that God became man so that man may become God. This developed into the doctrine of divinization, theosis, deification, being made into God's likeness. "Irenaeus writes about the new Adam: When God became incarnate and was made man, he recapitulated in himself the long history of man, summing up and giving us salvation in order that we might receive again in Christ Jesus what we had lost in Adam; that is, the image and likeness of God"<sup>64</sup>.

St. Irenaeus is struggling to marry the Old and the New Testaments. What he is trying to suggest is that, through Adam's sin, there was something that was lost; there is something lacking after Adam's fall. When Jesus comes, he summarises all the limited humanity into himself then makes it perfect. Jesus assumes everything and makes complete. He becomes the new Adam. The old Adam led humanity into sin, while the new one, Jesus Christ brings salvation<sup>65</sup>.

The theology of Irenaeus is very important in Greek soteriology. It is the foundation that St. Athanasius of Alexandria and other Greek theologians will build on. Athanasius used to say, 'The Logos was made man that we might be made God. This is how he explained the necessity of the death of Christ'<sup>66</sup>. According to him, the crisis is the breakage of relationship between God and man, and to mend this, there is a necessity, of one who perfectly knows what it means to be true God and true man. Christ, who is God incarnate, will make a transitional move from sin of

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<sup>64</sup> S. LYONNET – L. SABOURIN, *Sin Redemption and Sacrifice*, 191.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 18.

<sup>66</sup> S. LYONNET – L. SABOURIN, *Sin Redemption and Sacrifice*, 195.

man to salvation of God. “In one passage Athanasius states that Christ was made for us ‘sin’ (2Cor 5: 21) and ‘curse’ (Gal 3:13) in that he carried (*ebustasen*) our sins and our curse”<sup>67</sup>.

One of the sources of the development of the doctrine of divinization is the scriptural teaching in Genesis, that man was created in the image and likeness of God (*Gen* 1:26). This is a participation in the divinity in some way: this therefore will increase when God draws closer to humanity, when God really takes the human nature. “The Word saves us chiefly by achieving a physical contact with humanity in the flesh of Christ, a contact which bestows divinization, sonship, immortality, incorruptibility, restoration of the image lost in Adam”<sup>68</sup>.

When God draws close to us, we become more human a gift which was lost by Adam’s sin, and God remains God. Only in God can the human person become fully human. Athanasius and other Greek fathers were careful to avoid the thinking that, when we are divinized, we become one with God the way Jesus is. It is worth pointing that we become sons and daughters of God, yes, but not as the begotten son is; we become this by adoption.

The second letter of St. Peter is one of the central texts of the doctrine of divinization.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us, by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (2Pet 1:3-4).

What this text affirms is that God allows us to participate in his nature, so that we cannot sin but live according to his will. Such capacity does not come from us, but from God himself.

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<sup>67</sup> S. LYONNET – L. SABOURIN, *Sin Redemption and Sacrifice*, 196.

<sup>68</sup> J. M. CARMODY – T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 67.

The book of *Psalms* is also another text championing for divinization. “I said, you are gods you are all sons of the most high” (*Ps* 82:6). The assertion of this *Psalms* is used by Jesus to affirm and defend his claims to be God. “Jesus answered them, it is not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are gods?’” (*Jn* 10:34) The argument is that, if God called the leaders of Israel gods, because they were responsible for the revelation and representation of God on earth, how can it be blasphemous that Jesus call himself son of God if he is the revelation?

In addition, the New Testament basis for the theme of divinization is the teaching of St. Paul on adoptive sonship and recreation in the likeness of Christ that we have addressed when were presenting St. Paul in his appeal to *1 Cor* 15:49, *2Cor* 8:9, *Rom* 8:11, *Gal* 3:26, and *Gal* 4:6. Divinization is therefore adoption by grace into a filial relationship in which humanity participate in the divinity of God. The Greek thinkers were basically aware of the universal salvific will of God and his own initiative to enter human beings to participate in his divinity. But according to them, this did not render human beings passive in this process of divinization as receivers. The instruction and education which liberate man and woman from ignorance and immaturity comes from Jesus the educator and model, for he is the only perfect man and God.

Those who have been liberated, and possess the free will, authentically participate, in the divine and co-operate actively and responsibly in the process of their own divinization. This is called *métheis*. For the Greek fathers, the true prototype and ideal of human person could only be the Logos made flesh, pursuing the educative pedagogic activity of God. “For like a kind teacher who cares for his disciples if some of them cannot profit by higher subject, comes down to their level,

and teaches them at any rate by simpler courses, so also did the word of God<sup>69</sup>. By imitating and entering into *métheis* with the prototype teacher, human beings become liberated from their condition of sin and death with the eyes open to see the way of becoming ever more like God.

### **2.1.1 Cappadocian Fathers**

Gregory of Nyssa. (+ 394), took the matter of the death and resurrection of Jesus to a deeper level and elaborated a more meaningful use of it. He asserts, “In death and resurrection of Christ, humanity is delivered from death and begins to return to immortal life. His death passed from the deed of first Adam to all humanity, so resurrection passes from the second Adam to the whole humanity”<sup>70</sup>. Something bizarre with Gregory of Nyssa and other Cappadocian fathers is the personification of the devil. They believed that because of the fall, the devil acquired a right over human beings. With such a belief, many images and analogies to explain how we were acquired back by God in Christ were build-up. To be acquired back, Gregory of Nyssa insists that there was a ransom-price to be paid, but the question is to whom was the price paid? This is the problem that cuts across many theologians of this time. Is it paid to God or the devil?

Gregory Nazianzus (+389) denied any dealing about the devil. He asks, “How could a ransom be paid to the devil? A price is paid for the emancipation of a slave; and though undeniably men were under the power of the devil, and thus it might seem plausible that a ransom should be paid to him, nothing of the sort can really have happened”.<sup>71</sup> This led Gregory Nazianzus to deny the notion of ransom all together; he adopts sacrifice instead. Any discussion of the devil met with strong

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<sup>69</sup> J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 68.

<sup>70</sup> J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 87.

<sup>71</sup> G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor*, 50.

criticism in the early Church but it consistently re-occurred in the theology of the early fathers<sup>72</sup>. Though rejected by Gregory of Nazianzus, it was adopted by Gregory of Nyssa. Maybe in an attempt to avoid it, Gregory of Nyssa coined imagery borrowed from the world of fishermen to explain how God acquired us in Christ. He makes God a clever fisherman, the divinity of Jesus a fish-hook, and the bait his humanity, to trick a big greedy fish. Just as a fish hook is always hidden in the bait to trick a greedy fish, and so the divinity of Jesus hidden in his humanity to trick Satan. When the fish comes for a bite, it is hooked.

Let us stick to G. Aulén to capture well Gregory's theological interpretation.

Therefore, he accepts the offered prey: as a fish swallows the bait on the fish-hook, so the devil swallows his prey, and is thereby taken captive by the Godhead, hidden under the human nature. Since the hostile power was not going to enter into relations with a god present unveiled, or endure His appearance in heavenly glory, therefore God, in order to render Himself accessible to Him who demanded of Him a ransom for us, concealed Himself under the veil of our nature, in order that, as happens with greedy fishes, together with the bait of the flesh the hook of the Godhead might also be swallowed, and so, through life passing over into death, and the Light arising in the darkness, that which is opposed to Life and Light might be brought to nought. For darkness cannot endure when the Light shines, nor can death remain in being where life is active<sup>73</sup>.

Gregory of Nyssa was trying to avoid ransom-price theory, but did he? Probably this is not a fair question due to the primitive theology of his time. Gregory was definitely exalting the wisdom of God over the devil, and the great love and concern God has for us to make us his own. He was probably aware of the criticisms of such imagery, but he was very ready to take the risk, just to show God's effort in saving humanity. Again the use of imagery is not something new; the Bible itself is full of images. He wants to demonstrate that just as the devil deceived humanity and took possession of them, is the same way God has tricked the devil to acquire humanity back to him- God deceived the deceiver.

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<sup>72</sup> G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor*, 50.

<sup>73</sup> G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor*, 52.

## 2.2 Salvation in the West – Latin Fathers (I - IV c.)

It is worth noting that, the struggle for understanding of the salvific event of Jesus in the post-biblical era, did not take on much depth in the first four centuries in the West compared to the East. Beginning with Tertullian (+ 220), a lawyer, sin was viewed as a crime, therefore its treatment and overcoming it was presented in a predominantly legal way. A sinner was considered a criminal in a courtroom for hearing and judgement. What is more surprising with Tertullian is that, sin required some form of compensation if it were to be forgiven. As a lawyer, he believed that the law was given by God, and when one fails to keep the law, then he or she offends God. Therefore, the fear and respect of God the lawgiver and judge is the beginning of salvation.

For sinners, the words debt, satisfaction, guilt, compensation, occur frequently in the writings of Tertullian, and he believed that something has to be done to undo the damage caused to God by offending him. The intellectual atmosphere of his time did not favour him to expound more on how reconciliation took place, but he made an orientation towards a forensic notion of salvation<sup>74</sup>. He is remembered for beginning the idea of the sacrificial value of our Lord's death and the enlightenment which Christ as model, teacher, and lawgiver has brought to the world<sup>75</sup>. This is the trend that will influence much the theology of salvation in the West.

Hippolytus of Rome, (+235), with Greek origin and probably a student of Irenaeus, echoes in Rome the modality of the East about recapitulation. He seems to suggest that Christ lived to the old age, passing every human age to transform the whole of humanity - youth, middle age and old age. He says, "And we believe the

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. M. WINTER, *Problems in Theology*, 44.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 37.

*Logos* to have passed through every period in his life, in order that he Himself might serve as law for every age, and that, by being present amongst us, he might exhibit his own manhood as an aim for all men”<sup>76</sup>.

For Hippolytus, Jesus Christ chose to be in solidarity with mortal human being to prove that God made nothing evil, and that human beings have the ability and capacity of self-determination. Such a thought tries to imply that Jesus took human nature made of the same substance as man to remind, human beings that they have the power to will, and not to will the good. According to him, the passage of Jesus through every age is very important. “For Christ is the God above all, and he has arranged to wash away sin from human beings, rendering regenerate the old man”<sup>77</sup>. As we have pointed out before, there is no deep exploration in the West, of how the son of man washes away the sin of human beings, at this early stage of Christian development. These attempts were only made to defend Christian faith against Christian controversies.

St. Ambrose, (+397), coming late in the fourth century in his fine attempts to defend the full humanity of Christ, inherits the theory of recapitulation and expiation. He believes that Christ must have been truly human; otherwise, there was no way he could have redeemed humanity. “And so he who came to redeem and save the whole assumed everything that was part of human perfection”<sup>78</sup>. Ambrose recognises in Christ true divinity and humanity. Like his fellow Westerners, he believes that there is something paid to the devil for our redemption. “The price of our liberation was the blood of the Lord Jesus which had to be paid to the one to

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<sup>76</sup> J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 40.

<sup>77</sup> J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 41.

<sup>78</sup> J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 51.

whom we had been sold by sin”<sup>79</sup>. As we can see, it is nothing new to the devil’s right theory that we have addressed earlier.

In making synthesis, on the understanding of salvation in the post-biblical epoch up to fourth century, we would say that Greek theology of sin makes use of model from pathology and a sinner is viewed as a patient looking for healing; while the Latin theology of sin takes its models from the world of crime and justice, and a sinner is a criminal in a courtroom for interrogation and judgement.

### **2.3 Salvation in the Medieval and Reformation Eras (V – XVI c)**

The medieval period marks the beginning of the era of systematic attempts to expound on salvation. The two phases present many theories on how salvation can be explained. Though they are many, in this study we will dwell more on Anselm of Canterbury, with his theory of satisfaction, Peter Abelard with his theory of the model of love, and the great reformist Martin Luther and his theory of penal substitution.

It will look strange to consider theology in the Medieval Period without addressing St Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas the great doctors of the church of this period. We admit this, but the particular focus is on a theology of salvation in this period, which St Augustine did not consider too much. “Augustine did not shape Christological tradition as decisively as he did the doctrine of grace and predestination”<sup>80</sup>. But this does not mean he did not say anything to do with salvation. Let us address him briefly and see what we can gain from him, as he is worth considering.

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<sup>79</sup> J. M. CARMODY – T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 55.

<sup>80</sup> J. M. CARMODY – T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 58.

### 2.3.1 St. Augustine of Hippo (+ 430)

Augustine takes a middle ground in his explanation of the salvific mission of Christ. He strongly denies the appeasement of God the Father by the Son that is proposed by the Greek and Latin classic doctrine of the atonement. He so strongly believes in the perfect unity of the three persons of the Trinity that he could not think in any line that could divide the persons of the Trinity. G. Aulén has this observation to make, "He (Augustine) denies that God the Father can be in any way 'placated' by the son's death; for in that case there would be a difference of some kind, even a conflict, between the Father and the Son: but that is unthinkable, for between the Father and the Son there is always the perfect harmony"<sup>81</sup>.

Therefore, St. Augustine bases his theology of salvation on the Trinity and Incarnation. God the Father sent the Son, to take a human form, to destroy the power of evil on humanity, so that human beings can be reconciled to God and to the world. For this reconciliation to take place, for Augustine, the three persons are totally and actively involved. Aulén would put it well for us. "Thus the power of evil is broken; that is to say, not that sin and death no longer exist, but that, the devil having been once for all conquered by Christ, His redemption work can go forward everywhere, through the Spirit who unites men with God [...]"<sup>82</sup>.

The key text that probably moved St. Augustine about our salvation is the famous letter to the Philippians. "And being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross" (*Phil 2:8*). Augustine believed that human beings fell because of pride and disobedience. Human beings decided to live independent of God. Therefore. God made himself man and remained obedient to God, even to accepting death on a cross. Christ is

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<sup>81</sup> G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor*, 58.

<sup>82</sup> G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor*, 59.

therefore a mediator who reconciles human beings to God by giving an example to correct what went wrong. “[...] in order that the pride of man might be rebuked and cured through the humility of God: that man might be made to see how far he had departed from God, when the incarnate God came to summon him back; that man in his stubbornness might receive an example of obedience from the God-man”<sup>83</sup>. Such a quotation might lead us to the temptation of categorising Augustine in the exemplary theory of salvation but, since no one has ever marked him that way, we will keep that as the opinion of this study.

The best term and image that Augustine has for Christ in his mission is mediator. For him Christ is a mediator between God and man, the perfect person who comes to reconstruct a new relationship between God and man that was broken by disobedience. Essentially, what Augustine means to be saved, is following Christ in his obedience to the demands for self-giving as opposed to self-centredness. Christ’s inner disposition to the Father, by obedience to the point of death, the worst death on the cross – to make the life of Christ our own. “But the most distinctive note of Augustinian soteriology concerns the moral and exemplary force of the redemptive Incarnation, which offers the proud, self-centred man the example of God’s gracious charity and humility in taking mortal flesh”<sup>84</sup>.

We can recognize in Augustine humility and obedience as the perfect ingredients for salvation. This reminds us of the topic of our study, why do others proclaim themselves saved? Is that the sin of pride that Augustine is talking about? Yet the question still remains unanswered: we don’t want to rush, in giving shallow responses. But paradoxically, Augustine implies that Jesus’ triumph is through humility, obedience, weakness, and seeming defeat. Why can’t all Christians apply

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<sup>83</sup> J. M. CARMODY – T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 61.

<sup>84</sup> J. M. CARMODY – T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 59.

this humility, obedience, vulnerability in their lives? This is the problem that is taking our study further; we want to understand. Let us move to the twelfth century and find out the response of St. Anselm of Canterbury, the innovator of satisfaction theory.

### **2.3.2 St. Anselm of Canterbury (+ 1109)**

Anselm is remembered not only as one of the best definers of theology – *Fides quaerens intellectum*, but also as one paramount in shaping the theology of salvation into a rational, systematic and scriptural dialectical form. For this reason, Anselm and his position should be taken into serious consideration in this study. One of the things that are important with Anselm is that he reasons rigorously with strong faith; at the same time, he makes a good balance between faith and reason<sup>85</sup>.

Though others criticized him for being too rational, but this was realized to be based on misunderstanding and misinterpretation of what Anselm meant. Aulén believes that most of the criticisms against Anselm are only valid on the grounds of misunderstanding<sup>86</sup>. Many good things have been told about Anselm. J. Riviere, said, “Anselm did not simply offer a new idea, he founded an era”<sup>87</sup>. When many good things are told of a theologian like this, it gives one an appetite or desire to know what lies behind earning such credit.

Prior to Anselm, we have theories of divinisation from the East; a vague theory from both East and West of devil’s right; and ransom from Gregory of Nyssa and his students, as the dominant explanations of how we attained our salvation in Christ. Anselm begins by striking a lethal blow at the theory that personifies the devil, giving him power and right over human beings. He completely eliminates the

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<sup>85</sup> Cf J. HOPKINS, *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm*, 34.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor*, 85.

<sup>87</sup> J. RIVIERE, *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 14.

devil, in any attempt to explain our salvation.<sup>88</sup> He also realises that the ransom that is talked about was taken literally from the gospel of *Mk* 10:45, and that is why those who advocates for such a theory have no answer as to whom the ransom was paid.

As a strong believer in the Incarnation, he begins his theology (Faith seeking understanding) by asking why Incarnation? Why God-man? “At the beginning of the *Cur Deus homo* Anselm states that he intends to argue the reality of Incarnation by demonstrative arguments (*rationes necessariae*), while rescinding from what faith tells us of Christ”<sup>89</sup>. What Anselm has done can be compared to an actor in the theatre, who has cleared everything that pre-existed and begins completely with a *tabula rasa* ground. Anselm was to make a discovery; he has woven a new cloth rather than putting a patch on the old one.

Many scholars say that, to understand Anselm best, with fairness, one should be aware of the context of the feudal system of the Middle Ages, because it is the world-view in which he paints his theory. Let us try to look at it briefly, to prevent falling into the same error of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Anselm’s theory.

The type of government of the land that existed in Europe in the Middle Ages was feudalism. The structure of this system consisted of two classes: The upper and the peasants or serfs. The upper class was for the nobility, the owners of the land who controlled everything. This class was mainly for the kings, who held the land by what they believed to be a divine right granted by God. Since the kings owned huge pieces of land which they could not govern fully due to poor transport and communication, they awarded some pieces to the fiefs, important nobles in the

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 175.

<sup>89</sup> J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 175.

kingdom who governed the land on behalf of the king but always paid homage to the king. Many of the fiefs were the church leaders, bishops who headed dioceses and, each diocese was considered a fief. The diocese of Canterbury for example was a fief. Each fief had to defend the king at all cost when need arose, pay taxes, and really function at the king's pleasure and will.

The lower class was for the peasants or serfs. They were the tillers of the land; they worked tirelessly, living a very poor life style. Peasants had no right to anything including their own lives. They were only to be seen and not heard. In fact, the peasants were almost like slaves to the feudal lord. The peasants were attached to their pieces of land where they worked, to the extent that if the land was sold, they were sold along with the land. They also acquired a new owner with the land; they were just like instruments in the feudal system of government.

This is the atmosphere in which Anselm is developing his theory. The social ranks, of this feudal system allow only people of the same calibre to associate together, satisfy one another in their dealings and mutual relationship, and solve the offences committed satisfactorily. The intensity of an offence depended on the social status of the offended. For instance, in an offence between two serfs, the punishment would just be normal and the offended would be satisfied. But if a person's offence is of another class, for example an offence of a serf against a bishop or lord, any punishment, however severe, could not satisfy the offended of a higher rank. This could be worse, for the offence by a serf against a king. It was unimaginable; it is like just a street boy finding his way to the State House and gives a neat slap on his Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya. No measure can satisfy such an offence. We can think of one of the journalists who threw a shoe at the former president of the United States, George W. Bush. It did not touch him, but we can

imagine how this filled the broadcast houses, and the fate of the man is not yet known at the time of this writing.

“Anselm’s solution on the problem of Christ’s death and mankind’s reconciliation is basically an analogy of the situation of the medieval peasant insulting a king”<sup>90</sup>. It cannot be stressed enough, but, “Behind this is the idea that the measure of offence is determined by the status of the offended party: If I offend a beggar the consequences are not the same as they could be if I offended a head of state. The importance of the offence varies according to the addressee”<sup>91</sup>.

According to Anselm, what happened at the fall of man was an offence against God, the transcendent, infinite, uncreated, the un-originated origin, all powerful, King of kings, Lord of lords. For sure no measure to amend this offence could satisfy the damage, even if man is put to death. Only a divine person with divine status could take the weight to satisfactorily undo the infinite damage. As a matter flowing from this fact, God out of his love, chose to undo the damage on our behalf, and so, because it was done on our behalf, God combined the divine and human together to form *Deus-homo*. “Therefore, for the God-man to do this, the person who is to make this satisfaction must be both perfect God and perfect man, because none but true God can make it, and none but true man owes it”<sup>92</sup>. This is how Anselm explains the necessity of Incarnation. So far we are in a better place to understand “the two whys” - why God-man? Why death of Christ?

Anselm explains, “But the debt was so great that, while man alone owed it only God could pay it, so that the same person must be both man and God. Thus it was necessary for God to take manhood into the unity of his person, so that he who

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<sup>90</sup> M. WINTER, *Problems in Theology*, 63.

<sup>91</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 173.

<sup>92</sup> J. M. CARMODY · T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 179.

in his own nature ought to pay and could not should be in a person who could"<sup>93</sup>. What God-man is going to do, is to take our guilt upon himself then allow measures of the damage man caused God at the fall. He is going to be put to death as a punishment and God will be satisfied; hence the birth of satisfaction theory of salvation. Since it is a measure taken between two equals, Jesus however, becomes our satisfaction, because he offered a totally adequate, vicarious satisfaction for the divine offence caused by the finite human sin.

One particular thing that we should make clear before we conclude our consideration of Anselm is that, according to his mode of explanation, two things can be read between the lines – punishment, and satisfaction between offended God and sinning humanity. Therefore, either man is punished or offers satisfactory measure. As we pointed out before, Anselm is a strong believer, who doesn't believe in an angry God who imposes his wrath upon finite sinful human being<sup>94</sup>.

Therefore, against those who criticized Anselm for presenting an angry God, Anselm insists that God chose satisfaction, and not punishment. That sentence is worth repeating, God chose satisfaction not punishment. M. Winter observed that. "Anselm was careful to treat sin as affront to the honour of God, and the compensation was not anything like financial repayment of a debt, but what he called 'satisfaction'"<sup>95</sup>. We would also agree with M. Winter, when he concurs with J. Rivière saying, "Personally I prefer Rivière's definition, because he avoids the notion of punishment or payment, both of which are inappropriate, to say the least, in a transaction between Jesus and God the Father"<sup>96</sup>. This implies God total free initiative out of his superabundant love to rescue fallen humanity.

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<sup>93</sup> J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 181.

<sup>94</sup> Cf J. HOPKINS, *A Companion to the Study of St Anselm*. 27.

<sup>95</sup> M. WINTER, *Problems in Theology*, 64.

<sup>96</sup> M. WINTER, *Problems in Theology*, 64.

What is satisfaction then? What is satisfaction here? What we have learnt in Anselm is that God is satisfied because justice is done<sup>97</sup>. Christ is not punished on our behalf, but he has freed us from punishment by satisfaction. So to speak, justice and right are not obtained between God and any of his creatures; it has to be between God, and God and this is what has happened in the process of our salvation according to Anselm. Therefore, we have the theory of satisfaction of Anselm<sup>98</sup>. Let us try to evaluate this theory.

a) Criticisms of Anselm's Theory of Satisfaction

How was the theory of satisfaction of Anselm understood? What we can notice in Anselm is his vision of a transcendent God who is at the same time good and merciful. However strong such a theory can be, some limitations have been identified. Joseph Ratzinger, one of those who have read and understood Anselm's theory closely, realized that there are some faults. He asserts, "But even if all this is admitted it cannot be denied on the other hand that the perfectly logical divine-cum-human legal system erected by Anselm distorts the perspectives and with its rigid logic can make the image of God appear in a sinister light"<sup>99</sup>. What J. Ratzinger discovered in Anselm was an exaltation of sin. How can sin of finite beings, have an infinite importance? If we stick to the logic in which Anselm is trading then finite repentance and request for mercy should also have satisfactory infinite reparation too.

A different recent accuser of Anselm is Karl Barth, as it is cited in the book *St Anselm Proslogian*. "For Barth, Anselm allows no place of any kind for philosophical theology, prior to and independent of faith and concerned with

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. J. M. CARMODY – T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 182.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. M. WINTER, *Problems in Theology*, 64.

<sup>99</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 174.

establishing the ‘credibility’ of faith”<sup>100</sup>. For Barth, reason should not question faith; reason must always work in the midst of faith, and faith should be prevenient and subsequent. A science of faith as Anselm has it, according to Barth would ipso facto cease to be either faithful or scientific<sup>101</sup>. In Barth’s view, Anselm has substituted reason for faith, which according to him, would mean that man has some kind of power of his subjectivity which is not obliterated by the fall<sup>102</sup>.

Another widely held accusation of Anselm is a hasty generalization that he paints his theory around the feudal system of land governance of the Middle Ages and make it universal salvific theory. The question therefore is, what about other systems of government with different worldviews? Social systems? Democrats? Communists? Liberals? What about societies fighting for equality and dignity of all human persons? This theory drawn from the feudal system seems to work only in some particular society or at a given age in history – Middle Ages and not the whole of salvation history. “The objection was raised that it does not fully and completely maintain the character of justice”<sup>103</sup>. The theory of satisfaction maintains the class differences; it does not mirror Christ’s teaching on equality; treating slaves and kings alike. Some would say, such theory is enslaving than liberating.

The other accusation that has been widely made is lack of biblical foundation. Redemption through Christ is regarded one-sidedly with the juridical thought of the Middle Ages rather than Christ event as recorded in the Holy Scripture. The theory of satisfaction does not earn more biblical favours especially in the West. “We must note in the first place that when Catholic theology speaks of satisfaction it is well aware nowadays that no formal statement on satisfaction is to

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<sup>100</sup> M.J. CHARLESWORTH, *St Anselm Proslogian*, 40.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. M.J. CHARLESWORTH, *St Anselm Proslogian*, 40.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. M.J. CHARLESWORTH, *St Anselm Proslogian*, 40-41.

<sup>103</sup> F.LAKNER, “Salvation”, 405 -- 438.

be found in Scripture or in earliest tradition”<sup>104</sup>. This has caused this theory of satisfaction to be rejected, especially by the biblical fundamentalists.

b) The Contribution of Anselm’s Theory to the Theology of Salvation

Though some weaknesses have been realized in the theory of satisfaction of Anselm, he has done more good than harm to the theology of salvation. That is why as we have pointed out above, we agree with Rivière when he observed that Anselm did not only found a theory but also an era in the theology of salvation. Emil Brunner, a follower of Anselm, agrees with the importance of Anselm in understanding our salvation. “He (Anselm) emphasises especially the idea of law as the foundation on which the doctrine of Atonement must be built. Law is the backbone, the framework, the granite-foundation of the spiritual world”<sup>105</sup>.

J. Hopkins gives a lot of credit to *Cur Deus Homo* Anselm’s great book in which he seeks to discover the reason why Jesus’ death could justly be counted by God as vicarious<sup>106</sup>. The same is also acknowledged elsewhere, “The great archbishop of Canterbury is a major figure in the development of soteriology, and his masterpiece *Cur Deus Homo* has become a classic”<sup>107</sup>. Hopkins appreciates Anselm’s rational ground to explore the notion of sin in order to develop the nature of salvation. He adopts Anselm’s expression, “I do not seek to understand in order to believe; but I believe in order to understand. This statement more than any other, embodies Anselm’s programmatic version of faith’s relationship to reason”<sup>108</sup>. Anselm is one of the greatest theologians of the Middle Ages who marry well faith and reason. He is motivated by faith seeking understanding. He wants to understand

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<sup>104</sup> F. LAKNER, “Salvation”, 405 – 438.

<sup>105</sup> G. AULFN, *Christus Victor*, 84.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. J. HOPKINS, *A Companion to the Study of St Anselm*, 221-212.

<sup>107</sup> J. M. CARMODY · T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 175.

<sup>108</sup> J. M. CARMODY · T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 38-39.

fully the mystery of our salvation and why it was only possible by a life giving death out of the love of God who became man on the tree.

It is beyond doubt that Anselm's theory of satisfaction became important and influential up to the recent centuries. "In fact from then on, Anselm's view gradually gained ground in theology so that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century soteriology was dealt with in textbooks exclusively under the aspect of the *modus satisfactionis* (e.g., M.G. van Noort, L. Billot, C. Pesch)"<sup>109</sup>.

In a nutshell, we would say that the theory of satisfaction of Anselm is worth spending time on. He is a theologian of his time, within his culture, and world view; therefore, if justice is to be done, he should be read, interpreted and understood within his context. As a matter of fact, as F. Lakner puts it at the end of his article, we should not pin Anselm down too much, "The mystery of Christ's passion and cross remains absolutely inaccessible to human hypothesis and attempt at systematization"<sup>110</sup>. Human thinking capacity cannot fully capture the salvific event of God in Christ; therefore, any theory is just a human attempt to give meaning to it as we experience it.

### **2.3.3 Peter Abelard (+ 1142)**

In the same century, after Anselm, comes P. Abelard. He comes to the stage with an expression of being fed up with notion of the devil's right; he begins by rejecting it strongly seemingly more than anybody before him. He repeats, "Some say that we have been redeemed from the power of the devil, who by deceiving man subjected him to himself, and received over him a power which he did not previously have"<sup>111</sup>. Contrary to such belief he says, "But against this I affirm and

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<sup>109</sup> F.LAKNER, "Salvation", 405 - - 438.

<sup>110</sup> F.LAKNER, "Salvation", 405 - - 438.

<sup>111</sup> J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 184.

irrefutably prove that the devil has no right over man”<sup>112</sup>. After the exclusion of the devil’s right, how then does he approach our salvation? He asserts that, Christ did not do anything else to man, “[...] but he came to redeem him from the power of sin, infusing his love into him, by offering himself as a pure victim to the father and paying the price to the father”<sup>113</sup>.

He seems to be moving away from satisfaction theory, because he sees its impossibility. For him, the fault of Adam was not enough to demand such a great satisfaction. If so, then, he says the sin against Christ could not be satisfactorily amended. Adam was only disobedient; what about those who persecuted Christ and put him to death? The satisfaction is immensely impossible.<sup>114</sup> Instead he draws his inspiration from the gospel according to Luke which he read closely, especially the story of the sinful woman, when Christ said of her in response, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much” (*Lk 7:47*).

As it is cited in the footnotes commentary of the same text, in *The Life Application study Bible*, overflowing love is the natural response to forgiveness and the appropriate consequence of faith. Jesus has rescued all of his followers, whether they were once extremely wicked or good from eternal death<sup>115</sup>. Abelard could consider Jesus a great teacher and exemplary, who awakens a responsive love. “He emphasises especially that Christ is the great teacher and exemplar to humanity, who arouses responsive love in men; this love is the basis on which reconciliation and forgiveness rest”<sup>116</sup>. Abelard does not focus much on the death and resurrection of Christ as the cause of our salvation. In its place, he accentuates the words and deeds of Christ in his public ministry, and his death is just a transforming power. In the

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<sup>112</sup> J. M. CARMODY – T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 184.

<sup>113</sup> J. M. CARMODY – T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 185.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor*, 96.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *Life Application Study Bible*, 1684 (*Lk 7: 47*).

<sup>116</sup> G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor*, 96.

period with the greater emphasis on the death of Christ both in theology and devotional practises, his teaching was met with rejections<sup>117</sup>.

From where does Abelard inherit such an inspiration? It is addressed in his commentary work on the letter to the Romans; he tries to find out the nature of sin, before discovering how we were saved. He seems to follow St. Augustine by believing that sin is to do with the pleasure of the flesh inherited by all through the sexual act – original sin. “It is true that in one place in the commentary on Romans he appears to share the same obsession as St Augustine that sin means primarily sins of the flesh or sexual sin”<sup>118</sup>. This explains well why salvation according to him takes a moral avenue and is not anything to do with the devil or legal offence. “Sin is an evil thing not because it breaks a legal contract between God and man, but because it at once lowers man from that level of moral life on which he has fellowship with God”<sup>119</sup>.

Abelard, who believes in a powerful God, was careful and cautious about thinking that Jesus was compelled to die in order to save us – for him Jesus was totally free. This is to remind us of the question with which we began. How then is the death of Christ related to our salvation? Abelard puts the whole life and death of Christ together in order to earn for us salvation. He says, “The life and death of Christ win us to love of him, but not necessarily to love of God. The efficacy of Christ’s death is now quite definitely and explicitly explained by its subjective influence upon the mind of a sinner”<sup>120</sup>. What Abelard in fact teaches is that the love of God, manifested in the total giving of Christ in his public ministry and ultimately in his death, has a great impact in the life of a sinner to the extent that it transforms

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. G. AULÉN, *Christus Victor*, 97.

<sup>118</sup> A.V.MURRAY, *Abelard and St. Benard*, 117.

<sup>119</sup> A.V.MURRAY, *Abelard and St. Benard*, 133.

<sup>120</sup> A.V.MURRAY, *Abelard and St. Benard*, 126.

him or her. The power of the love of God has the capacity to penetrate into the hearts of sinners, setting the fire of love in them that draws them back to God. Abelard therefore, summarises the whole mission of Christ's life and death as salvific. "He was born and died to exhibit to us His love and to draw us in return to love Him. And loving Him means salvation from sin"<sup>121</sup>.

This mode of love, reminds us of a story told of a young high school girl, who refused to identify herself with her mother on parents day at school. The mother had a disfigured face from serious previous fire burns. When they returned home, her mother narrated to her how it happened. She said that fifteen years ago, she went to fetch water in a nearby river; she left her baby sleeping inside their thatched roofed house and some food boiling on the traditional cooker. From far, she saw much smoke, and she suspected the house was on fire. She threw the pot of water, ran courageously into the thick smoke that had already covered the whole room, and took her beloved baby and threw her out through the window. As she was coming out from the bedroom, the whole roof that was already consumed by fire fell on her. She screamed loudly and she was rescued by those who came to her help. She was then rushed to the hospital where she was admitted for more than a month in the intensive care unit. It took her time to heal and she was fortunately healed but with a disfigured face. She ended by saying, "The beautiful baby girl was you! It is because of love I had for you that my face was disfigured". The reaction of the girl after the story is left to the world of imagination, because we don't have words to express what happened. But in turn she loved her mother more than anything else.

Abelard's theology as well is to explain that the revealing of God's love in the life and death of Jesus is a transformative love in every Christian who stops and

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<sup>121</sup> A.V.MURRAY, *Abelard and St. Benard*, 134.

ponder about it. It is the love of the mother of the girl about whom we have read, to the extent of offering herself in a huge fire to rescue her baby girl that had transformed the heart of her daughter and led her from the hate of a mother into a powerful love for her. For Abelard, "Christ's humanity was real, His sorrows were real, His offering of Himself was real because it arose from His love of God. He loves us and He loves God, and God loves us. We are drawn to love Him and to love God, and so the circle is complete"<sup>122</sup>.

Abelard's point, therefore, is that for a Christian to obtain salvation he or she has to have a great love for God, because it is for the love of God that the remission of sins takes place. He is very confident in insisting on this, because it was said by Christ himself to the woman who had loved much (*Lk 7:47*). But still Abelard's discussion moves in a moral plain; he believes that love is a motivation to do good, because love has all the morals and virtues needed for salvation. Again according to him, it is love that moves someone to a contrite heart whenever he falls; then repentance follows and reconciliation with God. "In the *Scito* Abelard emphasises the inward contrition from the motives of love [...]. With this contrition of heart sin disappears and we are reconciled to God"<sup>123</sup>. We admit the fact that it is not easy to capture and understand Abelard fully, but this could be because he is using the word 'love', which in our today's world has been misused so much. In summary, the words of L. Grane are worth borrowing,

Abelard advances the idea that the atonement is the revelation of God's love expressed in the fact that Christ became man, taught us by His word and example and persevered unto death. By proclaiming this act, or rather by faith in Christ, love of God who first loved us is awakened in our hearts so that we are freed from the power of sin and the Devil: Our redemption is therefore this greatest love in us through Christ's suffering, the love which not only delivers us from the bondage of sin but gains for us the true freedom of God's children, so that we rather through

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<sup>122</sup> A.V.MURRAY, *Abelard and St. Benard*, 134.

<sup>123</sup> A.V.MURRAY, *Abelard and St. Benard*, 136.

love of him than fear. fulfil all; he who has shown us such great mercy that none greater exist. as He himself witnessed [...] <sup>124</sup>.

#### **2.3.4 St. Thomas Aquinas + 1274**

Aquinas treats the work of Christ in our salvation in his great book *Summa Theologica* in the in the third part (IIIa). As we might be aware, he does his work in question form and gives his possible answers. To approach our salvation, he first considers the nature of sin from which we are to be saved. According to him, human beings were held bondage in two ways. First, is the bondage of sin, where every sinner is a slave to the devil and subject to the bondage of the devil. Second is the bondage of the debt of punishment that sinners have to pay to meet the justice of God. It means, after sin there still exists by reason of justice's demand, a penal debt <sup>125</sup>.

Therefore, according to Aquinas, for human beings to be saved from these bondages, two requirements have to be met; that is, the act of paying and the price paid. "Now Christ's blood or His bodily life, which is in the blood, is the price of our redemption (*Lev 17:11, 14*), and that life He paid" <sup>126</sup>. Aquinas does not leave his work shallow like this; instead he goes to the efficiency of the whole activity of salvation. He identifies two kinds of efficient agencies - The principal and instrumental. "Now the principal efficient cause of man's salvation is God. But since Christ's humanity is the instrument of the Godhead, [...] all Christ's actions and sufferings operate instrumentally in virtue of His Godhead for the salvation of men" <sup>127</sup>. This was the theology of Aquinas to let us understand and affirm that Christ as passion brings about our salvation efficiently.

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<sup>124</sup> L. GRANE, *Peter Abelard*, 102 - 103.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. *ST IIIa*, Q48, Art 4.

<sup>126</sup> *ST IIIa*, Q48, Art 5.

<sup>127</sup> *ST IIIa*, Q48, Art 6.

Something is awakened in us again in Aquinas, that was forgotten when we were addressing Abelard – The Devil’s right. It has erupted again. This is repeated by Aquinas when he tries to explain how we were saved by Christ’s passion. He says, “[...] by Christ’s passion man was delivered from the devil’s power [...] Christ’s passion freed us from the devil’s power [...] passion delivered us from the devil”<sup>128</sup>. It is very probable that he has picked up where Anselm left off. He believes in the power of the devil and of God as well, but he wants us to believe that, when we are in sin, we are under the devil’s power and when we are saved we belong to the power of God<sup>129</sup>. But we were meant for the power of God as our ultimate *telos*.

At the fall, Aquinas, like Anselm, asserts that the devil acquired power over human beings, and God was offended. When God was offended, there was to be a price as a propitiation for our sins. This is where Aquinas complements Anselm, because Anselm did not state to whom the price was paid, God or the devil? In his answer, he asserts, “But by suffering out of love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offence of the whole human race”<sup>130</sup>.

Abelard focused on the exemplary life of Jesus and a little bit on the death of Christ, as the cause of our salvation; however, Aquinas would insist on the life, passion, death and the resurrection of Jesus together as the key cause of our salvation. In his reply to one of the objections he says, “And therefore, just as all other things which Christ did and endured in his humanity are profitable to our salvation through the power of the Godhead [...], so also is Christ’s resurrection the efficient cause of ours”<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>128</sup> ST IIIa, Q49, Art 2.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. J. M. CARMODY - T. E. CLARKE, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, 212-213.

<sup>130</sup> ST IIIa, Q48, Art 2.

<sup>131</sup> ST IIIa, Q56, Art 1, Reply Obj. 3.

## a) Satisfaction and Atonement Notions in Aquinas

As we realized before, for Aquinas, after sin comes by manner of justice's demands a penal debt. There has to be a punishment for the offence committed. Our God is forgiving and full of justice at the same time he punishes. For a sinner to be reconciled to God, he or she has to accept divine justice. What does this divine justice mean? Let us find out how R. Cessario defines it, "This is to be willing to accept satisfactory punishment, or if one does not spontaneously take on some form of penance, then at least one must patiently bear the punishments that are imposed"<sup>132</sup>. This would refer to the genuine willingness to undergo suffering to undo the damage our sins have caused God. It can be called saving justice as well. It comes as a result of inner thirst for union with God from whom sin separates. The good that one will enjoy in union with God overpowers the affliction of punishment.

It is worth mentioning that the satisfaction that Aquinas is talking about is much different from the theory of satisfaction of Anselm. For Aquinas, satisfactory punishment is a pain that a sinner voluntarily chooses to undergo, so that he or she may be completely reconciled to God. This reminds us of the feelings we had when we were young. Sometimes, when we committed an offence that was obvious, either to our parents or teachers, we felt like being punished to get it over with. If it went unmentioned, any time we saw a teacher or parent passby, the guilt came, but once it was punished, the guilt went and we felt relieved. The same is also common in the many passages of the Scripture, where one desires pain upon him or herself for an offence, to undo the damage. For example, "If I forget you Jerusalem, let my right hand wither. Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth" (*Ps* 137:5-6).

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<sup>132</sup> R. CESSARIO, *Christian Satisfaction in Aquinas*, 147.

Satisfaction has a healing effect to undo a scandal. One might ask how satisfactory punishment is related to Christ and our salvation. Aquinas would say, "Satisfactory punishments, however, may not be the result of an individual's own sin, as is the case when one person who has not sinned willingly undergoes punishment in place of another. The explanation given for why this is possible is love"<sup>133</sup>. It is out of love that Christ allowed himself be punished to meet all the purposes of punishment – satisfaction, penalty and healing. Therefore, Christ saved us by voluntarily accepting our satisfactory punishment out of love to undo the damage our sin caused God, and this is how Jesus became our saviour.

#### **2.4 Salvation of the Reformers (XV c -)**

It is at this moment of our study that we are invited to pay much attention and to capture the root cause of the call for this study. We desire to enter the era of reformation, the era through which we long to find out the reason why others are confident about their salvation while many Catholics remain hesitant. Such feelings begin with reformation with the key figure of reformation Martin Luther, +1546. As we are always told, Luther did not intend to protest; he wanted to make changes from inside, not from outside as it resulted.

As a brilliant, pious Augustinian monk, Luther is obsessed by his own justification, his own salvation; he questions himself how he can be saved and justified before God. St. Augustine, the founder of his congregation, whose work he read so closely, led him to think that everything has been predetermined by God; *Massa damnata*. It is only few by the grace of God that will be saved. He really longed to be among the few, but he asks himself how this can be possible. He reads the letters of St. Paul, especially *Rom 4*, and realises that it is not human good works

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<sup>133</sup> R. CESSARIO, *Christian Satisfaction in Aquinas*, 149.

that justify him, but by faith alone all are justified – *sola fidei*. “We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds, but, having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds”<sup>134</sup>.

For Luther, no human effort is salvific; for him, salvation is totally God’s doing. What is needed on the part of man is faith. “In his first lectures on St. Paul, Luther found the central drama portrayed by the epistle to the Romans being the opposition between the righteousness we achieve by our effort and in which we take satisfaction and the alien righteousness given from outside ourselves by God in pure mercy”<sup>135</sup>. This recovery lights up some fire because this is contrary to the teaching of the Church, who believed in different works of charity, mercy, to attain graces proper for salvation.

By then, the Church strongly believed that by doing good works, one is justified before God. Luther was advised to withdraw his position, but the more he was advised, the more he hardened his stand, because as he claims, he wanted to be sincere to his conscience. This brought an expected hostility on the part of the Church that finally led to the excommunication of Luther, and he was regarded protestant although this had not been his wish.

#### ***2.4.1 The Soteriology of Luther***

Just as St Anselm asserted that Christ’s passion and death were a satisfactory payment recompensing for sin. Luther, inspired by the letter to the *Heb 2: 14*, believed that the Devil’s killing work was turned into life by the transitory action of Christ from death to life. “Christ, victorious, is the sacramental source of life for those united with him by faith”<sup>136</sup>. What Luther insists on is taking up the very life

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<sup>134</sup> D. K. MCKIM, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, 166.

<sup>135</sup> J. WICKS, *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy*, 66.

<sup>136</sup> J. WICKS, *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy*, 73.

of Christ by faith. Through faith in Christ, we enjoy all the good that exists in Christ. "Just as it is impossible for Christ, the victor over death, to die again (*Rom 6:9*), so it is impossible for one who believes in him to die [...]. For just as Christ, by reason of his union with immortal divinity, overcame death by dying, so the Christian, by reason of his union with the immortal Christ - which comes about through faith in him - also overcomes death by dying"<sup>137</sup>.

Luther had no doubt whatsoever in faith; he exalted faith in Jesus Christ more than anything else. This overemphasis of faith at the expense of other Church dogmas and doctrines landed him into jeopardy. His account on the importance of faith did not allow him to see any significance of indulgences, ministerial priesthood, supremacy of the pope, the very function of the Church in forgiving sins through penance.

#### ***2.4.2 Luther and the Catholic Church on Salvation***

The discrepancy between the Catholic Church and Luther occurred as a result of differences in religious insights and teachings. The Church teaching could not give room for Luther to stay, because of the teachings Luther held. "Luther had largely abandoned the line separating the teaching of the Church from theology. Doctrine which runs counter to exegenetic evidence is not a doctrine to him"<sup>138</sup>.

In an interesting interview with J. Ratzinger, on the interconnection between Church and theology, he tries to address the main soteriological difference between the Catholic Church and the Protestants, the so called the churches of the reformation. There is a clear cut that separates the understanding of salvation between Catholics and the churches of reformation. As Ratzinger responded in his

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<sup>137</sup> J. WICKS, *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy*, 74.

<sup>138</sup> J. RATZINGER, "Luther and the Unity of the Churches", 210-226.

interview, according to Luther, “Redemption is realized the moment faith appears as the rescue from the demands of self-justification, that is, as a personal certainty of salvation”<sup>139</sup>. In Luther’s strong conviction, the moment one becomes a believer, he or she is saved already and can stand erect and boast of it. “Faith, assures, above all, the certainty of one’s own salvation”<sup>140</sup>. This reminds us of the members of other Christian denomination that we are considering in this study, who are assured of their salvation, boast of it and use it in their introductory formulas – I am so and so and I am saved.

This is a legacy borrowed from Luther, and it is assimilated by many Protestant churches. We are in a better stand now because at least we know the source of the main concern of this study. No wonder why some groups of Christians are assured of salvation while Catholics are hesitant.

In the continuation of Ratzinger’s responses in his interview, he holds that the assurance of salvation for the Catholics is based on three fundamental divine virtues: faith, hope, and love. “To the Catholic, the certainty of faith refers to that which God worked and which the Church witnesses. The certainty of hope refers to the salvation of individuals and, among them, of oneself”<sup>141</sup>. For Luther, the three divine virtues mean very little in the salvation of humanity; faith has it all, in fact an automatic salvation. The essential belief of the Catholics lies in the understanding of the human person as a very fragile and vulnerable being, who has to depend totally on God for forgiveness whenever he or she falls. This does not rule out our salvation in Christ, but the Catholics hold, as J.Wicks puts it, “Grace and forgiveness do not

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<sup>139</sup> J. RATZINGER, “Luther and the Unity of the Churches”, 210-226.

<sup>140</sup> J. RATZINGER, “Luther and the Unity of the Churches”, 210-226.

<sup>141</sup> J. RATZINGER, “Luther and the Unity of the Churches”, 210-226.

arise from the human heart, but are communicated in dialogue, as God speaks a loving word of promise and salvation”<sup>142</sup>.

## **2.5 The Teaching of the Council of Trent Concerning Justification**

The Council of Trent was an official church response to the reformers, on many contentious issues. In this case, we want to address its concerns on justification. The Council rejected the idea of the reformers that justification of a sinner is simply the remission of sins. Instead, the Council affirmed that, “The justification of the ungodly before God to life eternal is not solely the remission of sins but also the sanctification of the inner man”.<sup>143</sup>

The Council as opposed to Luther focused on the inner transformation. Therefore, the justification of a sinner by faith must be understood according to the Council in the sense that faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification and not the salvation itself. Faith must be accompanied by good works to merit the grace of justification.<sup>144</sup>

The Council fathers, drawing from the life of the Apostles, insisted that, “[...] through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith cooperating with good works, increase in that justice received through the grace of Christ and are further justified.”<sup>145</sup> What the council is trying to point out is that, faith alone without good works is not enough for justification: Faith without action is dead. This Decree was against the confidence of the reformers, who strongly believed that faith alone can bring about justification of a sinner. As it is well put in the book, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, “To those who work well unto the end and trust in God, eternal life is to be offered, both as a grace mercifully

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<sup>142</sup> J. WICKS, *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy*, 24.

<sup>143</sup> M. CHEMNITZ, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, 515.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. H. J. SCHROEDER, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, 35.

<sup>145</sup> H. J. SCHROEDER, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, 36.

promised to the sons of God through Christ Jesus, and as a reward promised by God himself, to be fully given to their good works and merits".<sup>146</sup>

Another point that is worth noting is that, according to the Council of Trent, justification is not an event that takes place once in one's life, rather it is a process: a gift to be nurtured.

For since Christ Jesus Himself, as the head into the members and the vine into the branches, continuously infuses strength into those justified, which strength always precedes, accompanies and follows their good works, and without which they could not in any manner be pleasing and meritorious before God, we must believe that nothing further is wanting to those justified to prevent them from being considered to have, by those very works which have been done in God [...]<sup>147</sup>.

After the Council of Trent, the Catholic doctrine on justification was based on faith and good works and not faith alone as was insisted on by the reformers.

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The second chapter has helped us to appraise the key soteriological themes in history. The study has enabled us to discover the main differences in theories of salvation between Catholics and the Protestants. We would agree with Otto, H. Pesch when he says, as it is cited in the book *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy* that, for Catholic theologians, e.g. Aquinas, God's wisdom in the total plan of salvation is accounted for in unity: creation, fall and salvation, while for Luther as an existentialist theologian, every theological issue is based on what God is saying to an individual person<sup>148</sup>.

For Luther, the whole history of salvation means very little; he is concerned with an individual here and now, God addressing us here today, and not in history. For him, salvation is not a process; it has no history. If you have faith you have

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<sup>146</sup> H. J. SCHROEDER, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, 41.

<sup>147</sup> H. J. SCHROEDER, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, 41.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. J. WICKS, *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy*, 25.

salvation,, and vice versa. Faith is the template for salvation. “There faith can take hold of reliable communications from God. Above all, Luther sought to help people be struck personally by the word and work of Christ”<sup>149</sup>. Such an individualistic approach alters the whole structure and teaching on salvation. For Luther therefore, faith is not, as the Catholics have it, an essentially ecclesial gift of the entire Church. “In any case, according to Luther, the Church can neither assumes the certain neither guarantee for personal salvation nor decide definitely and compellingly on matters (that is, the content) of faith. On the other hand, to the Catholics, the Church is central to the act of faith itself. Only by communal belief do I partake of the certainty on which I can base my life”<sup>150</sup>.

As we come to understand the teaching of the Church, its beliefs are interconnected; once one is altered, like a damaged spider web, the whole system of belief is disfigured. What Luther claims consequently affects the relationship between the Church and the Scripture on the whole concept of salvation. For the Catholics, the Church and the Scripture are indivisible, while for Luther, Scripture becomes an independent template, a mirror of the Church and its Laws<sup>151</sup>. Though the Bible should be the manual of every Christian living, “But still the Bible only comes to us because it was made canonical by the Church, and this Bible is first of all an element in the life of the Church”<sup>152</sup>. The ultimate interpretation of it should come from the Church, as the Spirit guides her to develop her doctrines, which arise from the interplay of the Biblical message and the Church<sup>153</sup>.

In the third chapter, we will bring these soteriological theories we have addressed so far into a language that is relevant to our contemporary world. Our

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<sup>149</sup> J. WICKS, *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy*, 26.

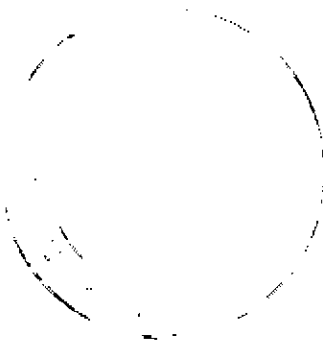
<sup>150</sup> J. RATZINGER, “Luther and the Unity of the Churches”, 210-226.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, “Luther and the Unity of the Churches”, 210-226.

<sup>152</sup> J. WICKS, *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy*, 25.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. J. WICKS, *Luther and His Spiritual Legacy*, 25.

interest will be to come out of a theoretical level of salvation into a rational and practical understanding of it.



## Chapter III

### SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO SALVATION

The third chapter takes a more systematic mode of reflection toward the concept of salvation. The theories we have appreciated in the previous chapter, as Haight puts it, are theories dependent upon a variety of New Testament images, which in turn rest upon a memory and experiences of Jesus as the bringer of God's salvation. Many of these theories today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century appear difficult and at the same time remain theories and abstract. "Many of the traditional expressions of how Jesus saves resemble myths that no longer communicate to educated Christians; some are even offensive. Many of the traditional theological 'explanations' of salvation through Christ do no better"<sup>154</sup>.

The systematic approach wants to retell the Jesus event in the language that brings salvation to our people today. Our study therefore, aims at re-reading these past historical symbols that address salvation with our present skills, techniques and questions. We would take the precaution of Haight when he says, "At this point, however, the aim is not to build a meta-story of salvation from common experiences of the past. It is simply to highlight aspects of the specifically Christian experiences

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<sup>154</sup> R. HAIGHT, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 335.

which are carried by these diverse classical interpretations of Jesus' work of salvation"<sup>155</sup>.

To approach salvation from a systematic point of view implies bringing together into unity the whole economy of salvation in a way that the human mind can figure out a sensible picture of God's plan. This approach will take the salvation in three phases: one, human existence in the present time; two, life after death; and three, the Parousia

### 3.1 Human Existence in the Present time

According to Oscar Cullmann, if our time is a point in the flow of the history of salvation, then, the salvific elements are also applicable in our time. Let us allow him to express himself in detail.

If we are really in the stream of salvation history which is characterized not only by contingency, but above all by the constant of the divine plan summed up in the Christ event, then in the Bible we have the norm uniquely adequate for application to our time. With this norm in hand we can at least attempt to establish where and how the saving process is unfolded. If the present period actually belongs to salvation history must be discernible in this period, even though the details of how salvation history continues remain hidden for the present<sup>156</sup>.

What Cullmann conveys to us is that we belong to a time that falls between the resurrection of Christ and his second coming: a time that all the elements of salvation are available, but not fully realized; awaiting full realization, but lived in the present. That is why Roger Haight says, "Salvation becomes an experienced reality in the disclosure that God effects through Jesus: salvation is in turn something that is recognised, accepted, internalized, and lived by Christians. A full concept of salvation includes both objective and existential dimensions"<sup>157</sup>.

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<sup>155</sup> R. HAIGHT, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 238.

<sup>156</sup> O. CULLMAN, *Salvation is History*, 304.

<sup>157</sup> R. HAIGHT, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 147.

Both Cullman and Haight try to tell us that the resurrection of Jesus has an effect in our life today and on what our final salvation will be like. “Resurrection transforms human existence in the end and, when grasped in faith, the experience of life in this World”<sup>158</sup>. According to Cullman, salvation is already experienced in the human existence in the present time, but at the same time it is a ‘not yet’ reality. The tension between the already and the not yet is generated by two great gifts of salvation – the Holy Spirit and the Church, which are granted by the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. After the resurrection, the Holy Spirit is not limited to a few chosen people, but it is given to all unconditionally. “He (the Holy Spirit) is the power of the resurrection, the great adversary of sin and death, and he will also recreate our bodies (*Rom 8:11*). This future power is already at work. That is the meaning of our time in the salvation history the ‘already’”<sup>159</sup>

We admit that all these are true, but what sets the whole gift of the Holy Spirit into a special focus is that sin and death still exist. The same is true of the other great gifts of the Church. The Church is still both holy and sinful, because of the sinful Christians found within the Church. “Our time is the time of the Holy Spirit, and it is the time of the Church. The Church also indeed, particularly shares in the tension of ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ [...] Nowhere is the chasm between what already is (the body of Christ) and what still is (sin) more painfully felt than in the Church”<sup>160</sup>. What raises our eye-brows is that sin is experienced in our Church not only today; even in the beginning there was not a perfect Church. Acts of the Apostles points to many evil deeds that took place in the early Church, e.g. Ananias and Sapphira (*Acts 5:1-11*), but this did not revoke the holiness of the Church. It is

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<sup>158</sup> R. HAIGHT, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 148.

<sup>159</sup> O. CULLMAN, *Salvation is History*, 305.

<sup>160</sup> O. CULLMAN, *Salvation is History*, 306.

still holy despite all these evil deeds done by men and women that belong to the Church.

The tension between 'already' and not yet' is the key tension that generates the soteriological disparity between the Catholics and some churches of the reformation. The Catholics believe that the churches of the reformation do not take the 'already' seriously and the churches of the reformation are also convinced that the Catholics take 'not yet' for granted. From Cullman, a member of one of these churches of the reformation,

The protestants find that the Catholics fail to heed the 'not yet', as it is exemplified in the Catholic doctrine of the infallible teaching office. The Catholics, on the contrary, find that we Protestants do not take the 'already' seriously, that we therefore overlook that fact that in Christ and in his Church the tension in already set aside<sup>161</sup>.

### ***3.1.1 Present Time Soteriology***

As we already mentioned, a systematic approach to salvation puts all the theories of salvation into unity, and presents them in a worldview through which they can be appreciated by our people today. Systematically, salvation centres on Jesus Christ. Jesus as saviour could be explored in different ways, and we want to look into some of them.

#### **a) Jesus Symbol of God**

The symbolic language of salvation is advocated by Roger Haight. Symbol is a visible sign that makes present an invisible reality it signifies. What does Haight mean when he calls Jesus a symbol of God? He explains in detail,

To call Jesus a symbol of God does not entail shifting the structure of Christology away from the narrative of salvation. It should rather be seen as capturing in the idea of symbol the dynamic process of coming to a faith that is salvific. The event of encountering salvation is dialectical. On the one hand, one encounters God and God's salvation in Jesus, the historical figure. Jesus was an integral human being, a person who lived in history inquiry, which one does not need faith to pursue. Jesus

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<sup>161</sup> O. CULLMAN, *Salvation is History*, 306.

is available to all. On the other hand, this salvation is an encounter with God in Jesus. It is an axiom that only God can save with the ultimate or transcendent salvation with which we are dealing. To experience salvation in Jesus of Nazareth is to encounter God. On the one hand, that which is encountered in Jesus is God. Thus Jesus makes God present in a saving way, so that it is no less than God with whom we are confronted in Jesus<sup>162</sup>.

The conclusion we made in the exploration of salvation in the Bible in the first chapter was that it is only God who saves, and in the New Testament he does this in Jesus Christ. This is the starting point of Haight and the whole systematic horizon. Salvation comes from God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. But since systematic theology says it is not enough to say that it is so, but asks why and how it is so, (faith seeking understanding), it is not enough to say that salvation comes from God the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. It would be beneficial to find out how it happens.

According to Haight there is no doubt at all that Jesus is a human person. But this person is so filled with God as spirit that he becomes the symbol of God, the one in whom God is fully present to us. "The point once again is that because God as spirit is at work in Jesus, Jesus' whole life may be considered a parable or gesture of God's communication to human beings"<sup>163</sup>. Since Jesus is fully human and full of God, in his person is found God-human encounter, revealing both human and divine existence. This revelation is not simply an event of disclosure and information about the reality of God; rather it is something more. "Thus in the conceptions of both Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, revelation is salvation, and salvation is constituted by revelation"<sup>164</sup>. A revelation that Jesus offers is a healing of union and fellowship with God, which was broken by sin. Therefore, one way that we can understand Jesus as saviour according to this view is that, through Jesus, God enters into a

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<sup>162</sup> R. HAIGHT, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 339.

<sup>163</sup> R. HAIGHT, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 346.

<sup>164</sup> R. HAIGHT, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 344.

personal relationship with human beings: Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. God comes to be with us, to show us what it means to be human beings. In the process of this revelation we are invited to imitate Jesus Christ.

Haight takes a revelational and exemplary theory of salvation and tries to present it in a language that an average Christian of this time can appreciate. Here he explains in a full text:

From the various notions of salvation that appears in the New Testament and early Christian theology we have proposed that a revelational and exemplary theory of salvation best corresponds to current historical consciousness and the sense that God's salvation has been operative since the beginning of human history. Speaking historically, salvation did not begin with Jesus. Rather Jesus saves by being the revealer of God and God's salvation which God as spirit has effected from the beginning, the revelation of what human life should be, and the empowering example of life for disciples. Jesus saves then, not only by mediating God as spirit and thus empowering a saved life, but also from the point of view of Christians, by being followed<sup>165</sup>.

It is in following the life of Jesus Christ that Haight claims that Jesus must be a true human being. If he were divine we wouldn't follow him; we would need divine attributes to follow him. We can only be able to follow his example if he was a human being. Though it is not accepted as theological tradition, he has said something, to be complimented, for surely, if God is divine and Jesus is divine, why did a divine God need a divine person as an intermediary? God would have done it directly. "Imitating of Christ, which constitutes Christian salvation requires a focus on Jesus being a human being like us, because a human being could not follow Jesus if Jesus were simply and undialectically divine"<sup>166</sup>.

A point worth noting is that, although Haight insists on the humanity of Jesus in our salvation, he does also insist equally on the intervention of the three persons of the Triune God in working out our salvation in a sovereign, unilateral and

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<sup>165</sup> R. HAIGHT, "The Case for Spirit Christology", 257-287.

<sup>166</sup> R. HAIGHT, "The Case for Spirit Christology", 257-287.

gratuitous way. According to Haight, salvation is not something that happens once and for all, but an ongoing process moving towards a destination. “God symbolized as Father, Son and Spirit is one God who is loving creator, and who was present and active for the salvation of humankind in Jesus, and who is consistently present in the Christian community, in individuals within it, and indeed, in all human beings”<sup>167</sup>

As we have seen, Haight takes the current historical consciousness as the starting point together with the sense that God’s salvation is as old as human existence itself. He assumes that Jesus’ salvific work is basically exemplary and revelatory. Jesus is saviour in the sense that in him, we are presented with a prototype to imitate. Through Jesus, we are offered the design of what God expects of us, in following his example; we do the will of God and are therefore being saved.

#### b) Salvation as an ongoing process

“For us who are being saved [...]” (1Cor 1:18). The unfolding of God’s event, today called salvation history, takes place in a progressive manner. Old Testament contemporaries no doubt believed it, the New Testament believed it. We, 21<sup>st</sup> century Catholics probably believe it. What has been changing with the advancement in knowledge is the understanding of the human being, the object of salvation history. Today a human being is understood as *Soma* in Greek. *Soma* is the individual as a unit, living in the real world. It is not a separated body and soul but whole being under one aspect. The person does not have a *soma*, as was understood in the past but the individual is a *soma*<sup>168</sup>. *Soma* therefore, translates person. This in original Greek implies the subject of a wide range of relationships. The person exists only in communion with society, environment and more significantly with God.

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<sup>167</sup> R. HAIGHT, *Jesus Symbol of God*, 485.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. J.R. SACHS, *The Christian Vision of Humanity*, 53.

Along with this, a person is given freedom as a gift out of love by God to choose either to relate or not to relate. “To be, and to be a self, is a gift, it is the fundamental grace”<sup>169</sup>. It is in relation that a person matures.

The person is therefore a dynamic self-making being in freedom. The person implies a dynamic becoming, possibility, potentiality. “We are really free to be, free to be ourselves, different from God. The real freedom of the world is what God most intensely desires and is its greatest good”<sup>170</sup>. As a spiritual being, created in the image and likeness of God, the person has a tendency towards God the creator. It is capable of God, *Capax Dei*. It is a being called into a personal relationship and communion with God, and for a covenant. The covenant that in the unfolding plan of God unfolds in progressive stages, from Sinai in the Old Testament, to Pentecost in the New Testament, to the Church in our time and to a finality of the Kingdom of glory. As a fact flowing from this matter, we are in the process of self-realization, self-awareness which will acquire its completion in the kingdom of glory by eternal joyful communion with God. To talk about a person means a being that points beyond itself, it seeks intimacy with God.

### c) God as the Aim in the Process of Salvation

“But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God: indeed, he has prepared a city for them” (*Heb* 11: 16). A life of a Christian is really not concerned with the individual in oneself, or God in himself but God in relationship to human beings. Talking about God without touching the lives of human beings is considered irrelevant and has no future. A Christian God is one who influences, touches, and plans for his people.

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<sup>169</sup> J.R. SACHS, *The Christian Vision of Humanity*, 37.

<sup>170</sup> J.R. SACHS, *The Christian Vision of Humanity*, 27.

The hope of every Christian is to be holy, to be complete, and to meet God, where he or she will find fulfilment. That is why Walter Kasper says, “The concern is therefore always with the concrete God who is salvation of human beings and whose glory is man alive”<sup>171</sup>. It is such profession of faith and beliefs that keep Christians focused in the future and moving towards their focus. Despite of the oppression, guilt, anxiety, sickness, death and all the dehumanizing principalities, the hope of Christians is that the glory of God is to see them alive. “The hope is hope in the coming of absolute love that identifies itself with suffering and with the sufferer in the world. For sufferers the quest for God is a quest for a divine compassion, an identification of God with the suffering and death of human beings”<sup>172</sup>.

Christians recognizes that evil and suffering are a reality, but in their suffering, God always accompanies them, in Jesus Christ, and at the end the evil will be overthrown by the good. God will be victorious and all in all. “The basis of Christian hope is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The object of Christian hope is fullness of life in the kingdom. The horizon of Christian life and hope is eternal life with God and the lamb in the new Jerusalem”<sup>173</sup>.

Sharing in this, God’s hope and plan for the world, is what empowers Christians to persevere in the difficulties and tragedies of daily lives, because they refuse to absolutize them. “Seeing things with the ‘mind of God’ as it were, it knows that nothing is absolute except the victory of God’s saving, transforming love. It can, therefore, imagine something (not nothing, not everything) which it can realistically do, even if that often means waiting in hope and solidarity”<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> W. KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 158.

<sup>172</sup> W. KASPER, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 162.

<sup>173</sup> D.J. HARRINGTON, *What are we Hoping for?*, 117.

<sup>174</sup> J.R. SACHS, *The Christian Vision of Humanity*, 110.

d) Destined to be saved

“For the aim of the creator is that his creatures should live in his presence”<sup>175</sup>. Our investigation into the biblical and historical meaning of salvation revealed to us God’s sovereign, universal and gracious saving will, a hope for the salvation of all men and women, who accept God’s will to be saved. “Salvation is the ultimate Christian hope. It provides the horizon for all other hopes”<sup>176</sup>. Though, if an average balanced Catholic is asked about his or her end, he or she will probably not be able to say much, at least there would be an imagination of some hope higher than the present life. A more popular hope is Heaven where God dwells and those who live according to his will shall join him.

As far as joining God in his joyful communion in the end is concerned, there are two main possibilities: the acceptance of God’s gracious gift of divine love or rejection of it. But it is also worth noting that our destination to be saved does not depend on us. God loves us unconditionally. Whether we accept to love him or not, has no affect in him, but on us. His wish and will is that we are saved. “God’s love for us as revealed in the judgment of Christ is the prior foundation of our very existence. It is not the result of, nor is it merited by our actions. It does not depend on us”<sup>177</sup>.

Salvation can be compared today with an invitation to a feast, let us say, a wedding feast. The invitation card is not a guarantee that the invited guest will come, but it simply gives an assurance to the invited person that she or he is loved and that his or her company is important to the inviting host or hostess. It is the decision of the invited guest to come or not to come. The refusal to come does not

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<sup>175</sup> W. PANNENBERG, *Systematic Theology*, 523.

<sup>176</sup> D.J. HARRINGTON, *What are we Hoping for?* 117.

<sup>177</sup> J.R. SACHS, *The Christian Vision of Humanity*, 96.

deny the invitation itself; after all she or he is still invited<sup>178</sup>. In the same way, God gives all the possibility and invitation to join in his joyful communion, but the decision to join him or not to join him depends on our decision. He respects our decision. Therefore, the decision we make determines our final destiny. That is why we say that all are destined to be saved. All have received the invitation to salvation. "Grace is always and everywhere on offer, in transcendental mode, that is, as offer within human consciousness"<sup>179</sup>.

#### e) Vocation of an Individual and what God wills

We have realized that there is God's universal will to salvation. What comes into the centre of our attention is, what does that speak to the unique vocation of every individual? If our destination is one, why do we have different vocations? Does it mean that there is an individual will of God to an individual person? To throw some light into some of these different concerns, John R. Sachs explains, "God does not desire the well-being of the world as a kind of abstract generality. God desires the life of each and every creature. Thus, even before I wonder whether God has something in particular which God wants me to do, I may view my very self as that which God wills"<sup>180</sup>. In this sense, God's will and vocation are particular because God's gift of life in fullness, concerns every human being personally.

God creates a human being who is totally free and authentic, who has all the ingredients of his or her own making in freedom. The vocation of every individual shows how much God is concerned with the life of each and every individual, and his active participation in our everyday life. When we respond to our vocation positively, we are participating in a way in God's saving work. "Thus individuals

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<sup>178</sup> Cf. L. MAGESA, " 'I am Saved'- The Ethical Dimension", 238-244,

<sup>179</sup> N. ORMEROD, *Creation, grace, and Redemption*, 121.

<sup>180</sup> J.R. SACHS, *The Christian Vision of Humanity*, 106.

are chosen to have a share in the people of God to perform various ministries within it, while the people of God is chosen to bear witness to the creator's will to save that applies to humanity as a whole"<sup>181</sup>.

What we learn from this is that, although God has a specific vocation for each individual, this does not happen in isolation; it has an effect on the relationship with one's neighbour and the society at large. It is in and with different vocations that we relate to God as a Church and as a family with Christ as the head. "We may never separate the election of individuals to participate in the Son's relation to the Father from the fact that believers are members of the body of Christ. They cannot have the salvation of fellowship with God in isolation"<sup>182</sup>. Therefore, what individual vocation tells us is that, though we have many branches, we still belong to the same tree. We relate to God individually, but the Church aspect is not excluded; it is in fact it is strongly emphasized. God's salvation is intensely personal and it is never private; it is expressed in a community of believers, the Church.

### **3.2 The church in Relation to God's Plan of Salvation**

Among the definitions that Second Vatican Council gave to the Church is the mystery of the sacrament of salvation. This is the understanding of the Church in Christ as the instrument for the unity of God and his people. The document defines this as meaning that the Church is a tool for the most inward union with God and for the unity of all people<sup>183</sup>. Being a tool for God's plan of salvation implies that the Church of Christ has a very significant role to play in this salvific process. To present this reasonably, the Church must be understood in the context of Christ. The Church can be a tool and instrument if and only if it is understood as the body of

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<sup>181</sup> W. PANNENBERG, *Systematic Theology*, 522.

<sup>182</sup> W. PANNENBERG, *Systematic Theology*, 522.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

Christ. “The Church that is, the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery grows visibly through the power of God in the Word”<sup>184</sup>.

Since Christ is the reconciler, the Church can only be a reconciler if it is the body of Christ. The point of calling Christ the mystery of salvation lies in Christ’s universality in salvation history as the reconciler of the world. This universality is seen in the life of the Church. The plan of salvation calls for transformation of all human reality, and the church must be the instrument of this process of transformation. “Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men and women”<sup>185</sup>.

It is realized that all the elements of the eternal plan of the Father, revealed through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit to bring humanity into the kingdom of glory are present in the Church. Under this token, the Church is considered in a broad sense as God’s plan of salvation which includes all people. Since the Church has all the elements required for salvation, her mission is therefore to manifest the future plan of God and to lead all humanity towards its final destiny.

W. Pannenberg says the Church is not the Kingdom of God, but, “It is a sign of the kingdom’s future of salvation. It is so in such a way that this future of God is already present in it and is accessible to people through the church, through its proclamation and its liturgical life”<sup>186</sup>. In all the functions of the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God’s future glory is translated into the present. God’s kingdom is already anticipated in the life of the Church, the life of heaven is already begun in the present. “The kingdom makes itself present in the Church in a

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<sup>184</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 3.

<sup>185</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

<sup>186</sup> W. PANNENBERG, *Systematic Theology*, 37.

particular way. We can say that the Church is an ‘initial realization’ or ‘prolepsis anticipation’ of the plan of God for humankind”<sup>187</sup>.

The Church is the symbol of God that makes the kingdom that it signifies already present and the kingdom mediated to all who come in contact with the Church. Since the Church makes God’s final saving intentionality effectively present, as J. Feullenbach puts it, “We should never separate the kingdom from the Church because the Church is God’s chosen instrument for God’s kingdom here on earth”<sup>188</sup>.

### ***3.2.1 Salvation Outside the Church***

The concerns that we have here are: what do we mean by Church? Is the Church necessary for salvation? What is the difference between salvation in the Church and outside the Church? What is the way forward?

#### **a) The Meaning of the Church**

Church as a term has a number of meanings in the Second Vatican Council. According to *Lumen Gentium*, we realize six different implications of the meaning of the Church. The first is Church as Catholic Church. What qualifies the Catholic Church is: profession of one faith, sevenfold sacramental liturgy and the Roman Pontiff as the supreme authority. “This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him”<sup>189</sup>..

The second is Church as local congregation. What the Council meant by this is any community where the word and the Eucharistic meal is celebrated in a worshipping community under power of the Holy Spirit. This local community gives

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<sup>187</sup> J. FUELLENBACH, *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 88.

<sup>188</sup> J. FUELLENBACH, *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 89.

<sup>189</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

a lot of significance to action or activities of the Church “This Church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which, in so far as they are united to their pastor, are also quite appropriately called churches in the New Testament”<sup>190</sup>.

The third is Church as community of the baptized. The Council pointed out that what makes one a member of a Church is a properly celebrated sacrament of Baptism which incorporates one into Christ. Therefore, a community which consists of the baptised constitutes a Church. “Fully incorporated into the church are those who, possessing the spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the church together with her entire organization”<sup>191</sup>.

The fourth is that Church refers to the people of Israel. The Council noted the continuity of the church with the past in the Old Testament. Abrahamic community is church that is the community of the called, beginning with Abraham and flowing across ages. This is a view which sees the Jewish people as belonging to the Church in a loose sense<sup>192</sup>. “As Israel according to the flesh which wandered in the desert was already called a church of God [...]”<sup>193</sup>.

The fifth is the Church from Abel. This broad understanding of the Church refers to the entire human race as long as it is influenced and transformed by God’s saving work<sup>194</sup>. This is a very inclusive understanding of the Church, which recognizes God’s own way of touching human life.

The sixth is the house Church. This meaning of church gives significance to the domestic Church, the foundation of faith, passed on from parents to their children. “In what might be regarded as the domestic church, the parents, by word

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<sup>190</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 26.

<sup>191</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 14.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. J. FUELLENBACH, *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 70.

<sup>193</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 9.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. J. FUELLENBACH, *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 70.

and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children”<sup>195</sup>. In a family there is Christ’s presence through evangelization, prayer and the experience of love. These are the elements that institute a family as a church<sup>196</sup>.

b) Is the Church Necessary for Salvation?

St. Cyprian of Carthage in + 258 AD coined the axiom, “*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*” This slogan remained in the Church until the 1960s. There were a lot of boundaries, exclusion, negative approaches to people outside the Church. As a pastoral constitution, Second Vatican Council threw this dictum into a special focus. The main concern was how to reconcile the maxim with the understanding that God condemns no one unless they are personally and seriously guilty<sup>197</sup>. Christopher Butler observed that,

A person who genuinely fears God and does what is right would obviously wish to become a Christian if he recognised this as God’s will: It is God’s will and he wishes to do God’s will, hence, he may be said to desire implicitly what he rejects explicitly: [...]. The implication of the Council’s positive attitude to all these groups of non-Christians is, that in them also Christ is (anonymously) at work, and that in them also the Church, *extra quam nulla salus*, is transcending her own visible limits<sup>198</sup>.

Butler recognized that grace is not limited to the visible Church and the Church is not only confined in the juridical Catholic Church alone; the Church is present whenever sanctifying grace is present. Anybody who lives and acts in faith and good will, even though he or she has never heard of Christ, is invincibly linked to the church.

Just as we have seen, what came with the Second Vatican Council is adoption of categories of membership of the Church, recognizing many levels and implications of belonging to the Church. The Church of Christ is not exclusively

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<sup>195</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, n.11.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. J. FUELLENBACH, *Church: Community for the kingdom*, 72.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. W. TOBIN, “Is the Church Necessary for Salvation?”. 41-51.

<sup>198</sup> B.C. BUTLER, *The Theology of Vatican II*, 126.

identified with the visible Catholic Church, even though the Catholic Church has the fullness of the means of salvation<sup>199</sup>. God has his own ways in which the grace of salvation comes to those who are not reached by the Church's direct ministry. "So, although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please him (*Heb 11:6*), the Church nevertheless, still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize"<sup>200</sup>.

The possible implication one can draw from this council's text is that, where the evangelization of the Church is not possible, it is God alone who can finish the work of acquiring sons and daughters for himself. The spirit of God can use other means to bring Christ's saving grace to these innocent people. Karl Rahner explains, "Christ is present and operative in non-Christian religions and hence in non-Christians religious in and through his spirit"<sup>201</sup>.

The impression that we get from the text, does not imply that the Church is not necessary for salvation. The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the necessity of the Church for salvation.

Basing itself on scripture and tradition, the Vatican II Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is mediator and the way of salvation: he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (Cf. *Mk. 16:16; Jn 3:5*), and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it, or to remain in it<sup>202</sup>.

As J. Fuellenbach detects, the Council was concerned with the image of the Church as a point of reference in the process of salvation in the world. Being fully aware of the Church as a sacrament of salvation, the council fathers corrected the

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<sup>199</sup> Cf. W. TOBIN, "Is the Church Necessary for Salvation?". 41-51.

<sup>200</sup> Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*, 7.

<sup>201</sup> K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 316.

<sup>202</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 14.

narrow image of the Church and fixed it as the symbol of Christ. "Today we would say there are as many ships as there are religions (and denominations) that can carry people to salvation. The Church's mission is viewed here not as taking the people from their ship into the 'bark of Peter' but rather as indicating to them which way to steer their boats"<sup>203</sup>.

From these explanations, we can still ask, is the church necessary for salvation? Both yes and no answers apply. Yes, in the sense that baptism that is found in the Church was made necessary for salvation for those to whom the gospel has been proclaimed. And No, in the sense that although God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism in the Church, he is not bound by the sacrament, he has his own ways of working his salvation in the people who are ignorant of the sacrament<sup>204</sup>. As Christ is the unique and universal mediator, so also his body the Church, which is his own sacrament, has a necessary instrumental role of mediation in the process of salvation<sup>205</sup>.

### **3.3 Personal Existence as a Question of Salvation**

Personal existence of a human being entails freedom and responsibility. Freedom belongs to the subjective nature of human existence. It is freedom that makes human beings accountable for their own decisions. As Karl Rahner says, "In real freedom the subject always intends him or herself, understands and posits him or herself. Ultimately he does not do something, but does himself or herself"<sup>206</sup>. Since freedom is the capacity of the person to decide about the self, it is fundamental to personal existence.

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<sup>203</sup> J. FUELLENBACH, *Church: Community for the Kingdom*, 36.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. CCC, 1287.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. F.A. SULLIVAN, *Salvation Outside the Church?*, 199.

<sup>206</sup> K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 94.

It is worth noting that freedom is not just the capacity to do this and shun that, but the actualization of the self; it is the expression of the uniqueness and totality of the self as a whole. Freedom manifests the capacity of the self, the subject, therefore, not just an accident, but subjective. It is a fact that the subject cannot be repeated. "Freedom therefore, is not the capacity to do something which is always able to be revised, but the capacity to do something final and definitive. It is the capacity of a subject who by this freedom is to achieve his or her final and irrevocable self. In this sense and for this reason freedom is the capacity for the eternal"<sup>207</sup>.

After exploring the point on responsibility and accountability of a free subject, which touches the whole of human existence, we now turn to the discussion on salvation in relation to personal existence. Salvation should be understood as rooted in the personal existence and freedom, and not as an abrupt event that comes at the end from without. "For the true theological notion of salvation does not mean a future situation which befalls a person unexpectedly like something coming from outside, and he or she is happy or, if it is opposite of salvation, unhappy"<sup>208</sup>. What K. Rahner is telling us is that, salvation or damnation will not come as a surprise; rather it is something that is part of us, something we are familiar with, something that we decide on our own, in our personal existence.

Salvation is a process of self-realization and not a decision made in a courtroom in front of a judge at the end of time. "It means rather the final and definitive validity of a person's true self-understanding and true self-realization in freedom before God by the fact that he accepts his or her own self as it is disclosed

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<sup>207</sup> K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 95-96.

<sup>208</sup> K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 39.

and offered to him or her in the choice of transcendence as interpreted in freedom”<sup>209</sup>

The central issue that this interpretation of salvation poses to Christians is that the exercise of freedom in everyday life must be in accordance with oneself as revealed by God. Every Christian’s behaviour must carry within itself the consciousness of what God expects from every follower of Christ. If Christ is regarded as a concrete symbol revealing the intrinsic character of the primal relation between God and human existence, every Christian life must be Christ-like. Jesus used his own human freedom to demonstrate what salvation is like. With this point, we can understand how Jesus who lived many years ago is still relevant to us today. Though we did not see him, we hear how he lived his life, what he did and said; therefore we are able to imitate him. R. Haight, thinking in the same line says, “In this view of salvation, Jesus of Nazareth is not considered its efficient cause but as its revealer or exemplary cause, a view which among others is supported by the New Testament”<sup>210</sup>.

What we gather from these points is that, in our personal existence, when we live the life of Christ, when we imitate him, we already live the life of salvation, we are already saved. Though we are already saved, we still await another level of salvation. Let us look into this kind of salvation briefly.

### **3.4 The Final Salvation at the End of Time**

This concept of salvation is brought about by the second coming of Christ. If he came the first time to bring salvation and he promised his second coming to take us with him into heaven, we would say that he probably will come with another

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<sup>209</sup> K. RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 39.

<sup>210</sup> R. HAIGHT, *The Future of Christology*, 70.

level of salvation to add to the first, as if that was not complete. This idea brings together a higher synthesis of the various dimensions of salvation that we have already encountered in the course of our study.

The meaning we can attach to the second coming is the culmination of the individual salvation and of course the salvation history as a whole. It is the event that keeps the present transformation in a forward looking movement. It will be the consummation of God's plan of salvation and should be understood as another aspect of salvation. "The second aspect of salvation points to an ultimate or final salvation in an end time. It is symbolized by 'heaven' and its equivalents"<sup>211</sup>. Heaven and its equivalents is the ultimate hope of at least every Christian. For R. Haight, some form of faith and hope towards self-transcendence is necessary, even if the object of such faith and hope is not clearly known. For this reason, heaven serves two significant purposes for salvation. First, it expresses the final fulfilment of human freedom in the ultimate future. "Salvation in the absolute future, in order to be such, must draw the present and the past into a wider horizon of meaning that promises to redeem the negation of life, the innocent suffering, the evil of the whole past, present and temporal future into absolute meaning"<sup>212</sup>. This function of heaven fulfils the social nature of human existence: since human beings are social by nature, their absolute salvation must take a social dimension too.

The second function of heaven is grounded on Jesus' whole life and ministry. "By his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has 'opened' heaven to us"<sup>213</sup>. Jesus saves by revealing first of all the sinful nature of the human predicament and shows how it is suppose to be. And at the end he gives us powers to resist sin,

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<sup>211</sup> R. HAIGHT, *The Future of Christology*, 71.

<sup>212</sup> R. HAIGHT, *The Future of Christology*, 72.

<sup>213</sup> CCC, 1026.

promises his abundance of blessings, and gives an assurance of the defeat of evil at the end. In Jesus, especially his nature of resurrection, we can guess in time, the broad line of the history of salvation's goal.

According to Pannenberg, the resurrection of Jesus anticipates in time the final destiny of humanity as a whole, indicating it to be a perfect communion with God, the final triumph of good over evil, the full leadership and glory of God.<sup>214</sup> In Jesus, the future is identified with God and his kingdom alone. It is a time that Jesus will hand over to God all the saving work that was entrusted to him, God will be all in all.

The very first element of the meaning of heaven is that it is a mystery of communion; nobody goes into heaven alone. Since human life involves a wide range of relationships, it must find its fulfilment in heaven, the perfection of all relationships. "This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity - this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed - is called heaven. Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfilment of the deepest human longing, the state of supreme definitive happiness"<sup>215</sup>. This is the final salvation, a state for which every human being is groaning towards.

### **3.5 Salvation in Africa**

When we want to talk about salvation in Africa, it doesn't mean that salvation has been personalized. Our task is to show how the Christian salvation can be understood in the African context. Our concern is to ask, as R. J. Gehman puts it, will the African ancestors be saved? What will happen to our fathers who lived before the gospel was brought to the lands of Africa?<sup>216</sup> These are particular queries

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<sup>214</sup> Cf. W. PANNENBERG, *Systematic Theology*, 637- 638.

<sup>215</sup> CCC, 1024.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. R.J. GEHMAN, "Will the African Ancestors be Saved?", 85-97.

that cannot get their answers explicitly in the scriptures. However, part of the response to such a question we have already addressed, when we were treating the necessity of the Church for salvation. Anybody who lived and acted in good faith, even though he or she may have never heard of Christ is invincibly linked to the church.

In addition, T. Adeyemo gives different avenues of salvation, and one of them is salvation in moralist sense. He says, "Those who seek salvation in right actions, is that the moralist allows the possibility of the existence of God though he also doesn't seek salvation from God or gods"<sup>217</sup>. Under this token, salvation is not attained by destroying the evil, but simply by doing the good. So our African forefathers who did not struggle to submit to Christ, but simply lived a good life pleasing to God are definitely in heaven. They attained salvation by their moral life.

Furthermore, as R. J. Gehman continues to say, "Whatever the final decision will be concerning the future destiny of those who never heard the gospel, we can rest in God who is righteous and just, our faith rests in God who is fair and not in doctrine or theological statements"<sup>218</sup>. Though there is no agreement among the African Traditional Religions (ATR) of what happens after death, all believe in a life of reward and punishment after death depending on how one lived his or her earthly life. This appeals to a good life here and now on earth strongly among the African people, because after life there will be an eternal reflection of life one lived here on earth. "If a person was genuinely prosperous and happy on earth the life in heaven will be for him an enlarged copy of his former happy one"<sup>219</sup>.

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<sup>217</sup> T. ADEYEMO, "Ideas of Salvation", 67-75.

<sup>218</sup> R.J. GEHMAN, "Will the African Ancestors be Saved?", 85-97.

<sup>219</sup> T. ADEYEMO, *Salvation in African Tradition*, 65.

We may even go further. The Scriptures give us the possibility of individuals knowing God in traditional religion apart from the usual preaching of the gospel or the experience of Christ himself. We are therefore, made to believe that God is not limited to the means of salvation that he has established. Melchizedek, Abimalech, the Canaanite woman, the Good Samaritan, and so many others were biblical figures who lived blameless and upright lives; no one knows how God revealed himself to them, because they didn't belong to any chosen race. This highly suggests that God can reveal himself to individuals and save them if he chooses to do so<sup>220</sup>. The same way of salvation can extend to our African ancestors too.

An observation made by P. N. Wachege is that the word salvation never existed in any ATR, but when Christianity came, some elements of salvation were found in the ATR. One of the meanings of salvation that is found in the ATR is rescue from danger; this can be any life threatening situation. It can be drought, famine, diseases, hunger and many other immanent calamities. The Africans would pray and offer sacrifices so as to be rescued from these dangers and if it happened they would say that God had rescued them. As we are probably aware, this is an element of the Christian understanding of salvation, but it does not carry with it the whole meaning of salvation. "With the emergence of Christianity, new concepts and ideas were introduced. As such the verb *kutangiwa* (among the Kamba) came to mean 'to be saved' rather than just 'to rescue'"<sup>221</sup>.

A deeper understanding of salvation in the ATR can be done in relation to sin which has to do with misconduct or social evil, and is a crime by an individual or entire community against society, ancestors and God as well. Such taboos destroy the chain of relationships from individual to society to ancestors and ultimately to

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<sup>220</sup> Cf. R.J. GEHMAN, "Will the African Ancestors be Saved?", 85-97.

<sup>221</sup> P.N. WACHEGE, *Salvation & Being Saved*, 133.

God. In many cases offerings and sacrifices were demanded of those seeking pardon and integration. When this was done, one would say, "I have been saved or we have been saved or God has saved us". "Salvation in this sense has the implication of being at peace with all, acceptance into the living community and rescue from powers of the malevolent forces. A saviour then is a *conditio sine qua non*"<sup>222</sup>.

Salvation in the ATR is all about right relationship. If one is progressively pro-life, pro-community and one is in right relationship with oneself, the family, the clan, the ethnic group, the ancestral spirit and above all God, then the person is considered to be in the realm of salvation.

Salvation in the ATR is also about the fullness of life, a life well lived in good relationship with the unborn, living and the dead, above all with God. Thus, heaven as a state of those who are saved has this meaning for the ATR. "Heaven is presented as a personalistic state of fullness of life with a convivial community of the living dead and ancestral spirits in nearness to the Supreme Being would appeal most to the Africans"<sup>223</sup>. As with Christianity, ATR also believe that heaven is communion. For the Africans, heaven is a joyful communion with the ancestors and the Supreme Being while for Christians it is a joyful communion with the Three Persons of the Trinity, Angels, Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints.

It is very interesting to notice that in ATR the process of salvation takes the past, present and future into a single unit. This is something that should not only be admired, but exploited. As a conclusion, salvation and being saved, P. N. Wachege would say, "In the African household, the issue of salvation and being saved evokes a philosophy of life and living which embraces we who are still on earth, the 'living

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<sup>222</sup> P.N. WACHEGE, *Salvation & Being Saved*, 134.

<sup>223</sup> P.N. WACHEGE, *Salvation & Being Saved*, 133.

dead' the ancestors and creator together with the rest of creation"<sup>224</sup>. This is what makes salvation in Africa something lived. ATR was a system of life, and no need to tell somebody that he or she is saved, because it is something that everybody lives. "Since religion to an African is the principal way of life, it follows that the doctrine of salvation should be presented as such. In other words, as the way of life"<sup>225</sup>

### **3.6 "In Hope we were Saved"**

This is the title that Pope Benedict XVI has given to one of his recent Encyclical letters, to address the kind of salvation relevant to us today. The aim of this theme is to clarify the kind of salvation revealed to Christians of today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As he says in the introductory remarks, salvation is not simply a given, rather it is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trust worthy hope by virtue of which we can face our present, even if its arduous, and live and accept it if it leads towards an enormous goal<sup>226</sup>. Let us begin by clarifying the meaning of Christian hope.

#### **3.6.1 Christian Hope**

A pressing question that will not go away is this: What fate awaits Christians? What is our destiny? Will our difficulties be forever? What should we continue hoping for? These are serious questions that bring much anxiety and concern. To address these questions, L. Boros says, "We shall start with the essential, Christ's resurrection. Christ is risen. He has, our faith tells us, overcome all the limitations of human existence"<sup>227</sup>. This should be our point of reference, in fact our foundation if we wish to talk about the future, because in this significant

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<sup>224</sup> P.N. WACHEGE, *Salvation & Being Saved*, 144.

<sup>225</sup> P.N. WACHEGE, *Salvation & Being Saved*, 176.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 1.

<sup>227</sup> L. BOROS, *Living in Hope*, 30.

event, human existence finds its hope and fulfilment. “In its future reference, the resurrection is viewed as an eschatological event which opens up a horizon of ‘hope’”<sup>228</sup>. When Jesus rises from the dead, he comes back to life in a glorious body, a different kind of creation, a body that is not limited to the principles of the world, no longer conditioned to space and time. It marks a different kind of creation, from the old one.

When talking about resurrection as the ground of our hope, N. Fogliacco explains. “It is the event that marks the beginning of the final phase of God’s project, characterised by fullness of life and every perfection, in that total harmony with God, with one another, and with the cosmos whole pale image and prophesy was the Eden of old”<sup>229</sup>. Through Jesus’ resurrection, his human reality has risen above the highest sphere of the cosmos and entered into the life of the divine. The resurrection implies that we are no longer conditioned to the dehumanizing principals, a condition which we long for with every fibre of our being. Christians and all the elect are consoled by this to the uttermost<sup>230</sup>.

The Scriptures tell us that, after resurrection, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and sits enthroned at the right hand of the Father, sharing in God’s own power (*Rom* 1:4; *1Cor* 5:4), and in this highest position he intercedes for us forever (*Heb* 7:25). What does that mean? It means that after the resurrection, God is wholly present in human life, penetrating man’s being to make it proper to the purest essence. The resurrection is the central event which shows that the world is already saved and we are free to carry out our reality to the end. As L. Boros puts it eloquently, “This is the central event of the making of the world, of cosmogenesis.

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<sup>228</sup> N. FOGLIACCO, *The God of all Consolation*, 66.

<sup>229</sup> N. FOGLIACCO, *The God of all Consolation*, 66.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. L. BOROS, *Living in Hope*, 35.

The world is already redeemed. We human beings, however – it is the privilege of our freedom – have freely to carry up our reality into its final fulfilment”<sup>231</sup>.

In the views of N. Fogliacco, it is the resurrection of Jesus that makes the act of faith promising and logical, because Jesus, who remained faithful to the Father and committed himself to the absolute limits, even to the point that he felt abandoned, was shown by trustworthy God that he was right, and raised from the dead to a higher position. The same is applicable to us. “The act of faith is the event whereby one commits himself or herself totally and blindly to the unknown. An extremely hard decision for one’s mental pride to make. The resurrection of Jesus becomes a source of consolation because it makes that act not only possible but also reasonable”<sup>232</sup>

In the post-resurrection era, when one makes a decision of faith in God, such faith is in a trustworthy position, because God has showed us in Jesus that he is worthy of trust. All who believe in him will never be forsaken. By this token, all Christians always see a light of Easter ahead, in what is already and at the same time not yet there. “As such, the resurrection is the basis of all our hope”<sup>233</sup>.

### ***3.6.2 Salvation Presupposes Hope***

It is in the acceptance of God’s salvation as true and dependable that we live in hope for its fulfilment in the future. “The present salvation is drawn into and geared towards the future one which finally accomplishes it thereby making it eternal salvation which is absolutely irreversible and irrevocable”<sup>234</sup>.

According to Benedict XVI, the fact that salvation comes to us from God as a gift is actually part of hope. His salvation is not a dream hereafter, situated in a

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<sup>231</sup> L. BOROS, *Living in Hope*, 36.

<sup>232</sup> N. FOGLIACCO, *The God of all Consolation*, 72-73.

<sup>233</sup> N. FOGLIACCO, *The God of all Consolation*, 70.

<sup>234</sup> P.N. WACHEGE, *Salvation & Being Saved*, 49.

future that will never arrive; his saving work is present. The love of God is our guarantee of the existence of what we only vaguely sense and which in our inner self, we await: a life that is truly life<sup>235</sup>.

In addition, Antony Kelly says, the love of God promises us salvation, even though the stream of eternal life has already begun to flow, the gift of God is irrevocable. The resurrection has happened, the spirit is already poured and believers have become children of God.<sup>236</sup> Despite all these gifts, the tension between good and evil shall remain, but we have been assured that this is temporal, the good will overcome the evil. It is this victory of the good over evil that we await in hope. The defeat of the evil by the good has already taken place, the victory is already determined but we await its ultimate declaration. Kelly in basing his argument on the Scriptures says,

Father, I desire that those also whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory. (*Jn* 17:24). This desire of Jesus and prayer to his father is what we are still waiting for to be fulfilled. In this hope we are saved [...] we wait for it with patience (*Rom* 8:18-25). At present, hope can claim only the first fruits of the spirit. The full harvest is yet to grow and be gathered<sup>237</sup>.

Our salvation in hope is based on God's decision to save us. He has manifested his firm intention to save us, provided we join in his promise to the world, receive Christ as his great sign of hope and accept the paschal mystery as the decisive directive of his salvation. Salvation in hope is not just a belief, but it is Christ in person: hope has become incarnate, he has been seen and touched by some, and has been heard and accepted by many. Christ is therefore, our hope as the fulfilment of God's saving love, God's saving mercy and God's saving justice. He who is our hope is our salvation. It is in him who is our hope that we were saved<sup>238</sup>.

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<sup>235</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 31.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. A. KELLY, *Eschatology and Hope*, 66.

<sup>237</sup> A. KELLY, *Eschatology and Hope*, 66.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. B. HARING, *Hope is the Remedy*, 21-22.

### 3.7 “I am so and so and I am Saved”

Having explored the theme of salvation in depth, let us return to the matter that led to the development of this study. It is common to our Christian brothers and sisters of other denominations to proclaim themselves saved. The phrases like “I am saved, “I have met the Lord”, and many others that are close to those are common on the lips of some. It is true that they have biblical origin and sentiments; however, the understanding of salvation as an on-going process is not understood if not overlooked. L. Magesa also observed this in his contact with some Christians and commented: “Many of the African indigenous Christian churches and some Catholics charismatic prayer groups show this tendency. ‘I am saved’ means for them mere (intellectual and emotional) knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ, as ‘Lord’. After that, for such people there does not seem to be any need for further repentance”<sup>239</sup>.

A systematic question that might follow is, does the recognition of Jesus, as Lord alone make one perfect? Does belief in Jesus Christ remove one from the sin of the world, the fallen human condition, the tendency to turn away from God, and other sins human beings are prone to? This does not reflect either the Scripture, or the actual human predicament<sup>240</sup>. We have seen in the course of our study that salvation is first of all a gift from God that can either be welcomed or rejected. Welcoming it alone is not enough, it has to be nurtured and made to grow, through constant repentance. “Salvation in a Christian sense is a process, a growth towards completion. It is not an ‘I have got it all’ *eureka* event. It is a progressive dynamic shauri involving our volition in our diaspora”<sup>241</sup>.

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<sup>239</sup> L. MAGESA, “‘I am Saved’ - The Ethical Dimension”, 238-244.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. L. MAGESA, “‘I am Saved’ - The ethical Dimension”, 238-244.

<sup>241</sup> P.N. WACHEGE, *Salvation & Being Saved*, 53.

To be a Christian is to join a pilgrimage, the community that is on the salvation road to final salvation. Meeting Christ, is not always a joyful moment. Meeting Christ is another momentous time of pain, because in Christ we are confronted with the truth about ourselves. It is a time that our limitations and our dark side are put into a broad light. L. Boros, as it is cited in the book, *Eschatology and Hope*, fluently states:

Christ looks with utter love and complete graciousness on the one who comes to him. At the same time his gaze burns right into the innermost parts of that human existence. To encounter God in Christ's eyes of fire is the highest fulfilment of our capacity for love and also the most fearful suffering our nature ever has to bear<sup>242</sup>.

Meeting Christ is a crucial moment of our own judgement. Before him all our pretence melts away and we face him in true self. This encounter with him is feared, because it burns us, renovates and frees us, by letting us become authentically ourselves. "Yet in the pain of this encounter, when the impurity and sickness of our lives become evident to us, there lies salvation. [...] The pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy"<sup>243</sup>. Christ must not only be understood as saviour, but also our judge. However, through his grace, we hope and go trustfully to meet him because he is also our advocate.

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When we meet Jesus, the journey is not finished; it has begun. In fact expressions like beginning a fresh from Christ are applicable. For Christians, this journey begins at Baptism. "Baptism provides a unique opportunity to make a fresh start in life, to integrate various dimensions of life into one whole and healthy organism"<sup>244</sup>. On one hand, with baptism we are saved, because we are rescued from

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<sup>242</sup> Cf. A. KELLY, *Eschatology and Hope*, 125.

<sup>243</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 47.

<sup>244</sup> L. MAGESA, "'I am Saved' - The Ethical Dimension", 238 -244.

'unchristian' life to a Christian life. While on the other hand, the journey of salvation is just begun. In a sense, we are being saved. Christian life is therefore a life of those who are being saved. This would be the best slogan for Christians. "I am so and so and I am being saved in hope". We will be able to exclaim that we are saved in the final triumph, the goal that every Christian must groan towards attaining and await for with hope.

L. Magesa also insists on the same, when he says, "Understanding salvation as a once for-all event, accomplished in the past by Jesus death on the Cross, is thus not only unchristian, but it may even be completely anti-Christian. It may, and usually does, contradict the true sense of Christian ethics, whose base is the effort to conform to the perfection of God"<sup>245</sup>. To take an ethical dimension as Magesa does and say "I am saved" is self-affirmation, which brings the danger of self-justification and kind of a boast, which is strongly opposed to ethical duty<sup>246</sup>.

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<sup>245</sup> L. MAGESA, "'I am Saved'- The Ethical Dimension", 238-244.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. L. MAGESA, "'I am Saved'- The Ethical Dimension", 238-244.

## CONCLUSION

We have to acknowledge the fact that it is not easy to bring the history of salvation into unity that can be relevant to Christians today. For this reason, we humbly accept that this study is not entirely exhaustive. It is open to more contributions and corrections. However, from the very beginning our focus has been to offer a systematic presentation of salvation in the language Christians can understand easily in our contemporary era. The Bible itself, seemingly, does not take much time over explaining systematically our salvation. Nonetheless it gives it as a hope which is to be embraced by all the believers. The Old Testament is far more interested in the narratives, which present God as the only hope for salvation of his people. The Old Testament salvific terms and images present a God who is entirely concerned with the well - being of his people. Here the initiative lies completely with God. He is the subject of every work of salvation.

We have also learnt that the Old Testament presentation of salvation is significant to the salvation in the New Testament. When Jesus infers the meaning of his own work of salvation, both for himself and his own contemporaries, he falls back to the Old Testament concepts as his starting point. In the Old Testament, it was God who saves, in the New Testament, God saves in Jesus Christ. Jesus presents a new face of God's manifestation to humanity. He gives a new social reality in his own identity, in his relation to the Father and his life to be imitated by

his brothers and sisters on earth. The way he relates to human beings has saving efficiency. In Incarnation, the realities of both God and man are present and those who come in contact with him taste divine reality. “For through him both of us have access in one spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone” (*Eph 2:18-19*).

In St. Paul, we found out that salvation has past, present and future scope. It is past because we are saved the moment we believe in Jesus Christ as saviour. Salvation is also at the present because we are being saved. Our sanctification is a process by the Holy Spirit that accompanies us. It is as well in the future, because we have not fully received all the fruits of salvation that will be ours when the reign of God is completely established.

Our study has shown us in the second chapter that after the biblical epoch, the meaning of salvation developed through the centuries and cultural factors have had a decisive influence on it. During the first four centuries, salvation was understood as a process of being like God, and terms like divinization, deification and the like were used. With a lot of limitations, the Medieval period began an attempt to present salvation in a systematic way and the result of this was many theories of salvation. The study dwelt more on the theory of satisfaction of Anselm of Canterbury; this was done because of the vast influence the theory had up to nearly our century.

Besides this theological development, we have appreciated that Protestantism has played an important role in bringing about a different attitude towards the contemporary Catholic viewpoint of salvation. One of the viewpoints

that we highlighted is that as the Church focuses on the salvation of itself and the salvation of the individual members of the Church through faith and good works is also taken with equal importance. Though we are not saved in isolation, the salvation of an individual also takes value as the founders of Protestantism, like Luther, insisted upon.

Our study on the systematic approach to salvation, in the third chapter, was asking the questions; how can salvation touch the lives of Christians today? How can the language of salvation be relevant to Christians today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? This approach realized the tension that exists between the “already” and “not yet” in the human existence in the present time. We are already saved through the death and the resurrection of Jesus, but since we still live in a world, that Benedict XVI describes as having problems that have not gotten any better, we await a complete salvation at the end-time, which has been anticipated in the resurrection of Jesus<sup>247</sup>.

We realized that our salvation in hope is based on God’s decision to save us; he has manifested in the resurrection of Jesus that they who trust and believes in him, cannot be forsaken. Salvation in hope for that reason is not just a belief, but it is Christ in person; a hope that has become incarnate. Christ is therefore, our hope, the fulfilment of God’s saving reality. It is in him, who is our hope that we are saved. “Saved in hope” therefore means “Saved in Jesus Christ”. What does hope, who is Jesus, want from us to be saved? “He wants us to believe him. To let ourselves be led by him. To live with him. And so to become more and more like him and, thus, to live rightly”<sup>248</sup>.

At the end of this reflection on the investigation into the meaning of salvation, we need to emphasize once more that considering salvation as a once and

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<sup>247</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Light of the World*, 126.

<sup>248</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Light of the World*, 156.

for-all event, achieved in the past by Jesus death on the Cross, is thus not only unchristian, but is completely anti-Christian. It contradicts the true sense of Christian hope, whose foundation is the effort to conform to the perfection of God. We will be able to cry out that we are saved in the final victory, the perfection that every Christian must work towards achieving and wait for it with a trustworthy hope, which has already been assured to us.

Another characteristic that emerged and we need to mention again is the acceptance of our weakness and sinfulness. All of us are beggars receiving God's graces. Thus, instead of introducing ourselves as, "I am so and so and I am saved", it is more Christian to say "I am so and so, and I am being saved in hope", because the whole of the Christian family is striving to live a good moral life.

Finally, with regard to all the pervasive issues that we have dealt with in the course of this study, to answer the question we began with, whether the Catholics are saved or not? We would say once again that: We are saved in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We are being saved in Christ through the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. In the end we will be irrevocably saved at the Parousia when Christ comes in his glory. Christ is therefore, our hope, the hope of all God's saving plan. He who is our hope is our salvation and in him we are saved.

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