

**A THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL EXAMINATION
ON THE SYNTHESIS OF PENAL SUBSTITUTION AND
CHRISTUS VICTOR MOTIFS: IMPLICATIONS FOR
AFRICAN METAPHYSICS**

By

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Falconer', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Robert D. Falconer
Port Elizabeth, South Africa
9 January 2013

Dedication

I joyfully dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my dearest companion, my wife, Catherine Falconer, who served faithfully as a missionary to South Sudan for many years. May the missionary work you have done in Africa resound like the beating of ten thousand drums to the exquisite rhythm of the Blessed Trinity.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| AIC's | African Independent/Initiated Churches |
| ATR | African Traditional Religion |
| <i>De. Fu. Sae.</i> | <i>De Fuga Saeculi</i> , “Flight from the World” |
| <i>Dem. Ev</i> | <i>Demonstratio Evangelica</i> , “Proof for the Gospel” |
| ESV | English Standard Version |
| <i>Ign. Smyr.</i> | Ignatius’ <i>Epistle to the Smyrnaeans</i> |
| <i>Ign. Trall.</i> | Ignatius’ <i>Epistle to the Trallians</i> |
| <i>Iren. Ad Haer.</i> | <i>Adversus Haereses</i> , “Against Heresies” |
| <i>Just. Dial.</i> | Dialogue with Trypho the Jew |
| KJV | King James Version |
| LXX | Septuagint |
| MFM | Mountain of Fire and Miracles |
| <i>Mor. Exp. Jo.</i> | <i>Moralia, sive Expositio in Job</i> , “Commentary on Job” |
| MT | Majority text (Byzantine Text) |
| NA27 | <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , 27 th ed. |
| NASB | New American Standard Bible |
| NET | New English Translation |
| NIV | New International Version |
| NJB | New Jerusalem Bible |
| NKJV | New King James Version |
| NLT | New Living Translation |
| NRSV | New Revised Standard Version |
| NT | New Testament |
| OT | Old Testament |
| <i>Poly. Phil.</i> | Polycarp’s <i>Epistle to the Philippians</i> |

RCCG *Redeemed Christian Church of God*
TR *Textus Receptus*
Trac. Ps. LIII *Tractatus Super Psalmos LIII, “Treatise on the Psalms 53”*

Abstract

The present disposition of atonement theology has been turbulent in light of recent disputes and criticisms. This dissertation seeks to acknowledge two seemingly distinct atonement theories, the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs, and then explore how they harmoniously complement one another as a synthesis. This atonement synthesis is then applied to African metaphysics to demonstrate its efficacy in a very different cultural context from that of the West.

The research begins with a study of the interplay between atonement theology and socio-historical contexts and the influences that helped develop the theological concepts of atonement. Here the notable presence of atonement synthesis is highlighted throughout Church history. Atonement synthesis in biblical narrative is then examined. It is argued that a theology of penal substitution without *Christus Victor*, or *vice versa*, is inadequate, as both the Church's theology and biblical narrative present them as harmonious and complementary.

The implications of atonement synthesis are then explored in light of African metaphysics, in which the atonement best finds its expression among Africans. An overview of African philosophy and spirituality and a study of African atonement prepare the way for exploring the implications of atonement synthesis in African socio-cosmology, socio-disharmony, socio-ontology as well as socio-renewal and cosmic harmony. These implications demonstrate that Christ's atonement is more than capable in dealing with African metaphysic realities. This dissertation suggests that atonement synthesis ultimately offers the African liberty and hope. It fulfils a profound need in African philosophy and spirituality which, without Christ's penal substitution and Christ as Victor, there would be no hope of redemption.

“It means”, said Aslan, “that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards”.

C.S. Lewis

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research Problem

Atonement theology has been taught throughout church history by most ecclesiastical traditions and movements. Theologians have traditionally applied atonement theology to their particular socio-historical context. One might expect that the way atonement theology is presented to the Western world would be different to the way it is presented to the people of Africa, because their philosophy, culture, reasoning and way of thinking are remarkably distinct.

Penal substitutionary atonement was a systematic theology developed chiefly by the 16th century Reformers as an expansion of Anselm's satisfaction view of atonement. The *Christus Victor* motif, on the other hand, is not so much a rational systematic theology, instead it is a drama in the grand narrative of Scripture, whereby God through His Son triumphed over Satan and the malevolent spirits, and defeated them, liberating humanity from the bondage of sin and death (Aulén 1931). In this cosmic drama it is palpable that Jesus immersed Himself in the experience of humanity. He shared in their struggles and sufferings, and ultimately overcame and defeated the power of evil through His atonement by

establishing His Kingdom. In recent years this view of atonement has received growing popularity among Christians of diverse theological persuasions. Perhaps today, as Harper (2001) observes, Postmodern culture has produced an environment ready to embrace the *Christus Victor* motif as its atonement theory because it effectively addresses the universal issues of evil and suffering.

I propose that a fresh understanding of a synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs are a powerful and significant view of atonement for the Church, and especially for African Christianity. I argue that this addresses the environment in which African Christians find themselves, at the metaphysical level as well as in their physical experiences. Although African and Western theologians have explored penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs, few, if any, have rigorously developed a synthesis of these motifs from a metaphysical perspective which provide a holistic and significant contribution to African Christian soteriology.

On the outset I have discovered that much has been written on African theology. In fact, Sakuba tells us that many contributions have been made to African theology which explores “the task of the church and themes that are important in an African context such as culture, healing, the spirit, church leadership, the role of the ancestors and initiation”. Not to mention the many “urgent ethical issues” that African theology seeks to engage. These contributions, however, also offer reflections on the traditional theological themes, including salvation. Yet Sakuba argues, “These often remain implicit and are seldom developed towards a systematic treatment of specific aspects of Christian doctrine” (2004:11). It seems then that little attention has been given towards formulating an African theology in terms of a soteriology that is grounded in both historical theology as well as biblical narrative in such a way that it is profoundly meaningful for the African people (cf. Sakuba 2004:11; Nkansah-Obrempong 2007:149). Therefore I have felt reason to embark on a comprehensive study on atonement theology and illustrate its implications within an African philosophical framework for the African Christian community.

1.2 Review of Scholarship

In 1935 C.H. Dodd challenged the view of penal substitution in his book, *The Bible and the Greeks*. He argued that the concept of propitiation was foreign to Scripture and that ἱλάσκεσθαι really means expiation. Two critics, Nicole (1955) and Morris (1956/1965) would several years later refute Dodd's thesis in their writings by re-examining the texts which he had employed in his study. Here they discovered numerous inadequacies in Dodd's study and sought to promote the doctrine of penal substitution. Packer (1959/1973) and Stott (1986) would then build upon this doctrine, by making significant contributions towards the understanding of atonement.

Not long prior to Dodd, Aulén's (1931) seminal work, *Christus Victor: an Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Atonement* illustrated that the *Christus Victor* motif was the leading view in the NT as well as throughout the early church period for the first thousand years. He predicted that this motif, although not expressed in precisely the same form as in the past, would once again experience a comeback in authentic Christianity. Aulén's prediction came true! In his article Harper (2001) provides a very insightful contribution to the understanding of the *Christus Victor* motif for today. He demonstrates how some of the central features of Postmodernist culture make the *Christus Victor* motif an attractive alternative to that of penal substitution. He explains that in the last century (and I would include the present) there has been much dissatisfaction with the view of penal substitution. Harper argues that the reason why the *Christus Victor* motif is so attractive amongst Postmodern Christians is that it envisions Jesus' full immersion into human suffering and experience and the final defeat of evil. He believes that for the Postmodernist, an atonement view that is too individualistic cannot engage or address the problems of endless suffering and evil on a cosmic level. It is then reasoned that Postmodernism has fostered an environment that is ready for a *Christus Victor* Renaissance, as was predicted by Aulén. Harper is, however, not entirely predisposed to the *Christus Victor* motif, for he acknowledges its dangers as well. He comments on its liabilities stating that

this view can ignore the all-embracing narrative of Christ's atonement which fails to deal with YHWH's¹ wrath as well as Jesus' substitution and sacrifice.

An example of this Postmodern response to the atonement is expressed by Weaver (2001), a Mennonite theologian, who says that God the Father did not ordain Jesus' crucifixion but that it was an expected consequence of Him falling into the hands of sinful human beings. He, therefore, advocates an entirely non-violent theory for understanding the atonement, namely *narrative Christus Victor*. Unfortunately, Weaver argues that the satisfaction view of atonement must be discarded in favour of the *narrative Christus Victor* motif as the *only* biblical and non-violent alternative. This I believe is erroneous.

Similarly, Boyd (1997/2008), an Open Theist and influential advocate of the *Christus Victor* motif, explains that this view of the atonement cannot be understood without an appreciation for the broader spiritual warfare motif that runs throughout Scripture. Boyd suggests that the initial victory is found not in supposing that our sins and just punishment are literally transferred onto Jesus whilst being crucified, experiencing YHWH's ineffable wrath as He exhausts it upon His Son in our place. Rather, Jesus, in love, died as our substitution, bearing our sin and guilt by experiencing the full force of Satan's kingdom which mankind has allowed to rule on the earth. We are saved not from YHWH's wrath but from God's archenemy and the destructive consequence of our sin and so, through Christ's death, we are reconciled to YHWH, being freed from our slavery to Satan. Therefore, whilst Boyd is an advocate of the *Christus Victor* motif, the penal substitutionary theory is also not entirely absent from his theology.

Chalke, another contemporary advocate of the *Christus Victor* motif, wrote that the traditional presentation of the atonement, that is, the satisfaction / penal substitutionary view of atonement, is a barrier to faith for many people. He argued that these views seem to portray the cross as "cosmic child abuse", a vengeful

¹ In this dissertation I shall refer to the Judeo-Christian God as YHWH, except for in quotations and where 'God' is appropriate; e.g. 'the Son of God'.

Father demanding the punishment of His Son for an offence He has not even committed, for the sake of humanity's sin.

In response to Steve Chalke's discourse on the atonement and the general atonement debate, the London Symposium on the theology of atonement was held at the London School of Theology in July 2005. The symposium facilitated the debate with the purpose of fostering a mutual understanding among the evangelical community during the atonement controversy. Although the controversy was far from being resolved, many at the symposium agreed on the urgency and necessity of communicating the message of the cross in a way that is biblical and meaningful in our contemporary world.

In America several Reformed theologians and pastors were genuinely concerned that the criticism and denial of penal substitutionary atonement is harming the church. In response, a collection of three papers written by J.I. Packer on penal substitution together with one from Mark Dever was compiled and published in the book, *In My Place He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement* (2007). The aim was to encourage the church to revisit the doctrine of penal substitution. In that same year in Great Britain, Jeffery, Ovey and Sach (2007) also responded out of concern, and published their book, *Pierced for our Transgressions: Recovering the Glory of Penal Substitution*, as a defence of the historic, evangelical and biblical doctrine of penal substitution which they believe is under assault. After publication, Wright (2007) gave the book a scornful review calling it "deeply unbiblical" in his article, *The Cross and its Caricatures*.

Considering now modern African soteriology; Meiring (2007) acknowledges significant variations between Western theology and African's view of soteriology, but he also sees a possible harmony between the theology of Western Postmodernism and African theology.

In his exhaustive study, Khathide (2007) explored the theme of evil spirits in the first-Century Jewish World against the African context. He illustrated that in both

worldviews there is a heightened sense of the spiritual world and malevolent spirits. One cannot help but feel the shadow of the *Christus Victor* motif throughout Khathide's research.

Chike's (2008) view differs somewhat from Meiring; demonstrating how the African worldview is very different to that of the West. Firstly, the traditional African beliefs acknowledge a Supreme Being even though he is remote and vague and is rarely worshiped. However, intermediaries are more articulate, functioning as a vital part of the community. Secondly, traditional Africans understand the world and its universe in metaphysical terms, for the spiritual and physical worlds are interwoven, as is also illustrated in Khathide's work, whilst Westerners separate the physical world from the spiritual. As a result of the African's 'interwoven' worldview, their understanding of soteriology and what they are being saved from integrates the vertical dimension which includes humans and deities, and the horizontal relationship, that is, humans and their experiences. With an acute awareness of the spiritual world and malevolent entities, Chike explains that Africans view their deliverance in terms of victory over evil spirits. Therefore, religious observations provide them with a sense of greater power which is required to defeat such forces. These forces may manifest as poverty, misfortune, poor health, and, of course, sorcery and witchcraft. Thirdly, according to Chike, traditional African Christians focus on Jesus as a glorious and powerful Victor and the life in which they live is a synthesis of spiritual and physical worlds. Therefore, they view their life as a spiritual battle. Lastly, Chike explains that forgiveness and deliverance for the African is primarily cosmological and focuses on the propitiation of God.

Mbiti (1973) concurs with many other African theologians explaining that above all else Jesus is seen as supreme over all spiritual authority, specifically over evil forces, He is seen as the *Christus Victor*. Consequently, as Mbiti notes, Jesus as Victor is at the forefront of African theology and Jesus' humanity, atonement and the cross are in the backdrop. Mbiti judges that this view of Christ is inadequate whilst he stresses that there still needs to be a deeper appreciation of the African

worldview which has influence on the way Africans experience and understand the Gospel (Bediako 2004:22).

In an article by Ngong (2009), he argues that in most cases Pentecostal or Charismatic Christianity in the African Church have uncritically adopted the soteriological philosophy of the ATR's. This, he believes, is inappropriate and undermines the differences between authentic Christianity and ATR's, as he says, "...thus collapsing Christianity into African Traditional Religions". To remedy this Ngong recommends that African Christians need to find a synthesis between authentic Christian worship and African cultural continuity within their respective context. Nkansah-Obrempong (2007) points out that African Evangelicals have not made adequate use of their resources in an effort to develop a truly African theology. He notes that this is because they are fearful of being labelled syncretistic, or as Bediako (2004:49) says, "... to achieve some integration between the pre-Christian religious experience and African Christian commitment." Bediako comments further, saying that this must be done in such a way as to ensure the integrity of African Christian identity in its own right. Christian faith he considers, is capable of 'translation' into an African worldview without destroying its foundational content.

1.3 Problem

The problem in this dissertation is to determine the validity of penal substitution and the *Christus Victor* motif as a synthesis, and how it engages with African metaphysics. This problem requires answering the following subordinate questions: (1) what were the socio-historical influences and milieus that helped shape the development of atonement theology in light of the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs in the theology of the Church? (2) What does the biblical narrative tell us about penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs as an atonement synthesis²; how are they complementary? (3) What are the

² I shall oftentimes employ atonement synthesis as a contraction of the synthesis of penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs. The meaning in this dissertation is the same.

implications of a synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs for African Christianity concerning their ontological perceptions and the cosmic struggle in which Africans find themselves? Simply put, what are the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics?

1.4 Delimitations

I wish to make the following delimitations: (1) I have elicited the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs as the dominant atonement views above other atoning themes, such as satisfaction, governmental, scapegoating and example (moral influence) theories³, for the following reasons: (i) they have held profound influence in church history, (ii) they appear to be the dominant views of atonement today, (iii) they seem to hold scriptural precedence, (iv) they are two very different views of atonement and yet appear to be complementary, and (v) the theological and biblical view of Jesus' death in light of these views seem to offer significant meaning and relevance for African Christianity, perhaps more so than the other views of atonement. Notably, whilst the example theory offers important ethical contributions towards African Christianity, its contribution towards African metaphysics is negligible, not to mention its non-salvific qualities. (2) Although I shall employ Hebrew, Greek and Latin, my abilities in the African languages are non-existent, and thus I shall avoid references to African vernacular texts and quotations. (3) Africa is a profoundly diverse continent; it is impossible to explore the implications of atonement synthesis for every African ethnic group and culture. Therefore, by 'Africa' I mean all of Africa, apart from the Arab countries of the North, and so I shall address general African concepts and notions that apply across a wide range of African people groups.

³ No doubt these views are important and will be mentioned as well.

1.5 Objectives

The ultimate objective of this dissertation is to discover and explore the implications, meaning and significance of atonement synthesis for Africans in light of their own philosophy and spirituality.

This objective has three goals: (1) it investigates what factors helped shape the development of atonement theology in church history. This will assist in laying out a framework for discovering the interplay between atonement theology and the African socio-cultural contexts. (2) To explore in biblical narrative two very distinct views of atonement, namely the penal substitution and the *Christus Victor* motifs and whether they are coherently interrelated and complementary as a synthesis. Furthermore, the outcome of this study will primarily form a biblical framework for the development of an African Christian soteriology. (3) To formulate an African systematic theology in soteriology by examining the synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs in light of the first two outcomes. This objective seeks to discover the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics.

1.6 Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is as follows: (1) the primary contribution is to lay a foundation for a systematic theology in African soteriology that is rooted in the history of the Church's theology, and more importantly in biblical narrative. I believe this will demonstrate the profound significance and meaning of the atonement for the African people, with respect to African metaphysics. This is important because too often the philosophical and spiritual needs and desires of African Christians have not adequately been met by Christianity. (2) As a secondary purpose, I am deeply concerned about the state of atonement theology in today's church and in the halls of theological academia. I believe this study can add value to the current, turbulent discourse on atonement theology from a unique perspective. (3) This research, I trust, will contribute to new trends in the study of

atonement theology, by exploring the synthesis of penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs, especially as it relates to African metaphysics, as laid out in chapter 4.

1.7 Design and Methodology

1.7.1 Design

The nature of this research is a development from a literary investigation to a conceptual, philosophical construction. The design of this research can be divided into three literary tasks: (1) the first task explores the literary works of various theologians throughout the history of the Church. Here I shall explore the socio-historical development of atonement synthesis theology in order to highlight the church's understanding of penal substitution and the *Christus Victor* motif as a synthesis. Theology should always be done in community. Therefore, taking into account and reflecting upon the historical teachings of atonement throughout Christian history is imperative. (2) The next task examines what the biblical narrative tells us about atonement synthesis. It is my conviction that all of Christian theology must be grounded in the biblical text, above all else. This task, among other things, will make use of textual analysis, hermeneutics, exposition, textual criticism and discourse analysis. (3) Whilst also literary, the third task is primarily conceptual, making use of conceptual and philosophical analysis. Here the concepts of the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs in African metaphysics and traditional life will be analyzed. At a philosophical level, this study will explore and highlight meaningful and significant implications of atonement synthesis in African metaphysics.

1.7.2 Methodology

The research is separated into three main steps: The first step is a theological study of the socio-historical development of atonement theology. The second is an

examination of relevant biblical texts. The last step is the development of a systematic theology for an African soteriology by engaging with African metaphysics.

Step 1: Theological Examination

In order to examine the socio-historical development of atonement theology I shall employ the following methods: (1) comparisons will be made whereby the differences of the disparate views of atonement theology in church history will be compared and analyzed. (2) The synthesis and harmonization of two seemingly unrelated atonement theories, namely, penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs, are highlighted and demonstrated as a coherent whole in the history of the church's theology. This theological examination will be chronological.

Resources to be consulted in this theological examination will, among others, include the following: (1) the primary works are to be historical. These include the original works, in English translation, of the Fathers of the Church, the Scholastics, the Reformers, and so on. (2) Secondary works will consist of recent literary works. Among many others, this will include the following: Aulén (1931), Boersma (2004), Boyd (1997), Brown (1984), Green and Baker (2000), Hill and James III (2004), Jeffery, Ovey and Sach (2007), Kelly (1968), McDonald (1985), McKnight (2005), N.T. Wright (1996; 2006; 2007), Packer and Dever (2007), Stott (1986), Tidball, Hilborn and Thacker (2008), Tillich (1967) and Weaver (2001).

Step 2: Biblical Examination

The second step will provide an examination of the biblical narrative and discourse, exploring the biblical meaning of the atonement, and examining atonement synthesis. Here I shall engage with the original, that is, the Hebrew and

Greek texts. This step will require the following methods: (1) A lexical and syntax analysis whereby significant words and grammatical features will be analyzed and discussed in an effort to discover the original meaning, working towards an accurate rendering of the text. (2) Textual criticism will also be employed to highlight textual variations for reconsidering the original text where necessary. (3) Discourse analysis will assist in determining the biblical author's coherence and flow of thought. (4) The method of structural criticism will analyze the literary discourse features and semantic relationships of the biblical text. These will include discussions on syntax, conjunctions, the use of grammar and the development of logic and literary structure. (5) I shall study the theological meaning and message of the major theological themes of selected biblical texts. The layout of this examination will, for the most part, also be ordered chronologically.

The primary resources for this research will consist of the original Hebrew and Greek texts of the Sacred Scriptures. I will be using the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5th rev. ed. (BHS) and the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed. (NA27). In addition I will consult the *Septuaginta*, Greek ed. (LXX) and the *Byzantine/Majority Text* (MT).

This study will also employ the following secondary resources: (1) Hebrew lexicons: I shall consult the HALOT by Koehler, Baumgartner, Richardson and Stamm (1995) as the chief Hebrew lexicon, supplemented by the TDOT edited by Botterweck and Ringgren (1978), Gesenius and Tregelles (2003) and Brown, Driver and Briggs (1906). (2) Hebrew grammars: my first choice will be Waltke and O'Connor (1990), followed by Joüon and Muraoka (2006), Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar (1910) and Arnold and Choi (2003). (3) Greek lexicons: the main lexicon that will be used for word Greek definitions is BDAG (2000), but for more exhaustive lexical commentary I shall employ the TDNT edited by Kittel and Friedrich, 10 vols. (1985) and the NIDNT edited by Brown, 4 vols. (1986). (4) Greek grammars: I shall rely upon Wallace (1996), Young (1994), Porter (1999), and for more advanced Greek grammatical studies I shall consult

Robertson (1934). (5) Biblical commentaries: I shall employ numerous commentaries for example: Bruce (1990), Carson (1984), Ellingworth (1993), Grudem (1988), Gundry (1994), Motyer (1999), O'Brien (1999; 1990; 2002), Stuart (2007), including the *Africa Bible commentary: A One-Volume Commentary Written by 70 African Scholars*, edited by Adeyemo (2006). (6) Bible Translations: English modern translations will also be consulted throughout for comparisons and further discussion. Translations to be consulted are: NASB, ESV, KJV, NKJV, NET, NIV, NJB, GNB and NLT. (7) Other works to be consulted may include Bible dictionaries, Old and New Testament surveys, theological books as well as relevant theological journals, articles and research papers.

Step 3: African Metaphysics

In the last step the implications of penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs in African metaphysics will be explored and highlighted in order to construct a meaningful and significant atonement theology for the African people. I shall employ the following procedures: (1) an epistemological study will be employed, discussing the African traditional life and its philosophy and spirituality on its own grounds and in light of the Judeo-Christian tradition. (2) Yet it is also a dialogical study as I seek to engage with African philosophy, spirituality and beliefs. Furthermore, I shall engage with various viewpoints presented by African theologians. (3) A comparative method will be employed in way of juxtaposing African philosophy and spirituality with that of Christianity. (4) Theological implications for African metaphysics will also be extrapolated in an effort to construct an African soteriology.

There are two types of primary resources to be consulted in this step: (1) articles from theological journals and research papers by African theologians will, among others, include the following: Adeyemo (1976, 1978), Burgess (2008), Ikuenobe (2000), Kasambala (2005), Kato (1974; 1975), Light (2010), Nkansah-

Obrempong (2007), Nyeri (2011), Reed and Mtukwa (2010). (2) Books on African theology by African theologians will also be consulted; some of these works include the following: Awolalu (1996), Bediako (1995; 2004), Bujo (1992), Idowu (1973), Katongole (2011), Khathide (2007), Kunhiyop (2008), Mbiti (1970; 1989; 1991), Sawyerr (1970), Turaki (2006).

1.8 Overview

Chapter 1 has formed the introduction to this dissertation by offering a synopsis of the research problem and a review of scholarship. The problem, its main question and subordinate questions have been articulated in order to focus the study. The design and methodology of this research has also been carefully laid out along with a list of relevant resources. Lastly, a broad overview of the whole project has been presented.

Chapter 2 is a study of the socio-historical development of atonement synthesis theology, exploring the socio-historical influences that have shaped theological systems and concepts. In this chapter, the interplay between atonement theology and socio-historical contexts throughout the history of the Church are emphasised and articulated. This chapter lays out a theological framework in which to study the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics in chapter 4.

Chapter 3 carefully lays out the synthesis of the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs as illustrated through the drama of atonement synthesis in biblical narrative. This study demonstrates that these two motifs should not be separated when considering atonement theology and that they are in fact complementary. This chapter provides a serious biblical foundation for studying the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics.

Chapter 4 explores the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics. I shall examine the interplay between atonement theology and socio-cultural contexts. Here I argue that African metaphysics is the ‘socio-historical’,

or more accurately in this chapter, ‘socio-cultural’, context in which a *biblical* atonement synthesis best finds its expression among Africans and that atonement synthesis offers significant hope for the African, presenting a powerful African soteriology.

Chapter 5 concludes this research project by offering conclusions from the research problems and the questions asked in light of the conclusions drawn from chapters 2-4. This will include a review of research undertaken, conclusions of research findings and a discussion on the contribution of this study. Lastly, I shall offer recommendations for further theological research.

Chapter 2

The Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis Theology

2.1 Introduction

Although there is little literary⁴ development of atonement theology in recent African Christianity, there are a handful of African theologians among the Fathers of the Church who were generous enough to furnish us with such a written theology. Apart from the African and Eastern Church Fathers, I shall also draw my discussions from the historical theology of the West. Throughout the history of the Church, atonement synthesis has never really been comprehensively articulated as a theology of atonement⁵, at least as far as I am aware. Yet, tracing the socio-historical development of atonement theology throughout church

⁴ I acknowledge, however, that there is an atonement theology being articulated in one way or another by African Pentecostal/Charismatic preachers. Many of them can be watched on television. I shall explore this further in my fourth chapter, *Atonement Synthesis: Implications for African Metaphysics*.

⁵ By comprehensively articulating a theology of atonement I mean, tracing the synthesis of the penal substitution and Christus Victor motifs throughout Church history and in Biblical narrative.

history, I shall demonstrate the remarkable presence of atonement synthesis in the major periods of Christian history and in many of the great Christian thinkers.

This chapter is a study of the Church's theology, exploring the socio-historical influences that have shaped theological systems and concepts. This, therefore, is an interplay between atonement theology and socio-historical contexts. Mann (2005:6) talks about creating an atmosphere whereby the language of one culture (or context) is translated into another. He says that in light of Jesus' incarnation, we should take seriously "the need for atonement to be communicated in the context of human culture and language". Mann (2005:7) offers what is perhaps the best starting point not only for this chapter, but for this dissertation as I seek to engage and examine the socio-historical development of atonement synthesis theology, and later, African Metaphysics. He comments as follows:

We need to read and re-read the atonement as time and place changes the context in which we are called to communicate the salvific work of Christ. Our responsibility, as it has been since the paradigmatic intervention of the incarnation, is to discern the overarching predicament of our time, to understand *the* question behind the questions of our cultural and philosophical context and to engage them with a meaningful and sufficient story of atonement.

This is exactly what the theologians both past and present have sought to do. The British theologian, Michael Reeves (2011), offers a helpful description of historical theology which is relevant. He explains that doing "historical theology is like doing a Bible study with the Greats, theology is done in community, we know God together" (Eph 4:13-16). He acknowledges though that there were certainly problems with the theology of many great theologians and Fathers of the Church in the past and that we should ultimately submit all theology to Scripture.

It is for this reason; out of a high view of the authority, inerrancy and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures that I choose to first examine the synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* Motifs theologically, before I examine it biblically. In other words, I wish not only to submit the outcome of this chapter to Scripture (cf. Ch 3), but that Scripture will be primary for addressing African Metaphysics.

The present chapter, though, will demonstrate that atonement synthesis is evident in the various socio-historical contexts of the Church, and that in these contexts it has indeed enjoyed meaning and significance⁶. Therefore, this chapter will examine the synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs in the work of the Early Church Fathers, European Scholasticism, and the Magisterial Reformers; namely, Martin Luther and John Calvin, theologians of the Post Reformation; and lastly, the current movement in which we find ourselves, Postmodernism⁷.

2.2 The Early Church Fathers

2.2.1 Introduction

The death of Aristotle ended the Classical Greek epoch and the Hellenistic age followed after his student, Alexander the Great. Hellenism was marked by the Stoics, Epicureans, Neo-Pythagoreans, Sceptics, and Neo-Platonists, which provided an essential spring for early Christian thought although perhaps its influence was more evident in early Christendom than in later periods of Christianity⁸ (Tillich 1967:3).

⁶ I do not wish in any way to argue that atonement synthesis was made or should be made to fit a specific context. Rather the atonement synthesis is relevant to all contexts, but a certain context might well cause it to be understood or presented differently.

⁷ Although I could have included a discussion on African theologians and their atonement synthesis theology in this chapter, I felt it more appropriate to include it under the heading, *Socio-Cultural Influences in Atonement Synthesis Theology* in the fourth chapter, *Atonement Synthesis: Implications for African Metaphysics*.

⁸ I note, as we shall see later, that the Scholastics were also influenced by Hellenistic philosophy.

As we shall see, threats to Christianity were external, however as Tillich observes, a much greater danger was also evident within Christianity itself, namely the threat of Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a syncretistic movement and embraced a combination of all the religious traditions of that time (cf. Kelly 1968:6-7) and “was a religion of salvation from the demonic powers” (Tillich 1967:33, 36).

The Church through much of the Apostolic and Ante-Nicene Patristic epoch experienced malicious slaughter and persecution at the hands of the pagan Roman Empire. It was a struggle of the cross and the sword as the unseen powers of the invisible world, YHWH and the dark prince, waged war (Schaff 1910:33). Boyd (1997:56) correctly points out that the Post Apostolic Church understood the problem of evil in a spiritual warfare milieu and that “the world is caught up in a cosmic battle and thus is saturated with horrifying suffering and diabolical evil”. Despite a strong emphasis on the *Christus Victor* motif, we should not be surprised that the Church Fathers provide us with a variegated treatment of the substitutionary atonement as well (Kelly 1968:4), which also included the idea of sacrifice.

Nevertheless an unexpected turn of events during the Nicene and Post-Nicene Patristic period occurred at the time of the Roman emperor, Constantine. He provided a shift of the Christian faith from a persecuted religion under secular Roman rule to an alliance with itself. Here Schaff so brilliantly writes, “Galilean, thou hast conquered! The ruler of the civilized world lays his crown at the feet of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth” (Schaff 1910:4).

This discussion will explore the synthesis of penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs, and it’s socio-historical development in both the Greek and Latin Church Fathers of the Apostolic, Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene periods.

2.2.2 Apostolic Fathers

Ignatius (50-117) and Polycarp (69-155), both disciples of the Apostle John and friends with one another (Schaff 1910:665), were of the first Apostolic Fathers. It is credible that Ignatius wrote his epistles whilst on his way from Antioch to Rome to face martyrdom under the reign of Trajan. It is difficult to ignore the possible influence of his impending martyrdom and his preparation for an agonizing death in light of his understanding of the atonement as he wrote his epistles⁹ (Finlan 2007:53; Wright 1992:350).

In Ignatius' Epistle, *Επιστολή προς Τραλλιανός*, "Epistle to the Trallians", he describes Jesus Christ as being the one who suffered death for their sake, that his readers may believe in his death and so escape dying (Ign. *Trall.* 2). The imperative here is that Christ "suffered a death for their sake" and that by believing this, Christians can escape death¹⁰. Here the substitutionary theme, though not penal, is clearly illustrated (cf. Ign. *Smyr.* 2). Again he writes in *Επιστολή προς Σμυρναίους*, "Epistle to the Smyrnaeans", in section 6, that those who do not believe that Jesus Christ lived in the flesh, and confess His cross, passion and the blood which He shed for the salvation of the world, will not inherit eternal life. Further, Ignatius proclaims that our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered *for* our sins, and that the Father raised him up again. In his epistle, he focuses on the cross which becomes the victory through Jesus' resurrection and the ground by which salvation is secured (Ign. *Smyr.* 7; Mc Donald 1985:120). Polycarp, the other disciple of the Apostle John, in his writings employed substitutionary language to explain his understanding of the atonement. In *Επιστολή προς Πιλιπησίους*, "Epistle to the Philippians" he proclaims Jesus Christ, "who bore our sins in His own body on the tree... but endured all things for us, that we might live in Him" (Poly. *Phil.* 8). Like Ignatius, Polycarp taught that Jesus took upon himself the sins of humanity, thus teaching a vicarious soteriology.

⁹ An example of Ignatius' martyrdom rhetoric can be found in Ign. *Rom.* 4-7.

¹⁰ Ignatius is referring to eternal death or spiritual death.

2.2.3 Ante-Nicene Fathers

2.2.3.1 Greek Church Fathers

Justin Martyr (103–165), a philosopher and apologist, went somewhat further in his atonement theology than both Ignatius and Polycarp. Justin was probably the chief of apologists and for him Christianity as a philosophy was the only certain adequate philosophy (Tillich 1967:27). He wanted to win the unbelievers over to Christianity and did this by finding connection points between the Gospel and the intellectual concepts and cultural notions of his audience. This he did without compromising the Christian message (Litfin 2007:55). Justin recorded a dialogue with a learned Jew, Trypho. Here they conversed about spiritual matters which developed into theological apologetics and biblical arguments (Litfin 2007:59). Justin centred his discourse of the foreshadowing of the cross on the OT alone¹¹. In these discussions Justin’s understanding of the atonement becomes evident.

In his Τρύφωνα Ἰουδαῖον Διάλογος¹², “Dialogue with Trypho the Jew”, Justin demonstrated that the Father not only wished that Jesus should suffer in order that humanity might perceive that the Father willed His Son to experience sufferings for our sakes (Just. *Dial.* 103) but that He “caused Him to suffer these things on behalf of the human family”. Justin then goes on to comment, “remission of sins shall be yours” (Just. *Dial.* 95).

Another central theme in Justin’s atonement theology is the Passover lamb whose blood on the door posts and the lintel delivered the Israelites from death and then out of Egypt. Justin compares Christ to this Passover lamb, Christ being the new Passover Lamb who was sacrificed (Just. *Dial.* 111); this is significant because Trypho, who was a Jew, could understand the typology of sacrifice and its meaning from the OT. Similarly, as we shall see in chapter 4, Christ as a sacrifice offers meaning for the African in light of traditional African sacrifice.

¹¹ The NT would obviously have held no weight for Trypho, being a Jew.

¹² Latin: *Dialogus cum Tryphono Iudaeo*

Shaw and Edwards (2006:56) see this as the “substitutionary nature of Christ’s death.” Whilst I agree, I would adjoin that it is also deeply rooted in Israel’s liberation from Egypt and thus alludes to a *Christus Victor* metaphor.

Another Greek Ante-Nicene Father is Irenaeus of Lyons (115 - 202) who had heard Polycarp in his youth (Litfin 2007:79). Out of his cosmological and a soteriological interest, his attention focused on the saving work of Christ in soteriology (Brown 1984:82-83). Here he developed the *historia salutis*, “history of salvation”, idea of the fallen Adam being resumed by Christ whereby a new humankind, a new creation, indeed a whole new cosmos, would be started, finding its fulfilment in Jesus. To achieve this, Christ was incarnated and took part in human nature (Brown 1984:83; Kelly 1968:173; Tillich 1967:45).

Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses*¹³, “Against Heresies”, was a major work against the Gnostic heresy (Brown 1984:78; Tillich 1967:37). It is important then that his confutation against Gnosticism shaped his understanding of atonement, most notably in his *ἀνακεφαλαίωσις* or *recapitulatio* theory (Kelly 1968:147). His teaching on *recapitulatio* provides us with a significant development of atonement. According to Schaff (1910:751-752), we are able to trace Irenaeus in the strong influence of Pauline anthropology and soteriology, yet he also demonstrated the unity of the OT and NT in opposition to the Gnostic heresies. This becomes evident in his *recapitulatio* theology. He understood that through Adam’s disobedience, all humanity came under Satan’s dominion and that Jesus’ death was a victory over sin, death and the devil (Demarest 1997).

Irenaeus was the first of the Early Church Fathers to lay emphasis on the consequence of Adam’s sin and that each individual person has participated in Adam’s disobedience. He taught that Jesus is the second Adam having undone the evils brought by the first Adam and put right every part of the disobedience of

¹³ All references to Irenaeus’ work will be taken from *Adversus Haereses*.

Adam and his offspring, thus restoring communion with YHWH (McDonald1985:126-125; Shaw and Edwards 2006:57; Reeves 2011:online).

For Aulén, Irenaeus is a strong proponent of the *Christus Victor* motif and understands his theology of atonement primarily as being “depicted in dramatic terms, as a conflict with the powers of evil and a triumph over them” (1931:16-35). Boersma explains that it was Irenaeus’ emphasis on Christ’s true humanity and obedience in the heat of temptation that enabled him to merge both the cosmic as well as the human struggle on earth (2004:189). Thus the atonement touches the very fabric of human life. It is apparent that Irenaeus’ theology on the atonement emerges out of a *recapitulatio* theology as groundwork (cf. Iren. *Ad Haer.* 3:23.1.), and builds towards a magnificent *Christus Victor* theology. The above is well illustrated in his major work, *Adversus Haereses* in 3:18.6 whereby he proclaims that Jesus fought and conquered, and through obedience did away with disobedience completely having bound the strong man, and thereby setting free the weak. Jesus endowed His own handiwork with salvation, by destroying sin.

Irenaeus provides his readers in 5:1.1 with further *Christus Victor* imagery; only this time he incorporates a sacrificial theme by stating that “the mighty Word, and very man, who, redeeming us by His own blood (cf. Iren. *Ad Haer.* 3:16.9.) in a manner consonant to reason, gave Himself as a redemption for those who had been led into captivity.” He then expands his *Christus Victor* theology by arguing that although we were by nature YHWH’s property, we were alienated from Him contrary to nature. Thus He redeemed us back for himself as His own property, not by making use of violent means by which Satan employed to obtain dominion over humankind but he “redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh, and has also poured out the Spirit of the Father for the union and communion of God and man¹⁴”. Here Irenaeus uses substitutionary language along with *Christus Victor* imagery. Aulén (1931) failed

¹⁴ Boersma (2004:124) also points out that the victory gained by Christ was not by exercising counter violence, but by being perfectly faithful and obedient under satanic temptation.

to demonstrate that Irenaeus held *Christus Victor*¹⁵ as only one component of his atonement theology. Contrary to Aulén, I find Irenaeus' theology of the atonement not without reference to substitutionary atonement.

One of the foremost theologians of all the Ante-Nicene Fathers was Origen¹⁶ (185-254) of Alexandria, a major African theologian. In his youth his father, Leonides, was martyred and later Origen himself would experience severe persecution (Schaff 1910:786-790). It was in Alexandria where the Neo-Platonic system was developed and held significant influence on Origen. He employed its theories to communicate Christianity. Ironically, the emperor had introduced it as a system against Christianity (Kelly 1968:131; Tillich 1967:50-51, 55).

The writings of Origen made a significant contribution to the popularization of the ransom theory which would later be reworked by others, though his doctrine corresponded with the works of both Irenaeus and Tertullian (Allison 2011:392-393; Litfin 2007:152). Origen believed that as a consequence of sin, man was held in captivity illegitimately by Satan. In substitution for the freedom of humanity under his dominion, Satan demanded Christ as a *pretium*, that is a “price” or a “ransom”, which YHWH offered as compensation to release people from this tragic state. However, when Satan accepted the bargain he miscalculated and could not hold Christ in hell, having been overwhelmed by Christ's goodness. On the third day He arose from the grave victoriously and as a result the devil released both Christ and his captives (Allison 2011:392; Demarest 1997). Origen's ransom theory, however, is not without obvious errors and theological difficulties. Among his other views Origen also expressed Jesus' death in *Christus Victor*, substitutionary and penal terms and yet the theme of *propitiatio* seems to find its place in the very heart of Origen's atonement theology (Shaw and Edwards 2006:60-61).

¹⁵ For further development of the *Christus Victor* theory, cf. Iren. *Ad Haer.* 3:18.7; 3:23.1; 4:33.4 and 5:21.3.

¹⁶ Due to Origen's heretical ideas he is not strictly a Church Father. However, his philosophical and theological contributions in the *Patristic period* are significant enough to include him in this discussion.

In Origen's commentary (4:37) on John's Gospel, he points out that Jesus "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world... especially of them that believe." The idea of *propitiatio* is found throughout much of Origen's teaching on the atonement¹⁷. Following on, he furthers his discussion by explaining that Jesus "blotted out the written bond that was against us by His own blood, and took it out of the way, so that not even a trace, not even of our blotted-out sins, might still be found, and nailed it to His cross."¹⁸ Origen also alludes to *Christus Victor* in 4.37 of his commentary saying, "And we are taught to rejoice when we suffer afflictions in the world, knowing the ground of our rejoicing to be this, that the world has been conquered and has manifestly been subjected to its conqueror".

He speaks freely of Jesus delivering up His life to Satan as a *pretium*, "price or ransom" in exchange for the souls held captive because of their sinfulness. Yet Origen is also prepared to talk about Jesus' death as an act of propitiatory sacrifice and vicarious substitution (Kelly 1968:185-187). It becomes evident here that Origen associated sacrifice with the substitutionary motif, which is also very much a part of his ransom theory.

2.2.3.2 Latin Church Fathers

Tertullian (160-220), the first great Latin Father of the Church had a strong connection to the Montanist movement which emphasised radical spirituality and eschatology. Further, being a philosopher of the Stoic tradition and having a legal mind, Tertullian employed reason to develop a rational system in a radical approach (Kelly 1968:114; Tillich 1967:38, 98). It is significant as well that he was the first to introduce new terms in hamartiology, namely *vitium originis*, "vice (flaw) of origin" and *naevus peccati*, "birthmark of sin" (Brown 1984:79).

¹⁷ cf. Origen's Commentary on John's Gospel in 1:23 and 38.

¹⁸ Col 2:14-15.

His theology was therefore less metaphysical and more ethical and psychological. He pioneered the idea that Jesus' death on the cross was a *pretium* offered to YHWH and as a sacrifice that removed His wrath from man and cancelled his guilt (McDonald 1985:153). The notion of sacrifice here corresponds to the African concept of sin as we shall explore in chapter 4. This also illustrates how Jesus became the perfect and final sacrifice for all African peoples, in fact for all of humankind, removing their guilt and the wrath of YHWH. But for Tertullian's audience, the milieu is important, he writes to those fleeing persecution, saying in, *De fugâ in Persecutione*, "Of Flight in Persecution" (9:12),

"Why, in this very standing of yours there was a fleeing from persecution, in the release from persecution which you bought; *but that you should ransom with money a man whom Christ has ransomed with His blood...*how unworthy is it of God and His ways of acting, who spared not His own Son for you, that He might be made a curse for us, because cursed is he that hangeth on a tree (Rom 8:32; Gal 3:13), Him who was led as a sheep to be a sacrifice, and just as a lamb before its shearer, so opened He not His mouth (Is 53:7); but gave His back to the scourges.

Referring back to the biblical text, he reminds his readers that "all this took place that He might redeem us from our sins" and that His most precious blood obtained this great ransom (9:12). Further, in his *Adversus Marcionem*, "Against Marcion" (3:19), Tertullian proclaims Jesus Christ "who overcame death by His suffering on the cross, and thence reigned!" Whilst undeveloped, this idea probably emerged out of the *Christus Victor* theology of the earlier Fathers of the Church.

2.2.4 Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers

2.2.4.1 Greek Church Fathers

The Arian heresy caused an enormous stir within Christendom and threatened division within the Church and also threatened to split the Roman Empire. In 325 A.D. the emperor Constantine who had apparently become a recent convert to Christianity, convened the First Council of Nicaea where the Bishops of the Church gathered to settle the Arian controversy. Christianity at this time had surprisingly become a popular religion within the Roman Empire and its unity was essential for the unity of the Empire. For this reason the Council of Nicaea was primarily a political move on Rome's part. A consensus was met against Arianism, proclaiming Jesus Christ as YHWH, being of one substance (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father. Athanasius, a defender of orthodox Christianity, was the greatest rival against Arianism and a key figure in the decision of Nicaea (Litfin 2007:176-178; Tillich 1967:69-73). Athanasius (293–373) was born an Egyptian in Alexandria and thus an African! Later he would be Bishop of Alexandria. Athanasius was mentored under the guidance of his predecessor Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, and together they attended the Council of Nicaea (Litfin 2007:172-178).

Similar to Irenaeus, in his book, *De Incarnatione*, “On the Incarnation”, in section 4, Athanasius taught that Jesus Christ the Word came down to us because our transgressions cried out to him, that he might in His love for us appear and help us. He then furthers his discussion on humanity's depravity and how humankind “turned from the contemplation of God to the evil of their own devising” and consequently “came inevitably under the law of death”. Thus humanity found themselves becoming progressively corrupt and death ruled over them as their transgressions against the commandments of YHWH made them “turn back again according to their nature”.

It is evident then as Kelly (1968:377) rightly points out, Athanasius' soteriology is predominantly “the physical theory that Christ, by becoming man, restored the

divine image in us; but blended with this is the conviction that His death was necessary to release us from the curse of sin, and that He offered Himself in sacrifice for us". Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf was therefore understood in terms of penal substitution.

In another book, *In Illud Omnia*, "On this: all things" in section 2, Athanasius provides us with an outstanding discussion, alluding to *Christus Victor* as he proclaims that all things were delivered to Christ and while He was made to be man, all things were set right and perfected. Instead of a curse, the earth receives a blessing. "Paradise was opened to the robber, Hades cowered, the tombs were opened and the dead raised". Athanasius then shifts his focus on the substitutionary theme when he writes, "For He bore the indignation which lay upon us". But perhaps Athanasius' strongest expression of penal substitution is found in his *Contra Arianos* saying, "Formerly the world, as guilty, was under judgment from the Law; but now the Word has taken on Himself the judgment, and having suffered in the body for all, has bestowed salvation to all" (sev. 2, vol.4). It is clear here that Athanasius' flow of thought progresses from a forensic aspect, to a substitutionary motif and concludes with redemption. Thus Athanasius positioned penal substitution at the heart of his theology, essential to the purpose of the incarnation, as well as to the restoration of humanity and creation (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:173).

Alongside Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390) was also a defender of orthodox Christianity against Arianism. In his Fourth *Orationes Theologicae*, "Theological Orations" (serv. 2, vol.7), Gregory argued that the purpose for which Jesus was cursed was to transfer our sin and curse upon Himself (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:174). Flood (2010:150) makes a salient observation saying that with the same weight that Gregory emphasises Christ bearing our sin and curse, he stresses with equal force the destruction of that same curse. Thus Gregory not only advocates a substitutionary atonement saying, "just so He makes my disobedience His own", but the notion of the *Christus Victor* also comes into focus when he proclaims, "Who destroyed my curse; and sin". Yet Gregory does not stop here,

he develops his argument further expounding a *recapitulatio* view similar to Irenaeus' where Christ becomes "a new Adam to take the place of the old".

A very different presentation of atonement theology is given by the extraordinary preacher, John Chrysostom (349–407), who did not purpose to develop a theology on the atonement at all! He does, however, provide an analogy in *II Corinthios Homilia*, 11:6 of a king who sympathises with a condemned robber, by giving his own son to receive the guilt and the death penalty in the criminal's stead. Over and above this sacrifice, the king exalts the criminal to great dignity (Jeffery et. al. 2007:175-176). This transaction in John's analogy expressed how YHWH allowed His son to suffer as a condemned sinner, though he was perfect and sinless, so that He might deliver us from the penalty of sin and offer us salvation (Shaw and Edwards 2006:65). It is clear that Chrysostom understood humanity being condemned to death by YHWH and yet Jesus substituted Himself in our place. Our guilt and death was transferred to Christ; His sacrifice was of surpassing worth that it was sufficient to save humanity (Kelly 1968:385-386).

The Greek theologian, Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), unlike Irenaeus who understood the *Christus Victor* motif in light of *recapitulatio* and sin, understood it in light of freedom from slavery (Boersma 2003:189). Gregory taught in his Great Catechism in Chapter 22 that the devil deceived humanity and enslaved them through sensual pleasure. The devil thus giving "acquired rights over mankind through the Fall" (Aulén 1931:48). Gregory then uses an analogy from slavery to assist in articulating the image of ransom, and as noted by Aulén (1931:49), this "ransom for men, is commonly regarded as paid to the devil, or to death".

In the next two chapters, chapters 23 and 24 of The Great Catechism, Gregory's ransom theory is developed further, providing us with powerful imagery of the *Christus Victor* motif. He explains how the devil took advantage of Christ while he was in His fleshly nature and chose "Him as a ransom for those who were shut up in the prison of death" (Ch. 23). Boersma (2004:190) explains that in

Gregory's theology Christ came in the flesh so as to conceal His deity from Satan and thus His deity was hidden in humanity. In so doing the Father purposed to redeem the captives by deceiving Satan in offering up His Son to him as a ransom. And so Satan, who deceived humanity, was himself deceived as Christ the Saviour triumphed over the grave and rose to life (cf. Demarest 1997). In chapter 24 Gregory then goes beyond Origen, and employs the metaphor of the fish and the hook seeking to demonstrate the wisdom of YHWH. The 'hook' being the hidden Deity of Christ which was gulped down together with the bait of flesh, by the 'fish', that is, Satan.

Whilst the imagery is somewhat vulgar, Gregory is successful in illustrating his ransom theory. Yet his chief concern was for YHWH's justice, therefore it was by man's own free will that he fell into Satan's clutches. Hence Satan had a right to require recompense if he were to surrender humanity. For YHWH to have implemented His *casus fortuitous* or superior force, He would therefore have been unjust. It is under these circumstances that He offered Jesus to Satan as a *pretium*. Failing to apprehend that the outer covering of the human flesh obscured the immortal Godhead, Satan took advantage but was outmanoeuvred (Aulén 1931:49; Kelly 1968:382).

As fascinating as Gregory's imagery is, I find it wholly unconvincing since Mark makes it clear in his Gospel that the demons knew who Jesus was¹⁹, even though He was *clothed* in humanity! It is difficult to see how Satan could be tricked by the 'bait of flesh', at least in Gregory's theological framework.

2.2.4.2 Latin Church Fathers

The era of Eusebius of Caesarea (275–339) marks a pivotal shift in the history of Christendom. Martyrdom was, more or less, a thing of the past after Constantine had Christianised the Roman Empire in 312 A.D. Eusebius was a significant

¹⁹ Mk 1:25, 34; 3:11.

leader in the church and was instrumental in the council of Nicea. He wrote *Demonstratio Evangelica*, “Proof for the Gospel” for a pagan audience where he offered a defence for his faith. It is here where his understanding of penal substitution comes into view (Jeffery et. al. 2007:166).

Referring to *Demonstratio Evangelica* (10:1), Williams (2008:182) argues that Eusebius employs the union with Christ to offer explanation for the justice of penal substitution. As a result, Eusebius renounces any notion of penal substitution being individualistic. Eusebius comments as follows, “And how can He make our sins His own, and be said to bear our iniquities, except by our being regarded as His body”. Here his substitutionary view is unequivocal as he explains that if we are in His body, then and only then does he make our sins his by bearing them. Flood (2010:145) objects that this demonstrates a *penal* substitutionary view at all! But in light of the latter part of Book 10, Eusebius tells us that Christ was “chastised on our behalf, and suffered a penalty He did not owe”. Flood appears to turn a blind eye to the apparent penal substitutionary notions in Eusebius’ writings²⁰.

Hilary of Poitiers (300–368), another Latin Father of the Nicene and Post-Nicene era, was schooled in the works of Origen and Athanasius, yet he was an interdependent intellectual (Schaff 1910:960). According to Brown (1984:178) he revived the old *modus operandi* of Tertullian, that is, the two natures in one person. Hilary introduced the terms *evacuation*, “voiding” and *exinanitio*, “emptying”, in order “to describe the self-emptying of the Son in his incarnation²¹” (Brown 1984:178).

Pelikan (1975:147)²² explains that Hilary “equated ‘satisfaction’ with ‘sacrifice’ and interpreted the cross as Christ’s great act of reparation to God on behalf of sinners”. This is evident in his *Tractatus Super Psalmos LIII*, “Treatise on the

²⁰ The rest of *Dem. Ev.* 1.10 is replete with penal substitutionary language. I have merely provided a sample. Flood’s concern is that Eusebius’ view of atonement is substitutionary, but not penal.

²¹ This is not kenoticism; Hilary did not teach that the Son laid aside his divinity or his power. Cf. Brown (1984:178).

²² Quoted in McDonald (1985:156).

Psalms 53”. Firstly, Hilary is explicit that Jesus sacrificed Himself freely when he notes, “I will sacrifice unto Thee freely”. This is emphasised afterwards when he talks of Jesus “offering Himself voluntarily a victim to God the Father” and “in order that by means of a voluntary victim the curse which attended the discontinuance of the regular victim might be removed”. Thus Jesus suffered and died for our sake under voluntary consent (McDonald 1985:156). In his discourse, ‘curse’ is thematic, employing the word repetitively as he discusses the sacrificial system. Jeffery *et al.* (2007:167) observes that “Hilary begins by pointing out that God’s curse rested upon everyone who broke the law, and that the Old Testament sacrifices were therefore absolutely essential to escape God’s sentence of death.” (cf. *Trac. Ps. 53*).

In his writings, Hilary centres on sacrifice whilst stressing the voluntary nature of that which Christ achieved, that is, His death destroyed the sentence of death which was owed to us and reunited us to YHWH (Kelly 1968:388). The sacrificial theme is also prominent in Hilary’s atonement theology which ultimately points towards the *Christus Victor* motif, that is, in Christ’s sacrifice there is victory over death.

It becomes apparent that Hilary of Poitiers held significant influence in the atonement theology of Ambrose of Milan (339-397), elaborating on “a theory of Christ’s death as a sacrifice offered to satisfy the claims of divine justice” as Kelly puts it (1968:389). Ambrose also preserves the ‘curse’ theme of both Hilary and Gregory of Nazianzus, not to mention the idea of *recapitulatio* in the earlier Church Fathers. Yet Ambrose’s teaching pivots on the theology of penal substitution, because the *curse* that was on fallen humanity was now transferred to Jesus Christ, and He in turn died in our stead to satisfy God’s justice (Jeffery 2007:175). In his *De Fuga Saeculi*, “Flight from the World” it becomes clear that Ambrose held to an atonement theology that is penal substitutionary matched with the satisfaction theory which would later be developed by the Scholastic, Anselm. Yet, Anselm’s language strangely resembles that of the *Christus Victor* motif

when he talks about destroying the curse and overwhelming sin (*De. Fu. Sae.* 7.44).

In light of this research, it is significant that one of the greatest Christian theologians was Augustine of Hippo (354-430) from North Africa who was deeply influenced by Ambrose. Before his conversion, he was a Manichaean. Manichaeism was a system of salvation and competed against Christianity at the time. According to Kelly (1968:9) Manichaeism was a *gnosis*. This was a system founded on a radical dualism which taught that reality consists of two forces eternally conflicting with one another, good and evil, evil being identified with matter. Furthermore, as a Neo-Platonic philosopher, Augustine found a “basis for a new certainty, the immediate certainty of God”. These influenced his atonement theology (Brown 1984:201; Kelly 1968:9; Tillich 1967:106-109).

Keeping this in mind, Augustine’s theology of atonement does not explore new ideas. Instead, he reaffirms that which appeared in the works of the Fathers who preceded him, although he developed the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs within his own philosophical framework (Shaw and Edwards 2006: 64-65; McDonald 1985:157).

Following on from Hilary of Poitiers, Gregory of Nazianzus and Ambrose, Augustine continues the theme of ‘curse’ in his *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, “Disputation against Fortunatus the Manichaean” (14:4) proclaiming,

The apostle boldly says of Christ, “He was made a curse for us;” for he could also venture to say, “He died for all”. “He died,” and “He was cursed,” are the same. Death is the effect of the curse; and all sin is cursed, whether it means the action which merits punishment, or the punishment which follows. Christ, though guiltless, took our punishment, that He might cancel our guilt, and do away with our punishment.

In section 6 of the same book, Augustine develops this thought, “And as He died in the flesh which He took in bearing our punishment... He was cursed for our offences, in the death which He suffered in bearing our punishment”. Further in *De Trinitate*, “On the Trinity”, he states, “As our death is the punishment of sin, so His death was made a sacrifice for sin” (4:12). Therefore, Augustine’s teaching of penal substitution is explicit, and yet he also advocates a ransom theory²³ which evidently stands out in many of his sermons, though this is not his main concern (Rosenberg 2004:234). In *De Trinitate*, he says, “For as the devil through pride led man through pride to death; so Christ through lowliness led back man through obedience to life” (4:10).

Gregory the Great (540-604), the last of the Church Fathers to be discussed in this chapter, is said to be “the chief architect of the medieval Roman Catholic papal bureaucracy” (Shaw and Edwards 2006:67). He popularised Augustine’s ideas of salvation according to the Roman model of blending legal²⁴ and sacrificial notions (Finlan 2005:70).

In his book, *Moralia, Sive Expositio in Job*, “Commentary on Job” (33:14), Gregory taught the ransom theory whereby he employed an earlier illustration from Gregory of Nyssa of ‘the fish and bait’ (McDonald 1985:144). Nevertheless, he also sought to develop in the same literary work, a theology of atonement that was penal substitutionary. In doing so he emphasised Jesus’ innocence and explained that Christ “took upon Himself the punishment of the carnal” even though He was “without offence” (*Mor. Exp. Jo.* 3:14; Jeffery *et al.* 2007:183).

2.2.5 Conclusion

In this discussion an atonement synthesis theology from the Patristic corpus has been highlighted, exploring the atonement theology of the Greek and Latin

²³ Most notable is his mousetrap allegory; cf. Finlan (2005:70).

²⁴ That is, according to Finlan, rewards and punishment, legal process, and the role of intercessors in court, cf. Finlan (2005:70).

Church Fathers of the Apostolic, Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene periods. The penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs, often presented together, find clear articulation throughout the Patristic corpus, even as various distinctives often overlap in different socio-historical milieus. It is significant that many of the Church Fathers understood Christ's death as a sacrifice, and this sacrifice was often thought of in light of penal substitution and/or *Christus Victor* motifs.

What is of further significance is that the Church Fathers: Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius and Augustine were brilliant African Fathers of the Church who together held to atonement synthesis. At the close of the age of early Christianity, a new age emerged. The next discussion will investigate the socio-historical development of atonement theology among the Scholastics of the medieval epoch.

2.3 European Scholasticism

2.3.1 Introduction

European Scholasticism provided a methodological investigation of Christian theology by endeavouring to acquire an understanding by means of experience, intuition and reason. The intention of which was to construct a theological interpretation for all of life's problems (Tillich 1967:135-136). The Scholastics were profoundly influenced by the ancient authorities, namely the biblical and the Patristic authorities (Brown 1984:241) as well as the ancient Greek philosophers²⁵. Scholasticism in Europe brought about a new method, a new intellectual movement in which its emergent academic theologians swiftly transformed much of the continent (Brown 1984:241).

Another significant development in the medieval era was the Crusades which provided a pinnacle in the secularisation of the Christian Church. Through these undertakings the Church for the first time organised and inspired military force (Brown 1984:240). The socio-ecclesiastical structure during this period had

²⁵ The Platonic and Aristotelian traditions are especially evident.

become fundamentally hierarchical whereby the church, state and culture were now dependant and the ecclesiastical hierarchy sought to have world domination (Tillich 1967:145). These, too, shaped the theology of the Scholastics.

At a metaphysical level, as Tillich (1967:148) points out, the reality of the medieval man was his experience of the demonic. Nevertheless, Weaver suggests that the “narrative *Christus Victor*”²⁶ eventually fell out of vogue during the Middle Ages once the Church began to support the world’s social order and welcomed political interventions in ecclesiastical affairs. According to Weaver, this resulted in the Church losing its sense of confrontation with the World (2001:107-108). Although Weaver’s *narrative Christus Victor* may have disappeared gradually in Scholastic theology, we cannot deny that the *Christus Victor* motif was still very much alive both in European Scholasticism and in the theology of the Reformers.

Medieval architecture itself, notably its cathedrals, gives evidence of a continuing demonic presence, but a presence already conquered. Gargoyles decorated the cathedrals and these demonic figures were often portrayed as having been conquered. The cathedral was also a place of common exorcism and rituals where people could purify themselves and fend off demonic forces (Tillich 1967:148). Though these forces were supposedly conquered, Tillich explains that a constant angst of the demonic was evident in the Church during this period, not to mention its obsession with the persecution of witches and heretics (1967:148-149).

Focusing on atonement theology itself in European Scholasticism, the eleventh century, according to Boersma, sought to articulate the various motifs of the atonement in greater detail and nuance than ever before. This presented tensions and incompatibilities between the various motifs which now became more pronounced (2004:159). In the discussion which follows I shall address these various motifs.

²⁶ *Narrative Christus Victor* is a view of the *Christus Victor* motif largely developed by Weaver which arguably runs throughout Scripture, cf. Weaver (2001:13-126).

2.3.2 The Satisfaction Theory

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) was, as Schaff (1907: 598) proclaimed, “the most original thinker the Church had seen since the days of Augustine”. Prior to Aquinas, it was Anselm who developed Scholastic orthodoxy to its greatest height (Brown 1984:264). Anselm was a Monastic theologian who worked from a Platonic worldview in a very tempestuous time when people thought very differently (Reeves 2011: online; Shaw and Edwards 2006:68).

Anselm’s atonement theology is articulated in his *Cur Deus Homo*, “Why God became Human²⁷” (1098). Hannah (1978:334) observes that he wrote this work in “the scholastic method of dialogue”, which, as Reeves (2011: online) points out, is written in a rational, step-by-step logic. In this work, Anselm sought to, by reason alone, persuade those who do not have faith in the Trinity to prove the existence of YHWH independent from the authority of Scripture (Reeves 2011: online). *Cur Deus Homo* was the first treatise to provide a serious attempt in rationalising the atonement, bringing an aspect of substitution to the forefront of atonement theology (Boersma 2004:155; McDonald 1985:163). It was perhaps one of the most influential works on the atonement in the Western church (Keshgegian 2009).

The socio-historical milieu of Anselm’s atonement theology in *Cur Deus Homo* was typified by feudalism (Green and Baker 2000:22, 94), “where noble knights operated to codes of honour and chivalry. Feudal law dominated life, with a complex series of penalties and punishments for offences”. It is apparent that he drew on these ideas in his work (Shaw and Edwards 2006:68; McDonald 1985:163-164) articulating the significance of the atonement in his particular contemporary context. Reeves (2011: online) highlights the following:

The concept of honour is a feudal concept, God has been wronged. Sin costs more than Creation; God Himself is worth

²⁷ Aside from various other translations, the literal translation from the Latin reads, “Why God Human?”

more than creation. Christ, the God-man has given himself as a priceless gift of his own death. Once the God-man has done that, then God would have to reward the God-man because the God-man did not have to offer Himself up but he chose to live the perfect life and went beyond that and therefore God must justly reward Him.

Even in Weaver's discussion on Anselm's theological argument it is difficult to ignore the *Christus Victor* implications in his *satisfactio* formula. Weaver explains that in Anselm's atonement theology Christ's death satisfies YHWH's honour and therefore restores order to creation, following "the logic of the peaceful way to restore order in the Norman feudal order". The honour of YHWH which Anselm explores in *Cur Deus Homo* only makes sense within the honour in the empire and *satisfactio* as a means of restoring the honour and thus reserving the order of the empire. Jesus, likewise, having become a man, preserved YHWH's honour and brought about restoration to the universe once again. This provides context for Anselm's atonement theology (Weaver 2011:232, 235). Indeed, this approach is useful in developing an African atonement theology in light of African metaphysics. This is evident especially in the discussion on Africa's Ontological Balance in chapter 4.

Anselm understood that human sin and disobedience disrupted the "ordered relationship of beauty and harmony". The consequence of this is disharmony and disorder. However, it was Jesus, the God-man's offer of death, which was not required but was freely given to satisfy YHWH's honour that restored order (Keshgegian 2009). In *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm describes sin as follows, "He who does not render this honour which is due to God, robs God of his own and dishonours him; and this is sin" (Bk. 1, Ch. 11).

It was not that YHWH's wrath had to be appeased, but rather His honour had to be restored (Green and Baker 2000:21). McDonald (1985:165) explains that YHWH is the moral sovereign of the universe and his honour must not be

trampled in the dirt. Therefore, for Him to forgive without atonement would compromise the righteousness of his authority. As Reeves (2011: online) puts it, Christ is not understood as a substitute bearing our punishment, instead Jesus offers His life to YHWH as an offering which is of greater worth than YHWH could justly demand, and in this His honour is justified. This is *Satisfactio!* The debt is infinite and no one other than an infinite being is able to satisfy the debt, and yet only a man can bring about the compensation. The only solution is that YHWH must become man, which is the answer to *Cur Deus Homo* (cf. *Cur Deus Homo*, Bk 1. Ch, 21; Bk. 2, Ch. 15; Aulén 1931:86; McDonald 1985:167; Smyrl 2007). Submitting to death, Jesus acquired a merit of infinite value which covers the infinite guilt of man's sin constituting *satisfactio* (Schaff 1907: 605).

Some theologians today argue that Anselm prepared the way in atonement theology towards a “cosmic child abuse” theology, a son being punished by a wrathful Father for someone else's sin. In book 1, chapters 8 and 9, Anselm rejects that Jesus' suffering was compelled by the Father (Green and Baker 2000:132-133; Shannon 2009). I question whether such theologians understand either Anselm's theology or the context in which he wrote. Anselm does, however, say in chapter 10 that YHWH commanded Christ to die, but did not force Him to do so (Green and Baker 2000:129). Rather, the “Son wished to die for the salvation of the world” (Bk 1, Ch. 10).

Aulén (1931:89) explains that the dualist approach of the Fathers of the Church is rejected by Anselm, repudiating the idea that a *pretium*, “price” or “ransom”, was paid to Satan, and instead develops an idea of *satisfactio*. Green and Baker (2000:21) point out that Anselm argued against the earlier ransom theory, as does Reeves (2001: online) who says that Anselm's *satisfactio* replaced the ransom theory. Boersma adds his voice as well, “*Cur Deus Homo* gradually replaced the traditional *Christus Victor* model” (2004:155). Weaver too argues that Anselm's theory of atonement was developed to replace the prevailing view of atonement, that is, Christ's death being a ransom payment that YHWH owed to the devil” (2011:229). Lastly, Shaw and Edwards (2006:69) concur with the above

sentiments and say, “To Anselm, sin was ‘not to render his due to God.’ Sin is an offence against the honour and greatness of YHWH, to whom, as the infinite, Sovereign Creator and Redeemer, all honour is due”. Therefore, as Green and Baker (2000:21) correctly highlight, the issue for Anselm is not what was due to Satan, but rather the problem had to do with the wrong that was done to YHWH (cf. Aulén 1931). The argument of *Cur Deus Homo* was grounded in divine necessity and not freedom from satanic bondage, as was taught by many Church Fathers (Hannah 1978:344).

Nevertheless it is, in my view, erroneous to think that Anselm was entirely adverse to the *Christus Victor* motif, as many theologians above have suggested. Yet I affirm that Anselm did not wish to entertain a classical ransom theory. In Book 1, Chapter 7 of *Cur Deus Homo*, he demonstrated his disapproval of the ransom theory, stating that the devil had no right over humanity and that he had become a thief and a traitor. Anselm alluded to the *Christus Victor* motif in Book 2, Chapter 19 when he wrote,

But God demanded that man should conquer the devil, so that he who had offended by sin should atone by holiness. As God owed nothing to the devil but punishment, so man must only make amends by conquering the devil as man had already been conquered by him. But whatever was demanded of man, he owed to God and not to the devil.

I argue, along with Siekawitch, that the *pretium* in *Cur Deus Homo* can be said to be paid not to the devil, but to YHWH and this *pretium* overcame the devil and defeated him. In light of this, I like to think of the penal substitution as the means of the atonement and *Christus Victor* as its purpose. Nevertheless, according to Anselm, *satisfactio* brought honour to YHWH. Therefore, he did not discard the ransom theory but revised it *per se* by adding a *satisfactio* formula to the *ordo salutis*, that is, the order of salvation. In other words, he sought to demonstrate the atonement within his socio-historical context, which included the feudal system of

his day. Anselm never rejected the idea of humanity having sold itself into the devil's bondage, and he had no problem with Christ's death as a ransom for humanity's sin which rescued people from the devil. Anselm did, however, reject a payment to Satan, and he rejected the often grotesque imagery of the ransom theory as portrayed by some Fathers of the Church. And rightly so! (Siekawitch 2007-2008:6). I think it is therefore reasonable to say that Anselm taught a satisfaction theory which included a modified ransom theory, and the *Christus Victor* motif. This is apparent in Book 1, Chapter 23 and Book 2, Chapter 19 in *Cur Deus Homo*.

Anselm's theory became popular because it was felt that only in suffering is forgiveness possible, rather than forgiveness without some type of atonement (Tillich 1967:166). Yet, some dissenters showed contempt for his view, notably Peter Abelard, who initiated the moral influence theory (Allison 2011:397). It is to him we now turn.

2.3.3 The Moral Influence Theory

The prominent philosopher and theologian, Peter Abelard (1079-1142), lived in the twelfth century "in the shadow of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris", according to Tillich, and represented a form of jurisprudential thinking which was established in the Western church by Tertullian (1967:167-168). Olson records that whilst Abelard was a genius of Christian theology and philosophy, his life was marked by tragedy. In his early years he supported himself by tutoring Héloïse, the daughter of an important citizen of Paris. The two fell in love which resulted in a pregnancy, and although the child would be legitimate they married secretly. Unfortunately for Abelard, Héloïse's uncle found out and in fury had him castrated. This provides context to Abelard's subjective theory of atonement, the moral influence theory. Abelard emphasised YHWH's love in the atonement, instead of YHWH's anger or honour. The idea rejected that a compensation paid to YHWH was required, but rather that all humanity really needed was a fresh incentive for action, a moral influence. Abelard felt that the previous views of the

traditional ransom and satisfaction theories demonstrated a concern only for YHWH's cosmic justice and honour and not humanity's participation in reconciliation (Olson 1999:325, 326, 328; Tillich 1967:167). These ideas are developed in Abelard's *Exposition of Romans* in 3:19-26.

It is difficult to overlook Abelard's moral influence theory in light of his passionate love affair with Héloïse when he taught that YHWH has always loved us and therefore there is no need for a satisfaction. Thus, Abelard removes the notion of legal transaction (Olson 1999:328). Tillich (1967:172) explains Abelard's new theory as follows,

It is the love of God which is visible in the cross of Christ; this produces our love. It is not an objective mechanism between transcendent powers which enables God to forgive, as it is in Anselm, but it is the subjective act of divine love which evokes in us a love for him.

Therefore, Abelard changed the purpose of the atonement which preciously centred on what YHWH had done for humanity through Christ on the cross to a subjective emphasis, focusing on humanity's response and his feelings about the cross (Shaw and Edwards 2006:72). Indeed, Abelard explains in his *Exposition of Romans* 3:26 that our redemption is the highest love shown by the passion of Christ which liberates us from slavery to sin and "wins from us the true liberty of the sons of God, so that we may fulfil all things from love rather than from fear". It is of significance, though, that Abelard did not reject the "satisfaction" idea entirely, for a notion of penal substitution is remarkably evident in his writing as well (Siekawitch 2007-2008:13-16). For Abelard said, "He (Christ) suffered truly for your salvation, on your behalf, of his own free will, and by his suffering he cures all sickness and removes all suffering" (The letters of Heloise and Abelard; cf. *Exposition of Romans* 8:3). He also wrote in his *Exposition of Romans* 4:25,

First, because the faults for which he died were ours, and we committed the sins for which he bore the punishment; secondly, that by dying he might remove our sins, that is, the punishment of our sins, introducing us into paradise at the price of his own death, and might, by the display of grace such that he himself said, “Greater love hath no man,” draw our minds away from the will to sin and enkindle in them the highest love of himself.

However, Abelard²⁸ also, like Anselm, had a dissenter who showed disapproval of his views, namely, Bernard of Clairvaux who wrote to Pope Innocent III hoping to condemn Abelard. Bernard believed that Abelard’s atonement theology had Pelagian tendencies and that it made the cross merely an example of Christ’s love (Siekawitch 2007-2008:11). In the next discussion Bernard’s atonement will be discussed.

2.3.4 Opposition to the Moral Influence Theory

Abelard’s adversary, Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), was certain that Abelard’s understanding of the atonement was flawed (Shaw and Edwards 2006:73). Bernard succeeded in bringing Abelard before a synod of bishops in Paris which rejected many of Abelard’s views²⁹ (Lane 2008:249; Olson 1999:328; Tillich 1967:173). Yet, according to Tillich (1967:173), Bernard also favoured the subjective side of the atonement which meant that he did not reject Abelard’s view altogether. Abelard approached the atonement in terms of reason, whilst Bernard approached it “in terms of mystical experience” (Tillich 1967:173).

²⁸ Peter Lombard (1100-1160) in his *Liber Sentiarium* was sympathetic towards Abelard’s Moral Influence theory. Though he, like we shall see in Bernard, employed various aspects of the atonement (McDonald 1985:285). Brown comments that “if Abelard shaped the mentality of Scholasticism, it was Peter Lombard who gave it its structure” (1984:265).

²⁹ Abelard submitted to the Pope just before his death and reconciled with Bernard in writing (Olson 1999:328).

A man of deep devotion (Shaw and Edwards 2006:73), Bernard exhibited the finest qualities of medieval spirituality. As a scholar, reformer and the most prominent representative of Christian mysticism (Tillich 1967:173), he had profound influence in shaping medieval piety among the religious orders. It is also of significance that Bernard inspired the Second Crusade (1147-49) which ended tragically and brought dishonour to both the Church and to Bernard (Brown 1984:240).

Bernard emphasised YHWH's love and believed that Christ's atoning work "had accomplished something before a just God, which was to save the believer from the consequence of sin" (Shaw and Edwards 2006:73). Dissimilar to Anselm and Abelard, Bernard did not stress one model of atonement to the loss of the others, but sought to integrate them as a whole. He understood that the debt that we owe is death. The penalty for sin and thus the idea of a *pretium* to be paid is conspicuous in Bernard's thought. This price paid to satisfy the Father's justice was the blood of Christ (Lane 2008:264, 256-257; cf. Errors of Abelard; Shaw and Edwards 2006:74).

The idea of Jesus securing *redemptio* for humanity from death and the devil is also articulated (Lane 2008:251; McDonald 1985:284). Bernard does however make it clear to his readers that nothing was offered to the devil, but rather that Satan lost his power over us because the penalty imposed by YHWH upon us has been paid and thus we are reconciled to Him. In so doing humanity was freed. Bernard declares in his *Sermon on the Song of Songs* that Jesus came down into our prison, not to torture us but to liberate us from the power of darkness (22:7) and that it was Jesus who "conquered the enemy, alone he freed the captives" (13:5). By eliminating the consequence of sin, death is conquered (Lane 2008:256). Thus Bernard continued the tradition of the Church Fathers, teaching "that Satan was tricked into accepting Christ in our place, not realising that he could not hold on to the sinless one, who was also God" (Lane 2008:254). Bernard borrows from Gregory of Nyssa, using the 'fish and hook' metaphor

when he states, “You are dead, O death, pierced by the hook you have incautiously swallowed (*Sermon on the Song of Songs* 26:11; cf. sermon 20).

2.3.5 The Sacrament of Penance in Appropriating the Atonement

The Prince of European Scholasticism was undoubtedly Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). He stood next to Augustine in intellectual ability and influence (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:184; Reeves 2011: online; Schaff 1907:661). Aquinas exerted profound influence in both Roman Catholicism and in Reformed theology (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:184; Reeves 2011: online).

Aquinas worked from an Aristotelian worldview which was being rediscovered and promoted by the Arabian philosophers at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Aquinas, likewise, wished to incorporate Aristotelianism into Christianity in such a way that preserved the integrity of both, formulating a sort of ‘Christian Aristotelianism’. Whilst the result was triumphant, it did not necessarily make for correct theology. Aristotle provided a basic set of metaphysical categories, for example, form and matter, and actuality and potentiality. He presented the world with a new understanding of matter, and of the relation of God (or the Unmoved Mover) to the world, together with an ontological examination of reality³⁰. Aquinas’s ‘Christian Aristotelianism’ held that reason and natural knowledge provide the foundation on which our theology can be constructed, and revelation is there to complete it, or ‘top it up’. In other words the supernatural is to be built on the natural, because knowledge of itself is insufficient and requires revelation (Reeves 2011: online; Tillich 1967:183-184).

Aquinas’ understanding of the atonement exhibited the full force of scholastic methodology, and is often described as eclectic. He combined the atonement theories before him into a comprehensive account. Nevertheless, Aquinas placed Anselm’s satisfaction theory above the ransom and moral influence theories. As

³⁰ cf. Aristotle’s, *The Metaphysics*.

with Anselm and Abelard, Aquinas did not reject the ransom theory, but rather modified it (Siekawitch 2007-2008:5; 17-19). At the very core of his understanding of the atonement was Jesus' death as a substitutionary sacrifice which dealt with the penalty of sin that was owed and thus satisfied YHWH's justice. The cross provides *redemptio* for sinners from punishment and slavery to sin (Shaw and Edwards 2006:75).

This *redemptio* was so arranged to reveal the love and justice of YHWH (Shaw and Edwards 2006:75), for Aquinas explains in his *Summa Theologica*, "Summary of Theology"³¹ that it was by Christ's Passion that He "made satisfaction for the sin of the human race". It was by Christ's justice and mercy that man was set free, because man of himself was incapable of offering satisfaction for the sin of all humanity (Q.46, A.3). It is not very difficult to see Abelard's influence in Aquinas' atonement theology, for he too promotes the moral influence theory (Siekawitch 2007-2008:19). Having been "delivered by Christ's Passion", man knows "how much God loves him", Aquinas argues, and man is therefore "stirred to loved Him in return". It is in this, Aquinas says, "lies the perfection of human salvation". He explains that Christ set us an example of obedience, loyalty, justice, humility and diverse virtues exhibited in the Passion which are all essential for our salvation (Q.46, A.3).

Anselm's satisfaction theory is perhaps the most dominant in Aquinas' theology. For he asserts that YHWH has demonstrated both His severity towards sin as well as His graciousness towards His people, paying a debt Himself which man could not pay. For "no penalty endured could man pay Him enough satisfaction". Our debt was due to us for we have sinned against YHWH, yet He pays it himself by giving His own Son as propitiation (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:184; Q.47, A.3). Christ's work, therefore, paid the ransom price and the "satisfaction of accounts required" (McDonald 1985:291). Although Christ's human nature made the offering, being YHWH Himself, His Passion is of infinite worth and is thus "a superabundant atonement for the sins of the human race" (Aulén 1931:93; Q.48, A.3).

³¹ Or translated as "Highest Theology".

Proclaiming that “when sufficient satisfaction has been paid then the debt of punishment is abolished (Q.49, A.3).

Nevertheless, Aquinas skilfully weaves the satisfaction and ransom theories into an atonement synthesis. According to Jeffery *et al.* “Aquinas argues that our sin leaves us enslaved to the devil and indebted to God” and that we were freed by Christ’s Passion which was the *pretium poenae* or “penalty price”. Yet he shies away from the idea of a ransom being paid to Satan, but rather that it is a debt owed to YHWH and that Christ rescued us from the Devil’s bondage (2007:185). Aquinas supposed that humanity was held in bondage on account of sin in two ways: (1) Satan overcame man by provoking him to sin and thus humanity became subject to Satan’s bondage (Q.48, A.4; cf. Q.46, A.3). (2) Man is held in bondage by YHWH’s justice and thus he is accountable for the payment of a debt of punishment. However, Christ’s sufficient and superabundant atonement for sin frees humanity from his obligations (Q.48, A.4). Penal substitution appears to be apparent here, in that Christ suffered in our place and frees us from our debt and in so doing YHWH maintains His justice (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:185). Aquinas provides us with a pithy illustration of the work of redemption and the victory over Satan in an atonement synthesis when he says,

Although the devil assailed man unjustly, nevertheless, on account of sin, man was justly left by God under the devil's bondage. And therefore it was fitting that through justice man should be delivered from the devil's bondage by Christ making satisfaction on his behalf in the Passion. This was also a fitting means of overthrowing the pride of the devil (Q.46, A.3).

Thus far Aquinas’ atonement synthesis seems rigorous, yet his theory of atonement appears severely deficient as he emphasises the *sacramentum paenitentiae*, that is, the sacrament of penance, in appropriating the atonement. This includes contrition, confession, faith, love, baptism and other acts of penance and absolution. These apparently “unite people to the atonement of Christ and

become a necessary part of it” (Allison 2011:398; Siekawitch 2007-2008:24). His view, according to Siekawitch, offers “the fullest expression of how one appropriates the benefits of the atonement. Christ’s passion has to be applied before it is efficacious” (2007-2008:22). Therefore, although Christ’s work is the greatest constituent of the *satisfactio*, both His work and the *sacramenta* are needed for a full legal *satisfactio*. In other words, *paenitentiam*, or acts of repentance (penance), fill up what is lacking in Christ’s *satisfactio* (McDonald 1985:292). Here we can observe hints of ‘Christian Aristotelianism’. So, for Aquinas, *paenitentiam* was essential for salvation, but it is not absolute for achieving salvation, although it is necessary for one to co-operate “with grace unto the destruction of his sin” (Siekawitch 2007-2008:23; Q.84, A.3; cf. Suppl. Q.10, A.2 and A.5).

Aquinas held that “God gives grace to man in a way which is suitable to him. Hence it is that man needs the sacraments that he may obtain grace” (Q.61, A.1). Walters explains that the *sacramentum*, “sacraments” assisted sinners in remedying previous sins and helped in resisting future sin. It was this connection between *sacramentum* and atonement that was “critical for the cohesion of late medieval piety” (Walters 2004:251).

It is, therefore, understandably difficult to appreciate the apparent inconsistencies of Aquinas’ view of atonement. That is, (1) Christ having delivered us from the two accounts of bondage through His Passion and (2) that His atoning work provides both a “sufficient and superabundant satisfaction for the sins of all humanity” (Q.49, A.3). Yet he says that “human cooperation with the work of Christ is necessary” in appropriating the Atonement! (Allison 2011:398).

2.3.6 Conclusion

In this discussion the socio-historical development of atonement synthesis theology in European Scholasticism was explored. This included discussion on Anselm’s satisfaction theory, Abelard’s moral influence theory and Bernard’s

opposition to Abelard's theory. Lastly, Aquinas' view of the *sacramentum paenitentiae* as a means of appropriating the Atonement was examined.

Overall European Scholasticism in one way or another illustrated a synthesis, notably between the satisfaction and *Christus Victor* motifs. Penal substitution³² was left largely undeveloped during this era and would be picked up by the Reformers. The influence of the Greek philosophers and the Church Fathers were evident throughout their work. The hierarchical socio-ecclesiastical structure also found expression in the atonement theology of Scholasticism. Further, the *Christus Victor* motif makes regular appearances, especially in the ransom theory, albeit a modified theory. This was due largely because of the medieval man's experience of the demonic.

Therefore, European Scholasticism has presented a well-articulated atonement theology which exhibited greater nuance and detail than its predecessors. There would be no serious contributions in atonement theology until the Reformation, and even here both Luther and Calvin would find themselves heavily indebted to Anselm, Aquinas and, to some extent, Abelard (Siekawitch 2007-2008:21).

2.4 Magisterial Reformers

2.4.1 Introduction

The Protestant Reformation was a revolution against the sale of indulgences, corruption and the abuses of authority in the Roman Catholic Church. It was a movement that sought to find its way back to the origins of the Christian Gospel. Tremendous anxiety was often crippling during the end of the Middle Ages. This found expression during this period as the people of Europe sought every way possible to relieve their guilt. This included frequent pilgrimages, praying countless 'Our Fathers', the collection and veneration of relics, purchasing of indulgences, asceticism and giving money to the Church. It was impossible to

³² I take penal substitution to be a development from the satisfaction motif.

know whether anyone could be sure of their salvation, for one could never do enough in way of good works or asceticism, and thus could never acquire enough grace (Tillich 1967:228-229).

The atonement theology found in the Magisterial Reformers is similar to Anselm's in some ways, but with an important difference. Anselm's satisfaction theory highlighted the 'honour of YHWH', the Reformers, conversely, emphasised the 'justice of YHWH' (Allison 2011:399). They therefore redefined *satisfactio* as stipulated in *Cur Deus Homo* and much of Scholastic theology and sought instead to stress *poena*, "penalty", and "to meet the claims on us of God's holy law and wrath" (Packer 1973:54). I shall begin my discussion by exploring Luther's atonement theology.

2.4.2 The Cross Alone is Our Theology

Luther's method of theology was quite different from that of the Fathers of the Church. For him Christology was central (Tillich 1967:249). His high Christology was not only existential but also a logical prerequisite for a "radical view of the Fall, sin, and the resulting depravity of humanity and the bondage of the human will. Luther's radical understanding of sin and the Fall was grounded experientially as well as theologically". Early in Luther's life as a monk, he experienced a prolonged struggle with *Anfechtung*, meaning "challenge" or to "fight against" and stretched himself to the limits of his strength to relieve himself from guilt and condemnation. He attempted to satisfy YHWH in prayer, vigils, fasting and good works, all to no avail! In Luther's despair, his confessor, Staupitz, directed him to the cross, "the wounds of the sweet saviour". The very heart of Luther's struggle was a pursuit of assurance of his salvation (Brown 1984:315-316; George 2004:265; Shaw and Edwards 2006:77). George explains that,

By pointing Luther to the cross, Staupitz had 'started the doctrine'... a new and deeper understanding of the cross was at

the heart of Luther's developing theology... which came to articulate expression in Luther's Heidelberg Disputation in April 1518 (2004:265).

Many scholars have traditionally thought Luther's atonement theology belongs to the Anselmian theory (Aulén 1931:101). Despite this, Aulén (1931:101) presented a hypothesis that Luther's teaching of the atonement can only be correctly understood as a renaissance of the *Christus Victor* motif taught by the Church Fathers³³. Aulén highlights Luther's teaching on the atonement as returning to the dramatic idea, that is, the *Christus Victor* motif, in his Catechisms. For example, Luther writes that Christ has purchased His people and has won and delivered them from all sins, death and the power of the devil with His precious blood and His guiltless suffering and death, so that they may be wholly His own and live with Him in His kingdom (Article 2: The Small Catechism). The *Christus Victor* motif is also underscored in his Large Catechism, article 2, reading, "He has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and all evil. For before I had no Lord nor King, but was captive under the power of the devil, condemned to death, enmeshed in sin and blindness".

According to George, Luther portrayed Christ crucified as the bait YHWH used to 'hook' Satan thus destroying his power over man. This is reminiscent of Gregory of Nyssa's metaphor. Hence Luther saw the cross as the place of Satan's defeat and yet "the objective basis of justification by faith alone". Luther's understanding of Christ's atoning work is inseparable from his doctrine of justification by faith alone (George 2004:264-275). Contrary to Aulén's hypothesis, Luther articulates penal substitution and vicarious satisfaction as well as a victory over Satan. Packer (1973:85) makes a point of showing his appreciation for Aulén's emphasis of a cosmic victory in "Luther's account of the cross and resurrection". But he rightly accuses Aulén of ignoring "the penal substitution in terms of which Christ's victorious work is basically defined" (cf. Aulén 1931:101-122). Along with the *Christus Victor* motif, penal substitution

³³According to George (2004:268), numerous Luther scholars are unconvinced by Aulén's effort to enforce an inflexible typology in Luther's unsystematic theology.

and vicarious satisfaction are in fact crucial for Luther's comprehensive biblical doctrine of the atonement (Aubert 2002:1, 3-4, 16; Shaw and Edwards 2006:82; cf. Luther's Large Catechism, article 2).

Furthermore, Luther rigorously opposed the system of *poenitentiae*, acts of penance, which exploited the notion of *satisfactio*. Contrary to the familiar medieval teaching of the wrath of YHWH with reference to the judgment to come, Luther saw it very much as operative in the present on sinful humanity with its entire dreadfulness. For Luther, the wrath of YHWH takes the place of the *justitia distributive*, "retributive justice", of the medieval system. He favoured the personal notion rather than the cold juridical term, demonstrating that YHWH is personally involved in the judgment of man and maintains His establishment of grace. Hence 'the wrath of YHWH' expresses YHWH's direct and immediate reaction to sin (Aulén 1931:113-114).

Unlike Aquinas who "emphasized human reason and the need to participate in divine love", Luther viewed Christ's *satisfactio* as perfect and sufficient, and hence there was no need for additional *satisfactio* on man's part (Aubert 2002:1, 3-4, 16; Finlan 2007:59; Shaw and Edwards 2006:82). Yet, whilst Anselm taught that YHWH either inflicted *poenae*, "penalty" or provided a *satisfactio*, Luther on the other hand argued that YHWH chooses both, that Christ in His death "bears all the sins of all men in his body³⁴" and bearing our *poenae* makes "satisfaction for them with His own blood". Punishment is paid and His justice is satisfied! (Luther's Works vol.26: 277).

Thus the atoning work of Christ is a penal substitution. It is somewhat peculiar and in my view erroneous that Finlan (2007:59) would accuse Luther of reviling the emphasis on love and mercy of the Scholastics when these two are very much emphasised and celebrated in Luther's work. He also sees Luther's view as "even sadder than Anselm's", picturing "a divine cruelty that is *worse* than the human cruelty of his time. Luther asserts both the helplessness of humans to break free

³⁴ cf. Luther on Gal 3:13.

from the power of sin and the nearly infinite wrath of God against such sinners” (Finlan 2007:58). But Finlan seems to miss the point in Luther’s theology when it is not only Christ’s victory for our sake, but Christ bearing and paying for our punishment in a penal substitutionary atonement. Surely this is the apex of divine love and mercy! For Luther says that Christ was not only crucified and died, “but by divine love sin was laid upon Him” (Luther’s Works vol.26: 279).

Satisfactio during Luther’s day was related to the medieval *sacramentum paenitentiae*, “sacrament of penance”. Luther wished to have it abolished from Christian theology and felt that it belonged to the legal profession. For him the idea of *satisfactio* was so much a part of the penitential system that he despised it as concealing the Gospel (Luther’s Works vol.30:29; Aulén 1931:118, 120-121; George 2004:273; McDonald 1985:183).

For this reason, Luther is able to say that *satisfactio* alone is ‘too weak’ a description for Christ’s atoning work on the cross. His understanding of atonement theology and in fact all his theology is shaped by the contrast of the *theologia gloriae*, “theology of Glory” and the *theologia crucis*, “theology of the Cross” laid out in Theses 19-21 of the Heidelberg Disputation. For Luther the cross alone is our theology, *Crux sola est nostra theologia* (Brunner 1968:435; George 2004:265, 273).

The cross was firstly “God’s attack on human sin” and secondly salvation from sin. But this attack on sin was a strange attack, for Christ suffered and died at the hand of humanity. It was YHWH’s ‘alien work’. Forbe explains that the cross of Christ does not call for a passive response, but that it “draws us into itself so that we become participants in the story... Just as Jesus was crucified so we also are crucified with him. The cross makes us part of its story”. In his disputation Luther proclaimed, according to Forbe, that “theologians of the cross attack the way of glory, the way of law, human works, and free will, because the way of glory simply operates as a defence mechanism against the cross” (Forbe 1997:1, 7, 12).

Luther's central ideas in his atonement theology come together in his exposition of Galatians³⁵ which attacked the *theologia gloriae* (George 2004:266-269). In this exposition, he presented both Christ's victory and his work of atonement. Although the weight of Christ's atoning work is not placed on the *Christus Victor* motif, says Aubert. Instead Luther taught that, Christ secured *redemptio* whilst "facing death, while agonizing under the wrath of a holy God opposed to sinful man". This was the means by which Christ conquered the devil, death and sin (Aubert 2002:59). For "Christ's righteousness is unconquerable. Sin is defeated and righteousness triumphs and reigns forever. In the same manner was death defeated... Sin, death, the wrath of God, hell, the devil are mortified in Christ" (Luther on Galatians 3:13).

Having looked at Luther's atonement theology, we can see that it is not only complex and deeply rooted in context, but that it is clearly a synthesis of penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs.

2.4.3 Institutes of Christian Religion

The Reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564) of Geneva is arguably on a par with Augustine and Aquinas. He also shared Luther's conviction "that the atonement lay at the heart of theology" (Shaw and Edwards 2006:83). Calvin's mentor Martin Bucer of Strabourg took part in a debate on the atonement in 1526 with the Anabaptist, Hans Denck. In opposition to Denck, Bucer wished to argue that the 'hospitality'³⁶ of the Cross was limited to the elect. In the end this led to the expulsion of Denck from his city. It is plausible that this debate and the issues that surrounded it, along with the historical views on the atonement influenced Calvin's own views (Boersma 2004:65).

Of the Magisterial Reformers, it was Calvin who gave penal substitution a "compelling statement" (McDonald 1985:191). He produced the *Institutio*

³⁵ Particularly Gal 3:13.

³⁶ cf. Boersma (2004).

Christianae Religionis, “the Institutes of Christian Religion”, which is his most popular work and contains a culmination of “all his biblical insight” and supplements his biblical commentaries. It is rightly considered “one of the foundations of Reformed Theology” (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:185), and it is in this work where most of his atonement theology finds expression. It is noteworthy that the context of Calvin’s theology of atonement is entrenched in a passionate pastoral concern. He provides a magnificent demonstration in the penal substitutionary atonement of YHWH’s fury against sin, juxtaposed against His intense love for the sinner (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:186; Shaw and Edwards 2006:83).

The richness of the biblical content of atonement is reflected in Calvin’s thinking as he expands on several motifs, namely, ‘Christ our Example’, ‘Christ our Sacrifice’, ‘Christ our Merit’, ‘Christ the Obedient Second Adam’, and of course the synthesis, ‘Christ our Penal Substitution’ and ‘Christ our Victor’ (Blocher 2004:281; Shaw and Edwards 2006:85). A favourite atonement motif of Calvin’s is ‘Christ as Victor’ who defeats the enemies of his people and delivers them from tyranny (Blocher 2004:289-290). Calvin explains that through His suffering Jesus overcame death, “that he might subject the weakness of the one to death as an expiation of sin, and by the power of the other, maintaining a struggle with death, might gain us the victory” (2.12.3). Christ therefore engaged “with the powers of hell and the horrors of eternal death” in this struggle (2.16.10). He says that man was under the curse of eternal death and thus “excluded from all hope of salvation”, certainly he was held captive to sin and enslaved to the devil. His *poenae*, “penalty” was hideous devastation. But Jesus Christ interjected! (2.16.2). By Christ enduring the curse, Calvin proclaims that Jesus “annihilated all its force”, and hence, referring to the Apostle Paul³⁷, Christ triumphed upon the cross, the symbol of humiliation, and exchanged it for “a triumphal chariot” where he defeated the principalities and powers (2.16.6). But Calvin also makes it clear that in Christ’s rising again, Jesus “became victorious over death, so the victory of our faith consists only in his resurrection” (2.16.13).

³⁷ Col 2:14-15

Book 2 of *Institutio Christianae Religionis* seems to provide unambiguous support for Calvin's penal substitutionary motif. He explains that through Christ's obedience, Christ reconciled man to YHWH by satisfying His justice and paying the *poenae* of sin (cf. 2.16.13). By becoming man He presented "our flesh as the price of satisfaction to the just judgment of God, and in the same flesh paid the penalty which we had incurred" (2.12.3; cf. 2.16.2).

Jesus Christ consequently took it upon Himself to pay all of humanity's penalties and in so doing, according to Calvin, He descended into hell enduring "the death which is inflicted on the wicked by an angry God" (2.16.10).

2.4.4 Conclusion

The context of the Magisterial Reformers, namely, Luther and Calvin, as well as their atonement theology has been explored in this discussion. Both Reformers provide us with an articulated synthesis of penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs. In a time of crippling fear, guilt and tremendous anxiety, the Reformers sought to find a way back to the origins of the Christian Gospel where free grace and assurance of salvation could be found once again.

2.5 Post Reformation

2.5.1 Introduction

In this discussion, the socio-historical development of atonement synthesis theology in the Post Reformation era³⁸ (17th – 20th century) will be explored. This period was marked by the Age of Reason, the Age of Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution and lastly, Modernity.

³⁸ In this discussion I am not necessarily referring to the 'Post Reformation era' in light of Reformed theology, but rather as the period between the ecclesial reformation in the Medieval age and Postmodernism. Undoubtedly, however, much of the protestant theology done during the Post Reformation period was deeply influenced by Calvinism and the Reformation.

Reason became deeply important in the 17th century as it still is today. This rationalism has shaped the church and its theology with its “preoccupation with proper interpretation, precision hermeneutics, and ‘pure doctrine’ which continues to dominate Christian thinking in the West and now beyond” (Haase 2009:29).

Grenz explains that the optimism of the Enlightenment and the emphasis on reason and human freedom gave rise to the suspicion of beliefs that appeared to restrain autonomy and promote an external authority rather than experience and reason. He comments further that the Enlightenment movement understood freedom mainly in individualistic notions. The modern movement would later advance the “autonomous self, the self-determining subject who exists outside any tradition or community” (1996:4).

The influence of Newton and Galileo encouraged the moderns to forsake an organic understanding of the world which was a dominative view of the ancients, and adopted a mechanistic understanding instead (Grenz 1996:50). This understanding according to Grenz (1996:50) reduced “reality to a set of basic elements or elementary particles and forces”.

Perhaps the apex of the Post Reformation period finds expression in Modernity which was distinguished by rationalistic, positivistic and technocentric notions. Modernity fostered a belief in absolute truth, linear progress, the standardization of information and production, and the rational planning of idyllic social orders, for example, Fascism and Marxism (Haase 2009:52). During the Post Reformation, “rational theology dispossessed the superstructure of revelation” stripping away its meaning which positioned the Church into the territory of rationalism (Tillich 1968:279). The manifestation of which is beautifully expressed in Ferguson’s (2010) article, *Christus Victor et Propitiator: The Death of Christ, Substitute and Conqueror*, where he explains that modern man would dismiss a belief in Christ’s work destroying the devil. Theologians during this period usually not only had an anti-supernatural bent but would dismiss such

theologies as mythological (2010:171). Yet, even those Reformed theologians, like François Turretini, Charles Hodge and Louis Berkhof, who believed in the supernatural in some sense, did not explore the theme of Christ conquering the devil in any detailed argument (Ferguson 2010:172).

The discussion which follows will explore atonement theology during the Post Reformation. This includes the Puritans, the Princeton theologians, the Calvin Theological Seminary theologians, the English theologians, the Swiss theologians and the Dutch theologian, G.C. Berkouwer.

2.5.2 Puritans

For sheer exactitude, François Turretini³⁹ (1623–1687) of Geneva is without equal. He discusses each theological subject in his *Institution Theologiae Elencticae*, “Institutes of Elenctic Theology”, by “carefully defining and answering the question under discussion, before launching into a fuller explanation and biblical defence of his position” (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:186-187). In Turretini’s discussion on the atonement he provides a detailed forensic treatise where he teaches penal substitution and proclaims our liberation from guilt whilst preserving YHWH’s justice. He explains the relation of *satisfactio* “to the penalty enacted against it by Supreme Judge”. Turretini then notes that the act of payment which liberates the debtor and cancels the obligation, whether the payment was made by the debtor himself or by a surety. He argues that Christ, in His Life and Death, made such a satisfaction and that remission was given, for YHWH had accepted the satisfaction. Therefore, “Justice is exercised against sin, and mercy towards the sinner; an atonement is made to the divine justice by a surety, and God mercifully pardons us” (Turretini: online).

³⁹ I concede that Turretini is not strictly a Puritan. I include him because (1) he lived during the time of the Puritans, (2) his theology is similar to the Puritans and (3) the Puritans (and later theologians) were profoundly influenced by Turretini’s theology.

Turretini believed that Christ bore our sins and took the punishment due to us by standing in our stead (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:187). Turretini (14.XI. 2-4:426-427) affirms that a true satisfaction was “made by the payment of a full price which meritoriously obtains the liberation of the guilty on the ground of justice” and then proclaims that Christ died substitutively.

Turretini’s atonement theology is also articulated in the theology of the towering theologian, John Owen (1616–1683). Owen’s atonement theology, however, was focused primarily against universal redemption⁴⁰ (Packer 1959:141). Pre-eminent amongst Puritan thinkers, Owen is possibly the greatest of English theologians (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:189; Shaw and Edwards 2006:93).

Packer, an expert on Owen and his book, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, proclaims it as Owen’s second major work and first masterpiece (Packer 2007:140). “The idea of the absolute predestination of the elect, for whom alone Christ has made atonement” dominates this volume (McDonald 1985:293). The context of this masterpiece is significant. Owen wished to remonstrate against the emerging Arianism of the Anglican Church and “the universalism of the French school of Saumer” and the work of Thomas More (McDonald 1985:293). Yet, according to Packer, Owen’s aim in his book was not to be defensive, but to be constructive. Therefore this work is a theological and biblical examination with the purpose of making plain what Scriptures says about the atonement. And yet, it is also a systematic expository treatise (Packer 1959:124-125).

Owen argued that the punishment that Jesus bore in his death was the exact equivalent of the sins and punishment deserved of all believers (1959:168; Shaw and Edwards 2006:93). He later makes it clear “that Christ died for all in respect of the sufficiency of the ransom he paid, but not in respect of the efficacy of its application” (1959:184; cf. Owen 1959:47, 61). Christ’s death is therefore “a full satisfaction for the sins of God’s redeemed”, satisfying “the requirements of justice” and freeing them from YHWH’s wrath (Owen 1959:170; McDonald

⁴⁰ I.e. classical Arminianism, Amyraldism, and the work of the lay theologian, Thomas More (Packer 1959:141).

1985:295). In his own words he (1959:171) affirms “that our Saviour underwent the wrath of God which was due unto us”.

Owen certainly held that the invitations to the gospel were universal because it is addressed to every man and that all who come to Christ would be received by Him. The extent of the atonement thus does not arise in evangelism in Owen’s theology (Owen 1959:97; Packer 1959:135).

During Owen’s time, John Bunyan (1628-1688), one of England’s greatest preachers, was greatly admired by Owen (Packer 1959:135; Shaw and Edwards 2006:95). Bunyan’s earlier life of impiety and profanity, and his later faithfulness to Christ during countless persecutions, provide a background for understanding much of what he wrote on the atonement. It was likely during one of his imprisonments that he wrote *Pilgrim’s Progress*. This work exhibits “the profound spiritual reflection of a great nonconformist hero” and is submerged with allusions from Scripture (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:188). Throughout much of his writings, Bunyan taught on the cross which had comforted him “in his own struggle with sin” (cf. Bunyan, *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved* n.d.: 28; *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* n.d.: 38), and thus could teach from his personal experience. He also believed that because YHWH was a God of justice, salvation could only be secured through Christ’s satisfaction and penal substitutionary atonement (Bunyan n.d. 95; Shaw and Edwards 2006:95). He wrote that on the cross Christ suffered “the death that we deserved for our sins” (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:189; Bunyan, *Saved by Grace* n.d.:15). In the same book, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, he said, “He was the mighty God, and did what He did, and died the death also, not for Himself, but for me; to whom His doings, and the worthiness of them, should be imputed, if I believed on Him” (Bunyan n.d. 92-93).

2.5.3 Princeton Theologians

Whilst Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) was only at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) as President for a few months before he died⁴¹, he forms a vital link between the Puritans and the Princeton theologians, being a Puritan himself. If John Owen was the greatest of English theologians, Jonathan Edwards was perhaps the greatest American theologian (Shaw and Edwards 2006:98). According to McDonald (1985:296) his work stands beside that of Calvin and Owen “unfolding the sovereignty of divine grace in man’s salvation”.

The gospel of Christ’s satisfaction for sin in Edwards’ preaching was instrumental in the 1734-35 and 1740-41 revivals (McDonald 1985:299). In his sermons he would “set the love of God firmly alongside the justice of God⁴² as the reason for the atonement” (Shaw and Edwards 2006:100). Edwards taught that Christ’s passion revealed the fullness of His love for man and the honour and love of the majesty of YHWH (McDonald 1985:297). Therefore, given YHWH’s majesty, holiness and excellency, there is no escape from the penalty of sin which has insulted YHWH. The terrible reality of man’s doom is therefore imminent, unless a satisfaction of eternal worth can be found to counterbalance the divine decree” (McDonald 1985:298). Edwards makes clear that it is,

By Christ purchasing redemption, two things are intended, his *satisfaction*, and his *merit*. All is done by the price that Christ lays down, which does two things: it pays our debt, and so it *satisfies*; it procures our title to happiness, and so it *merits*. The *satisfaction* of Christ is to free us from *misery*, and the *merit* of Christ is to purchase *happiness* for us (Edwards 1773:574).

Edwards, therefore, emphasised, according to McDonald (1985:299), the infinite worth of Christ’s work, thus meeting the infinite penalty of our sin. Edwards explains that satisfaction and merit “both consist in paying a valuable price, a

⁴¹ cf. *Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards*, In The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 1.

⁴² cf. Edwards’ sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*.

price of infinite value: but only that price, as it respects a debt to be paid, is called *satisfaction*; and as it respects a positive good to be obtained, is called *merit*” (Edwards 1773:574).

Some years later the orthodox Calvinism of the Western Confession was challenged as liberal theology advanced. It was during these troubling times that Charles Hodge (1797-1878), in his *Systematic Theology*, provided a defence of orthodoxy, including the traditional view of penal substitution. Hodge felt that it was appropriate to use forensic language when talking of the atonement, because justice is a vital feature of YHWH’s nature. Speaking of the work of Christ, Hodge states that a satisfaction satisfies the demands of the law. And “by his (Christ’s) obedience and sufferings, by his whole righteousness, active and passive, He, as our representative and substitute, did and endured all that the law demands” (Hodge 1968:494). Thus, similar to Edwards, Hodge spoke of sin having been forgiven only on the basis of forensic penal satisfaction (Hodge 1968:494; Shaw and Edwards 2006:123).

Like Edwards, “Hodge sees justice as a form of moral excellence that belongs to YHWH’s essential nature. And because of this reality of justice sin must be punished”. The law requires both sin’s penalty as well as fulfilment of all righteousness, all of which are met in the work of Christ (Hodge 1968:494-493; McDonald 1985:193-194).

B.B. Warfield (1851-1921) of Princeton was also concerned about Christian orthodoxy and the traditional view of penal substitution. He stated that “the doctrine of substitutive atonement... is, after all, the very heart of the gospel” (Warfield 1950:377). Much like Edwards, he too sought to highlight the love of YHWH in the atonement. Expositing John 3:16 he comments, “God’s love of the world is shown by His saving so great a multitude as He does save out of the world” (Warfield 1916:114). He explains that the primary intention of salvation “is to convey some conception of the immeasurable greatness of the love of YHWH. The method it employs to do this is to declare the love of God for the

world so great that He gave His Son to save it” (Warfield 1916:115). Further, Warfield writes that Christ gave himself for us as a ransom for many, thus purchasing us to Himself by his blood. As a result Jesus is our saviour, he “is an all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins” (Warfield 1916:185).

Hodge rejected the ‘bizarre’ account of Jesus being a ransom to Satan which was often illustrated by the Church Fathers (Warfield 1950:374) and evades any discussion on the *Christus Victor* motif. The Princeton theologian John Murray (1898-1975) on the other hand does offer comment:

It was that triumph alone that released believers from the bondage of fear and inspired the confidence and composure of faith. But this triumph had relevance for them because their consciousness was one conditioned by the awareness of the role and activity of Satan, and confidence and composure entered their breasts because they knew that Christ’s triumph terminated upon the sinister agent who had power of death (Murray 1955:20).

Murray views redemption from sin as a victory which Christ secured once and for all, and redeeming us “from the curse of the law, from the guilt and power of sin, from the enthralling power and bondage of Satan” (Murray 1955:41-42, 54).

Like Edwards and Hodge, Murray emphasised the love of YHWH as “the cause or source of the atonement” (Murray 1955:4). And yet, following on from Owen⁴³, he believed that the atonement was limited to the elect alone, and thus purposed and accomplished actual salvation. This salvation was purchased and secured “through a satisfaction that could be rendered only through substitutionary sacrifice and blood-brought redemption” (1955:56, 62). Therefore, the atonement is found in substitutionary blood-shedding, “purchasing to himself the many on whose behalf he gave his life a ransom” (1955:6, 39, 49).

⁴³ This is not to say that Owen neglected the love of YHWH in his discussions or that Edwards and Hodge did not hold to Limited Atonement.

It becomes apparent in the Princeton theologians that they not only borrowed from each other in their understanding of the atonement, but that they were all greatly influenced by François Turretini as well.

2.5.4 Calvin Theological Seminary Theologians

The theology of Jonathan Edwards lived on in Louis Berkhof (1873-1957) of the Calvin Theological Seminary. McDonald (1985:310) explains how Berkhof saw the atonement as an absolute necessity because rebellion cannot simply be disregarded in light of YHWH's infinite majesty and perfections. Sin must be punished (Berkhof 1996:371).

With respect to YHWH's love in the atonement, Berkhof cautioned representing a "sympathetic love of Christ for sinners", offering Himself in the sinner's stead thus pacifying an angry God. Berkhof felt that this was all wrong and that it "presupposes a schism in the Trinitarian life of God" (Berkhof 1996:367). Rather,

The good pleasure of God to save sinners by a substitutionary atonement was founded in the love and justice of God. It was the love of God that provided a way of escape for lost sinners, John 3:16. And it was the justice of God which required that this way should be of such a nature as to meet the demands of the law (Berkhof 1996:368).

Therefore, the atonement cannot only be explained on the basis of YHWH's love alone. Yet, it was indeed "the good pleasure of YHWH to save sinners by a substitutionary atonement" (Berkhof 1996:363, 367-368).

Following closely behind Berkhof is Anthony Hoekema (1913-1988) who is in agreement with him. For Hoekema explains that YHWH is wrathful against sin and that this is taught clearly in the OT and NT. But at the same time "God has so

richly shown his love to us that he gave his Son for us, so that through the shedding of Christ's blood the Father's wrath against our sin could be removed" (1989:158). Therefore, it is through Christ's substitutionary sacrifice that YHWH's wrath against our sin is turned aside, as Jesus bore His wrath in our stead (Hoekema 1989:158, 174).

2.5.5 British Theologians

In line with Berkhof and Hoekema, the British theologian George Smeaton (1814-1889) believed that a theory of atonement that only demonstrated YHWH's love was insufficient. Yet, whilst Smeaton never does "elaborate a specific theory of atonement" he was ardent that Christ took upon Himself the sin of humanity and in so doing bore YHWH's wrath. Therefore, he understood the atonement as consisting of both YHWH's love and His justice together and that justice had to be satisfied (McDonald 1985:323-324). This is palpable in his work, *Paul's Doctrine of the Atonement*, where he says that Christ's atoning work interjected between our sin and YHWH's holy anger, manifesting His love and compassion. This atoning work of Christ, according to Smeaton, removed humanity's sins and brought YHWH's anger to an end (Smeaton 1870: online). He develops this idea when he declares that "God loves His creatures" and yet He cannot but be wrathful against sin and sinners by striking those outside of Christ with everlasting punishment. Christ "bore the penalty of sin in order to set us free from it as a deserved doom. This remission, consisting in nothing else than in the liberation of the man, or in personal liberation from any liability to punishment" (Smeaton 1970; 1871).

Smeaton, without a doubt taught penal substitution, but the *Christus Victor* motif also forms a vital part of his atonement theology. He, like many other theologians who abhorred the grotesque imagery of the ransom theory, believed that "the ransom was not paid to the inferior officer, but to the fountain of authority—the Judge of all". Therefore man was held in bondage to Satan, but his dominion was subordinate. "He was but the jailor, having no power over his captives except by

God's authority, who left them under a just doom—under sin, death, and hell” (Smeaton 1870). This captivity was chiefly to the justice of YHWH and secondly a captivity to Satan “accordingly, a satisfaction to God's injured law and honour terminated the bondage, the ransom being paid to God, not to Satan” (Smeaton 1871).

During the time of Smeaton, the Prince of Preachers, Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) of London was deeply concerned about the lack of the preaching of the cross in many sermons. He was also horrified at the novel atonement theories and the undermining of the traditional understanding of the cross. The substitutionary atonement was absolutely essential to Spurgeon (Shaw and Edwards 2006:117). He, therefore, challenged theological liberalism and the shifting doctrinal standards of many evangelicals (Shaw and Edwards 2006:118-119).

In his preaching, Spurgeon made it clear that Christ took our sins upon Himself and suffered for them on the cross and in so doing our debt has been paid for and our transgressions removed by His blood forever (Spurgeon 1878:5; cf. 1858). He explains further that it is “because God has condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ, therefore He will no more condemn us—we are henceforth free—that the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in us...” (Spurgeon 1878:5). Despite a strong emphasis in penal substitutionary atonement, he too taught on the *Christus Victor* motif, saying:

For the battle is fought and the victory is won forever! Victory, VICTORY, VICTORY! His own right hand and His holy arm has gotten Him the victory! Though the Champion died in the conflict, yet in His death He slew Death and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, Satan! Our glorious Champion has risen from His fall (Spurgeon 1878:6).

Spurgeon's cause for concern regarding a rising tide of criticism about the traditional view of atonement did not ebb. In fact at the dawn of the twentieth

century some theologians sought to valiantly defend substitutionary atonement, most notable the Scottish theologian, James Denney⁴⁴ (1856-1917). He argued that the atonement was central to the NT and that there was no Gospel without it. Denney believed that the atonement was “God’s response to a profound problem: ‘Sin in me is as deep as my being’” (McDonald 1985:273; Shaw and Edwards 2006:129).

For Denney, YHWH’s wrath against our sin is very real, and is the revelation of His righteousness. “The wrath of God brings with it the sense of the justice of punishment”. However, Christ died for our sins. His death on the cross was really a substitute for ours and is thus YHWH’s work accomplished for humanity (Denney 1895:112; McDonald 1985:274-275, 277). It is something of a perplexity though, that Denney did not accept the notion “that Christ in his death suffered the extreme penalties of sin or rendered for it an exact equivalent” (McDonald 1985:276). In light of this, one wonders whether our sins are fully paid for. Yet Denney is emphatic that “Christ, by God’s appointment, dies the sinner’s death. The doom falls upon Him, and is exhausted there”. For in redeeming us, Christ became a curse for us “that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (Denney 1895:111, 115).

According to McDonald, Denney was also uneasy with the forensic, legal and judicial terms in atonement theology and did not wish for his view to be characterised as such. He believed that such a concept was rooted in a misunderstanding of the Apostle Paul’s reference and application of YHWH’s Law (1985:276). For Denney, Christ was not only our substitute bearing our burden, but he was also our representative. He, therefore, discards the idea of the atonement as a transaction in book-keeping in and of itself (Denney 1951:196-197).

The steady decline of the traditional penal substitutionary view called for a serious defence from Christian ministers who would emphasise penal substitution as the

⁴⁴ According to Packer (1973:81), Denney, a celebrated advocate of the substitutionary idea never refers to the atonement as ‘penal’; the avoidance appears to be deliberate.

heart of the Gospel. A key player in this defence was Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) of Westminster Chapel, London. Seeing the atonement as the most marvellous and magnificent event in all of history and the universe, he challenged the notion of YHWH's wrath as almost blasphemous and the disdain of the propitiatory nature in Christ's death (Lloyd-Jones 1970:90; cf. 2003:322; Shaw and Edwards 2006:133-134).

Lloyd-Jones was a medical doctor earlier in his life which provides some insight into how he understood the atonement. He talked of the love of YHWH and His full mercy and compassion and that "Jesus literally died of a broken heart". He believed that the notion of penal substitution is evident throughout the OT's sacrificial system right through to Christ's Passion and the Epistles in the NT (Shaw and Edwards 2006:135).

In his *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, Lloyd-Jones considers the various atonement theories. He deems the satisfaction of the commercial theory, the moral influence theory, the governmental theory and the mystical theory as all false theories. With respect to the ransom theory, he distinguishes between a false ransom teaching, that of many of the Patristics who believed that Christ in his crucifixion paid homage to the devil, and the true ransom theory (Lloyd-Jones 2003:312-325). In his understanding of the true ransom theory alias *Christus Victor*, Lloyd-Jones had no doubt that in Jesus' work, both in his incarnation and atoning work, He was waging a *mêlée*. But Jesus "was not only conquering Satan, he was conquering death" (Lloyd-Jones 2003:240, 344). Commenting on Romans chapters 3.20-4.2, he views ransoming as redemption - YHWH ransoms us by means of a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Being that, according to Lloyd-Jones, the remission of sin can only be dealt with by means of shedding of blood and thus appeasing the wrath of YHWH⁴⁵ (Lloyd-Jones 1970:81, 89; 2003:322; cf. 2003:317, 326-237, 332). An atonement synthesis is manifested in Lloyd-Jones' writings most strikingly when he proclaims:

⁴⁵ In his writing, Lloyd-Jones makes it clear that YHWH Himself offers propitiation from within Himself, to satisfy and appease His own wrath. The propitiation is not provided by an external agent.

So you see that our Lord by His work, and especially His work upon the cross, in addition to bearing the penalty and punishment of our sins as our substitute, was also destroying the works of the devil, He was delivering us from the bondage and the dominion of the devil, and was also delivering us from the territory of death. We are no longer dead in trespasses and sins; we do not belong to the realm of death, we are alive unto God. And likewise He has delivered us from the tyranny and thralldom and power of sin (Lloyd-Jones 2003:345).

The Anglican theologian, J.I. Packer⁴⁶, was profoundly influenced by Lloyd-Jones, and he too courageously defended penal substitution against the liberals and some evangelicals who dismissed it as offensive and outdated. During his studies in Oxford, Packer came across the Puritan, John Owen. Owen had considerable impact upon Packer's theology, notably his atonement theology⁴⁷ (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:197). From a rigorous Calvinist perspective, Packer sought to defend the penal substitutionary view, not dissimilar to Owen himself.

Packer's conviction of Christ's death as a penal substitution and as the 'distinguishing mark of the worldwide evangelical fraternity' is powerfully set forth in a series of articles⁴⁸ (Shaw and Edwards 2006:136). Criticising the "divine child abuse" allegation of penal substitution, Packer labels this as a 'smarty pants' notion which is "supremely silly and as irreverent and wrong as they could possibly be". He argues that the atonement in penal substitutionary terms was premeditated by all members of the Trinity. For Packer the right view of the atonement is of utmost importance because it is so bound up in the

⁴⁶ Packer was born in Britain and it was here where he studied and started his academic career as a theologian. Moreover, the articles to which I refer were written during his years in Britain. It is for this reason I include him in this discussion under 'British Theologians'. Consequently, I concede that Packer has resided in Vancouver, Canada for many years having taught at Regent College.

⁴⁷ cf. Packer's introduction to the Banner of Truth Trust edition of Owen's *The Death by Death in the Death of Christ*.

⁴⁸ These articles were recently republished in, Packer J.I. and Dever M. (2007). *In my place condemned he stood: celebrating the glory of atonement*.

character of YHWH and the meaning of Christianity is at stake if an incorrect view of the atonement is held (Packer 2007:21-22).

In his writings, Packer articulates the atonement as Christ taking the place of sinners who are exposed to YHWH's divine judgement and in so doing lays down his life as a sacrifice undergoing their death and penalty on their behalf (Packer 2007:22). In so doing justice has been carried out and all the sins of those who believe have been judged, punished and thus pardoned in Christ Jesus (Packer 1973:41). There is there for an important connection between Jesus' death as a sacrifice and as a penal substitution.

Having explored the atonement theology of the British theologians it is evident that whilst the *Christus Victor* is not entirely disregarded, they rigorously fought to retain the penal substitutionary view.

2.5.6 Swiss Theologians

Conceivably the most pre-eminent theologian of the 20th century was the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968). Tillich states that Barth's Neo-Reformation theology was essentially a discovery of Luther in the Ritschlian tradition. Yet his theology went significantly further than the Ritschlians in coming to grips with Luther and the doctrines of sin and grace. In the beginning this theology was called the *Theology of Crisis* (1967:536). He detached himself from the religious socialism and political movements and led the inner-churchly resistance against National Socialism, under Hitler's power. Barth came to recognise that the quasi-religious movement headed by Hitler was an attack on Christianity (Tillich 1967:538-539).

In his atonement theology Barth emphasised certain aspects of the atonement but avoided setting forth logical atonement theory. He felt that YHWH's acts are so incomparably divine that they cannot be conformed to human reasoning and formulations (Barth 1956:80). And so the atonement is understood as a mystery

and miracle (McDonald 1985:307). Nevertheless, the historical milieu in which Barth did his theology, namely World War Two, lends itself well. Barth claimed “that the image of God in man is totally destroyed” (Tillich 1967:537). Not to mention Barth’s special emphasis in Christ as Victor “over the demonic adversaries of man, both personal and cosmic” (Barth 1961:168, 197; McDonald 1985:307-308). Barth writes that Christ’s “suffering and conquering in time, accomplishes the atonement” (1956:51). Jesus he says is himself “present as the Victor from the very outset” (1961:178).

In many ways Barth’s methodology is similar to Anselm in his theology (Clough 2010). This is expressed in Barth’s satisfaction view; but he also taught that Christ in His divinity and humanity, bore the penalty of man’s sin (McDonald 1985:307-308). He saw Jesus as the “Mediator between God and man, and therefore as the One who restores fellowship between them and accomplishes the justification and sanctification of man” (Barth 1961:180). His view of penal substitutionary atonement is perhaps most adequately expressed when he proclaims:

It was we who have deserved death, eternal death. But the Son of God... has entered into our place when He became flesh. He has taken to Himself the very accusation which was directed against us, the very judgment which was passed upon us. He has borne the punishment which was rightly ours. As the Son of God He could enter into our place, into the place of every individual man, of the whole human (Barth 1957:152; cf. 1956:552).

Barth experienced an uneasy relationship with his contemporary Emil Brunner (1899–1966) which involved a famous controversy in which Barth published an ill-tempered pithy rejection of Brunner’s *Nature and Grace* entitled

*No!*⁴⁹ (Tillich 1967:537). Yet Brunner had a high view of Barth and the two shared Neo-Reformation theology, having much in common theologically.

Both Anselm's and Barth's atonement theology make their way into Brunner's theology, though Brunner does not seem to develop Christ as Victor as does Barth. Brunner writes that "Sin against God is an attack on God's honour. Sin is rebellion against the Lord. But God cannot permit His honour to be attacked". If YHWH allowed His honour to be attacked He would cease to be God. YHWH's Law and order is the elemental order of the world. It is a "logical and reliable character of all that happens, the validity of all standards, of all intellectual, legal, and moral order, the Law itself, in its most profound meaning, demands the divine reaction" according to Brunner (1968:444; cf. 466).

A close affinity with Denney's atonement theology is also expressed in Brunner's thought, particularly humanity's sinfulness, and the reality of YHWH's wrath, the nature of the Law and the penal aspect of Christ's atonement (McDonald 1985:278). Brunner explains sin and guilt, emphasising it as an "actual obstacle" between YHWH and man with consequences (Brunner 1968:450; McDonald 1985:279). The idea of penalty then corresponds to our guilt. But Christ has taken upon Himself the condemnation of humanity's sin by bearing "the divine necessities of punishment" (Brunner 1968:445,447, 469; McDonald 1985:280). Brunner was also quick to point out that "the Cross is the only place where the loving, forgiving, merciful God is revealed in such a way that we perceive that His Holiness and His Love are equally infinite" (Brunner 1968:470; cf. 472, 450,485).

2.5.7 The Dutch Theologian, G.C. Berkouwer

A remarkable expression of atonement synthesis is apparent in G.C. Berkouwer's (1903-1996) *The Work of Christ*. He explains that the sacrificial system was

⁴⁹ cf. *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace"* by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "*No!*" by Dr. Karl Barth (2002).

imperfect and was never able to effect in any real sense reconciliation between YHWH and man because it was only ever a shadow of Christ's sacrifice (Berkouwer 1965:304). Christ in His true sacrifice presented Himself fully in our stead as a substitutionary sacrifice which brought us forgiveness, taking away our sin. This was not a human effort but an act of YHWH which has effected concrete reconciliation (Berkouwer 1965:309-310). In his refutation against those who reject Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, Berkouwer (1965:311) says,

Those who protest against substitution in the sacrifice of Christ express the natural, inevitable rejection by the human heart; refusing the gift of God, they are left in the poverty of their debt. God's graciousness and justice are revealed only in the real substitution, in the radical sacrifice.

The *Christus Victor* motif also enjoys much attention in *The Work of Christ*. Berkouwer observes that Christian theology has not paid enough attention to Christ's struggle and victory. The *Christus Victor* motif, though not always developed in Berkouwer's thought; he makes it clear that the testimony of the Messiah is that of power and victory. This triumph, Berkouwer believes, is not only in Christ's suffering, but is evident throughout his life as well. Notably his victory is demonstrated in His service, love, meekness and sacrifice. This victory is different because it is the "victorious power of reconciliation and mercy in the way of his suffering and death", even when such a victory is interpreted by the bystanders as he hangs on the cross, as a symbol of helplessness (1965:328-335, 338).

2.5.8 Conclusion

This discussion sought to demonstrate the socio-historical development of atonement synthesis theology in the Post Reformation era. The works of the Puritans, the Princeton theologians, the Calvin Theological Seminary theologians,

the British theologians, the Swiss theologians and the Dutch theologian, G.C. Berkouwer were focused on in particular.

The atonement theology of many Post Reformation theologians often demonstrated a clear sense of rationalism. At times their theology became mechanistic as they engaged with precise hermeneutics and proper interpretation in an effort to develop a ‘pure doctrine’. Most of these theologians, particularly Owen, the British theologians and others fought against the atonement theologies that were the effect of the Enlightenment. That is, the suspicion of beliefs that appeared to restrain autonomy and promote an external authority rather than experience and reason. This resulted in a rigorous defence of penal substitution. On the other hand, in the case of some Post Reformation theologians, an expression of the *Christus Victor* motif also emerged. Thus, in one degree or another, atonement synthesis is generally present through much of the Post Reformation.

In the next discussion we shall see a far greater emphasis of the *Christus Victor* motif and, indeed, atonement synthesis, in the prominent theologians of our day. This section shall explore how atonement theology seeks to engage with a very different shift in philosophy, Postmodernism.

2.6 Postmodernism

2.6.1 Introduction

The philosophical and cultural movement, Postmodernism, lacks a distinct organising principle and is intrinsically pluralistic. It aggressively challenges “totalities, and any hegemony of a singular, unified perspective” and promotes freedom “from order and stability, preferring instead nihilism and chaos” says Haase (2009:92). The unification of an often diverse Postmodernism is found in its frustration with modernist epistemology and the modernist agenda, especially its sense of cultural superiority. In this generation it is doubtful whether humanity

will ever solve the great problems of the world (Grenz 1996:7 Haase 2009:86). Harper (2001:7) explains that the Modernist viewed humanity as the centre of the universe, yet the Postmodernists view humanity as “merely one part of an intricate network akin to the Lion King’s, ‘circle of life’”. The Enlightenment notion of the human subjugation over nature is challenged by Postmodernism which conceives that life on earth is delicate and that we must foster a new attitude of cooperation with our planet. For the survival of humanity is threatened (Grenz 1996:12). Hence for the Postmodernist, the Modernist ideologies will never effectively address the worldwide problem of suffering (Harper 2001:9). Further, Mann (2005:8) notes that the Postmodernist yearns for “an ontological coherence; a wholeness of being”. As he rightly points out:

The fallout from this is many-fold, but perhaps of most significance for the individual is the social isolation that ensues, which drives an irreconcilable search for intimacy due to the fact that the subject of that search is only ever ‘I’.

Therefore, Postmodernism encourages both community as well as individualism (Haase 2009:53), and seeks to go beyond reason towards a non-rational epistemology exploring deeper meaning in emotion and intuition (Grenz 1996:13).

Postmodernists also explore old and ancient ideas, polish them up and make them their own in a contemporary context (O’Donnell 2003:23). Together with its cultural perspectives and polished ancient ideas, Postmodernism fashions a ripe environment for a renaissance of *Christus Victor*. Many have become dissatisfied with the penal substitutionary theory as a rational and objective view, as was evident in much of the Post Reformation. Yet a polished, ancient theory, *Christus Victor*, offers a fresh understanding of the atonement, of Jesus’ full immersion into human experience, where he shares our struggles, and conquers evil and its power through the resurrection (Harper 2001:5-6, 10).

Postmodernism provides Western Christianity with a paradigm shift as the Third World experiences explosive growth in Christianity and as liberation theologies experience popularity and development (Boyd 1997:65). In his book, *God at War*, Boyd (1997:240) makes some important observations. He says that from Anselm's time and notably during the Reformation, the Western church has focussed "its attention on the anthropological dimension of the atonement, usually to the neglect of the cosmic dimension that is central to the New Testament".

In this discussion I shall explore the influence of Postmodernism in the socio-historical development of the atonement. We shall first look at how a renaissance came about and its continuation. Here we shall see a fresh and vigorous emphasis of the *Christus Victor* motif and a denial or a minimisation of the penal substitution. Secondly, we shall survey the exciting synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs in Postmodernism which in my opinion seems to be the fullest expression of the atonement yet.

2.6.2 *Christus Victor* Renaissance

The early development of the *Christus Victor* renaissance in the Postmodern era began in the work of Gustaf Aulén (1879-1977). He made an important contribution to the atonement discussion when he presented several lectures during 1930 in Sweden at the University of Uppsala, as well as in Germany. From these lectures Aulén published his book, *Christus Victor: an Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*. In this classic work he wished to give a strictly historical outline of atonement theology and its various hypotheses throughout church history (Aulén 1931:xxi).

Aulén underlined three predominant types of atonement: (1) The Latin view⁵⁰. Aulén argued that Anselm replaced the older view of atonement, the ransom theory, with the satisfaction view whereby we are reconciled to YHWH through

⁵⁰ A.k.a. The satisfaction theory, and sometimes referred to as the 'objective view'.

satisfaction made to His justice. He felt that the Latin view gradually found its fullest expression in mediaeval scholasticism, and advocated that the scholastic understanding of penance provided *raison d'être* for the Latin view. For Aulén the Latin view is legalistic and problematic (Aulén 1931:1-2, 14-15, 82-83). (2) The humanistic view⁵¹, which really is Abelard's moral influence theory. Aulén argues that in this view, the idea of sin is weakened and that "the emphasis on the human nature now becomes an exclusive emphasis, and Christ is treated simply as the pattern Man" (Aulén 1931:96, 148, 152). (3) Aulén's classic paradigm is synonymous with the *Christus Victor* motif. In this view Aulén describes the central idea of the *Christus Victor* motif as YHWH and His kingdom in a battle against the evil powers which is on an all out assault on humanity (Aulén 2003:ix). The idea of atonement is really a divine conflict and victory whereby Christ the Victor fights and triumphs over the evil powers, those powers which hold humanity in bondage and inflict suffering. It is through Jesus Christ the Victor, that YHWH reconciles humanity and the world to himself, which is remarkably different to the satisfaction theory, at least in Aulén's eyes. Therefore, this battle is seen as a kind of a cosmic battle and victory over the evil powers. This victory brings with it a new relation between YHWH and the world. Thus Aulén argues that this provides a change in YHWH's attitude, and that the atonement does not affect men as individuals, but rather that it is a drama of the world's salvation. He believes that this view of the atonement was the dominant view in the NT as well as in the Fathers of the Church (Aulén 2003:4-6).

Conversely I have demonstrated that the *Christus Victor* motif was certainly not the only view, but that the Church Fathers held to an atonement synthesis. According to Aulén, the cause of the abandonment of the classic view is due to the Enlightenment era where its theologians were declared enemies of orthodoxy and their main object of attack was the satisfaction theory which was described by them as a remnant of Judaism surviving in Christianity (Aulén 2003:6). Yet again my discussions have shown that the *Christus Victor* motif has in one degree or another always been present and has never been abandoned. Indeed I

⁵¹ Sometimes called the 'subjective view'.

acknowledge along with Aulén that some have found the classic theory difficult because its dramatic view has been branded as ‘mythological’. The ransom theory is also often rejected because of its grotesqueness, especially when imagining YHWH ‘doing a deal’ with Satan. It is important to remember that the classic idea of atonement is dramatic and dualistic, depicting the drama of the atonement against a dualist background (Aulén 1931:10-11).

For Aulén the classic view was dominant in both the Latin and Greek Fathers. According to him, Paul’s theology neither belongs to the Latin view or humanist view of atonement, but it closely aligns itself with the classic view (Aulén 1931:10-11). Having explored the *Christus Victor* motif in Irenaeus and the Church Fathers, the NT and the Apostle Paul as well as Luther, Aulén ends his book by saying,

For my own part, I am persuaded that no form of Christian teaching has any future before it except such as can keep steadily in view the reality of the evil in the world, and go to meet the evil with a battle-song of triumph. Therefore I believe that the classic idea of the Atonement and of Christianity is coming back - that is to say, the genuine, authentic Christian faith (Aulén 1931:159).

Without a doubt we can see that Aulén’s loyalty lies almost entirely in the *Christus Victor* motif to the detriment of the Latin view. But ultimately Aulén was right, the *Christus Victor* motif is experiencing fresh emphasis and as we shall see it is a critical part of “the genuine, authentic Christian faith”.

More recently, J. Denny Weaver, a Mennonite, has proposed a *Narrative Christus Victor*. Finlan (2005:98) states that Weaver “rejects all notions of Christ’s death as a payment or a satisfaction of the need for divine retribution”. Weaver argues that Christ was put to death by “the earthly structures in bondage to the power of evil” and thus it was not a payment to YHWH’s honour at all, and neither was it a

“divine punishment that he suffered as a substitute for sinners”. Rather, Jesus’ death was the result of evil forces which rejected YHWH’s rule. Evil having done its worst by denying Jesus His existence, YHWH raises Him from the dead and thus displays His triumph over death (Weaver 2011:47). In His death Jesus refused to return evil with evil and in so doing exposed the violence of evil activity and that evil originated with humanity and not with YHWH (Weaver 2011:42). For Weaver, salvation is the freedom from these evil forces and to be changed and shaped by YHWH’s reign and to participate in making the reign of YHWH visible throughout history (Weaver 2011:46). *Narrative Christus Victor* according to Weaver, enjoys greater focus on the entirety of Jesus’ mission in making the reign of YHWH visible which includes the rejection of violence (Weaver 2011:51).

Weaver argues that the *Christus Victor* motif was “a statement of pre-Constantinian ecclesiology and the foundation for a narrative Christology” (Weaver 1994:278). This, of course, is an oddity through much of church history, as has been illustrated; the *Christus Victor* motif has always enjoyed status. Be that as it may, Weaver views Jesus’ public ministry as:

The beginning of the historical realization of the rule of God in the midst of his people. The rejection of Jesus and that message (Luke 4:29-30) emphasized the confrontation of the competing reigns. Healings and exorcisms (4:31-41), the miraculous catch of fish (5:1-11), and the stilling of the storm (Luke 8) displayed the power of the reign of God over the physical and spiritual forces which enslave individuals, as well as over the created, natural order (Weaver 1994:282).

The Gospel narrative, according to Weaver, portrays Jesus’ life as a clash of kingdoms and hence it is reasonable to Jesus’ life and teachings “within the framework of a historicized version of *Christus Victor*” (Weaver 1994:284). The historical life and ministry of Jesus revealed the nature of YHWH’s reign which

Jesus embodied and it is in this historical realm that Jesus confronts evil and YHWH's rule confronts the world (Weaver 1994:288). Consequently *Narrative Christus Victor* is not simply a proclamation of cosmic dualism and cosmic battle, but it is also historical (Weaver 1994:281, 284).

Sin and salvation within Weaver's *Narrative Christus Victor* is portrayed as a clash between reigns. Salvation within this framework "includes saved relationships and structures as well as saved individuals". The character of salvation in the *Christus Victor* motif is therefore primarily communal (Weaver 1994:288). One cannot but help acknowledge the significant contribution that Weaver has made to the atonement discourse. However, along with Finlan, I am concerned that he does not address the biblical roots of atonement adequately at all (2005:99). Furthermore, I feel Weaver's rejection of penal substitution is deeply troubling, especially when he chooses to ignore historical theology and parts of scripture which seem to advocate this view. Finlan (2005:99) talks about Weaver's idea of the *Christus Victor* motif as a battle between cosmic forces of good and evil being characteristic of the worldview of the first and second centuries and that it is insufficient in answering our current philosophic needs. I have disproved Finlan's argument up until now, for the *Christus Victor* motif has been evident and vital in all periods of ecclesiastical history including the present.

Although Weaver acknowledged the cosmic dimension of the *Christus Victor* motif, he emphasised the historical life and ministry of Jesus. Gregory Boyd, conversely, seems to emphasise a cosmic warfare as the framework for the atonement. According to Boyd, Jesus and his first disciples believed that a myriad of spiritual beings populate the universe. Some of these beings are supposedly evil and others are good, and these are at war with one another. Jesus was believed to be the crucial player in this cosmic battle (1997:238).

Boyd observes that there is a warfare motif that runs throughout Scripture and that the *Christus Victor* motif cannot be understood without it. He perceives that the biblical narrative is actually "a story of God's on-going conflict with, and ultimate

victory over, cosmic and human agents who oppose him and who threaten his creation” (Boyd 2008).

The varied parts of Jesus’ ministry, that is His teachings, healings, exorcisms, death and resurrection, enjoy thematic unity when understood in the context of this cosmic warfare motif. As Boyd explains, each of these parts demonstrated the diminishing of Satan’s hold over the world and the liberation of people thereof. Yet, it was Jesus’ death and resurrection that brought about Satan’s ultimate ruin. Unlike Weaver, Boyd makes it clear that the cross was YHWH’s plan, but the plan was carried out by evil ‘rulers’. He is not shy to speak the language of the Church Fathers, saying that “in a genius stroke of military planning, God seems to have *tricked Satan* into signing his own death warrant” (emphasis mine). Therefore it is through Christ’s work on the cross that “is the principal means by which this battle is being fought and won” (Boyd 1997:55, 230, 238, 256; 2008).

Jesus, in bringing the kingdom of YHWH, destroyed death by destroying “the one who has the power of death”, Satan. This is “the central significance of Jesus’ atoning work on the cross and of the resurrection”. It was in the atoning work that Jesus establishes “the kingdom of God and the restoration of a new humanity in the midst of this war zone”. Having conquered Satan and recaptured His rightful rule over all of creation, Christ is established as the legitimate ruler over the cosmos, and human beings as His legitimate representatives upon the earth” (Boyd 1997:212, 214, 240, 267).

Like Postmodernism, which encourages both community and individualism, the *Christus Victor* motif, according to Boyd, is in direct contrast to a hyper-individualistic worldview emphasising the “demonic dimension of all fallen social structures” (Boyd 2008; cf. 1997:268).

The whole of biblical narrative is about “God restoring his creation through humanity”, becoming incarnate Himself, and defeating His cosmic adversary (Boyd 1997:113). Consequently, salvation is an aspect of a universal cosmic

restoration, yet, “Christ’s cosmic victory results in our personal salvation” (Boyd 1997:250), and in this, salvation is also individualistic. Salvation is then most fundamentally about being saved from YHWH’s archenemy and the eternal consequences of our sin. Our salvation then is to eternally participate in the fullness of life; that is the “joy, power and peace that is the reign of the triune God” (Boyd 2008).

For Boyd, the notion of salvation in the NT is consequently not about being saved from YHWH’s wrath or about salvation from hell (Boyd 2008). Even so, he does not deny the substitutionary death of Christ for humanity’s sin, but this dimension of Christ’s work is possible because of Christ’s victory (Boyd 1997:241). Referring to “the common substitutionary view espoused by many today”, Boyd does not wish to suppose that individual sins, guilt and just punishment were transferred onto Christ literally and thus placating YHWH’s wrath (Boyd 2008). But, on the other hand, he does acknowledge in an online blog, without retracting his criticism of the idea that YHWH needs to exercise His wrath against Christ so that He can forgive us, that “...God’s wrath against sin was expressed by him delivering Christ up to the Powers in our place. Sin was judged and Christ was our substitute — hence, *Penal Substitution*” (Boyd 2008: online).

In light of Jesus’ mission as revealing the nature of YHWH’s reign, the cosmic conflict between evil and YHWH’s rule, and the restoration of a new humanity in the midst of this war zone, Steve Chalke is a key figure in the work he does. Chalke is the founder of the Oasis Trust which pioneers education and youth work initiatives, education, healthcare and life-transforming housing. He is also the Chair of *Stop The Traffik*, a global coalition campaigning against human trafficking (Oasis 2007: online). Accordingly, Chalke has been actively involved in doing his part in revealing the nature of YHWH’s reign and partnering with Him in restoring humanity.

It is no surprise then that Chalke is an advocate of the *Christus Victor* motif. In his book, co-authored with Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus*, he illustrates the atonement as follows:

Just as a lightning-conductor soaks up powerful and destructive bolts of electricity, so Jesus, as he hung on that cross, soaked up all the forces of hate, rejection, pain and alienation all around him. Jesus wasn't failing as the Messiah; he was succeeding. The Kingdom does not come and cannot be maintained by military force. God's Kingdom is established by God's means – self-giving love (2003:179).

Chalke refers to John 3:16 and finds it difficult to accept that such a God who loves the world so much, vents his anger and wrath on His own Son. He states further, “the fact is that the cross isn't a form of *cosmic child abuse* – a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed” (emphasis mine). In strong language he calls this a “twisted version of events morally dubious and huge barrier to faith”. All the evil powers, both satanic and human conspired to crush Jesus, but although the cross was a “symbol of failure and defeat”, the truth is that it was “a symbol of love” demonstrating “just how far God as Father and Jesus as his Son are prepared to go to prove that love” (Chalke and Mann 2003: 182-183, 191-192).

It is no surprise that these statements stirred much controversy and attracted severe criticism, notably from Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach in their book, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovery of Penal Substitution*. Others were also highly critical of Chalke. This controversy among others instigated a symposium in London (cf. Tidball D, Hilborn D and Thacker J [eds.] 2008) to help facilitate a debate on the theology of atonement. In this symposium Chalke articulated his thoughts on this issue further. The imagery he presented in *The Lost Message of Jesus* he believes is the “violent, pre-Christian thinking behind the popular theology of penal substitutionary atonement” (Chalke 2008:34-35). Therefore,

Chalke feels that this is in fact a misrepresentation of the purpose of the cross, under the word 'penal' (Chalke 2008:35). Apparently, according to Chalke, penal substitution is an inadequate doctrine of atonement which leads to twisted understandings of YHWH and humanity and results in "an immature engagement in community and wider society" (Chalke 2008:36).

Chalk argues in his paper that the atonement in the NT is multicoloured and that no motif can single-handedly capture its "breadth and profundity". He acknowledges that he fails to see the 'penal' element in the atonement but affirms that it is indeed substitutionary. The penal substitutionary motif to Chalke is weak, calling it "culturally sluggish or even disconnected" and that it fails to engage with our society and its challenges (Chalke 2008:37, 41). It is my hope that this dissertation will demonstrate that the penal substitutionary motif does in fact engage with society and its challenges, at least on the African continent.

Drawing on the Church Fathers, Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa and Origen, Chalke sees the life, death and resurrection of Christ as the victory over sin and the earthly and spiritual forces of evil which oppose humanity (Chalke 2008:43-44). He proclaims that,

On the cross, Jesus does not place God's anger in taking the punishment for sin but rather absorbs its consequences and, as three days later he is raised, defeats death. It is the resurrection which finally puts the *Victor* in *Christus Victor!* (2008:44).

For these reasons Chalke rejects penal substitution and thinks it best to abandon the term altogether and provide a fresh way of presenting the atonement (2008:35).

The criticisms of Joel Green and Mark Baker on penal substitutionary atonement are not dissimilar to that of Chalke. They, too, are concerned that even a careful, well-articulated rendering of penal substitution is predisposed to

misunderstanding and caricature. That is, a loving God punishing His own Son for our sake, or YHWH as a “vindictive judge whose wrath must be averted by the death of his Son lest it be vented on us, his children” (Green and Baker 2000:30, 88).

Green and Baker argue that there are other factors aside from that which is found in Scripture that influence the penal substitution. The Western idea of justice is attractive to the Postmodernist sense of individuality focusing excessively on the notion of ‘wrath’ in Scripture (McKnight 2007:40). Whilst the objective of this chapter is to explore the socio-historical development of atonement synthesis theology, I stress that other factors aside from Scripture influence other atonement theories as well.

Nevertheless, Green and Baker feel that penal substitution is a ‘cultural product’ of the West, and according to them this motif has fallen “on deaf ears in other social worlds” because of their particular worldview (Green and Baker 2000:29). Therefore they concur with Chalke, advocating that fresh motifs and interpreting them anew, along with providing new ways of conceptualising and communicating the atonement, is in order (Green and Baker 2000:20. 89). So, whilst they believe that the penal substitution has had ill effects in society and has offered little to mission and the church in understanding the message of Jesus, Green and Baker feel that the *Christus Victor* motif has much more to offer (Green and Baker 2000:183, 220-221).

This discussion demonstrated a minimisation of the penal substitution or even its denial. Nevertheless the *Christus Victor* motif was vigorously emphasised. This seemed to present a deficient view of atonement.

2.6.3 Atonement Synthesis

This discussion will explore the current movement towards a synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs in Postmodernism. This exciting movement appears to offer, in my opinion, the fullest expression of atonement.

On a social level, John Stott (1921-2011) had a profound social concern for the developing world and established the Langham Trust to provide opportunities for scholars and pastors to study theology overseas. Perhaps his greatest literary work was *The Cross of Christ* where he observed three grand accomplishments of the cross. These were “saving sinners, revealing God and conquering evil” (Stott 1989:17). Here he provides an argument for penal substitution (Jeffery *et al.* 2007:196; Stott 1989:16), yet the *Christus Victor* motif receives significant attention as well. Stott denies that Satan has any rights over humanity which YHWH is required to satisfy. Further, contrary to Boyd and many Fathers of the Church, Stott also denied any idea of Christ’s death as tricking the devil or a transaction paid to him, “a *quid pro quo* to satisfy a code of honour” (Stott 1989:135, 188).

He makes it clear that instantly after the fall, Christ’s victory is predicted. This victory had its beginnings during Jesus’ ministry and “was decisively won at the cross”. Stott proclaims that “the cross was the victory won, and the resurrection as victory endorsed, proclaimed and demonstrated”. So whilst Jesus Himself was crushed by Rome, He at that time was ‘crushing the serpent’s head’⁵². Although Satan has been defeated, he has nevertheless not conceded defeat, still wielding great power. Stott says that because Satan knows he is defeated and is cognisant of his approaching doom (cf. Stott 1989:291), his rage is intensified. So, although he is defeated, the “painful conflict with him continues”. As Stott notes, this is why there is tension in both our experience and our theology (Stott 1989:265, 274, 279, 289).

⁵² Gen 3:15.

For Stott the cross is also to be rooted in the holiness of YHWH who is unable to gaze upon evil because of his untainted perfections. He argues that YHWH hates evil and thus His wrath is a holy response to evil and He could never come to terms with it (Shaw and Edwards 2006:137). With eyes too pure to look upon evil and an inability to tolerate wrong, our sins separate us from YHWH and He hides His face from us. Stott explains that the chief obstacle lies within YHWH Himself and that “He must ‘satisfy himself’ in the way of salvation he devises; he cannot save us by contradicting himself”. Humanity has incurred the penalty of breaking the Law, and this without impunity. The Law must be satisfied and upheld, and all penalties are to be paid, according to Stott. He explains that by overcoming our evil, YHWH in condemning it in Christ, justifies us and redeems us because He paid the ransom. Thus it was at the cross where “human evil was both punished and overcome, and God’s mercy and justice were both satisfied”. This satisfaction though came from within Himself, within YHWH’s own immutable disposition (Stott 1989:121, 132, 135, 146, 357).

Consequently Stott places the love of YHWH at the very heart of the atonement. Although Stott explores various features of atonement, he takes penal substitution to be, according to Shaw and Edwards, “the essence of each image and the heart of the atonement itself⁵³” (2006:138). He argues that all accounts of Christ’s atoning work should have at its centre the ‘satisfaction through substitution’, that is, “divine self-satisfaction through divine self-substitution”. Stott makes it pointedly clear that YHWH in Christ took upon Himself our sins and died our death because of his love and justice. We must not think of it as expressing an eternal sin-bearing in the heart of God (Stott 1989:138, 188, 380).

For Stott ‘satisfaction through substitution’ is the very centre of Christ’s work of atonement, rather than the *Christus Victor* motif. N.T. Wright, one of the most formidable NT Scholars of our time, on the other hand, takes a different approach. He is inclined to see “the victory of Jesus Christ over all the powers of evil and

⁵³ Stott quoted in Shaw and Edwards (2006:138).

darkness, as the central theme in atonement theology, around which all the other varied meanings of the cross find their particular niche” (Wright 2006:114).

Wright, who is also a classical historian, considers the wider canvas. That is, the definitive conflict between YHWH’s plan in redeeming the world from evil and the evil forces themselves, the evil regimes of Caesar, Herod and the Sadducees and the satanic forces behind them. He explains that for Jesus, Rome was merely the penultimate enemy at most. The heathen nations were not necessarily enemies of the people of YHWH, but ‘the satan’ was seen in the OT traditions to be the menacing force behind the problem of Israel’s exile. Jesus’ confrontation, therefore, was not simply a martial one, but a cosmic one. This was a climatic conflict with ‘the satan’ (Wright 1996:132, 451, 454).

Wright puts forth the notion that Jesus believed it was His duty to announce, enact and embody three principal kingdom themes: “the return from exile, the defeat of evil, and the return of YHWH to Zion”. Yet, Jesus conceived His death as the “actual victory of the Kingdom” whereby the foe of the people of YHWH would be conquered. Wright, therefore, proposes that Jesus employed cosmic warfare language to represent the conflict He Himself wrestled with, and that this was ultimately a battle against the evil forces of darkness (1996:449, 466, 481).

However, commenting on the Apostle Paul’s understanding of the cross, Wright argues that Paul understood the atonement as “the fullest possible revelation of both the love and the justice of God”. Its outworking, then, is the astonishing saving power of YHWH, conquering the evil powers which held humanity in captivity and thus defeating the cause of human sin (Wright 2009:96). But referring to Romans 8:3, Wright declares that Jesus’ death entails judicial and penal features. This is “God’s proper *No* to sin expressed on Jesus as Messiah” (Wright 2006:95).

Wright is also conscious and frustrated by what he believes are recent caricatures of penal substitution within much of the evangelical tradition⁵⁴. He makes it clear though that Christ did die for our sins and that there is ‘no condemnation’ for those who are in Christ and that it was through the cross that “God condemned sin in the flesh of the Son who, as the expression of his own self-giving love, had been sent for that very purpose” (Wright 2007). The atonement, according to Wright, is therefore not merely an abstract transaction whereby YHWH’s forgiveness is given to those who wish to have it, but it’s primarily a dramatic, explosive achievement in which evil is defeated so that “God’s new age could begin” (Wright 2006:156). For this reason Wright argues “for something that can be called ‘penal substitution’”, but he regards the *Christus Victor* motif “as the overarching one within which substitution makes its proper point” (Wright 2007).

Perhaps one of the most unique expressions of the cross is presented by S. Mark Heim. He too, like Stott and Wright, develops an atonement synthesis, but it is all understood within a ‘scapegoating’⁵⁵ framework. Heim’s work on the atonement is centred on the work of a philosopher of Social Science, René Girard⁵⁶. Whilst not a professional theologian, Girard was also not a Christian until much later when his Catholic convictions began influencing his work and he believed that as a non-Christian he had discovered “the generative principles of human culture” (Boersma 2004:133).

According to Finlan, Girard condemns sacrifice and says that the NT is void of any sacrificial imagery and argues that sacrifices promote violence. Sacrifice then, “evolved out of, and conceals, an underlying pattern of violent persecution of (human) scapegoats” (Finlan 2005:89-90). Girard believes that sacrificial scapegoating is a vital part of religion and human society. In view of this, internal conflicts are solved within communities by uniting against a specific victim, be it

⁵⁴ Wright wrote a contemptuous article expressing his concerns regarding the recent caricatures of penal substitution, entitled, *The Cross and the Caricatures: A Response to Robert Jenson, Jeffrey John, and a New Volume Entitled Pierced for Our Transgressions*. cf. Wright (2007: online); Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach (2007).

⁵⁵ This is not dissimilar to the ideas presented in Rob Bell’s DVD, *The Gods Aren’t Angry* (2008).

⁵⁶ cf. Girard R. *Violence and the Sacred* (1977); *The Scapegoat* (1986); *I see Satan Fall Like Lightning* (2001).

animal or human. Sacrifice, he believes, is viewed as a “primitive artefact of an earlier stage of human development” (Heim 2006:15, 23). Heim explains that:

The community usually names the crisis it is experiencing in order, more proximate terms: the prospect of defeat in war, an infestation of plague, a curse from the gods or attacks from demonic forces. Real, or believed to be real, all such situations have the same effect (Heim 2006:50)... The victim has been chosen and will suffer because of *our* problem, our collective disease of rivalry and conflict. The impetus comes not from some offence in the victim but from a need in us (Heim 2006:98).

Those who follow Girard, namely Heim, have offered an original, alternative understanding of the cross founded on a mimetic anthropology (Boersma 2004:42-43). It is, therefore, no surprise that Heim feels that it is a serious mistake to understand sacrifice exclusively in relation to private sin. For him the cross is a sacrifice to end all sacrifices. Effectively a sacrificial transaction took place at the cross, though it was arranged by man, not YHWH. It was YHWH, however, who turned this evil transaction against itself into a saving purpose, whereby the scapegoating system would be overthrown. Heim states that ‘ransom’ is employed to express this idea and that YHWH pays the ransom price to circumvent the shedding of blood of other scapegoats in the future (Heim 2006:10, 17, 160-162).

Whilst Heim acknowledges that the idea of Jesus in His death being given over to Satan as a ransom might be troubling, he says that it illustrates that the realm of scapegoating sacrifice essentially belongs to Satan. YHWH thus steps in as victim and as hostage. He offers Himself up as a ransom, “a substitution of hostages” taking the place of human sinners and “ransoms them by exchange on the devil’s terms”. But as Heim explains, “When God, who cannot be silenced and who will not take vengeance, stands in that place, the web of sacrifice collapses” (2006:160-162). “As Satan captured humanity by deceit, so Satan is overthrown

by a trick”, and this trickery brought about the sacrificial system’s own demise by means of a “startling reversal” (Heim 2006:164). Moreover, Heim views the atonement not only as substitutionary, but also as “an infinite satisfaction” which counteracts “humanity’s infinite offence” of condemning others as scapegoats (Heim 2006:252).

Like Wright *et al.* Heim is concerned about the caricature and overly mechanistic features of penal substitution where, according to him, YHWH demands a violent sacrifice or a satisfaction. He feels that “it makes Jesus our supreme scapegoat rather than our saviour from sacrifice” (Heim 2006:293-294).

Scot McKnight on the other hand takes a somewhat different stance from that of Heim. McKnight (2005:147, 177) explains that Jesus knew that He would die, in YHWH’s providence, a premature death “at the hands of those who rejected his mission as a potential source of rebellion”. Jesus foresaw His death as the consequence of an ordained mission that was all about the inception of the “Final Ordeal” which somehow was connected to YHWH’s kingdom.

McKnight declares that “there are some slight indicators that Jesus saw himself, in his mission and his role in the mission to Israel, as the *representative Israelite*”. Nonetheless, Jesus’ passionate predictions do not seem to offer a theology of atonement or an explanation of the saving value of His death, though they do provide reflections about His vindication (McKnight 2005:155, 238-239).

McKnight likens the atonement to a golfing metaphor. Like one might play golf with only one club, some theologians hold to one atonement theory and everything else is shaped in light of that one theory. If a certain feature of the atonement fails to fit, it is cast aside. Such theologians, he says, can be found “among the Abelardians and the Anselmians, among the incarnationists and the penal substitutionists, among the narrative *Christus Victor*-ists and the recapitulationists”. On the other hand though, some theologians enjoy a diversity

of metaphors and reckon that we should explore other “metaphorical gardens”. These ‘golfers’ “use all the clubs in their bag” (McKnight 2007:35).

Hence according to McKnight (2007:37), “atonement theories are imaginative metaphors that speak of the concrete reality of what God does through Jesus Christ.” He explains that understanding the atonement is really exploring metaphors that allow us to look into the atoning act of YHWH (2007:39). McKnight wishes to deconstruct the single-sided, simplistic, individualistic theories of atonement and explain how it was designed to resolve the universal problem of sin and evil. He proposes “a bag that can hold all the metaphorical clubs”, thinking of “atonement as identification for incorporation” (2007:61,107).

Having identified with humanity in his incarnation, Jesus incorporates humanity in His victory over the devil and death and frees those who were held captive by Satan. Furthermore, Jesus became a sacrifice, atoning for the sins of humanity. He died in humanity’s stead; our death became His so that His life might become ours. This identification focuses “to remove sins *and* victory in order to liberate those who are incorporated into him so that they can form the new community where God’s will is realized” (McKnight 2007:107-108).

Whilst McKnight thinks that “identification for incorporation carries within it an element of satisfaction”, he argues that the satisfaction theory is too judicial and thus, non-relational, to provide sufficient emphasis on “identification for incorporation” (McKnight 2007:111). It concerns him that a limitation to penal substitution and satisfaction motifs would focus exclusively on the “wrath-to-death problem” and the just elimination and resolution of sin. For McKnight the atonement includes these issues of course, but the atonement is also about recreation. Quoting David Bosch, he says “Salvation in Christ is salvation in the context of human society en route to a whole and healed world” (McKnight 2007:2, 113, 350). It is, therefore, noticeably evident that McKnight is proposing atonement synthesis in his work. Not only this, but he wishes to take into consideration *all* atonement theories.

In light of atonement synthesis, I consider the works of Luther, McKnight and Boersma to be the most salient, articulate and helpful. McKnight (2007:39) himself shares my sentiment concerning Boersma when he says, “Hans Boersma, ... wrote what I think is the best theology of atonement we have to date”. It is to Boersma I now turn.

Boersma offers a very unique theory of atonement, and yet without a doubt it is characteristic of atonement synthesis. He talks about violence and hospitality in YHWH’s atoning work, and that there is a place for both (Finlan 2007:88). Finlan (2007:89) notes that Boersma, a modified Calvinist, employs Calvinist language⁵⁷ to express the atonement in postmodernist terms. Indeed he engages with Postmodern philosophers like René Girard, Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas (Boersma 2004).

In his work, Boersma seeks to engage with “the contemporary scepticism that questions the possibility of hospitality” of the atonement. He wishes to address the incongruous tension between hospitality and violence” which he believes is unavoidable. Looking at the metaphor, hospitality for the love of YHWH, Boersma argues “that this hospitality, while necessarily involving violence, retains its integrity as hospitality”. He says that YHWH came to us in Christ, inviting us into His presence that we might enjoy eternal fellowship with Him. This, Boersma proclaims, is what atonement theology is all about - it’s “an expression of God’s hospitality toward us” (Boersma 2004:15-17). Boersma (2004:51) argues that we see divine hospitality in the cross even though divine violence is present as well.

It is Boersma’s conviction that whatever motif we employ in articulating the atonement, YHWH’s love must shine through it. The credibility of any atonement motif then is expressed in the way in which it accounts for YHWH’s hospitality

⁵⁷ Even though Boersma is openly critical of certain aspects of his Calvinist tradition. cf. Boersma (2004:14).

and yet if violence obscures this hospitality then the motif should be reviewed (Boersma 2004:112).

With this said, contrary to Weaver *et al.*, Boersma is unconvinced that traditional atonement motifs should be discarded on account of divine violence. Rather he says, “We need to affirm the paradox of redemptive violence in order to retain the vision of eschatological unconditional hospitality” (Boersma 2004:17, 29). Divine violence is then, Boersma believes, one way in which YHWH works towards safeguarding and ensuring a future eschatological condition of pure hospitality. He also points out that penal substitution provides significant insight into how one should relate to the social, economic, and political realities of everyday life, making choices that involve some degree of violence one way or another (2004:49, 179).

Turning now to the *Christus Victor* motif, Boersma acknowledges that its rediscovery is certainly a positive development in the atonement discourse. He also recognises that “Boyd and others are right in reclaiming this dualism as part of the Christian heritage”. Metaphysics or cosmic dualism is thus a vital function in the *Christus Victor* motif, according to Boersma (2004:199).

Boersma offers a clear affirmation of atonement synthesis, stating that the satisfaction or penal substitutionary and moral influence motifs are the “means by which YHWH ultimately defeats evil and upholds his eternal and unconditional hospitality”. Victory on the other hand is the purpose of the atonement. Therefore, one should not divorce these motifs from one another (Boersma 2004:21).

Leading on from this idea, Sinclair Ferguson (2010), in his article, *Christus Victor et propitiator: the death of Christ, Substitute and Conqueror*⁵⁸, offers the same sentiment. Ferguson argues that the multidimensional conflict motif is a central theme in the Gospels (2010:171, 176). Jesus’ entire ministry is largely portrayed as a confrontation with Satan.

⁵⁸ This article was written in honour of John Piper. cf. Storms S and Taylor J (Eds.). *For the Fame of God’s Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper* (2010:171-189).

Ferguson points out how Jesus, in Luke 4-14, being full of the Spirit, goes into the desert having been led by the Holy Spirit and goes to temptation and attacks it! Therefore, it is not so much that temptation came to Jesus, according to Ferguson. After having entered enemy territory, Jesus comes out as conqueror. This whole episode was “a declaration of war, an attack on the one who claims to be the ruler of this world”. In His conquering words, “Away from me, Satan⁵⁹”, Jesus demonstrates Satan’s defeat (Ferguson 2010:177).

Throughout Scripture, Ferguson explains, forgiveness of sins through divine justice and Christ’s victory of the devil are suitably complementary. Both are fundamental for our salvation and offer a view of atonement from which other aspects may be understood with a deeper sense of richness and clarity. These are profoundly interrelated. Therefore, according to Ferguson: “Any adequate understanding of the atonement must include within it this aspect of Christ’s disarming of the power of darkness” (Ferguson 2010:185).

2.6.4 Conclusion

In this discussion the socio-historical development of atonement synthesis in our current Postmodern era through the work of several theologians from varying backgrounds was explored. This examination demonstrated a fresh and vigorous emphasis of the *Christus Victor* motif, though a minimisation of the penal substitution was also very much evident in the work of some theologians.

Some general observations are in order. There is a feeling that the atonement in Postmodernism seeks to offer (1) a solution and hope for the worldwide problem of suffering, (2) a sense of ontological coherence and wellbeing, (3) a feeling that the atonement is both communal and individual, (4) an emphasis on emotion and intuition. (5) Postmodernism has fostered a ripe environment for a *Christus Victor*

⁵⁹ Mt 4:10.

renaissance, whereby the ancient idea of the *Christus Victor*⁶⁰ has been polished and is making its way into a contemporary context. (6) A cosmic dimension is often articulated in Postmodernist atonement theology. (7) A dissatisfaction with the penal substitutionary theory is expressed in some quarters. (8) Lastly, the penal substitutionary theory itself has had to undergo a fresh description, without changing its meaning, having been challenged and attempting to engage with the present Postmodern worldview.

2.7 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, the synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs in the work of the early Church Fathers, in European Scholasticism, the Magisterial Reformers, the Post Reformation, and in Postmodernism were examined. The aim was to trace the socio-historical development of atonement theology and demonstrate the notable presence of atonement synthesis throughout much of Christian history. This chapter has also shown how socio-historical influences have shaped the understanding of atonement in some of the greatest Christian thinkers. This discussion has also highlighted the interplay between different socio-historical contexts and atonement theology. The notion of sacrifice has also proved to be a dominating theme in relationship to atonement synthesis. Throughout the writings of most of these theologians, they sought to engage with the overarching predicament of their time, articulating an atonement theology that was meaningful for the cultural and philosophical context in which they worked.

Attention will now be turned to the drama of atonement synthesis in biblical narrative in order to examine exactly what Scripture says about atonement synthesis and to submit the theology of this chapter to the authority of Scripture.

⁶⁰ This is not to say that the *Christus Victor* motif was not an idea employed throughout church history. I have already proved otherwise. Rather, Postmodernism provides a fresh and vigorous emphasis of the *Christus Victor* motif, a *Christus Victor* Renaissance.

Chapter 3

The Drama of Atonement Synthesis in Biblical Narrative

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the socio-historical influences that shaped the theological systems and concepts in specific historical contexts that contributed to atonement synthesis theology were explored. In this chapter, however, the synthesis of the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs, as illustrated through a remarkable display of drama in biblical narrative, will be carefully laid out. It will be demonstrated that these two motifs should not be separated when considering atonement theology and that they are complementary. Sometimes Scripture discusses and engages with these two motifs independently from one other, and at other times together in tight treatises. The idea of sacrifice, especially of Jesus' death as a sacrificial act is also prominent, emphasising an atonement synthesis.

It is, of course, difficult to summarise such a grand narrative, but Jesus' atoning work on the cross and His triumphant resurrection is the very core of Sacred Scripture and Christian faith and hope. Therefore, I do not pretend to be

exhaustive in selecting key passages or in their exposition. However, my purpose is to demonstrate that atonement synthesis is a biblical view of atonement, and that our atonement theology should consist of a synthesis of these two motifs, without neglecting either.

In the discussions which follow, the drama of atonement synthesis in the OT narrative, with its various themes, as well as the NT and its narrative and discourse, together with its literary traditions will be explored.

3.2 Old Testament Narrative

3.2.1 Introduction

The OT narrative presents its readers with an account of humanity's situation as a result of their disobedience at the fall and its devastating effect of sin (Wright 2008:69-71). From the very start, in Genesis 3:15, YHWH offers humanity a saviour to save us from this ominous predicament. Throughout the OT narrative a theology of atonement manifests in a wide variety of concepts. Many of which highlight plainly the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs. These motifs will become evident as the various concepts of atonement in the OT narrative are explored. In this discussion the following shall be examined, (1) YHWH as the Triumphant Warrior, (2) atonement in ritual and sacrifice, (3) secular atonement, and (4) atonement and the promised Messiah.

3.2.2 YHWH as the Triumphant Warrior

The Israelites, having been enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians for 430 years⁶¹, finally, under the leadership of Moses, flee Egypt whilst being pursued by

⁶¹ Discrepancies exist in Gen 15:13 (430 years), Ex 12:14 (400 years) and Acts 7:6 (400 years). Nolen offers three solutions. (1) The 430 year period could be a reference to affliction, as well as bondage. The prophecy in Gen 15:13 does not only speak of affliction, but also of servitude, both making up 430 years. (2) The 400 years may have begun with Abraham's half Egyptian son, Ishmael, when he mocked Isaac at the feast celebrating his weaning (Gen 21:8-9). "Before the

Pharaoh and his military. In Exodus 14:14 Moses comforts the Israelites during a time of fear, proclaiming, “The LORD will *fight* for you, and you have only to be silent” (emphasis mine; ESV). The *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* provides the following fascinating reading of this text:

To the company who said, We [sic] will array battle against them, Mosheh said, Fear not; the Lord, in the glory of His Shekinah, will work the victory for your hosts. To the company who had said, Let us shout against them to confound them, Mosheh said, Fear not; stand and be silent; and give the glory, and praise, and exaltation unto Eloha.

Consequently, YHWH provides a miraculous crossing for the Israelites through the Sea of Reeds⁶² where they were saved and Pharaoh and his army were destroyed. It was then that YHWH explicitly manifested Himself as the Divine Warrior (Dillard and Longman 1995:65). Evidently, Exodus 14:14 presents YHWH as Victor, fighting for his people and triumphing over His enemies, the enemies of His people. After the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 15:1-18⁶³ joyfully sang a victory psalm to YHWH for He had been victorious in freeing His people from slavery. Moses and the Israelites

weaning, Ismael [sic] is called Abraham’s son (Gen 17:25), but afterwards he is called the ‘son of the Egyptian’ (Gen 21:9), ‘son of the bondwomen,’ and ‘lad’. Moreover, as the child’s attitude usually reflects that of his parents (i.e. Hagar), ‘cast out this bondwomen and her son’ (Gen 16:4; 21:9-10)” (2005:58-60). Ussher holds this view saying, “This declaration of the elect seed and persecution... of Isaac by Hagar’s son, is taken by many of the Jews referred to above as the start of the four hundred year period during which the seed of Abraham was to be a stranger and sojourner and afflicted in a foreign land, as God had foretold him (Ge 15:13 Ac 7:6). For those four hundred years were to be completed at the same time as the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt” (Ussher 2003:26-27). Nolan, however, thinks that this is an unsatisfactory explanation, arguing that it does not fulfil the Egyptian ‘affliction’ prophecy or that of servitude in Gen 15:13, because “Isaac did not thereafter serve the Egyptian bondwomen, her son or any other Egyptian”. (3) Nolan offers a third view which is the one that he holds. He believes that “the 30 years of Exodus 12:40 is 30 years longer than 400 years of Genesis 15:30 because it includes the sojourning of Abraham himself as well as that of his seed” (2005:58-60). Whilst I think Nolan’s view likely, I think the explanation might be simpler. 400 years is a rounding off of 430 years. As an example, one might say, “I was without work for a year!” when in fact it was only 327 days.

⁶² I shall not diverge in a discussion on the exact location, lexicography or textual criticism of either יַם־סוּף, “Sea of Reeds” or ἡ ἐρυθρὰ θάλασση, “Red Sea” (LXX); I shall simply refer to the sea which the Israelites crossed as the Sea of Reeds, rather than the Red Sea.

⁶³ cf. Ps 68:15-23.

sang⁶⁴, כִּי-גָאָה גָאָה, “for He is highly exalted”⁶⁵ (v 1) and that He has become their יְשׁוּעָה, “salvation” (v 2). The LXX employs the word σωτηρίαν meaning deliverance or preservation, focussing on the physical aspect of salvation from impending death, especially with respect to the sea (Arndt *et al.* 2000:985). The Hebrew word on the other hand is more preoccupied with the thought of YHWH’s people being saved or delivered by His victory (Brown *et al.* 2000:447). The theme of victory is carried through in military imagery when the Israelites sing that YHWH is a אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה, “man of war” (v 3) who is glorious in power and shatters the enemy (v 6). The anthropomorphic title, אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה provides us with evidence of YHWH’s “immanence and presence in the fabric of life” (Kaiser 1990:376). The *constructus* אִישׁ, “man” modifies the *absolutus* מִלְחָמָה, “war” revealing that YHWH is a warrior, a man who knows how to fight and defeat the enemy. The rendering, “The LORD is a warrior” is found in a variety of modern translations (cf. NET, NASB, NIV, GNT and NLT). Further, verse 7 proclaims, “In the abundance of your majesty you have overthrown (תִּהְרַס) those who rise up (קָמְיָהוּ) against you. You sent forth your wrath; it consumed them like stubble” (NET). The imperfect תִּהְרַס may be rendered as ‘to destroy’ (Gesenius and Tregelles 2003:232), and those people to be destroyed are described as קָמְיָהוּ, meaning, they are opponents against YHWH (Koehler, *et al.* 1999:1086-1087). Although YHWH’s majesty, holiness, glorious deeds and wonders are celebrated in verse 11, His נְסֻחַת⁶⁷, “steadfast love” and גְּאֻלָּה, “redemption” are remembered and

⁶⁴ The singular cohortative, אֲשִׁירָה, “I will sing” expresses Moses’ and the Israelite’s resolution to sing (NET Bible notes 2005: online). Despite textual variations, the reading of the Masoretic Text is thus preferred for the following reasons, (1) אֲשִׁירָה is preserved in the Masoretic Text and the use of ἄσμεν in the LXX reflects a translation from the same. (2) Whilst the Samaritan Pentateuch according to McCabe reads אָשִׁירָה, he seems to think that it is a conflate reading which merges the reading אֲשִׁירָה in verse 1 and אָשִׁירָה in verse 21. Therefore, the Samaritan Pentateuch he believes supports the Masoretic Text reading (McCabe 1981:83-84).

⁶⁵ The causal clause כִּי-גָאָה גָאָה provides the reason for the psalm as well as a summary. Essentially, the idea of the verb is to “rise up loftily” or “proudly”. The derivatives of גָאָה “carry the nuance of majesty or pride”. Therefore, the notion of the perfect גָאָה together with its infinitive absolute גָאָה may be rendered as “he is highly exalted” or ‘he has done majestically’ or ‘he is gloriously glorious’” (NET Bible notes 2005: online); All translations in the Hebrew and Greek are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

⁶⁶ The LXX employs ὑπεναντίους imagining hostility (Arndt *et al.* 2000:1030).

⁶⁷ The noun בְּחֶסֶד expresses loving kindness, loyalty, faithfulness, goodness and graciousness (Brown *et al.* 2000:339; Koehler, *et al.* 1999: 336–337). It is a peculiarity then that the LXX chooses to use δικαιοσύνη, “righteousness”, which in my opinion is a break down in the underlying theme of the whole Exodus narrative, the covenantal relationship which YHWH has with His people.

treasured in verse 13. YHWH is celebrated as the Triumphant Warrior who engages in physical life to defeat His enemies and save His people from danger. Although, Boyd argues, that the “celebration hymn of the exodus deliverance”, and indeed the act of deliverance itself, exhibits how the “Israelites were to engage in holy war”, that is in trusting YHWH as sole Warrior against the Egyptian military. The narrative serves, Boyd believes, “as a unifying undercurrent for Israel’s theology of warfare” (1997:135). There is some truth no doubt in Boyd’s thinking, however, he overlooks that the narrative is not only a warfare one, but it is very much a redemptive, salvation account as well. Early in Israelite history YHWH intervenes in the dramatic narrative and rescues His people from Pharaoh and his Egyptian military, and thereby reveals Himself as triumphant, a “man of war”. Here we can perceive a synthesis of both redemption and victory.

This discussion explored how YHWH conquered the hostile enemies of His people and those who had revolted against Him. The military imagery in these texts described YHWH as a triumphant warrior who rescues and delivers His people from harm. Already, early in the drama of atonement synthesis, there appears to be a synthesis of triumph or victory and salvation, deliverance and redemption. In these texts we begin to see the *Christus Victor* motif in the triumphant YHWH.

3.2.3 Atonement in Ritual and Sacrifice

The Passover was a blood ritual in Israel’s theology which was closely associated with the Exodus. The Exodus was a model of YHWH’s redemptive work in the OT *par excellence*, to put things right. The theology of the Passover ritual was an act of atonement offering protection against destruction and wrath, protecting the Hebrew families against the wrath of YHWH in which He struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt (Ex 12:12; Wright 2008:73).

At the Passover, just before the exodus out of Egypt, the congregation of Israel was told to take a lamb (or a goat), “every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ house (לְבֵית-אָבֹת), a lamb for a household” (Ex 12:3; ESV). The NET Bible notes (2005:online) explain that the expression, לְבֵית-אָבֹת is an idiom for ‘family’. Therefore, the domestic-religious institution that YHWH instituted through Moses was to be shared by family members. Verse 5 states that this lamb that they were to prepare and eat was to be “without blemish, a year old male”. Later in the biblical narrative, the Apostle Paul says that “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed⁶⁸” (1 Cor 5:7; ESV). Jesus Christ is therefore portrayed by Paul in terms of OT sacrifice, especially as the Passover lamb, or the fulfilment thereof. Christ is the superlative and final sacrifice! In fact Wright argues that the chief metaphor that Jesus employed was not the Day of Atonement, but Passover. This was the unique moment of freedom in Israel’s past, now to be translated into the unique moment in which Jesus would inaugurate Israel’s future (1996:605).

In the Paschal rite, after the lamb was eaten, Nicole explains that the blood of the lamb was not poured onto an altar, but was smeared on the lintel and door posts of the house of every Hebrew family (v 7). This was a sign for the Hebrew people, as well as for YHWH, for He would pass over those houses which had sacrificial blood smeared on their door posts and lintel (v 13). Nicole says further, “Israelites would not be protected by a power of life, which could avert the peril of death, but by a sign intelligible by God” (2004:46). Yet, whilst Morris (1983:61-62) acknowledges that the blood “was the means of averting destruction” and that it had cultic overtones, he regrettably sees “no place for understanding the imagery as pointing to life”. He argues, “It is the death of the atoning victim that is in mind”. Contrary to Morris, the Paschal rite not only points to life, but is life saving! Without the sacrificial lamb as a substitute, the Hebrew families would suffer the same fate as the Egyptians, the death of their first born. Here, the relationship between sacrifice and substitutionary atonement seems to be evident. Kaiser (1990:376) writes, “Israel would know the grounds and means of their deliverance and redemption: a sacrificed substitute and the blood of the atonement

⁶⁸ Jn 1:29; 1 Pt 1:19.

in which the paschal animal died”. Therefore, the sacrificial death of one victim offers life for many.

Exodus 12:12 develops the narrative when YHWH proclaims, “For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments (אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים)”. The statement אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים surely includes the judgements mentioned in all the plagues of Egypt, but we see YHWH’s judgment not only on Pharaoh, but explicitly of the gods of Egypt. Morris highlights the significance of שְׁפָטִים, “judgments”, rightly as being “viewed as an exercise in judgment”, might and justice (1965:256), but overlooks the “punishment” or “inflicting a penalty” rendering, which are significant in understanding the Passover narrative⁶⁹ (Gesenius and Tregelles 2003:844; Koehler, *et al.* 1999:1626). The LXX uses the word ἐκδίκησιν which has a wide semantic range, referring to “meting out of justice”, “retaliation for harm done” or “vengeance”, “penalty inflicted on wrongdoers” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:301). The reference to penalty here is really quite remarkable in light of primordial penal substitutionary atonement. YHWH’s judgements and victory are unmatched as He judged Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt and delivered His people (Kaiser 1990:372; NET Bible notes 2005: online). Kaiser explains,

Israel would know the grounds and means of their deliverance and redemption: a sacrificed substitute and the blood of the atonement in which the paschal animal died *in place of* the firstborn of all who took shelter from the stroke of the destroyer (Kaiser 1990:376).

This idea is apparent again in verse 13 and 23. The blood of the Passover lamb is of course the sign of the faithful Israelites, the signal to ‘pass over’, and that no plague would harm them (v 13; cf. v 23). In verse 27, YHWH’s זֶבַח-הַפֶּסַח is expressed by the NET Bible notes as “the sacrifice of Yahweh’s Passover”, זֶבַח means “slaughtering”, and thus can be said to be a sacrifice (2005: online). The

⁶⁹ I wish to avoid reading every meaning within a semantic range into a single context, yet these renderings appear vital when studying שְׁפָטִים in v 12 and its semantic meaning.

inauguration of this offering is life saving, for it is said in verse 27 that it was because of this Passover meal that Israelite households were spared, וְאֶת-בְּתוּבֵינוּ הִצִּיל, “but spared our houses” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:907). The Passover ritual was an act of atonement, protecting YHWH’s people from His wrath and the destruction that entailed. Although the Passover was a model of YHWH’s redemptive work in the OT *par excellence*, this redemptive model is developed in the NT narrative to be indescribably superior! The lamb in the NT is said to be Christ (Jn 1:29; 1 Pt 1:19), He becomes the sacrificial, Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7), offering atonement for us.

Moving on, an atonement of a somewhat different sort is that of the consecration of the altar highlighted in Exodus 29:35-37. YHWH first instructed Moses on the ordination process of the priests, Aaron and his sons (vv 1-35). A significant aspect of this ordination was the “sin offering for atonement”. For each day of the week a bull was to be offered and the altar was to be purified when atonement was made for it and so it was consecrated. It was only after the altar was atoned for and consecrated that it became most holy. This is, therefore, a very distinct and separate type of atoning ritual (Sarna 1991:191; Stuart 2007:628). The altar by virtue is naturally impure, having been made by human hands. It is for this reason that it had to be purified and purged from defilement so that it could be holy and sacred⁷⁰ (Sarna 1991:191). The NET Bible notes stress the preposition כּ in כִּכְפֹּרָה עָלָיו, “make atonement for it” (v 36; ESV) which is taken as an expression by which the altar is purged from contamination, “in your making atonement” (2005: online; Koehler, *et al.* 1999:494). The text then says in the verse 37b, and the NLT says this vividly, “After that, the altar will be absolutely holy, and whatever touches it *will become* holy” (italics mine). The Masoretic Text is somewhat ambiguous, reading, כֹּל-הַנִּגַּע בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ יִקְדָּשׁ, “everything touching the altar will become holy”. Several translations vary on the subtleties in their translations. The ESV and the NLT make it clear that whatever touches the altar would become holy by virtue of its contact with the consecrated altar. The context seems to favour this rendition. Also, יִקְדָּשׁ, “holy” is used as an imperfect verb, not an

⁷⁰ Ez 43:18-27

adjective. The NKJV takes the opposite view stating that “Whatever touches the altar *must be holy*” (italics mine), aside from any consecrated virtue of the altar, which seem irrelevant to the holiness of whatever touches the altar. Stuart bemoans that most English translators fail to recognize “the modal meaning of the imperfect verb form usually (mis-) translated here ‘will be holy’”. He argues that it should be rendered as “whatever touches it must be holy” (2007:628). In fact, the NASB, KJV, NET, NIV, GNT use the expression “will be holy” or “shall be holy”. However, the idea of becoming holy by virtue of the consecration of the altar, if correct, seems to provide some primordial reference for the doctrines of atonement and justification.

The liturgical ritual of consecration in Exodus 29:36-37 was for the altar of burnt offering, also known as the bronze altar. The altar being mentioned in Exodus 30:10 on the other hand is a different altar, the altar of incense which sat within the Holy place of the Tabernacle tent. This altar also required an atoning ritual and sacrifice to remove sin, in likeness to the consecration required for the altar of burnt offering. This was an annual ritual which was done with blood from the Day of Atonement in which a day is set aside for all the sin of the nation of Israel to be ritually removed (Stuart 2007:634; cf. Lev 16).

The atoning theme in Exodus 30:10 is unmistakable! It reads, “Aaron is to make atonement on its horns once in the year with some of the blood of the sin offering for atonement; once in the year he is to make atonement on it throughout your generations” (NET). כִּפֹּר, “atonement” is employed three times in this verse: (1) וְכִפֹּר, meaning to atone, to cover over or even to make propitiation (Brown *et al.* 2000:498; Koehler, *et al.* 1999:494). The LXX translates כִּפֹּר with the future middle verb, ἐξιλάσεται, in the LXX, words based on כִּפֹּר are always translated by derivatives of ἰλάσκομαι, “propitiate; appease” (Botterweck, Ringgren and Fabry 1995:291). (2) The noun, הַכִּפּוּרִים, meaning act of atonement(s) (Koehler, *et al.* 1999:495). As with other atoning rituals and sacrifices, it is noteworthy that they are done by means of blood. (3) The third instance, כִּפֹּר, “atonement” expresses atonement to be made for the altar of incense. The LXX deviates from the

Masoretic Text in translation here and translates כִּפֶּר with a future verb, καθαριεῖ, meaning to cleanse or to make clean (Arndt *et al.* 2000:488). I think the LXX fails to carry out the atoning theme as forcefully as it does in the Hebrew. The atoning motif is also almost entirely lost in the functional equivalent-free translations; this is disappointingly noticeable in the GNT⁷¹ and NLT⁷². The consecration of the altar introduces us to an atonement liturgy, and to themes of propitiation and appeasement by means of blood. In the consecration of the altar, offering of atonement is significant in the OT narrative existing in liturgical expression.

Leviticus 16 lays out beautifully the Day of Atonement. It is explained in verse 16 that atonement is to be made for the Holy Place because of the uncleanness of the Israelite people and their sins. Atonement had to be made for the altar that stood before YHWH, by applying the blood from a bull and of a goat to the horns of the altar (vv 17b-18). Aaron was to lay his hands on a living goat's head and then confess all the sins, iniquities and transgressions of the people of Israel. These were symbolically imputed to the goat. The goat was then led away into the wilderness. The goat bore the sin of the people and took them into a remote area (vv 21-22).

Heim⁷³ and Girard⁷⁴ base much of their 'scapegoating' theology and philosophy on Leviticus 16 in which they understand atonement and sacrifice. Heim states that the Day of Atonement, at the time immediately preceding Jesus' birth, became a major event in the annual "cultic cycle" in the Jewish temple. The Jewish community, he explains, centred its collective violence on the scapegoat which was imputed with all the sins and guilt of the community that threaten and corrupted the people, and was forced out of the city and off a cliff (2006:76-77). As we shall see in my next chapter, *Atonement Synthesis: Implications for African*

⁷¹ "Once a year Aaron is to perform the ritual for purifying the altar by putting on its four projections the blood of the animal sacrificed for sin. This is to be done every year for all time to come. This altar is to be completely holy, dedicated to me, the Lord" (Ex 30:10).

⁷² "Once a year Aaron must purify the altar by smearing its horns with blood from the offering made to purify the people from their sin. This will be a regular, annual event from generation to generation, for this is the LORD's most holy altar." (Ex 30:10).

⁷³ Heim SM (2006). *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross*.

⁷⁴ Girard R. *Violence and the Sacred* (1977); *The Scapegoat* (1986); *I see Satan Fall Like Lightning* (2001).

Metaphysics, there are noticeable parallels of ‘scapegoating’ in African traditional sacrifice and ritual.

Leviticus 16 on the other hand was “considered from the priestly standpoint, but here the duties and responsibilities of the lay Israelites are examined” (Harrison 1980:220). The Hebraic expression of יום הכִּפּוּרִים (v 27), is literally, “day of atonements”. Note the plural. It is a superlative meaning that this Day of Atonement is a day of total and full atonement! (Hartley 2002:387). It was also a day of holy assembly whereby the Israelites were to “afflict” themselves and present a food offering to YHWH (v 27). The words translated “afflict” in the ESV is the Hebrew word וְעִנִּיתֶם, meaning to “castigate oneself” (Koehler, *et al.* 1999:853). That is, they were to subject themselves to rebuke and criticism for their sin. Whoever did not subject themselves to castigation, as verse 29 explains, would be cut off from the people of YHWH. There was, therefore a serious penalty for failing to observe this feast (Hartley 2002:387). Although we have seen elements of substitutionary sacrifice, namely in the Passover lamb, the Day of Atonement is significant because it is the first real instance in penal substitution in OT narrative.

A discussion on atonement in ritual and sacrifice offers us foreshadows of an infinitely superior sacrifice yet to come in the NT narrative and discourse. This same superior sacrifice not only offers cohesion between the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs, but also, as we shall explore in chapter 4, provides redemption, freedom and forgiveness for Africans. For many NT authors, the sacrificial motif provides a context in which they write. This is especially true of Hebrews.

3.2.4 Secular Atonement

A substitutionary atonement in a secular context is evident in the praiseworthy⁷⁵ action of Phinehas in Numbers 25:7-13. By ‘secular context’, I mean a context which is not connected to the religious liturgy of the Israelites. The narrative from verse 1 tells the account of the Israelites living in Shittim (Josh 2:1). The Israelites started ‘whoring’ with the Moabite women and were thus drawn into the sacrificial practices of their gods and began to worship them. In so doing they committed idolatry against YHWH. Not surprisingly then, the wrath of YHWH burned against them furiously. In consequence, YHWH instructed that all the representatives, that is, the chiefs of the people, be hanged or impaled before Him in the sun so that His fierce anger might be turned away from the children of Israel. Zimri, the son of Salu, a chief, from among the Israelite people (Num 25:14), came and flouted a Midianite woman and presented her to his family in the presence of Moses and the Israelite congregation. Verses 7-8 explain how Phinehas was filled with zeal having seen this, arose, and left the congregation and taking a spear went after Zimri into a chamber and drove it through both him and his Midianite woman⁷⁶. This action had ‘penal substitutionary’ value as we see in YHWH’s proclamation in verses 11-13 where He announces that Phinehas has turned back His wrath on account of his righteous actions, and honors him with a covenant of peace and a perpetual priesthood.

Finlan scorns the narrative in this pericope, acknowledging the propitiatory theme in Phinehas’ “act of violence” calling it “sacred violence”; “justifying human violence through an ideology of divine violence” (2005:18-19). He proclaims that what is “even more gruesome is the atrocious ‘making expiation’” (2007:12). Finlan’s concerns express an inadequate understanding not only of this text but of substitutionary atonement. He fails to see how this ‘act of violence’ in fact averts YHWH’s anger (v 11), and extends His grace when His wrath was ready to

⁷⁵ I call this praiseworthy only in the socio-cultural and theological context of this passage and situation. By no means would this be praiseworthy in other contexts, especially today. Nevertheless, YHWH’s attitude in Numbers 25:11-13 towards Phinehas was favourable.

⁷⁶ This provided a pattern for Samuel’s killing of Agag (1 Sam 15, esp. vv 32-33) and Mattathias’ killing of a Jew at the altar (1 Macc 2:23-27; Ashley 1993).

destroy the nation of Israel (v 11). YHWH condoned the assassination of one mutinous man and his woman for the greater good of the wider community (cf. Oswalt 1998:400). While twenty-four thousand people were killed (v 9), the majority of Israelites were saved and restored to communion with YHWH on account of His grace because of this atoning act (v 13; Adeyemo 2006:197; Ashley 1993; Cole 2001). Further, Phinehas by virtue of his “priestly role in being a mediator between God and man, the covenant of peace extended well beyond him and his priestly descendants” (Cole 2001). Ashley (1993) develops Cole’s thinking, stating that “the term *to make atonement* indicates the mediatorial work of the priest that averts God’s wrath, usually by means of some sort of offering”. Here he thinks that the ‘sacrifice’ of Zimri and his Midianite woman was a surrogate of the usual means of an animal substitute. Thus the basis, Ashley reasons, “of the term *kipper* here is *kôper*, ‘the ransom price,’ and that the death of Zimri and Cozbi in some way paid this price for the Israelites”.

In Eastern Africa, parallels to this narrative and theology can be found. For example, the *African Bible Commentary* explains, in Tanzania, the Meru people used to kill those who were caught in adultery by staking them to the ground at crossroads so that they would die a slow death for the purpose of displaying the disgrace of the adulterers to the community and that they would fear such a punishment. Further, the Meru believed that this severe punishment would remove the shame and the curse of adultery from among the people (Adeyemo 2006:197). Whilst human sacrifice of this sort is rarely, if ever, practiced in Africa today, the principle still remains in many cultures, that is, a ritual sacrifice of an animal (cf. Nyeri 2011).

Finlan (2007:12) also has an aversion to the atoning theme in 2 Samuel 21:1-3. Following on from his comments on Numbers 25, he similarly critiques the ‘making expiation’ of 2 Samuel 21:1-3 on the same grounds. Historically, during Joshua’s invasion of Canaan when he conquered many of its habitants, the Gibeonites cunningly made a covenant with Joshua and his people. They pretended to be foreigners and sought the protection of Israel. So they made a

peace treaty with the Gibeonites that was forever binding, the covenant was honoured even after the Israelites found out that it was trickery (Josh 9:3-21; Baldwin 1988:302). Many years later, King Saul broke this covenant with the Gibeonites and killed many of them out of zeal for his people⁷⁷.

Now, during the reign of King David there was a famine which lasted three years (v 1a). Famines were not uncommon in Palestine and were not necessarily considered a sign of divine disfavour. However, the unusual length of this famine prompted David to enquire from YHWH whether this was a result of his displeasure (Bergen 2001:444). YHWH said to him in verse 1b, “It is because of Saul and his bloodstained family, because he murdered the Gibeonites” (NET). This indicated that the cause of the famine was a broken covenant with the Gibeonites. King David, anxious to relieve his people from the famine, took action and called the Gibeonites, and said “What can I do for you, and how can I make atonement (אָכִיפֶר) so that you will bless YHWH’s inheritance?” (v 3b). וַיִּבְרַךְו, “so that you will bless” communicates the purpose of the motivation of the main clause, expressed by the *waw* conjunctive and the imperative, the main clause being, מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה לָּכֶם וּבְמַה אֲכַפֵּר, “What can I do for you, and how can I make atonement (אָכִיפֶר)”. Botterweck *et al.* however argues that אָכִיפֶר, “atonement”, in this sense “denotes compensation through a material gift; understood literally as, the slaying of the murderer as an act of blood vengeance effects purification but not ‘atonement’” (1995:295). Although compensation is important here, Botterweck *et al.* falls short of recognizing that David’s purpose was to end the famine and in so doing he wished to appease YHWH, to make propitiation (Brown *et al.* 2000:497; Koehler, *et al.* 1999:494). It could be said that atonement was paid to YHWH to end the severe famine by means of paying compensation to the Gibeonites.

Therefore, David allowed the Gibeonites to “suggest the means of expiation, and they mentioned two alternatives: compensation and blood-vengeance”. Compensation they felt was inadequate, but blood-vengeance was “beyond their

⁷⁷ The incident is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture.

legal rights”. Yet, in this case David was willing to make a special concession and so he gave them seven of Saul’s sons (Anderson 2002: 248; Baldwin 1988:302). The sons were really the representatives of Saul (cf. 35:24). The question presented by David, וּבַמָּה אֶצְכֹּפֶר, “how can I make atonement” and the response from the Gibeonites illustrates a secular context for an act of atonement.

Atonement in a secular Hebrew context is remarkable in that it shows within the biblical narrative that YHWH responds to acts in secular matters as well. Whilst atonement seems to address metaphysical matters, as we shall see in my discussion on African Metaphysics, atonement addresses physical concerns too.

3.2.5 Atonement and the Promised Messiah

Soon after the creation account, the Holy Scriptures open with a dramatic narrative of humanity’s Fall into rebellion against YHWH and the horrifying consequences thereof. However, this narrative is not without an exquisite hope culminating in a prophecy of a promised Messiah in Genesis 3:15, whereby all reference to atonement synthesis in socio-historical theology and biblical narrative find its origin. It is to this prophecy I now turn.

Both Adam and Eve disobeyed YHWH in the Garden of Eden under the cunning persuasion of the serpent. In Genesis 3:14-19 the consequences of the Fall are laid out. Of great significance are the consequences imposed on the serpent in verse 15, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (ESV). The “independent personal pronouns are pre-dominantly used to express semantic-pragmatic functions”; this is especially evident in comparison and contrasting relationships. That is, הוּא, “he” (on the one hand) shall crush your head, “and you” (on the other hand) shall crush his heel (ESV; Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze 1997; cf. Arnold and Choi 2003:168; Waltke and O’Connor 1990:295). Thus the women’s offspring shall crush (יִשָּׁדֵק) the serpent’s head.

Hamilton (1990:198) cautions against being too quick to find “a clear-cut reference here to some remote individual”, namely Jesus Christ. His warning is based on the noun זָרַע, “offspring”, which he believes is a reference to an individual child, “an immediate offspring rather than a distant descendant”. On the other hand, Waltke explains that זָרַע, “offspring” could have a wider semantic range. It may refer to: (1) an immediate descendant (cf. Gen 4:24 and 15:3), (2) a distant offspring, or (3) a large group of descendants (2001:93). Collins (1997) however argues convincingly that זָרַע; “offspring” signifies a specific descendant. He observes that הוּא, “he” is “consistent with the pattern where a single individual is in view. In fact, since the subject pronouns are not normally necessary for the meaning”. Consequently, Collins thinks that הוּא may have in reality been employed to make it quite clear that a certain individual was being promised who would have victory over the serpent whereby he himself would be injured⁷⁸. He argues further that the LXX “makes it beyond question that the translator of Genesis 3:15 meant to convey that an individual was promised⁷⁹” (1997:141,144-145).

I therefore affirm the interpretation of Genesis 3:15 as a reference to the defeat of Satan, and that the Saviour of humanity, Jesus Christ is the descendant (זָרַע) of the woman who would crush the serpent, that is Satan⁸⁰. This provides a strong reference to the beginning of a new community and the deliverance of humanity from Satan’s power (Adeyemo 2006:16). Sailhamer (1990:56) therefore points out that “the two sides are represented by narrative to follow⁸¹”, there is to be a struggle between the two ‘seeds’, that of the woman and that of the serpent. In this

⁷⁸ Collins (1997) “examined every case of *zera* where it means ‘offspring’, noting where possible the behaviour of verb inflections, adjectives, and pronouns that are syntactically connected with the word *zera*”. In his article, *A syntactical note (Genesis 3:15): Is the woman's seed singular or plural?* He tabulates the results and concludes that a certain individual was being promised.

⁷⁹ “The mismatch in gender between pronoun and antecedent is held to be evidence that the LXX translator saw this as a prophecy of a specific individual. While this is generally acknowledged, many feel that the LXX is an interpretation that the Hebrew itself does not support, since the Hebrew is considered to support only a collective understanding of *zera* and *hū*” (Collins 1997:141).

⁸⁰ Scripture itself also seems to attest to such a conclusion in Lk 10:19; Rom 16:20; Rev 12:9.

⁸¹ Perhaps this discussion on Gen 3:15 would have been well suited at the beginning of this chapter, however, I felt appropriate for it to be connected to Jesus Christ, and thus I have included it under *Atonement and the Promised Messiah*.

battle it is said that the ‘seed’ of the woman would overcome the serpent. Waltke is in agreement with Sailhamer, stating that this verse is YHWH’s announcement of “a battle of champions”. There will be a descendant who will conquer Satan and because Adam failed, ultimately the woman’s seed must be a heavenly one, a new Adam and his community (2001:94). Likewise Boersma orientates us to the martial imagery in Genesis 3:15, to Christ’s obedience which rendered Satan impotent, giving Christ the victory and thus redeeming humanity (Boersma 2004:128). This is good news! And is the earliest statement of the Gospel of salvation, called the *Protoevangelium* (Dillard and Longman 1995:56). It is the very first instance of *Christus Victor* in Scripture, which makes this very significant for the drama of atonement synthesis in biblical narrative. It is here where the cosmic battle begins, where the cosmic drama begins to unfold.

In the royal psalm, Psalm 110, authored by David, the thematic focus is on the role of the house of King David among its subjects. This Psalm, however, looks beyond David’s achievements toward a future messianic figure; the orientation of this Psalm is almost entirely futuristic. It is not peculiar then that the NT frequently references this Psalm. Wright observes that Jesus quoted from this Psalm referring to the messianic enthronement⁸², his triumphant victory over the kings of the earth and to His everlasting priesthood in the order of Melchizedek (1996:508).

Verse 1 starts with what is often said to be a messianic proclamation, נָאֵם יְהוָה לַאֲדֹנָי, “YHWH says to my Lord”. ‘My Lord’ was applied to all successive kings in the dynasty and then ultimately to the ideal Davidic king who is thought to be a messianic figure (NET Bible notes 2005: online). He is told to sit at the right hand of YHWH, a place of honour, while YHWH makes his enemies His footstool⁸³. VanGemeren says that ‘footstool’ was an ancient Near East expression of absolute control. “Originally the victorious king placed his feet on the necks of his

⁸² Mt 22:41-45; Mt 26:64; Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:41-44.

⁸³ The Apostle Paul draws from verse 1 and much of Ps 110 in Eph 1:10-21 where he says that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father “in the heavenly places and is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” (ESV). cf. Col 3:1; Peter’s words in Acts 2:32-33. Heb 1:3; 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22.

vanquished foe... From this practice arose the idiom to make one's enemy one's footstool" (1991:697). These enemies would be subdued by YHWH, making them subject to the reign of the Davidic king, the coming Messiah⁸⁴.

YHWH stretches out from Zion in verse 2, the Davidic king's mighty sceptre. This 'mighty sceptre' was a symbol of the king's dominion and royal authority (NET Bible notes 2005: online). It is then proclaimed, "Rule in the midst of your enemies!" The imperative *רָדָה*, "rule" indicates an emphatic prediction that will be fulfilled in the future whereby He will rule over and subdue His enemies (Brown *et al.* 2000:921-922; cf. Gesenius and Tregelles 2003:758; Waltke and O'Connor 1990:572). A shift in thought occurs in verse 3 which offers a poetic description of how people will offer themselves freely to this Davidic king, even among the menacing forces during the day of His power.

The Davidic king will also be a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (v 4). This messianic figure will therefore be both a king and a royal priest. *עַל-דְּבַרְהֵי*, "according to" is an indication of manner, that is, behaviour *according to* a certain standard, in this case, Melchizedek (Arnold and Choi 2003:122; Joüon and Muraoka 2005:282). Thielman explains that it was only after Jesus' ascension, that the function of the eternal priest in the order of Melchizedek was fulfilled⁸⁵, for He was the ultimate Davidic King (2005:667). The OT king was a warrior king, but the NT understanding of Christ as king, is a king of Peace, not unlike Melchizedek who was an unusual OT king, for he was called, *מְלִכִּי-צְדָק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם*, literally meaning, "my king (is) righteous⁸⁶, king of peace" (Gen 14:18). The enemies which Jesus Christ wages war against are ultimately spiritual powers; they are the forces of evil who challenge His rulership (Adeyemo 2006:715).

The absolute proper noun, *אֲדֹנָי*, "Lord" in verse 5 refers to the Davidic king mentioned in verse 1. A militant theme is articulated when David writes, "He will

⁸⁴ Paul develops this thought in 1 Cor 15:24-28.

⁸⁵ Heb 5:6; 7:17; 26-28; 8:1.

⁸⁶ Or righteousness.

shatter kings on the day of his wrath” (ESV), and is developed further in verse 6. With very graphic imagery, the messianic figure is portrayed as an ultimate judge and warrior king; He is the unconquerable victor of all the earth. As a result of His triumph, He lifts up His head in victory (v7; VanGemeren 1991:700). This Psalm is a striking description of the *Christus Victor* motif in OT narrative.

The Prophet Isaiah also wrote a magnificent messianic prophecy. As we shall discover, the atoning themes in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 enjoy superb expression. Like Psalm 110, Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is also often referenced by the NT authors. Hence this pericope is noteworthy not only for the OT narrative, but also for the NT narrative and discourse. In this text the motifs of penal substitution together with *Christus Victor* really find expression as an atonement synthesis, where the two are artfully woven together.

This pericope was probably written in the sixth century BC while Israel was in exile. Although exile was understood as punishment for sins, forgiveness of sins was an expression often employed to mark the end of exile (Groom 2008:97). Wright believes that this pericope was the foundation to Jesus’ ministry and His announcement of the kingdom which Jesus understood as “the historical and concrete acting out of the return of the Lord to Zion to defeat evil and to rescue his people from exile; that is, to forgive their sins at last”. Jesus therefore saw “his own approaching death in terms of the sacrificial cult” and that this was “one key part of his messianic task” (1996:605). He also views Jesus’ understanding of His death as “the great saving event of Israel’s history: the exodus. This, Vanhoozer thinks, leads to “the kingdom of God: to the reign of God in human hearts”. However, Vanhoozer notes how Wright claims that Jesus’ teaching on His atoning work is concerned with the “new exodus” and does not have “a worked-out atonement theory” (2004:398). He is precisely right, for Wright argues that there was not a pre-Christian Jewish description of a Pauline atonement theology. There was however, he proclaims, “a variegated and multifaceted story of how the present evil exilic age could be understood, and how indeed it could be brought to

an end”. Wright believes that Jesus “was not offering an abstract atonement theology”, but identified Himself with Israel’s sufferings (1996:592).

Isaiah’s prophecy starts by describing how YHWH’s Servant⁸⁷ would act wisely, and that He would be lifted up and very exalted (Is 52:13). This, however, is juxtaposed by what follows. Verse 14 states, “As many were appalled at you, so His appearance was disfigured more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men”, and yet verse 15 proclaims that “kings shall close their mouths because of him”. Isaiah 53 develops this juxtaposition whereby the Servant is said to be “despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (v 3; ESV). The reason for such sorrow is found in verse 4, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (ESV). Whilst לָקָה may be rendered as sickness⁸⁸ (Brown *et al.* 2000:318; Koehler, *et al.* 1999:318); the LXX uses the verb ὀδυῖσθαι which means to suffer pain or to undergo physical torment. Yet it is significant that it could also mean “to experience mental and spiritual pain” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:692). Further, the substitutionary notion in נִשָּׂא, “carried” is unmistakable, bearing the consequences of another’s sin (Beyer 2007:207; Koehler, *et al.* 1999:726; cf. v 12).

Nevertheless Isaiah proclaims “even though we thought he was being punished⁸⁹” (NET). The *waw* conjunction at the start of verse 5 refers back to verse 4 indicating a relationship between (v 5) “pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities” and “smitten by God, and afflicted” (v 4; ESV). Of messianic significance is the word לָקָה, “pierced” (v 5). Although it means ‘wounded’ as many translations suggest (cf. ESV, KJV, NKJV, NET), I feel ‘pierced’ is a more helpful Christocentric rendering in light of Jesus being nailed

⁸⁷ Interpretations of Is 52:13-53:12 are hotly debated especially with reference to the servant’s identity. A discussion of the servant’s identity is outside the scope of this study and therefore I shall not embark on such a discourse. However, I do hold that this is a messianic prophecy based on evidence found in the NT (cf. discussions on *New Testament Narrative and Discourse* below) and the Early Church, and thus the Servant, I believe, is Jesus Christ. I shall therefore treat this pericope as such and shall capitalise ‘Servant’ and relevant pronouns.

⁸⁸ The NASB, ESV, KJV, NKJV and NLT have translated this as sorrow which seems to find a happy medium between the Hebrew and the LXX.

⁸⁹ Or “esteemed him stricken” (ESV)

to a cross and being pierced by a Roman soldier with a spear in John 19:34⁹⁰ (Brown *et al.* 2000:319; Gesenius and Tregelles 2003:281 and Koehler, *et al.* 1999:320). וַיִּמְעָקָהּ (v 4) is rendered as to suffer, become degraded, humbled and/or humiliated (Koehler, *et al.* 1999:853; VanGemeren 1997:450). This is important because the Servant carried the sufferings and sins of many. In the subjective genitive מִכַּדָּה אֱלֹהִים, “smitten by God”, YHWH, the genitive of agency does the action of smiting (Joüon and Muraoka 2005:417; Waltke and O’Connor 1990:143). But verse 5 also tells us that it was because of this ‘chastisement’ that we can have peace and that we are healed by His stripes. Thus the result of the action implied in מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ provides the “idea of purpose in the genitive of result”. This could thus be rendered as “‘the chastisement of *our welfare*’ or ‘the chastisement *that resulted in our peace*’” (Arnold and Choi 2003:11).

In verse 6, Isaiah focuses on humanity, that it is *we* who have gone astray like sheep. All of us have turned and have gone our own way and yet, it was YHWH who laid all our iniquities upon the Servant! The imagery of the Servant being the ritual, sacrificial lamb⁹¹ is expressed in verse 7 and it is here where the language of the Day of Atonement is highlighted, whereby the sins of the people were symbolically transferred to the scapegoat (Grogan 1990:303). It is reiterated in verse 8 that the Servant suffered oppression (cf. v 7) and judgment and was considered as “cut off out of the land of the living” (NASB). Yet the Servant, as the Prophet Isaiah explains, was stricken *for* the transgressions of YHWH’s people. Here the substitutionary motif becomes palpable.

The parallels of verse 9 between the Servant and Jesus’ death and burial are unmistakable (Mt 27:57-60). This Servant who experienced oppression and affliction was yet innocent, without violence. Even though He was undeserving of judgment, verse 10 tells us that it was the will of YHWH to crush him and to put him to grief. Here the meaning of “will” from the Hebrew verb יָפַץ, which also means “to take pleasure in” or “to desire”, is loaded with salvific and historical overtones of deliverance (Botterweck and Ringgren 1986:93, 106). For many

⁹⁰ cf. NASB, NIV and NLT.

⁹¹ Jn 1:29.

theologians, namely, Brock⁹² (1989), Brown and Parker⁹³ (1989), McLaren⁹⁴ (2003), Chalke⁹⁵ and Mann (2003) and Weaver (2011), this verse is understandably difficult to accept and has been criticised as ‘cosmic child abuse’. But to avoid the ‘cosmic child abuse’ accusation, we really should consider the following: (1) We ought to read it in light of the latter part of verse 10, for the Servant offers His life up as an offering *for our* guilt. This offering YHWH looks upon favourably when He sees it, and will prolong the Servant’s days and “the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (ESV). (2) Oswalt offers profound insight here; he says that YHWH would inflict innocent people with severe suffering if it served a greater good in which such sufferings would procure. But this would need to be of astronomical proportions, which indeed the saving work of the Servant’s suffering is! (Oswalt 1998:400). Thus Grogan can say, “God is seen not to be harsh but astonishingly gracious” (1990:304). (3) Morris observes an interesting sequence in verses 10-12, that “the LORD makes the *nephesh* of the Servant ‘a guilt offering’, and the passage goes on to say that the Servant ‘poured out his *nephesh* unto death’... The guilt offering and death are closely linked” (1983:56). Therefore, Jesus as the Servant not only offers redemption by way of becoming a substitute, but He offers a sacrificial death as well. This is evident in Jesus’ own words in Matthew 26:28⁹⁶ (Ladd 1974:188-189). As we shall explore in chapter 4, Jesus’ sacrificial death is central when dealing with ATR. His sacrifice is vital in offering solutions to the metaphysical problems that Africans experience. Not only this, but is also ultimately their only hope of redemption and ontological balance.

The result of the anguish mentioned in verse 11 is the Servant’s satisfaction, for He knows that by bearing the iniquities of many, many shall be accounted as righteous! The doctrinal themes of penal substitution and justification are remarkably evident in this verse.

⁹² Cited in Jeffery *et al.* (2007:229).

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ cf. Chalke (2008).

⁹⁶ Mk 14:24; Mark omits ‘for the forgiveness of sins’.

After a detailed description of the Servant's rejection, affliction, and death, a shift in discourse emerges in verse 12 whereby the servant's triumph is celebrated, thus developing a OT *Christus Victor* motif. This Servant's path to victory was certainly very different. As reward for this victory, YHWH would divide for the Servant a portion with the many, and shall divide the spoil with the strong. According to Oswalt this is a "picture of a victory parade with the Servant, of all people, marching in the role of conqueror, bringing home the spoils of conquest"⁹⁷ (1998:405). Such a victory is "because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors" (ESV). Atonement synthesis is explicit here! The substitutionary theme is highlighted again in verse 12c, "yet he bore the sin of many and interceded for the transgressors"⁹⁸ (NASB). The perfect verb נָשָׂא, "carried" is significant because the Servant received the punishment of *another's* sin upon Himself (Brown *et al.* 2000:671; Gesenius and Tregelles 2003:568 and VanGemeren 1997:163). It is important to understand in light of verse 10 that the Servant took upon *Himself* the sin of the world and like the scapegoat in Leviticus 16:22 carries those sins away from us (Oswalt 1998:377).

Of course כִּפָּר, "atonement" does not feature in Isaiah 52:13-53:12, but substitutionary and atoning language is implied throughout, notably in how the Servant suffers on the behalf of many, how He is like a lamb led to the slaughter and that He bears our sin and guilt (Beyer 2007:207; Groves 2004:64-87). Once again the metaphor of sacrifice emphasizes the penal substitutionary nature of the Servant's suffering and death. This is unique because the transfer of guilt cannot be transferred to another according to Ezekiel 18:20; and neither can a "man ransom his brother, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice" (Ps 49:7-8; ESV). This Servant is surely not an ordinary man! His uniqueness in my opinion points to a messianic figure, Jesus Christ. The language then, in Isaiah 52:13-53:12, clearly develops penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs as a synthesis, and makes a striking contribution to atonement synthesis in OT narrative and theology.

⁹⁷ cf. discussion on Col 15 below.

⁹⁸ Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45.

This therefore concludes the discussion on the drama of atonement synthesis in OT narrative. Despite the atoning themes throughout the OT and prophecies of an ultimate price that will provide an efficient atonement to save humanity, such atonement is absent from the OT narrative, for the ransom price is too high and too precious. The drama of atonement synthesis in OT narrative is a prefiguring of an additional narrative, the New Covenant and its infinitely superior atonement.

3.2.6 Conclusion

The above discussion explored the drama of atonement synthesis in the OT narrative, along with the following concepts: (1) YHWH as triumphant and victorious in defeating the Egyptians, and freeing the Israelites from their bondage and slavery. Christ likewise frees us by means of His victory over Satan, sin and death, for we too were held in bondage until Jesus died an atoning death on the cross. (2) The ritual and sacrificial practices of the Hebrews were also explored. These were in many ways foreshadows of Jesus' atoning work, especially in light of substitutionary atonement. (3) An examination of the concept of atonement in secular Hebrew society offered fascinating accounts of penal substitutionary atonement, found even outside of religious liturgy, in everyday life. (4) The discussion on atonement and the promise of a Messiah centred primarily on messianic prophecies. Here too, both penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs appear to find remarkable expression which are ultimately realised in the NT narrative and discourse. To be sure, the OT provides us with a multifaceted nature of atonement theology. The penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs seem to be different, though closely related, that is, they are two sides of the same coin. It seems that either of these two motifs cannot adequately explain the nature of atonement without the other.

Penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs are then, I argue, a significant part of OT narrative, which also assists us in understanding their meaning and

application in the NT as well as in African metaphysics. This discussion has provided a rich milieu for Jesus Christ and the NT.

3.3 New Testament Narrative and Discourse

3.3.1 Introduction

In my discussions above I examined the motifs of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* as an atonement synthesis in the OT narrative. This provides a matrix for the NT narrative and discourse. In many of the discussions above we perceived foreshadows of a messianic figure. Now in the NT as we shall see, this figure reveals Himself as the Saviour of humanity and of the cosmos.

This study will begin by exploring the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs in Jesus' thought, starting in the Synoptic Gospels and then will move on to the Johannine tradition, which will include his Gospel, 1 John and his Apocalypse. I shall also explore these motifs in the Pauline tradition, the Epistle to the Hebrews and lastly in the Petrine tradition. All of which offer a significant contribution to the drama of atonement synthesis in NT narrative and discourse.

3.3.2 Synoptic Tradition

Much of atonement synthesis in the Synoptic tradition demonstrates OT continuity in Jesus' own messianic understanding, especially with respect to Isaiah's Servant Songs. Further, as we shall see, Jesus' "atoning mission is not political according to" the Jewish hopes, but in fact is a personal salvation *as well as a 'cosmic struggle'* against demonic forces. Kalu notes, "Jesus' ministry was very much a cosmic battle in which He rescued humanity from evil powers" (2008:182). Jesus at the very apex of his 'cosmic battle' against the forces of evil, "recapitulates and fulfils the themes of Genesis, Exodus and Passover" as well as the themes in Isaiah's Servant Songs. Jesus is the Messianic Servant, "the final

Passover and substitutionary curse” (Gruenler 2004:104). The discussion which follows will explore the following, (1) Isaiah’s suffering servant, (2) a ransom for many, (3) atonement and the Eucharist, and (4) victory over the diabolic.

3.3.2.1 Isaiah’s Suffering Servant

In a reference to Isaiah 53:4⁹⁹, Matthew 8:17 reminds us that Jesus is the Suffering Servant whom Isaiah spoke of, and that it is He who *takes away* our sickness and bears our diseases. Gundry observes that Matthew replaced the Septuagintal φέρει, “carries” with ἔλαβεν “took”, which indicates removal rather than carrying away (1994:150). Earlier in verses 14-16, Matthew tells us how Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law and how He later healed many others and cast out evil spirits. Therefore, it seems that Matthew interpreted Isaiah 53:4 from the Masoretic Text in a *Christus Victor* sense. Yet the LXX provides a stronger penal substitutionary nuance, reading, “This one carries our sins (ἁμαρτίας) and sufferings, and we considered him afflicted, smitten and mistreated”, the Hebrew noun, מַלְיָוָה “sickness” being replaced by ἁμαρτίας, “sins”. Carson points out that sin nonetheless is the root cause of all sickness (Carson 1984:205). Despite different renderings, both are biblical. Carson offers a strong connection in the Matthaean interpretation of Isaiah 53:4 in the Masoretic Text, and that of the LXX by saying, “Healing and forgiveness are tied together... by the fact that the consummated kingdom, in which there is no sickness, is made possible by Jesus’ death and the new covenant”. Thus Carson reckons that “for Matthew, Jesus’ healing miracles pointed beyond themselves to the Cross” (1984:206). Whilst I agree with Carson theologically, I am doubtful whether this was quite what Matthew had in mind (cf. Gundry 1994:150 and Nolland 2005). Contra Carson, it seems that the Matthaean interpretation is more favourable towards a *Christus Victor* motif, rather than a penal substitutionary one, contributing towards the *Christus Victor* facet of atonement synthesis in the Synoptic tradition.

⁹⁹ This does not follow the LXX; rather it appears to be a Matthaean translation of the Hebrew text (cf. Targum).

Matthew makes yet another reference to the Prophet Isaiah in Matthew 12:17-21. In verse 18, Jesus is identified with the Servant¹⁰⁰. Gundry takes the emphasis on discipling the Gentiles in verse 18 that requires κρίσιν positively as ‘justice’, rather than the negative ‘judgment’ (1994:229). Thus κρίσιν may be rendered as the “right administration of what is right and fair” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:569). Jesus at this time did not come as judge but as a servant reaching out to the poor, to the outcasts and to sinners (Mt 9:13; Hagner 2002). Verse 20¹⁰¹ provides us with a picture of a ministry that is compassionate and gentle, for those who are weak are not broken or harmed, and Jesus will bring justice and victory. Thus ἕως ἄν ἐκβάλῃ εἰς νίκος τὴν κρίσιν is properly rendered as “until he leads justice to victory” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:673-674). Here the motif of *Christ the Victor* is remarkably articulated in the Matthaean reference to Isaiah’s Servant Songs (cf. MacAthur 1987:300-301), providing an important contribution towards atonement synthesis in biblical narrative.

3.3.2.2 A Ransom for Many

The reason for Jesus’ suffering is further clarified in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45, reading, “Just as (for) the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many¹⁰²”. This references back to Isaiah’s Servant Songs. Jesus explains in verse 28 that He did not come to be served, but to serve. Jesus giving up his life for many is echoed in Isaiah 49:6, where YHWH says of His Servant that He would make Him a light to all nations, and that YHWH’s salvation would reach to the ends of the earth. Isaiah 53:12 is also explicit in how the Servant gives up his life to death, bearing the sins of

¹⁰⁰ Is 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12.

¹⁰¹ Mt 12:20 is a paraphrase of Is 42:3.

¹⁰² The authenticity of Mt 20:28 and the Mk 10:45 parallel, especially λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν, “a ransom for many” has been questioned. It has been argued that it is ill-suited for the context in light of Jesus’ disciples being unable to imitate Jesus’ death and that Jesus’ death is not spoken like this elsewhere. The language is thought of as a reflection of the influence from the Hellenistic church. Yet, Jesus spoke in similar terms in Mt 26:28-29 and Lk 22:37 (Carson 1984:432). Further, the Servant motif and the language in Is 53:12 are akin to λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν. According to Green and Baker (2000:38) the authenticity of the ransom axiom has also been defended by Page (1980) and Stuhlmacher (1986). I, therefore, believe that a denial of the authenticity of this clause is unreasonable and unsubstantiated.

many. Hence Jesus seems to be interpreting His own life, death and resurrection in light of Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Carson 1984:434).

Λύτρον suggests a "ransom" that will be completely paid, and the prefix, ἀντί, "for; in place of" heightens the notion of an exchange being made, that is, a ransom is being paid *in place of* many. Whilst penal substitutionary atonement is usually expressed by ὑπέρ, Wallace acknowledges that ἀντί is an acceptable preposition which evokes notions of penal substitutionary atonement as well (1996:367, cf. Porter 1994:144). Carson declares that λύτρον "was most commonly used as the purchase price for freeing slaves; and there is good evidence that the notion of 'purchase price' is always implied in the NT use of *lytron*". Λύτρον, "ransom" is therefore used metaphorically for "a setting free from sin and its penalty at the cost of the sacrifice of Jesus" (Hagner 2002). Here again, the notion of sacrifice contributes towards a proper understanding of penal substitution.

However, Green and Baker (2000:93-94) believe that the use of the ransom 'metaphor' does not necessary allude to a sort of business transaction, arguing that Israel's exodus out of Egyptian bondage was a 'ransom' understood, not as 'payment', but as a 'release' (cf. McKnight 2007:86-87). Horton disagrees. He proclaims that "to the sacrificial imagery is added the economic analogy". God brought us back (λυτρόω), we who were slaves, so as to liberate us and to reconcile us to Himself. Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 are set "in the context of redemption from sin: its curse and tyranny". The price is paid, Horton thinks, in the 'marketplace'¹⁰³. He says that "this price is paid to God's justice; it frees us from the evil powers that hold us in bondage – especially Satan". Christ, Horton says, is the redeemer "who buys back his people by paying their debt at the highest personal price¹⁰⁴" (2011:498). Nevertheless Boyd understands Jesus' words here in a 'warfare' motif, he writes,

¹⁰³ Horton (2011:498) cites, Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7; Col 1:13-14; Ti 2:14; Heb 9:12; 1Pt 1:18-19.

¹⁰⁴ cf. 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23.

While the understanding that the central significance of the cross was to ‘destroy the works of the devil’ (1 Jn 3:8) may be unconventional, at least since Anselm, it should surprise us if this were not the case, given the centrality of the warfare theme that we have already observed running throughout Jesus’ ministry.

Therefore Jesus, according to Boyd, “anticipated this warfare interpretation when he spoke of his death as a ‘ransom’”. Jesus presented it as the purpose of his ministry of healing and exorcism (Boyd 1997:249).

Wright’s take is somewhat nuanced. He understands the ransom axiom in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 as the climax of the narrative, a struggle for the kingdom. The death of Jesus would therefore be “the inevitable result of his kingdom-inaugurating career”. Wright believes that Jesus conceived His death as “the actual victory of the kingdom, by which the enemy of the people would finally be defeated”. Accordingly he suggests that Jesus, in telling of the narrative “of Israel reshaped around himself, predicted his own death” (1996:466). In a similar manner, Hill considers that the death of Christ as a ransom (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45¹⁰⁵) is grounded in the milieu of YHWH’s great acts of delivering his people from Egyptian slavery and from Babylonian captivity” (2004:30).

Although McKnight (2007) does not refute penal substitution in Biblical narrative, he apparently does not think this is intended in Mark 10:45, according to Jeffery *et al.* (2007:71). McKnight is, however, sympathetic towards the grammatical evidence for ἀντὶ, “for; in place of” signifying substitution, he feels that “the logic of the language game” of λύτρον, “ransom” breaks down his sympathy. Instead McKnight argues, “To be a substitute the ransom price would have to take the place of another ransom price or a slave for another slave”. In Matthew 20:18 and Mark 10:45, he sees only slaves and a ransom price, the price is paid for the liberation of slaves, there is no substitution according to him. Contrary to Horton, McKnight says that “the ransom is the price paid to the

¹⁰⁵ cf. Ti 2:14; Rev 1:5; 5:9.

hostile power in order for the captives to be liberated”. The notion then as McKnight sees it, is one of being Saviour, not a substitution. Thus he translates, “ransom *for the benefit* of the many” (2005:357; cf. 2007:88). Whereas McKnight appears convincing, Jeffery *et al.* offers a forceful rebuttal. They demonstrate that McKnight is mistaken on account of the ransom price being a life given in death in place of the lives of many, rather than a monetary payment. Thus the substitute and the ‘many’ being substituted for are of the same category (2007:71).

Nonetheless I think it appropriate to consider the ransoming theme in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 in light of redemption. Carson explains that in the Graeco-Roman world, redemption language was common economic language, often for the redemption of slaves. Sometimes a person might become a slave because of personal, dire economic circumstance, selling themselves, and perhaps also their family into slavery. But if there was a friend or a family member who was caring and wealthy, he could make an arrangement with the owner of the slave and buy the person back out of slavery... this is called *redemption*. According to Carson, this worked by paying the price for the slave to a pagan temple, some of this money went to the temple priests and the temple in turn would pay the rest to the slave owner. The ownership of the slave was then transferred from the slave owner to the temple’s deity. By this it meant the slave was redeemed because if you were a slave to a temple god, you were basically a freed man, though he still held a status of being a slave even though he was free to do as he pleased (Carson 2010:58-59). No doubt, we can clearly see the idea of monetary transaction here which concerns Green, Baker and McKnight. Yet I propose that we keep in mind that Jesus offers not a transaction but a substitution under the same *redemption* matrix. Here we are able to observe aspects of penal substitutionary atonement and Christus Victor motifs. In this way not only does the ransoming in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 engage with the atonement synthesis in NT narrative and discourse, but with wider biblical narrative as well as redemptive concepts in the Graeco-Roman world.

3.3.2.3 Atonement and the Eucharist

In the previous discussion, atonement synthesis in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 was explored. Related images are fleshed out in Matthew 26:26-29. Here Jesus' death is freshly identified as the apex of His self-sacrificing service that exemplified his ministry (Nolland 2005). Gruenler writes that Matthew 26:26-29 is a principal text within the Synoptic corpus narrating Jesus' emphatic teaching on His atoning work. This pericope portrays Jesus' messianic understanding within a Levitical and prophetic framework (2004:94). At the Eucharist, Jesus took bread and after having blessed it, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body" (v 26). He then took a cup and after having given thanks, he gave it to them, saying,

"Drink from it everyone, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for (περί) many for the forgiveness of sins. But I tell you; I shall not drink again from this fruit (γενήματος) of the vine (ἀμπέλου)¹⁰⁶ until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (vv 27b-29).

Robertson states the genitive περί, "for" is a benefaction, expressing "for the benefit of" and is employed in connection with Jesus' death (1934:567). Further, the language, ἐκχυννόμενον, "shed; pour out" is reminiscent of "the sacrifices of atonement in the temple ritual" (Hagner 2002). The MT qualifies this covenant by stating that it is a 'new covenant' (τὸ τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης). Metzger writes that καινῆς, "new" likely came from the parallel passage in Luke 22:20. He believes that if it was original, there would have been no reason for its omission (Metzger 1994:54).

¹⁰⁶ The variation, γεννήματος, means "that which is produced" (Arndt, Danker and Bauer 2000:194); τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου is a LXX idiom meaning, "fruit of the vine" (Nolland 2005).

The purpose of Jesus shedding His blood for many is marked by the preposition εἰς, “for”, revealing the resultant idea as the forgiveness¹⁰⁷ of sins (ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν; Robertson 1934:594-595). Ladd (1974:188-189) explains that this may well have been Jesus’ interpretation of Isaiah 53:10-12 for His own sacrificial and substitutionary death. This offering of a sacrifice, as Morris proclaims, does not merely establish a (new) covenant, but also cancels the guilt and punishment of sin (1965:104; 1983:41). There also seems to be an interesting connection between the new covenant mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31-34, in light of Israel’s exile and release. Wright, picks up on these themes, he feels that Matthew was “not suggesting that Jesus’ death will accomplish an abstract atonement, but that it will be the means of rescuing YHWH’s people from their exilic plight” (1996:561). Whilst I think Wright’s ‘exilic plight’ motifs are overemphasised, I acknowledge that a reference to the Israelites’ exodus out of Egypt and the Passover lamb were likely in Jesus’ mind when He created a new set of symbols which relate to His sacrificial death. Horton likewise views the Eucharist as replacing the Passover (2011:773; cf. McKnight 2007:84-85). It is not surprising then that Jesus was crucified during the Passover, showing Him as the “new, eschatological Passover lamb” (1 Cor 5:7; Hagner 2002; cf. 1 Jn 1:29).

The narrative and discourse in Matthew 26:26-29 demonstrates that an atoning theme, namely penal substitution, is a new covenant extension of the Passover along with the temple’s rituals and sacrifices. The Eucharist, therefore, ties all of biblical narrative together in a single event, stretching back into OT narrative and yet anticipating an eschatological kingdom, a future hope.

3.3.2.4 Victory over the Diabolic

Examining now Jesus’ victory over diabolic entities in Mark 3:22-27, a discourse emerges in verse 22 between the scribes from Jerusalem who were saying of

¹⁰⁷ The KJV and NKJV have ‘remission’.

Jesus, Βεελζεβούλ ἔχει¹⁰⁸, “He is possessed by Beelzebul” and Ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια, “by the prince of demons he casts out demons” (v 22). Jesus then called to them and began to talk to them in parables. He responded to this charge arguing *reductio ad absurdum* and demonstrated that Satan has in fact ‘met his end’ (Guelich 1989:175). His discourse begins by pointing out that it “would be absurd for Satan to cast Himself out”. Young (1994:223) explains that by employing a rhetorical question, “How can Satan cast out Satan?” Jesus calls for careful reflection on the irrational accusation.

Guelich argues that two hypothetical conditional sentences in verses 24-25, marked by ἔάν, “if” and the subjunctive μερισθῆ, “divided” respectively, illustrate Jesus’ use of the macro ‘kingdom’ and micro ‘household’ (1989:176; 2002). These are of course; as Stein points out, hypothetical examples extrapolated from war and political motifs, used further to illustrate the ridiculous charge against Jesus (2008:183). In verse 26, Jesus appeals to “the condition assumed contrary to fact” highlighted by εἰ, “if” and the augmented tenses of indicative. The discourse shifts from the hypothetical to the assumption that Satan has certainly not risen against himself. If he had, he would have fallen by his very own demise, hence the resultant clause ἀλλὰ τέλος ἔχει, “but his end has come¹⁰⁹,” specifying the reason οὐ δύναται στῆναι, “he is unable to stand” (Guelich 2002). The conjunction, ἀλλ’, “but” in verse 27 provides “a strong adversative and introduces a contrary explanation of why demons are being exorcised in the ministry of Jesus”. The double negation οὐ, “no” and οὐδεὶς, “no one” also give an added emphasis to this assertion. The kingdom of Satan is thus not self-destructing from within, but rather an external force is attacking it and freeing its captives and proclaiming the coming of a new, very different kingdom, YHWH’s kingdom (Mk 1:15; Stein 2008:184).

¹⁰⁸ Literally, “He has Beelzebul”. Apparently, ‘Beelzebul’ does not occur in other Jewish literature of the time and hence indicates that it might have been a “passing colloquialism for a demon-prince”, or often understood as, ‘lord of the dwelling,’ ‘lord of the dung,’ and ‘lord of the flies, etc. (cf. Mt. 10:25; 12:24,27; Lk 11:15, 18-19). This seems to be affirmed in the references to ‘τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων’ and the generic reference to πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον (v 30; Lane 1974:141; Stein 2008:182). Jesus’ words in v 26 also identify Satan as the one spoken of as Beelzebub (Guelich 2002).

¹⁰⁹ ‘Come’ is included in translation for smooth rendering.

Jesus makes it plain in verse 27 that only someone who is stronger than the strong man (Satan) can enter into his house. The phrase, “unless he first ties up the strong man” has a somewhat eschatological focus, especially when Revelation 20:1-3 tells us how Satan would be bound for a thousand years. Jesus was speaking about Himself as the one more powerful than the strong man, for it was He who cast out demons and healed the sick¹¹⁰.

Moving on in discourse, in verse 28, Jesus announced “total forgiveness”, that He would release all those who have sinned “from legal or moral obligation or consequence”. That is, He would cancel their sins (Arndt *et al.* 2000:156; Guelich 1989:178). Gruelich writes, “This saying, therefore, speaks forgiveness to all humanity for all sins committed against God and other human beings”. Therefore, whilst Mark 3:22-27 provides us with a vibrant *Christus Victor* motif as Jesus engages in a ‘cosmic struggle’, verse 28 anticipates a penal substitutionary atonement in Jesus, even though implicit. This provides a significant contribution to the Synoptic tradition as it coheres to the overall drama of atonement synthesis in biblical narrative.

A classic example of this ‘cosmic struggle’ where it is unmistakable that Jesus is *not* possessed by Beelzebul or is in cohorts with him is Luke’s narrative in Luke 4:33-36 where Jesus exorcised an unclean demon¹¹¹ from a man in the synagogue. The demon’s cry, ἦλθετε ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς¹¹², “Have you come to destroy us?” is a statement revealing “the cosmic scope of Jesus’ battle against the demonic” (v 34; Nolland 2002). Bock explains that the Jews understood that demonic power would be defeated in the age of the Messiah and that it would be here where the “die of

¹¹⁰ Up until Mark 3:22-28 Jesus can be seen as successful in His exorcisms. cf. Mk 1:23-26; 32-34; 3:11, and He even gave authority to His disciples to cast out demons in verse 14! Jesus was also successful in overcoming sickness and healing those who were in need, cf. Mk 1:30-31; 2:3-12; 3:1-5 and 9-10.

¹¹¹ Peculiarly, the demon is spoken of in the narrative as a singular entity, yet the demon speaks of itself in plural (cf. ἡμῖν and ἡμᾶς in v 34). It has been suggested that ἡμᾶς is a reference to the demon as well as the man. The demon apparently was challenging Jesus that in order to get to him Jesus would have to destroy the possessed man. Thus the miracle would include exorcism as well as the safe delivery of this man (Bock 1994:432; cf. Green 1997:223).

¹¹² Although posed grammatically as a question, ἦλθετε ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς; should be taken as a statement.

cosmic confrontation is cast". They also believed that the messianic Victor would be revealed through battle (1994:431, 435). Jesus has more in mind here though than a single exorcism. Jesus as the *Christus Victor* has in fact purposed to utterly destroy the whole demonic realm and free humanity! (Lk 4:18-19). This is attested throughout the NT narrative and discourse.

Having considered Jesus' own understanding of His atoning death, one observes that He saw Himself as offering a substitutionary death fulfilling several OT themes, namely, Genesis 3:15, the exodus and Passover together with the Temple's rituals and sacrifices and Isaiah's Suffering Servant. Furthermore, Jesus viewed Himself as Christ the Victor engaging in a 'cosmic battle' with malevolent spiritual forces, rescuing humanity from demonic oppression.

3.3.3 Johannine Tradition

In the subsequent section, substitutionary atonement and *Christus Victor* motifs in the narratives and discourses within the Johannine tradition will be explored. This discussion begins in John's Gospel with John the Baptist's proclamation of Jesus as, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). This notion is maintained throughout much of the Johannine corpus. Whilst, John's Gospel does not articulate an explicit theology of atonement, Jesus' death is said to offer the world salvific benefits, without explaining how He gives eternal life or how he takes away the sin of the world. By contrast, 1 John focuses on the sins of believers and then "introduces an explicit theology of Christ's atoning sacrifice" (Michaels 2004:108-109; 112-113) in terms of advocacy and propitiation. A clear expression of the *Christus Victor* motif is also found in Jesus confrontation with Satan in John's Gospel, the First Letter of John and in His Apocalypse. I shall therefore discuss the following in the Johannine tradition, (1) the Lamb, (2) the Good Shepherd, (3) confrontation with Satan, and (4) propitiation.

3.3.3.1 The Lamb

Early in John's Gospel, John the Baptist revealed the identity of Jesus as the One who would come after him (Jn 1:27). While talking to his disciples and seeing Jesus walking towards him, John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".

Historically, various views of the symbolism of 'the Lamb' have been proposed. Ladd highlights them as follows: (1) The Lamb as the conquering Messiah. Whilst this would fit in with the topic of this dissertation, exegetically it makes little sense, (2) The leader of YHWH's flock, (3) the Lamb mentioned in John's Revelation 5:6, (4) this Lamb is a symbol for the Suffering Servant written about in Isaiah 53. Apparently "the Aramaic word *talya* can be rendered either by 'lamb' or by 'boy, servant' (5) and yet, other scholars believe that the symbolism is a deliberate blend of the slain lamb at the Passover (Ex 12:1-28) and the Servant in Isaiah 53:7 who is said to be "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth" (ESV; Ladd 1976:249-250, cf. Morris 1965:130-141; Thielman 2005:200). Morris offers additional views, (6) "The 'lamb that is led to the slaughter' (Is 53:7)", (7) "the daily sacrifice", (8) "the 'gentle lamb' (Jer 11:19)", (9) "The scapegoat", (10) the lamb that YHWH provides (Gen 22:8), and (11) "the guilt offering" (1965:133-141). Many of these suggestions come with convincing arguments. Morris, however, feels that the suggestions are largely too specific, and yet the "'Lamb of God' is too indefinite an expression for us to confine the meaning to any particular lamb" (1965:133-141).

Nevertheless, I argue that there is no evidence that John the Baptist thought of Jesus as the conquering Messiah, at least in so far as John 1:29, but rather as an atoning Saviour, a Sacrificial Lamb (cf. Ladd 1976:250). I therefore advocate that "the Lamb of God" is primarily a Passover lamb¹¹³, amongst other things listed above. In his narrative and discourse, John the Evangelist apparently considers the

¹¹³ cf. discussions above.

development of Jewish thought during Second Temple Judaism “to interpret the Passover as an atoning sacrifice”, as Green and Baker point out. They demonstrate further how John employed various themes in his Gospel to develop the idea of Jesus being the Passover lamb offering an atoning Sacrifice¹¹⁴: (1) Jesus’ death occurred during the time of the Passover sacrifice¹¹⁵, (2) both the hyssop and basin were there at the cross during Jesus death¹¹⁶, (3) Blood flowed from Jesus’ side and the witness thereof is emphasised¹¹⁷, and (4) none of Jesus bones were broken¹¹⁸ (Green and Baker 2000:78; cf. Köstenberger 2004:67). Further, the NET Bible notes (2005: online) explains that ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, “the Lamb of God” was in Jewish thought held to be a tremendously important sacrifice. No doubt, such an expression would also appeal to an African’s sense of sacrificial ritual as we shall discover in chapter 4. For the Jew, the sacrifice of a lamb, particularly in light of the Passover lamb, contained powerful symbolism attached to ideas of deliverance which implies victory, and the forgiveness of sins and messianic salvation. The Passover lamb provided protection from the final plague that defeated the Egyptians. Here it is the sacrifice of the Passover lamb that joins the themes of victory and forgiveness. Yet as Köstenberger (2004:66) notes, Jesus was a lamb *par excellence!* The article in ὁ ἀμνὸς, “the Lamb” is in fact a ‘monadic article’¹¹⁹, employed to express *par excellence* (Wallace 1996:224). That is, there were many lambs of sacrifice, but Jesus is the ultimate, superior lamb, who unlike other lambs, “takes away” or “blots out” the sin of the world (Arndt *et al.* 2000:28-29). Köstenberger (2004:67) and Morris (1995) suggest that the verb αἴρων, “takes away” in the present tense with a future force, and ἁμαρτίαν, “sin” in the singular refers to the totality of the world’s sin instead of a number of individual sinful deeds.

If the Aramaic noun *talya*, “boy; servant” was not intended by John the Baptist, and little seems to verify that this was John’s meaning, then I think it reasonable

¹¹⁴ cf. the discussion on OT ritual and sacrifice, especially on Ex 12.

¹¹⁵ Jn 18:28; 19:14

¹¹⁶ Jn 19:29 (cf. Ex 12:22)

¹¹⁷ Jn 19:31-35 (cf. Ex 12:13)

¹¹⁸ Jn 19:31-37 (cf. Ex 12:46)

¹¹⁹ The genitive, τοῦ θεοῦ is required as part of the formulae to make the monadic article work (Wallace 1996:224).

to consider the Passover lamb of Exodus 12:1-28 as the chief metaphor for understanding the Johannine “Lamb of God”. The thematic repetition of the “lamb” in the OT narrative is now identified in the Johannine tradition as Jesus Christ Himself, setting forth the NT narrative and discourse as a discontinuation as well as a continuation of the OT ritual and sacrifice.

Furthermore, John the Evangelist records in Revelation 5, a vision of a brilliant display of symbolism and paradox. In this vision John begins to weep for there was no one to open the seals of the sacred scroll (vv 1-4). In verse 5 a celestial elder comforts John, “Behold, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so as to open (ἀνοῖξαι) the scroll and its seven seals”. The infinitive ἀνοῖξαι¹²⁰, “to open” indicates the result of Jesus having conquered; the NET therefore translates it as “thus he can open the scroll”. Whilst Robertson seems to take this as purpose, he acknowledges that the distinction between result and purpose is faint (Robertson 1934:1089; cf. Beale 1999). I, however, reckon that the result is unmistakable and that the *purpose* does not agree with the natural flow of the text. The messianic victory described here is not a provisional one, but a final, unrestrained victory, for He is the victorious Lion! (Kittel *et al.* 1976, νικάω). Thus only Jesus who is identified as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (cf. Is 11:1; Rom 15:12) is worthy to open the seven seals of the scroll and reveal its contents, because He has conquered!

In verse 6, Green and Baker highlight that the paradox of images “coexist without contradiction in one person. Jesus is the conquering Messiah and the manner of his victory is his slaughter” (2000:81). Instead of a victorious lion, John now sees “a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain”. This lion in verse 5 is a Lamb! A Lamb with “seven horns with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (v 6; ESV). In the Johannine tradition Christ is identified as a Lamb, most explicitly in John 1:29, and which becomes a predominant title for

¹²⁰ The variant in the MT employs the present active participle and includes the article, ὁ, reading, ὁ ἀνοίγων, with the possible translation, “this One is opening”.

Jesus Christ throughout John's Apocalypse (Rev 5:12; 8:1; 12:11; 14:4; 21:23¹²¹; Hill 2004:196). ὡς ἐσφαγμένον may be rendered as, "as though it had been slaughtered" (Arndt *et al.* 2000:979). Thus expressing "an abiding condition as a result of the past act of being slain" (Beale 1999). This indicates a connection of Christ's sacrificial death to that of the OT Passover Lamb (Ex 12:1-28; cf. Is 53:7). The comparative particle ὡς, "as" however does not mean that the Lamb simply appeared as if it had been slaughtered, instead what John means to say is that the Lamb who was slaughtered is now alive! Thus two themes, death and resurrection, are joined (Aune 2002). But this slaughtered Lamb in Revelation 5:6 who is the crucified Christ is more than a victim, in fact, he is the all powerful Victor! He has seven horns¹²², a symbol of perfect might, and seven eyes, a symbol of perfect knowledge (Adeyemo 2006:1556). The Lamb then went and took the scroll, and in this cosmic liturgy, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell face down before the Lamb (Rev 5:7-8) and they began to sing a new song, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (vv 9b-10).

This song provides us three reasons¹²³ why Jesus was worthy to take the scroll and open its seals: (1) ὅτι ἐσφάγης, that He was slaughtered. This is of course reference to Jesus' crucifixion through which He was able to purchase humanity's redemption, which leads to the second reason. (2) Jesus through His atoning work ransomed people for YHWH from every tribe, language, people and nation. This was as Wright (2008:65) explains; a fulfilment of YHWH's purpose, that He would bless every nation through the seed of Abraham¹²⁴. "By your blood you ransomed people for God" is a lucid expression of the ransom theory of atonement¹²⁵. Arndt *et al.* renders ἡγόρασας as "to secure the rights to someone by paying a price" (2000:14). The imagery is not too dissimilar from some of the

¹²¹ ἄρνιον occurs twenty-nine times in Revelation, all references are to Jesus except for 13:11 (Aune 2002).

¹²² Deut 33:17

¹²³ These three though apparent in vv 9-10 are also highlighted in Wright CJH (2008:65).

¹²⁴ Gen 12:2-3; 13:14-16; 17:1-8; 18:18-19; 22:15-18.

¹²⁵ cf. discussion, *A Ransom for Many in Synoptic Tradition* above.

Patristic writings already discussed who proposed a ransom theory. Although the text is silent as to whom the payment was to be paid, humanity was nevertheless purchased for YHWH (τῷ θεῷ¹²⁶). Hill (2004:201) concurs with Horton (2011:498) and infers from the preceding verses that the payment was made to YHWH or to His justice. Whilst this may be possible, I find it difficult to trace such an inference in the Johannine Corpus, at least explicitly. Green and Baker, I think offer a sensible solution. While they too feel that beneficiary of the payment metaphor is left undeveloped, they argue that “we should probably understand this image as a way of understanding the seriousness (or costliness) of rebellion against God and his purposes” (2000:81).

The *African Bible Commentary* points out that “through his death, he *purchased men for God*. The image here is of freeing slaves, as when God liberated Israel from Egypt to become the free people of God in the land of promise” (Adeyemo 2006:1556). This is true, but the imagery and implications are really *far* richer than merely ‘freeing slaves’! The idea is also very similar to the concept of ransoming a slave in the Graeco-Roman world as described by Carson (2010:58-59) whereby the slave would be taken to a pagan priest and a price would be paid for his ransom. Thus he would become the property or the slave of the pagan deity of that temple as we have explored in a previous discussion. But, when Christ ransoms us for YHWH we do not become slaves to some deity, as in the Graeco-Roman world. Conversely, Christ makes us priests! He makes us a kingdom and makes us to reign on earth! (v 10). No doubt this would have had profound impact on John’s pagan audience, as well as his Jewish audience who would have been familiar with the Graeco-Roman culture. And so this provides the next reason for why Jesus was worthy to take the scroll and open its seals. (3) For it is by means of the cross that Jesus also achieved a victory (v 5) for His people and as a result

¹²⁶ The textual variant in both the MT and TR reads τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν. The KJV obviously follows this variant, reading, “... and hast redeemed *us to God* by thy blood” (cf. NKJV). Whilst the evidence for τῷ θεῷ is slim, it accounts best for the origin against the variation. Ultimately though, τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, according to Metzger, lacks adequate authority in textual criticism (1994:666). However, the other variation τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν, I argue was a result of homoeoteleuton, skipping over to the clause in v 10. Understandably, we find the textual variation, ἡμῶν in v 10, which similarity is poorly supported, but is not found in the MT.

they are now a kingdom of priests to YHWH and they will one day reign with Jesus on earth (v 10).

At Jesus' crucifixion where Jesus presented Himself as the slain Passover Lamb, all the satanic forces allied against Him together with hostile men and their institutions. Raging against the Christ they "hurled their worst at Him", but by absorbing this affliction He simultaneously defeated them and triumphed in divine love and in so doing he did "the perfect will of His Father". Through the atoning work of the cross, Christ made the satanic and the hostile forces of man agents of victory turning evil against itself and ultimately to its own ruin (Wright 2008:68). As Green and Baker (2000:81) write so brilliantly, "Revelation places the drama of salvation on the cosmic stage, so that the slaughter of the Lamb wins a cosmic victory". Consequently the motifs of substitutionary atonement and *Christus Victor* in the cosmic narrative of Revelation 5:5-10 are expressed impressively as an atonement synthesis.

The Passover theme of the OT narrative extends towards its fulfilment in the Eucharist in the NT narrative. And from this single NT event, the Eucharist, the Passover and its sacrificial Lamb, extend towards an eschatological hope, an eschatological kingdom (Rev 5:5-10). This pericope thus concludes the drama of atonement synthesis in biblical narrative; at least in the Johannine tradition.

3.3.3.2 The Good Shepherd

Ladd observes that an essential difference in John's Gospel from that of the Synoptics is its clarity and explicitness of Jesus' death in light of His messianic mission as a "deliberate redemptive act" (1976:187). This is notably true in the "I am the good shepherd" discourse (Jn 10:11-18). For Jesus "the good shepherd lays down his life¹²⁷ for¹²⁸ (ὐπὲρ) the sheep" (Jn 10:11; cf. vv 15, 17-18; ESV; emphasis mine). Thielman (2005:201) reckons that Jesus probably thought of

¹²⁷ Or "I die willingly" (NET Bible notes 2005: online). Several witnesses have "to give one's life" (cf. the synoptic gospels; Metzger 1994:196).

¹²⁸ Or "on behalf of" or "for the sake of" (NET Bible notes 2005: online).

Himself as the shepherd who endangers His own life so that He might rescue the sheep that are in serious peril. Jesus, therefore, dies as a substitution for those whom He loves so that they would be rescued from danger¹²⁹.

In the chapter, *Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis Theology*, under *Postmodernism*, the troubling criticism of penal substitution in Weaver (2011), Chalke (2003; 2008) and Green and Baker (2000) was highlighted. In one way or another, they critically identify penal substitutionary atonement as ‘cosmic child abuse’ or variations thereof. Yet it seems that those theologians who consider penal substitution as ‘cosmic child abuse’ miss the point of Jesus’ own words. Jesus tells us that not only does He lay His life down on his *own accord*¹³⁰ for the sheep (v 15, 17-18) and *no one* takes His life from Him (v 18a), but that He also takes it up again, and all this by His *own* authority (v 18b)! Arndt *et al.* (2000:352) explains that the authority in the context of this verse may be rendered to be in a state of control over something, or to have the *freedom of choice*. It is thus a reference to “Jesus’ absolute freedom within this power and authority to be a servant to humanity” (Falconer 2009:54). In light of the “cosmic child abuse” charge, Köstenberger (2004:307-308) contends,

The statement [“No one takes it away from me”] is in keeping with the evangelist’s consistent effort to portray Jesus being in charge throughout the events surrounding the crucifixion. It also highlights Jesus’ power over life and death.

Yet verse 18b clarifies, Jesus sacrifices Himself in obedience to His Father. Morris (1995) says that death was YHWH’s will for Jesus. Jesus sacrifices Himself in death because He was in perfect harmony with His Father, and “for this reason” the Father loves the son (v 17). Further, whilst in verse 17 “I lay down my life” provides reference to Jesus’ sacrificial death; “so that I may take it

¹²⁹ Similar themes of laying down one’s life for another are found in Maccabean martyrdom (2 Macc 7:18-38; 4 Macc 17:19-23) and in the substitutionary deaths found in the Graeco-Roman world (cf. Hengel 1981:10-14, 79). No doubt Jesus’ words, “I lay down my life for the sheep” would have resonated with both the Jewish and Gentile audiences.

¹³⁰ Here we observe that Jesus’ kenosis is by no means a diminution of His deity.

up again” is reference to His resurrection. The conjunction ἵνα, “so that” demonstrates that Jesus’ death was not an end in itself and neither was His resurrection an afterthought. Instead Jesus’ resurrection was in view in light of His death. His death was so that He could rise again and be ultimately glorified¹³¹, giving life eternal to His sheep (Falconer 2009:53). The shepherd’s death then, is not defeat, but is a victory, for Jesus would be resurrected (v 18).

In light of the NT narrative and discourse, the good shepherd laying down His life for the sheep for those who are of His fold and those who are not, demonstrates the purpose for Jesus’ substitutionary death. Taking His life up again, in resurrection, Jesus is also presented as a Victor!

3.3.3.3 Confrontation with Satan

In another, yet different, act of victory, Jesus highlights His confrontation with Satan in John 12:31 proclaiming, “Now is the judgment of this world, now the prince of this world will be cast out”. Boyd points out that Satan is now the “prince of this world” (cf. Jn 14:30; 16:11) because “we compromised our assigned task to have dominion over the world”. In so doing we subjected ourselves and all of creation to the vicious forces that are in opposition to YHWH (1997:111, 181).

Boyd proclaims that the old “prince of this world” has been “cast out” and a new prince, Jesus Christ, “a legitimate ruler, has been enthroned in his place”. The former prince held man in bondage, sin and suffering, but the new prince offers at no cost, forgiveness of sins through repentance (1997:245). Evidently, Jesus continues saying, “And when I am lifted up from this earth, I will draw all (πάντα¹³²) to myself” (v 32). Indeed this harkens back to John 10:15-18 where

¹³¹ Jn 12:27-28.

¹³² Some manuscripts have πάντα which is not only ambiguous, but also suggests a cosmic redemption similar to that found in Col 1:16-17, and/or being rooted in Gnosticism (Metzger 1994:202).

Jesus spoke openly about His death, and that He would draw all people¹³³, that is, both Jews and Gentiles, to Himself. The *Christus Victor* motif is alluded to in John 12:31, for Jesus said that He would now administer justice upon the world. And in way of exercising this justice He will also cast out¹³⁴ (ἐκβληθήσεται) the prince of this world (Arndt *et al.* 2000:299). ἐκβληθήσεται is a future passive verb which indicates that a triumph over Satan is a future event (Col 2:14-15; Heb 2:14-15; Rev 20:10). Although Satan seems to have victories now, these are his struggles to survive, for his ultimate defeat is fixed! (Adeyemo 2006:1280). Thus Boyd argues that Jesus announced bloodshed on this earth. Not that His followers should practice violence, but that they can expect acts of violence to be done to them. Spreading the Gospel invites satanic retaliation, for Satan, Boyd says, “owns all the kingdoms of this world¹³⁵” (1997:223). But ultimately Jesus’ death and resurrection marks the end of satanic rulership bringing about Satan’s defeat. As we read in Revelation 20:10, Satan’s defeat at the present time is not complete, but at the consummation of the age his defeat will be final.

With reference to Jesus’ crucifixion, John records a startling expression, “And when I am lifted up from this earth” (v 32). This brings to mind the OT narrative where Moses lifted up a bronze snake with atoning power for the healing of the Israelites in the Wilderness (Num 21:4-9). John makes the correlation in John 3:14 (cf. Is 52:13; Jn 8:28). Although this is not ambiguous, it is somewhat obscure. Green and Baker think that it is certainly a salvific metaphor, of “life-giving for those who believe” (2000:79). It is probably as, Arndt *et al.* tells us, a reference to Jesus’ crucifixion, whilst also suggesting a social position, that is an ‘exaltation into heaven, “since the heavenly exaltation presupposes the earthly” (2000:1045–1046; cf. Jn 8:28). The word’s of the Father in John 12:28 seem to affirm exactly this when he called out in a voice from heaven saying, “I have glorified it and will glorify it again”. Paradoxically then, the world and its ruler

¹³³ “People” is not in the NA27 or MT, rather it is often included in English translations for clarity and stylistic purposes.

¹³⁴ According to Morris (1995), this might be a reference to being thrown out into outer darkness, which is an expression employed by the synoptic authors.

¹³⁵ Lk 4:6; 1 Jn 5:19.

are judged at Jesus' crucifixion, while Jesus is glorified and salvation is obtain for all peoples (Köstenberger 2004:385).

The confrontation with Satan in John 12:31-32 presents Jesus in the NT narrative and discourse as the ultimate victor who will overcome Satan and cast him out of the world. Whilst penal substitution is absent, there is implicit reference to salvation and redemption in Jesus words, "And when I am lifted up from this earth, I will draw all people to myself" (v 32). These verses promote a *Christus Victor* motif in light of Christ's salvific work which fulfils YHWH's promise of the *Protoevangelium*, at the very beginning of the biblical narrative (Gen 3:15).

Further, in 1 John 3:4-10, John makes it clear that practising sin is lawlessness, thus, "Jesus was revealed to take away sins" (v 5; NET), so that we might be freed from sin's oppressive bondage. Immediately after John writes "Jesus was revealed to take away sins", he says, "and in Him there is no sin", which alludes to a penal substitutionary atonement, because Christ was sinless He was able to remove our sin from us, reminiscent of John 1:29.

Verse 8a says, "Whoever makes a practice of sinning¹³⁶ is of the devil" (ESV), so while some claimed to be of YHWH even as they continued sinning, they are in fact of the devil¹³⁷ (Kruse 2000), because those who continually sin exhibit a character that is ultimately derived from him (Stott 1988). The explanation being that the devil himself has been sinning from the beginning (v 8b). Jesus' confrontation with Satan is clearly expressed in verse 8c where John presents Christ as Victor, "the Son of God was revealed: to (ἵνα) destroy (λύση) the works of the devil" (NET). This parallels with verse 5a, "Jesus was revealed to take away sins" (NET; Smalley 2002) linking the two themes into a synthesis it seems. Wallace notes how the telic ἵνα and the subjunctive λύση express the purpose for why the Son of YHWH appeared, that is, to destroy the works of the devil (1996:472). In John's mind this is the supreme purpose for the

¹³⁶ ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν is, according to Wallace (1996:522), a "Customary (Habitual or General) Present" which signals "an action that *regularly occurs* or an *ongoing state*".

¹³⁷ Jn 8:44.

incarnation of Jesus Christ. Boyd (1997:266) argues, “The cross and resurrection, then, were not first and foremost about us. They were about overcoming evil”. I disagree. Although penal substitution, I argue, is the means of the atonement, and *Christus Victor*, the purpose, the cross and resurrection were ultimately about displaying YHWH’s holiness, righteousness and faithfulness by overcoming evil, thus redeeming humanity.

Nonetheless, Stott (1988) proclaims that Satan and his works, whilst having been destroyed are yet to be ultimately destroyed. Similarly, Boyd says that Jesus’ victory over death is eschatological, “it pointed beyond itself into the future, a future in which his accomplishment would be manifested” (1997:239). Yarbrough applies Stott’s thought and says that as Christ is victorious over the devil, He provides all those who have put their faith in Him with daily victory who would have otherwise been held captive by Satan¹³⁸. Jesus Himself stands and fights with us against sin and the forces of evil (2008:189). Jesus, in effect, appeared not only to destroy the works of the devil, but also to make us sons of YHWH, in Christ¹³⁹ (Smalley 2002). Yarbrough’s perceives the notion of *Christus Victor* as the dominating theme in this pericope,

The dramatic portrait of *Christus victor* dominates the literary horizon as the section comes to a close. The epistle’s key counsel – to abide in Christ and receive eternal life – is not a counsel of despair but a straightforward and compelling application of what Christ has already accomplished (Yarbrough 2008:189).

1 John 3:4-10 provides an impressive discourse on atonement synthesis. Although penal substitution is left somewhat implicit in verse 5, the *Christus Victor* motif is explicit. This pericope is rather exceptional in the NT narrative and discourse because it applies atonement synthesis to the Christian¹⁴⁰, offering practical counsel.

¹³⁸ Heb 2:15.

¹³⁹ Jn 3:1-2; 9-10.

¹⁴⁰ cf. Rev 12:7-12

3.3.3.4 Propitiation

In his first epistle, John writes for the sake of his “little children” so that they may not sin (1 Jn 2:1). Yet, John knows full well that we all still sin, as he made plain in 1 John 1:8. Therefore, in 1 John 2:1 he points out that “if anyone sins, we have an intercessor (παράκλητον) from the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”. John offers a juxtaposition between the idea of advocacy and an atoning sacrifice (Kruse 2000), for in verse 2, John continues to tell us, “He is the propitiation (ἰλασμός) for our sins, but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world”.

John articulates YHWH’s salvific work by saying that this intercessor is in fact the ‘offering for our sins’ (Smalley 2002). By ἰλασμός, “propitiation”, John means that Jesus is the “appeasement necessitated by sin”, “he is the expiation for our sins” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:474; Brown 1986, s.v. ἰλασμός 3). Arndt and Brown¹⁴¹ prefer “expiation”, that is, ritual cleansing (cf. Finlan 2005:40-41). I, on the other hand, think that ἰλασμός is not simply restricted to “expiation”, though to be certain, it is that too. I argue that we should think of ἰλασμός rather as propitiation¹⁴². That is, Jesus has made a satisfaction for our sins, He has appeased or turned away YHWH’s wrath and transferred it into blessing. Hengel states that in the early Greek period, the sacrifice of an individual for the good of the community was often understood to assuage the anger of the gods¹⁴³ (1981:19). It is noteworthy to consider, as Hengel points out, sacrificial death of this nature did not rest on an individual’s own decision, but was a requisite from a divine demand to atone for or deliver their people (Hengel 1981:87; Kittel *et al.* 1976, ἰλασμάς). Packer offers the following contrast: “In paganism, man propitiates his gods, and religion becomes a form of commercialism and, indeed, of bribery. In Christianity, God propitiates his wrath by his own action” (1973:36). The idea of

¹⁴¹ Brown (1986) acknowledges the debate on whether to translate ἰλασμός as “expiation” or “propitiation” and dealt with it elsewhere.

¹⁴² The NASB, ESV, KJV and NKJV translate ἰλασμός as propitiation; I shall offer a detailed discussion on “propitiation” under the *Pauline Tradition*, where I address the controversy.

¹⁴³ Examples include: (1) Menoeceus atoning for the ancient blood-guilt of Oedipus, (2) the safety of a victors’ return is guaranteed by the sacrifice of Polyxena which appeased the spirit of Achilles, (3) the wrath of Poseidon is appeased by King Erechtheus sacrificing one of his daughters; though all three of his daughters went to their deaths (Hengel 1981:19-20).

propitiation in the Holy Scriptures is therefore very different to that of the concept of propitiation in the Graeco-Roman World (Kittel *et al.* 1976, ἱλασμός; Packer 1973:29-30, 36; cf. Hengel 1981:19-20). Stott 1988 makes this clear in his commentary,

First, God's wrath is not arbitrary or capricious. It bears no resemblance to the unpredictable passions and personal vengefulness of the pagan deities. Instead, it is his settled, controlled, holy antagonism to all evil. Secondly, the means by which his wrath is averted is not a bribe, either from us or from a third party. On the contrary, the initiative in the propitiation is entirely God's.

I concur with Yarbrough (2008:78), that propitiation averts YHWH's "punishment in a substitutionary way". There is nothing in the Johannine corpus which disallows such an understanding, actually quite the contrary (Jn 3:16, 36; 8:24; 10:11; 11:51). Morris notes that "expiation is an impersonal word (1983:151-152), and for sin to be forgiven, the anger of the Triune Godhead needed to be appeased (Rom 3:23-25; cf. 1 Jn 4:10; Morris 1965:144; 205-206).

But this appeasement is not only for a select few, the 'we' in verse 1 or John's audience, but is "also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:2; ESV). Yarbrough reminds us that in light of John 3:16 and the theology of John's Gospel, it is no surprise that "there is a universal dimension to Christ's death for sins" (2008:79). Jesus' propitiating sacrifice, whilst "for the sins of the whole world" does not mean that all sins are automatically forgiven and eternal life is acquired for all. John makes it clear though that eternal life is only for those who believe "in the name of the Son of God" (1 Jn 5:13; Kruse 2000).

Propitiation is crucial, not only in understanding the OT and NT narrative and discourse, and the drama of atonement synthesis in biblical narrative as a whole, but also in how penal substitution engages with other religions.

Throughout the Johannine corpus I have demonstrated in one way or another that Jesus' incarnation, atoning work on the cross, and His resurrection have pointed towards a penal substitutionary atonement, that He indeed takes away the sins of the world. This was often expressed by means of sacrifice. It was also shown that Jesus was in confrontation with Satan and whilst Jesus was seemingly defeated at the cross, He turned this 'defeat' back onto Satan and his demonic forces, thus bringing them to ultimate ruin. The Johannine tradition, therefore, presents Jesus most unmistakably as Christ the Victor. In this way the Johannine tradition makes a noteworthy contribution to the drama of atonement synthesis in the NT narrative and discourse.

3.3.4 Pauline Tradition

The theological term, atonement, does not occur in the Pauline tradition and yet, notions of atonement and Jesus' death is present in many of his writings (Griffin 2004:140). Grogan rightly argues that the cross where Christ cancelled our debt is seen as the very same event in which He has victory over the malevolent cosmic forces (2008:90). However, Griffin (2004:140-142) remarks how contemporary Pauline scholarship has on the one hand neglected the penal substitutionary motif, and yet on the other hand, other scholars have failed to recognise or even do justice to the *Christus Victor* motif in the Pauline tradition.

The discussion which follows will explore atonement synthesis in the Pauline tradition where we shall observe penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs. I shall examine some of Paul's atonement theology in light of the following concepts; (1) propitiation, (2) redemption from the curse, (3) cosmic victory, and (4) resurrection.

3.3.4.1 Propitiation

McKnight (2007:64) acknowledges that Romans 3:21-26 is “riddled with theological controversy”, yet it is, as McKnight says, “the most significant atonement passage in the New Testament”. The pericope focuses our attention on the righteousness of YHWH. This righteousness, Paul says, has now been manifested apart from the law, but through faith in Christ for all those who believe (vv 21-22). In verse 23, Paul calls out humanity’s corrupt predicament. Thankfully Paul also points us to the solution in Christ, that we;

Are justified by his (Christ’s) grace as a gift, through the redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by (διὰ) his blood, to be received by faith. This was to (εἰς) show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins” (vv 24-25a; ESV).

Morris argues that the meaning of ἀπολύτρωσις, “redemption” in verse 24 underscores the redemption metaphor and may be rendered as ‘ransom’ (1965:45). The concept of ransom is meaningful in light of my previous discussions on redemption, *A Ransom for Many*¹⁴⁴ in the Synoptic tradition and in Revelation 5:9-10. The Apostle Paul employed ἀπολύτρωσις with reference to those having being justified by grace as a gift and released those who put their faith in Christ from demonic captivity. This redemption metaphor then is used in connection with the manumission of slaves, freeing humanity from the bondage of sin and demonic enslavement (Arndt *et al.* 2000:117). The mention of ἀπολύτρωσις in verse 24, whilst closely tied to the *Christus Victor* motif, does not provide an explicit premise for Satan’s defeat. Finlan (2007:20) correctly notes that the redemption metaphor understood in such a context “signifies a significant change of status”. In line with Anselm’s satisfaction theory, the *African Bible Commentary* explains that Jesus having died on the cross took upon himself the holy wrath of YHWH which was set against us. Yet, He sent His Son as an

¹⁴⁴ cf. Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45.

atonement, a propitiation for our sins, and in so doing He revealed His ineffable hatred of sin, but also His vast love for the sinner. By means of the cross, YHWH displayed his justice and his condemnation of sin, and in the same act He provided a means of atonement for the justification of sinners (Adeyemo 2006:1357).

Jesus was, therefore, set forth as a ἱλαστήριον¹⁴⁵, “propitiation” in verse 25. The causal preposition διὰ, “by” is employed in an instrumental sense to point to the instrument by which this propitiation is achieved, that is Jesus’ blood (Porter 1994:150). Following on from this, the aim of propitiation is identified by the preposition εἰς, “to” revealing the resultant idea (Robertson 1934:594-595). The resultant being that YHWH’s ‘judicial integrity’ (cf. Arndt *et al.* 2000:247) was demonstrated because He let former sins go unpunished. Paul also makes it plain in verse 26 that this justification is available for those who put their faith in Jesus, which reiterates πίστεως, “faith” in verse 25. In light of the above discussion, I take ἱλαστήριον to mean propitiation, rather than expiation, though it includes expiation too¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵ cf. discussion in Kittel *et al.* 1976, ἱλαστήριον 1.4.

¹⁴⁶ Historically ἱλαστήριον, “propitiation” has been a controversial issue in theological circles. It would therefore be appropriate to take a closer look at the exact meaning of ἱλαστήριον and its controversy. A British theologian, and foremost NT scholar, did not see eye to eye with the Puritans, or the British theologians discussed in Chapter 2, *Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis Theology*, with regards to the meaning of atonement, notably ‘propitiation’ (Nicole 1955). In his *The Bible and the Greeks*¹⁴⁶, Dodd sought to establish how the translators of the LXX understood אָפַר, “atonement” and its derivatives and the meaning of ἱλάσκεσθαι together with similar words in the LXX and the NT. Whilst he acknowledged that ἱλάσκεσθαι, “to make propitiation” frequently meant ‘propitiate’ in Classical and Koine Greek, he felt that it did not necessarily hold true for the LXX and the NT (Dodd 1935; Nicole 1955). In response to Dodd, two theologians, namely Leon Morris and Roger Nicole, sought to refute his argument.

In his study, Nicole sought to examine whether the facts really merit Dodd’s observations. In so doing Nicole discovered several flaws in Dodd’s arguments; (1) In several instances Dodd appears to have based his statements on merely part of the relevant facts, when a very different conclusion may have surfaced if the whole was taken into account. (2) Nicole noticed at least two cases of incomplete listings whereby only one explanation of a particular fact is given when additional explanations may be possible. (3) He also recorded several occurrences when Dodd’s assertions appeared to be founded on implied assumptions which might not automatically be granted. (4) Further, Nicole felt that Dodd, in several cases did not always exercise prudence and restraint which is expected in any scholarly endeavour (Nicole 1955).

According to Morris; Dodd wished to demonstrate that the meaning of ‘propitiation’ in Romans 3:25 is illegitimate (here as elsewhere) as conveyed in the LXX usage is ‘expiation’ and not ‘propitiation’¹⁴⁶. All notions of propitiation and of YHWH’s wrath are therefore absent from the biblical understanding of YHWH; Dodd seems to think (Morris 1965:147-148). Although he often found the expression, “the wrath of God” in Scripture, Dodd notes that these tell of the disaster following sin. For him it was a pithy expression portraying an impersonal process in which disaster emerges as a result of sin (Morris 1983:154). Therefore, “the wrath of God” is an

Carson observes that Paul emphasized that all people are condemned, both Jews and Gentiles, and that without Jesus' atoning work on the cross, all would stand under YHWH's judicial condemnation and would experience His wrath. A new righteousness has now appeared in the history of redemption to address our dire predicament. In verse 21, Paul first sought to relate this to the righteousness in OT revelation. He then established a theology which stressed the availability of this righteousness to all of humanity, yet, exclusively on the condition of faith. The source of this righteousness from YHWH was then said to be a "gracious provision of Jesus Christ as the propitiatory sacrifice for our sin" (2004:127).

Paul, in this pericope, sweeps through the biblical narrative and begins by mentioning the Law and the prophets (v 21) and then describes YHWH's righteousness and humanity's depravity. He draws various atonement themes together, namely justification, redemption and ransom, alluding to the *Christus Victor* motif and propitiation. This in turn demonstrated YHWH as righteous. Romans 3:21-26 thus marks a noteworthy instance of atonement synthesis in the Pauline tradition. Despite the ἱλαστήριον, "propitiation" controversy, one cannot but help agree with McKnight (2007:64) that this pericope is perhaps one of the

expression of cause and effect; sin is the cause, disaster the effect. So "wrath is the effect of human sin: mercy is not the effect of human goodness, but is inherent in the character of God" (Dodd 1944:22-23 in Morris 1983:154).

Yet, Morris and Nicole argue, and I think rightly so, that if the translators of the LXX and the NT did not mean 'propitiation', it seems decidedly unlikely that they would use ἱλάσκεσθαι, "to make propitiation" to mean "to expiate" or "to forgive". Why did they use words that overwhelmingly denote propitiation? (Morris 1965:148; Nicole 1955).

Further, Dodd disregarded the many passages where the putting away of YHWH's anger is made explicit, and this too causes problems. Morris wished to make it clear, contrary to Dodd; that in the OT the wrath of YHWH was understood as a very real and serious issue. Morris agrees with Dodd that the typical pagan idea of a basic propitiation of an angry deity is absent in the OT. Unlike the heathen deities, YHWH was not understood as unpredictable and irrational in His anger, but as a moral Being. Morris argues that YHWH's anger was focussed on sin and disobedience (Morris 1965:158-149, 157, 173). Nicole explains that 'celestial bribery' is absent in all of Scripture, but this does not mean that the idea of propitiation disappears. Indeed, he proclaims, "the biblical concept of propitiation stands on a much higher plane than pagan views of propitiation; the method of propitiation is more lofty, the giver of the propitiatory gift is God himself in his gracious mercy" (Nicole 1955). Therefore, as it is portrayed in the OT and NT, YHWH is ultimately a God of mercy, providing a way to avert His wrath and the consequences of sin away from the sinner because he "does not delight in the death of the sinner" (Morris 1965:149; Nicole 1955).

most significant passages on atonement theology in the NT narrative and discourse.

3.3.4.2 Redemption from the Curse

In a similar but different notion, Paul writes about redemption from the curse in Galatians 3:13. Akin to some Fathers of the Church, Paul also understood Christ's atoning work in light of a curse. Verse 10 is antecedent to verse 13 which proclaims, "All who rely on the law are under a curse" (ESV), because all those who do not abide by everything written in the Book of the Law are cursed! (v 10). The following discussion will illustrate a connection in Paul's mind between these two verses. He articulates penal substitutionary atonement in verse 13 as redemption from the curse of the law. In this theologically dense verse, Paul writes, "Christ redeemed (ἐξηγόρασεν) us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for (ὕπερ) us (because it is written, 'cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (NET). ἐξηγόρασεν, "redeemed" specifies the "redeeming and liberating act of Christ", whereby He purchases, not our transference of possession to YHWH¹⁴⁷, but to freedom. Galatians 3:13 sees our relation to the Law and its curse as slavery. The idea communicates the practice of manumission in the Graeco-Roman world¹⁴⁸. The liberation from the curse of the Law in verse 13 bestows a real and legal freedom which ensures the negation of any renewed position of slavery because the legal claim of the Law is satisfied forever! (Kittel *et al.* 1976, s.v. ἐξαγοράζω).

Of theological importance is the preposition, ὑπερ used in a substitutionary sense which has the resultant meaning "instead of" (Porter 1994:176). Robertson (1934:631) argues, "In a word, we were *under* the curse; Christ took the curse on himself and thus *over* us (between the suspended curse and us) and thus rescued us *out from under* the curse. We went free while he was considered accursed" (emphasis his). Christ secured this freedom by becoming an object of a curse

¹⁴⁷ Gal 4:5 however highlights a transference as adopted sons.

¹⁴⁸ cf. discussion on Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Rev 5:9-10.

instead of (ὕπερ) us. In this verse Paul cites Deuteronomy 21:23 and employs the Greek adjective, ἐπικατάρατος, “cursed” to highlight that every one who is hung on a tree is under divine condemnation (Arndt *et al.* 2000:373). The ‘tree’ is also a reference in Paul’s thought to the crucifixion, the Roman means of execution¹⁴⁹. Martin Luther (1996) declares,

For if it is true that we put away our sins by the works of the law and charity, then Christ takes them not away. But if He is the Lamb of God, ordained from everlasting to take away the sins of the world, and if He is so wrapped in our sins that He became accursed for us, it must follow that we cannot be justified by works. For God has laid our sins not upon us, but upon Christ His Son, that He, bearing our punishment, might be our peace.

Having explored the idea of our indebtedness to the law that stood against us and its curse, we note how Jesus became our penal substitute by becoming accursed for us. The theme of a curse in Pauline theology is unique to NT narrative and discourse and thus offers a different, yet important perspective of atonement synthesis in biblical narrative.

3.3.4.3 Cosmic Victory

The Ephesians were acutely aware of the diabolic cosmic powers, the malevolent entities at work in their midst. O’Brien (1999) believes that Paul in Ephesians 1:20-23 sets out to place such malevolent cosmic entities in proper relation to Christ and the believer. The same is evident in Paul’s epistle to the Colossians. Ephesians 1:20-23 is clearly the Apostle Paul’s Christocentric interpretation of

¹⁴⁹ Although Deut 21:23 was not originally a reference to crucifixion, which was abhorrent to the Jews. The Talmud recognizes four methods of execution which the Jewish people sanctioned, these were, beheading, stoning, burning and strangling. After the execution, the corpse of the criminal would then be hanged from a piece of timber, a stake or a ‘tree’. This indicated “that this person had been justly condemned as a transgressor of the divine law” (George 2001).

Psalm 110¹⁵⁰ whereby providing a substantial description of the spiritual forces subjected to Christ, employing the singular together with the adjective πᾶς, “all” signifying a group as a whole (Arnold 1989:52; O’Brien 1999). Thus Paul tells us that when YHWH raised Christ up from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places (v 20), this position is far above all rule, power and authority of the transcendent spirit world and above all dominion¹⁵¹ (v 21; Arndt *et al.* 2000:264, 353, 579).

Turaki offers some helpful commentary on verses 20-23; he proclaims that the fallen world has now been handed to Christ by YHWH because of his victory and triumph at the cross. The cross has thus become the symbol of His kingdom, His power and rulership over all the earth. It was through the cross that Christ dethroned Satan and thus subjecting all principalities and powers to Himself¹⁵² (2006:64). O’Brien (1990), with respect to the church, sees verse 22 as a proclamation of Jesus’ headship in relation to the cosmos and then verse 23 is a description of His body, the church of which He is also the head. Thus in His supremacy over the church and of the cosmos and over all things, He “exercises his sovereign rule by ‘filling’ the universe”.

Ephesians 1:20-23¹⁵³ contributes to the drama of cosmic victory in biblical narrative by tying the NT narrative and discourse to the OT narrative in way of demonstrating Jesus Christ as the Davidic king in Psalm 110.

Colossians 2:12-14 on the other hand addresses some of the issues of the *Satisfactio* formula argued by Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) in his *Cur Deus Homo*. This pericope recollects Genesis 3, humanity’s Fall, and reminds its audience that they were once spiritually dead in sin. However, now their sin has been forgiven on account of Christ through His atoning work on the cross having

¹⁵⁰ cf. Mt 26:64; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:41-44

¹⁵¹ cf. 1 Enoch 61:10

¹⁵² A very similar discourse follows in Col 1:16-19. I shall therefore not include a discussion on these verses, but in a later discussion I shall follow on from Col 1:19-22 and Col 2:13-20 which contain similar themes.

¹⁵³ Similar themes are highlighted in Col 1:16-22.

satisfied the “legal demands” by “cancelling the record of debt”. Paul’s atonement theology therefore offers a significant contribution to the wider biblical narrative, addressing the very origin of man’s downfall. It is significant in light of atonement synthesis that Paul discusses the forensic aspects of the atonement and then swiftly in verse 15 emphasises the *Christus victor* motif. The *African Bible Commentary* provides us with historical background for the rulers and authorities, as the defeated enemies being dragged along in Christ’s procession. In the Roman world, “when a city surrendered to a victorious general, the conquerors would stage a victory parade at which they would display their conquered enemies and all the goods they had plundered” (Adeyemo 2006:1453; Wright 1986).

According to Porter (1994:69), some scholars interpret Colossians 2:15 as Jesus having “stripped off from himself the powers and authorities (as if he were wearing them) and displayed them in triumph”. Indeed the notion of *stripping off clothing* is certainly evident in ἀπεκδυσάμενος, “taking off, stripping off or disarming” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:100). Nevertheless, I feel Porter’s explanation of the imagery superior and more sensible; he understands it as “Jesus Christ’s beneficial or participatory stripping of the defeated demonic enemies of their power”. Considering “triumphing over them in Him” (v 15b), Jesus’ atoning death on the cross is paradoxical, because it is on the cross that He leads a triumphal procession which leads the captured rulers in similar fashion as a Roman emperor would lead his captives (Kittel *et al.* 1976, s.v. θριαμβεύω). In light of this, these malevolent cosmic forces have not as yet been annihilated. As O’Brien (2002) points out, they were still visible at the triumphal procession, thus they continue to exist and still have power to influence. However, they are powerless entities, unable to affect the Christian who is in union with Christ and under His Lordship. Whilst we know that the eschatological reconciliation is accomplished through Christ’s blood at the cross (Col 1:20), the ultimate eschatological reconciliation is really the effectual extension of the victory won at the cross, says Ladd (1976:567). I think Griffin’s words are salient in light of the topic of this dissertation. He writes “Colossians 2:13-15 is particularly instructive for showing

how the themes of penal substitution and Christ as victor are inseparable and mutually conditioning” (2004:159).

Paul then changes focus somewhat and addresses the false teachings that advocated asceticism, worship of angels, detailed visions etcetera in verses 16-23. This has little to do with atonement synthesis but verse 20 is important. Paul employed the adverbial condition εἰ, “if” (v 20), which may also be rendered as ‘since,’ to introduce the ground for the conclusion. Acting as a first class condition, εἰ semantically conveys “a grounds-conclusion relation between the propositions”. The grounds are that Christians (Paul’s audience) had died with Christ to the elemental spirits¹⁵⁴ of the world. The conclusion which is the main clause is however put forward as a rhetorical question, “Why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations?” (ESV; Young 1994:185; cf. Wallace 1996:632).

Undoubtedly the *Christus Victor* motif features prominently in Colossians 2:15, 20, contributing significantly to a Pauline atonement synthesis in NT discourse together with the notions of *satisfactio* theory in verses 12-14, the groundwork for much of the penal substitutionary theory.

3.3.4.4 Resurrection

The Apostle Paul underlines the *Christus Victor* motif in his discourse on the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. Although Christ was being proclaimed as having being raised from the dead, the Christians in the Corinthian Church were supposing that there is no resurrection, at least in terms of humanity’s resurrection (1 Cor 15:12). Paul argued that in fact Jesus was not only resurrected, but that he was the “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (ESV). That is, others would be resurrected after Him, because through one man came death and by another came life, or resurrection from the dead. Christ first, as

¹⁵⁴ The Greek, στοιχείων, is reference to “transcendent powers that are in control over events in this world” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:946). Namely the malevolent cosmic forces mentioned above.

the first fruits, and then the rest of humanity would be resurrected at His coming (vv 20-21, 23). Thus, Paul reasoned in verse 22, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (NASB). Death therefore became a reality for humanity as a result of the disobedience of the first ἄνθρωπος, “man”, for all humanity is included in Adam with respect to sin and death (Fee 2007:516; Garland 2003). Morris (1985) is correct when he proclaims that “physical death is at once the symbol and the penalty. We are involved with Adam in solidarity of guilt”. Similarly, resurrection will be a future reality because of Christ, the second ἄνθρωπος. The ἄνθρωπος who stood at the very beginning of the old creation brought death, but the ἄνθρωπος who stands at the beginning of the new creation has brought bodily resurrection, an eschatological hope for all who believe¹⁵⁵ (Fee 2007:516; Garland 2003). Porter observes that “Some have interpreted it as a physical locative metaphor for a sort of corporate mystical union between the believer and Christ”. He, however, argues for a spherical sense which he feels is more appropriate for Paul’s language. Porter’s explanation seems convincing, he says that in Paul’s theology human beings belong to two different realms, “the one controlled by Adam and his actions and the one controlled by Christ and his [sic]” (1994:159).

This resurrection is then the apex of Christ’s ultimate victory, for it is here “when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has brought to an end all rule (ἀρχὴν) and all authority (ἐξουσίαν) and power (δύναμιν)” (v 24; NET). ἀρχὴν provides special reference to transcendent, angelic powers that were thought to have political organization. ἐξουσίαν too stresses the transcendent rulers of the spirit world, and δύναμιν also is an expression of personal transcendent entities or spirits (Arndt *et al.* 2000:138, 264, 353). It can be rightly argued that because Christ destroys these transcendent beings, they are by nature malevolent, diabolic entities.

But for now, as Paul says in verse 25, Jesus must “exercise authority at a royal level” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:170) until He has placed all malevolent entities which

¹⁵⁵ A brilliant and scholarly discussion on the resurrection can be found in Wright’s (2003), *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

oppose him under his feet¹⁵⁶. And so, Christ is currently the reigning King, but on His return he will abolish all forces that stand up against Him and will do so in fulfilment of Psalm 110:1 (Fee 2007:110). Verse 26 mentions death as the last enemy. In light of Paul's discussion on the resurrection, even death will be destroyed! This resurrection, Garland (2003) says, is grounded "in the cosmic victory of Christ over the power of death itself".

In verses 27-28 a strong emphasis is placed on *subjection* by the repetitions of ὑποτάσσω, "to subject", with its cognates. What is meant here by ὑποτάσσω is subordination, or in this case as Arndt *et al.* claims, to cause all things to be held in a submissive relationship (2000:1042). The use of πάντα, "all" is employed to express the totality of things (Robertson 1934:657). Kittel *et al.* says that this is a Christological interpretation on Psalm 110:1 with reference to YHWH's forcible disarming of these malevolent spiritual forces and to Christ's supreme rulership.

Paul's thinking on the *Christus Victor* motif in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 is framed within the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. Not only was Christ made alive, but he will make those who put their faith in Him alive too at the resurrection. Paul's discourse on the resurrection demonstrates Christ as Victor having conquered death and, ultimately, in an eschatological sense which once again point to the summit of biblical narrative and ultimate Christian hope.

Having explored atonement synthesis in the Pauline tradition, in terms of propitiation, redemption from the curse, cosmic victory and resurrection, it seems that the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs were significant to Paul. Often times Paul wrote about these themes independently from one other, yet sometimes the close proximity of the two motifs to each other provided an explicit reference to atonement synthesis, most notably in Colossians 2:12-15, 20. Through Paul's discourse on atonement theology one is able to perceive, penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs complementing each other, offering a

¹⁵⁶ cf. discussion on Ps 110 above.

remarkable contribution to the wider drama of atonement synthesis in Biblical narrative.

3.3.5 Hebrews

The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks confidently and purposely about Christ's priesthood and the final and absolute sacrifice that He made. It is not surprising then, that the African theologian, Peter Nyende, believes that Hebrews for NT scholarship is particularly useful for African theological reflection (2005:514). Although the language of atonement and redemption are not predominant in the epistle, the theology of atonement and redemption is loud and clear, together with the *Christus Victor* motif. Throughout much of this epistle, the atoning work of Christ is expressed in relation to His high priestly office (Ellingworth 1993; Kristemaker 2004:163).

Motyer argues, I believe erroneously, that Hebrews does not offer a theology of penal substitution, or even "a static satisfaction of a principle of justice in God or a negative dealing with wrath on our behalf". Further, Motyer finds no notion of Christ bearing our punishment in our place. Motyer reasons that all "these ideas are completely foreign to Hebrews" (2008:137, 145, 147). I shall illustrate in the following discussion that Christ's sacrificial death was indeed penal substitutionary and propitiatory.

Commenting on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Turaki, another African theologian, offers a helpful start by considering the theological method employed in this epistle. He notes how it can be applied to the relation of Jesus Christ to the cultures and religions of the world, and particularly to the cultures and religions of Africa. It "bases its appeal to the Jewish Christians on the 'superiority' of the Messiah Jesus over the Judaic system", and so too, to the African Christian (2006:106-107). Nyende makes a similar observation. He writes that if Jewish mediatorial figures are employed metaphorically to assist the audiences of

Hebrews to understand Christ as the mediator, “then there is no reason why ancestors should not be used as such to conceive and speak of Christ as the mediator in Africa” (2007:378). But more about this in chapter 4, under the discussion titled, *Intermediaries*.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews offers us a noteworthy discourse on atonement synthesis. Beginning in Hebrews 2:14 he states that ‘the children¹⁵⁷, that is humanity, are by nature flesh and blood and that Christ Himself chose to partake in the same, hence His incarnation. Subsequently the purpose for Christ’s incarnation is given, “so that through death He might destroy (καταργήσῃ) the one who has power over death, that is the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” (vv 14b-15). Turaki (2006:18) articulates this as follows; “Satan holds humanity in death, but Jesus has broken Satan’s power over death” (cf. Green and Baker 2000:83).

The author of Hebrews employed καταργήσῃ, “destroy; abolish” to describe Jesus’ victory at the cross whereby YHWH ‘put out of action’ or devastated the “destructive powers which threaten man’s spiritual well-being” (Brown 1986, s.v. καταργέω). This is not to say however that the devil has now ceased to exist, but the power and authority is now in the hands of the Victor, Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews identifies this destructive power as τὸν διάβολον, “the devil”, that is the “one who engages in slander”. διάβολον is a LXX translation of ἡψῶν “the satan”, meaning adversary or opponent, especially in a military milieu (Arndt *et al.* 2000:226; Koehler 1999:1317). This ‘slanderer’ is said to have had the power of death. Yet, this victory of Christ set those, who were through fear of death subject to lifelong slavery, free from the control of the devil (Arndt *et al.* 2000:96). Ellingworth (1993) argues that ἀπαλλάξῃ, “to free” does not tell us from what or from whom people are freed, although I feel he rightly identifies v 14 as offering a strong suggestion - it is liberation from the devil (τὸν διάβολον). In light of this text, these notions were developed by several Church Fathers.

¹⁵⁷ The author references from verse 13, ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ καὶ τὰ παιδιά ἃ μοι ἔδωκεν ὁ θεός, which inturn is a reference from Is 8:18.

It is made apparent in verse 16 that Christ's atoning work and intercession was for the descendants of Abraham¹⁵⁸. The penal substitutionary aspect of the atonement synthesis is then underlined in verses 17 as the author develops his argument. He proclaims, Christ "had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to YHWH (τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν), to make propitiation for the sins of the people". τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν is ambiguous here. I have chosen the rendering "in things pertaining to YHWH", which is in line with the NASB, KJV, NKJV and NET (which has 'relating'). The translation "in the service of God" (cf. ESV, NIV, GNT), feels somewhat forced. The NJB's translation is, however, interesting; it has, "for their relationship to God". The NJB has taken advantage of the ambiguity of τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν and has chosen to focus attention on the relationship of Christians to YHWH, rather than Christ being "a high priest in things pertaining to YHWH" (or Christ in the service of YHWH). Although theologically the NJB is quite correct at this point, its translation, whilst dealing with an ambiguous text, is dubious, especially with their use of the third person possessive pronoun, "their" which is absent in the Greek (NA27). As it is pointed out by Arndt *et al.* (2000:139), Christ faithfully serves as a "high priest by atoning for the sins of humans" by making propitiation. I have already discussed 'propitiation' in some depth, yet, I shall add here that in this verse the author seems to have in mind the Day of Atonement ritual¹⁵⁹ as well. In the context of this verse, Lane (2002) says of propitiation,

The making of propitiation for sins exhibits the primary concern of the high priestly office with the reconciliation of the people to God. The concept implies sacrifice, and in this context the propitiatory work of the Son consisted in the laying down of his life for others.

Hebrews 2:14-17 highlights several themes already mentioned in the NT narrative and discourse, namely, the incarnation, the destruction and victory over death and Satan, and propitiation which is taught in both the Johannine and Pauline

¹⁵⁸ cf. discussion on Rev 5:9-10.

¹⁵⁹ cf. my discussion on Atonement in Ritual and Sacrifice in the OT.

traditions. Once again we have the working of two motifs, penal substitution and *Christus Victor* operating as a synthesis in NT narrative and discourse.

The discourse presented in Hebrews 9:1-10 is evocative of my discussion on *Atonement in Ritual and Sacrifice in Old Testament Narrative*. The author says in verse 9-10 that all these ceremonial laws “cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper” (ESV), but merely dealt with food, ceremonial washings, and other rules that were enforced on the body waiting for the time of a new order. The author makes it apparent that the rituals and sacrifices could not remove sin. What follows is an examination of the author’s discourse in verses 11-15, as a description of the present ‘new order’ in light of the liturgical rituals and sacrifices of the OT. Bruce (1990) explains that such a ‘new order’ involves an entire reshaping of Israel’s religio-structure. The old covenant makes way for the new, “the shadow to the substance, the outward and earthly copy to the inward and heavenly reality”.

The contrasting conjunction δὲ, “but” in verse 11 draws our attention to a development in the author’s flow of thought. The inauguration of the ‘new order’ now comes into focus, at the appearance of Jesus Christ “as a high priest of the good things to come¹⁶⁰, then through the greater and more perfect tent” (ESV). This tent, O’Brian (2010) says, is superior to the Mosaic tabernacle which was symbolic for the “old age related to the first covenant with its daily and annual cultic ritual”. Indeed, as Lane (2002) argues, the superior tent is a heavenly tabernacle in the very presence of YHWH¹⁶¹. The high priestly action of Christ is comparable to the rituals of expiation during the Day of Atonement liturgy. Now that Christ has appeared, in Him the shadows of the OT ritual and sacrifice “have

¹⁶⁰ γενομένων enjoys superior attestation according to Metzger, in terms of variety of text type and age, against the textual variant μελλόντων. Metzger suggests that τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν in Heb 10:1, which lacks any variant, may well have influenced copyists in employing the same expression in Heb 9:11 (1994:598). It is also found in the MT. Although I acknowledge that γενομένων has superior witnesses, I do find it peculiar that the original author would not have employed the same expression, especially when, (1) both words have a very similar meaning, (2) they are in very close proximity and (3) both words are employed to address the OT imagery as a shadow of the things to come. Witnesses aside, based on these three points I believe μελλόντων might be original, but the superior attestation for γενομένων makes it difficult to know concretely.

¹⁶¹ Heb 6:19-20; 8:1-2.

given way to the perfect and abiding reality” (Bruce 1990). The notion of Jesus as the high priest is then developed in verse 12. But here Jesus enters “once and for all into the holy places” (ESV), not by blood from a sacrificial animal, but with his own blood, thus obtaining an eternal redemption. Therefore, we can perceive Christ’s participation in the OT imagery of ritual and sacrifice. Robertson (1934:809) identifies εὐράμενος, “obtaining” as an indirect middle. Here the subject, that is, Jesus, is presented as obtaining or securing an eternal redemption by *Himself* (cf. Wallace 1996:419-420). Robertson argues that the Greek syntax marks out Christ as the *sole* redeemer, and that no other is able to secure redemption. Once again, the use of λύτρωσιν, “redemption” speaks of “being liberated from an oppressive situation” with the notion of commercial usage (Arndt *et al.* 2000:606) and paying a ransom price as we have seen in earlier discussions. The ransom price is said to be Jesus’ own blood. Although this redemption is eternal, it is infinite! Morris notes the cost as well as “the permanent consequences of the payment of this price” of redemption.

Verses 13 and 14 underscore the consequences for believers of Christ’s sacrifice in contrast with those of the Levitical cultic system (O’Brian 2010). Ellingworth (1993) sees γάρ, “for” as introducing an argument in support of verses 11-12. Rather, I think that the author of Hebrews employs εἰ γάρ, “for if” in verse 13 to contrast the infinite power and worth of Jesus’ blood with that of the blood of male goats and bulls and sprinkling the impure with the ashes of a heifer, consecrated for the ritual cleansing of the flesh. Καθαρότητα, “purification” is used for the idea of consecration. The author of Hebrews apparently interprets Jesus’ death in light of OT ritual imagery for the purpose of demonstrating the superior quality of His sacrificial blood and of the new covenant over the old covenant. This consecration by means of Jesus’ blood is thus irreversible and valid forever. Whilst it brings about our outward purification, it is also efficient in cleansing from sin, that is, expiation, as we read in verse 22 (Brown 1986, s.v. καθαρότης 2.c; cf. Ellingworth 1993). This brings us to verse 14 where there is a climax of this comparison, indicated by πόσῳ μᾶλλον, “how much more”. For

“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal¹⁶² Spirit offered himself without blemish¹⁶³ to God, purify our¹⁶⁴ consciences from dead works to worship the living God” (NET). No doubt, sacrifice is central to the Letter to the Hebrews as well. Whilst we have seen in earlier discussions that Jesus’ sacrifice offers propitiation, in this pericope we see how such a sacrifice also offers expiation, in cleansing us from our sins and “our consciences from dead works”.

Therefore, the blood of Christ stands in emphatic comparison with the blood of goats and bulls (cf. v 12). Jesus offered His blood to YHWH as an unblemished sacrifice, not as an ordinary human being, or even as a martyr¹⁶⁵, but as the Christ, the Son of YHWH. His atoning death was thus final and absolute, O’Brian (2010) proclaims. The *African Bible Commentary* aptly reminds its African readers that “our redemption by Christ is not based on our performing ineffective ceremonies but on Christ’s great sacrifice” (Adeyemo 2006:1501). Here too the implications of Christ’s sacrifice for the traditional African are profound. For his redemption is found not in ceremony or sacrificial ritual, but in Christ’s perfect sacrifice.

The discussion in Hebrews 9:11-15 does not mention or allude to *Christus Victor*, however penal substitutionary atonement is made implicit by equating redemption through Christ’s sacrificial blood as an infinitely superior act of atonement than the rituals and sacrifices of the OT, instituting a new order, a new covenant. In this way the atoning theme in Hebrews 9:11-15 connects the NT discourse with the OT narrative of ritual and sacrifice contributing to the overall synopsis of the drama of atonement synthesis in Biblical Narrative.

¹⁶² The expression, πνεύματος αἰωνίου is admittedly unusual. It is probable that copyists then replaced αἰωνίου with the more common ἁγίου, reading πνεύματος ἁγίου. Further, there is nothing in the text which provides another reason for the variation, except perhaps the combination of ἁγια αἰωνίαν in verse 12 which might have contributed to a scribal error.

¹⁶³ ἄμωμον, another reference to the imagery of OT ritual and sacrifice, the absence of defects in sacrificial animals, i.e. unblemished (Arndt *et al.* 2000:56).

¹⁶⁴ Although the NA27 has used ἡμῶν, the MT uses ὑμῶν. Both are well attested (Metzger 1994:599) and so it is difficult to decide which is original, cf. NET Bible notes (2005: online).

¹⁶⁵ cf. 4 Macc 6:27-29; 17:23.

In this discussion on atonement synthesis in Hebrews I demonstrated its presence by highlighting the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs. These became evident as I explored Jesus as the high priest and mediator, as well as the work of redemption through Christ's sacrificial blood. The idea of sacrifice in Hebrews is prominent, and as we saw, contributes towards a theology of atonement synthesis. In the next discussion the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs in 1 Peter will be explored.

3.3.6 Petrine Tradition

In terms of density, 1 Peter offers a powerful discourse on atonement theology. Christ's atoning work is expressed in both moral discussions and the Christian response to suffering. It is therefore not surprising that the Petrine tradition makes frequent references to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and applying it to Jesus Christ, perhaps more than any other NT writing (McCartney 2004:176, 180). Throughout Peter's discourse various images are developed in which we are able to pick up noticeably that Jesus suffered for our sins. In the discussion that follows the substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs will once again be explored.

Peter develops an atonement theology in 1 Peter 1:18-19 exploring the concepts of ransom and of Jesus as a lamb. Peter continues a discussion in verses 18-19 on YHWH's impartial judgement (v 17) by reminding his audience that they have been ransomed. He writes, "You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors you were ransomed (ἐλυτρώθητε) – not by perishable things like silver or gold, but by precious blood like that of an unblemished spotless lamb, namely Christ" (NET). ἐλυτρώθητε speaks of ransoming or freeing by paying a ransom. Peter has in mind a freedom from the "empty way of life inherited from your ancestors" (Brown 1986, s.v. λύτρον). Michaels (2002) argues that whilst λυτροῦν is common in the LXX, Peter's 'ransom price', however, does not ultimately come from the LXX, but rather his interpretation of Jesus' death which was embodied in the Gospel tradition. I demonstrated this in my discussion

above in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45. Further, Michaels points our attention to Titus 2:14 where “the verb λυτροῦν is used to much the same effect..., where Jesus himself (ἔδωκεν ἑαυτόν) is the ransom”. McCartney (2004:187) sees this notion of ransom depicting YHWH rescuing His people in terms of an economic transaction, not dissimilar to the Graeco-Roman practice of redemption whereby a kinsman could redeem a destitute relative or friend by paying a price to a pagan temple (cf. Marshall 1991; Michaels 2002).

The conjunction ἀλλά, “but” together with the dative τιμίῳ αἵματι, “precious blood” in verse 19 specifies the means as well as the price of ransom by which Peter’s “we” (and Peter’s readers) were ransomed from slavery to their fruitless way of living (Michaels 2002; Porter 1994:99; Young 1994:49). In light of a previous discussion in Hebrews, the blood of Christ, τιμίῳ αἵματι, may be rendered according to Arndt *et al.* (2000:1005–1006) as being of exceptional value. According to Thielman (2005:574), some scholars have understood οὐ φθαρτοῖς, ἀργυρίῳ ἢ χρυσίῳ, “not with perishable things such as silver or gold” (v 18; ESV) as redemption being imperishable. I, however, take it as a comparison, marking Christ’s redemption as of infinite worth and virtue (cf. Grudem 1988; Marshall 1991; Michaels 2002; Thielman 2005:574). Michaels (2002) also considers the narratives on Peter in Acts 3:6 and 8:20 substantiating Peter’s use of “not with that which is perishable such as silver or gold” with reference of contrast for the “unique power and value of the Christian message”.

This precious blood is said to be “like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (v 19b; ESV). No doubt Christ’s blood is thought of as sacrificial. It seems to me that Peter made use of Passover imagery here too, based on the notion of deliverance (cf. ἐλυτρώθητε), and the reference to blood, comparing, as Marshall (1991) says, the blood of Christ with the blood of a sacrificial animal that was unblemished as per the Law. Only the best animals were accepted. Morris (1965:103), however, thinks that we cannot be entirely sure that this is in Peter’s mind. Nevertheless, Christ is presented in cultic terms, accomplishing what OT sacrifices did, but perfectly and forever. McCartney (2004:185) observes that,

1 Peter 1:19 occurs in the context of a ‘marketplace’ image of the atonement..., but is clearly alluding to cultic sacrifice as well, combining the notions of redemption as an economic transaction with the notion of prophylactic sacrifice that ‘guards’ or covers and protects. It has been observed that 1 Peter makes many allusions to Passover and the exodus, and this is clearly one such allusion. Exodus 12:5-7 requires a lamb without blemish whose blood is smeared on the doorframes as a guard against the destroying angel. Peter’s point would seem to be that the redemptive death of Christ protects and marks the people of God.

Peter’s discourse in 1 Peter 1:18-19 is important because it not only ties in with the atonement synthesis theology of Hebrews, but also with that of the Synoptic and Johannine traditions, in light of the ransom concept and the sacrificial lamb. This then promotes unity on the drama of atonement synthesis in the NT narrative and discourse, not to mention the OT narrative, with reference to the Passover lamb.

The Apostle Peter develops his atonement theology further in 1 Peter 2:23-24 where he makes frequent reference to Isaiah 53. In 1 Peter 2: 20, Peter encourages his audience to endure suffering when they do good under persecution. The next verse proclaims that they have in fact been called to suffering, because Christ has suffered *for* (ὐπὲρ) them. Whilst this in itself points us to substitutionary atonement I wish to explore this theme further in verses 23-24. Speaking of Christ, Peter writes that when He was reviled, he did not revile in return and even when He suffered unto death, Jesus did not threaten (v 23). This is a reference to the suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:7, 9.

Peter writes in verse 24a, “He Himself bore (ἀνήνεγκεν) our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (NASB). He makes reference here to Isaiah 53:4, reading אָכַן הִלְיִנוּ הוּא נִשָּׂא, “Surely He has

carried our sufferings”. The LXX, however, has οὗτος τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει, “He carries our sins”. Thus it seems likely that Peter referenced loosely from the LXX translation, rather than the Hebrew. Both the LXX and Peter have substituted ‘sins’ (ἀμαρτίας) for the Hebrew ‘suffering’ (נִלְנָה). The verb, ἀνήνεγκεν is interesting because it may also be rendered as “to offer a sacrifice” which is somewhat awkward. But perhaps a better reading is, “he himself brought our sins in his body to the cross” (Arndt *et al.* 2000:75). Like Galatians 3:13, Peter also makes use of ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον, “on the tree” to refer back to Deuteronomy 21:23 alluding to a salvific notion. Further, the idea that Jesus bore our sins harkens back to verse 21, “Christ suffered for us”. Jesus did this so “that we might die to sin and live to righteousness¹⁶⁶”. ἀπογενόμενοι has the notion of ‘dying to sin’. The NET, however, translates ἀπογενόμενοι, “to die” as “we may cease from sinning”, the NET Bible notes (2005: online) argues as follows, “It is a metaphorical way to refer to the decisive separation from sin Jesus accomplished for believers through his death; the result is that believers ‘may cease from sinning’”. The NET is, of course, right, but I feel it does injustice to the force of “that we might die to sin” which seems a more accurate translation. The idea is repeated in 1 Peter 3:18.

Peter then writes “by whose wound we are healed (ἰάθητε)” (v 24b). This too is a plain reference to the Suffering Servant (Is 53:5) and likely, I think, to the offspring of the woman in Genesis 3:15. By ἰάθητε Peter might have meant the healing of physical ailments and diseases or he might have employed it figuratively for sin as a wound or illness, or perhaps both, for sickness and sin (Arndt *et al.* 2000:465). I think the notion of our wound’s being healed finds its ultimate fulfilment at the resurrection. Further, I believe this is primarily a reference to our sin. The natural reading of verse 4¹⁶⁷ makes this apparent. Isaiah 53:6 is referenced in 2 Peter 2:25 where Peter writes, “For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (ESV cf. Jn 10:7-18).

¹⁶⁶ Is 53:11.

¹⁶⁷ He Himself bore our *sins* in His body on the cross, so that we might die to *sin* and live to righteousness (NASB; emphasis mine).

Once again, we observe that Peter explores some of the themes already mentioned in the drama of atonement synthesis, promoting connections in atonement synthesis throughout the biblical narrative.

Picking up from 1 Peter 2:24, the Apostle expands on his atonement theology in 1 Peter 3:18-22. Here he develops it further in a text that is oftentimes difficult to understand or exegete. Starting with verse 18, Peter writes, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (NASB; emphasis original). In this verse we observe the reiteration of Jesus suffering for our sins¹⁶⁸. But we also observe an allusion to the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:11-12. δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων, “the just for the unjust” is a significant account of the substitutionary motif (Marshall 1991). This is “firmly rooted in the Gospel Tradition” (Mt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32; cf. Michaels 2002). Christ the upright one with infinitely high standards of rectitude suffers *instead of* (ὑπὲρ) those who are unrighteous or unjust (Arndt *et al.* 2000:21; 246). The adverbial conjunction, ἵνα, “so that” points us to the purpose for which Christ suffered for the unjust, that is, that He might bring us to YHWH. Although καταλλαγῆ, “reconciliation” and cognates are not employed in this verse, McCartney (2004:187) argues, that ἵνα ὑμᾶς¹⁶⁹ προσαγάγη τῷ θεῷ, “so that He might bring us to God” is an “implicit assumption of the need for, and accomplishment of reconciliation”. Moreover, considering Peter’s statement, “having been put to death in the flesh, but made

¹⁶⁸ 1 Pt 2:23-24.

The clause *περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν* contains diverse textual variants. Metzger lists these variants as follows. Followed by *ἔπαθεν*, the variants are: (1) *περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν*, (2) *περὶ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*, (3) *ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν*. Followed by *ἀπέθανεν* the variants are: (4) *περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν*, (5) *περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*, (6) *περὶ ὑμῶν ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν*, (7) *περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν*, (8) *ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτωλῶν*. Although it is difficult to know the original text, out of the legion of textual variants listed, *περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν* is considered favourable by textual critics because, (1) the verb *ἔπαθεν* occurs eleven times in 1 Peter and continues the line of thought in v 17, (2) in light of *περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν* it is more probable that scribes would have substituted *ἀπέθανεν* for *ἔπαθεν* instead or *vice versa* and (3) the variations with *ὑμῶν* or *ἡμῶν* which later came to have the same pronunciation in Greek may have understandably been expanded by scribes (Metzger 1994:622-623; NET Bible notes 2005:online).

¹⁶⁹ Other variations either have *ἡμᾶς* or omit the pronoun altogether. The witnesses for *ὑμᾶς* are not particularly strong, and yet it seems more likely that copyists would have altered the second person to the first person (as more inclusive) than *vice versa* (Metzger 1994:623). Thus *ὑμᾶς* was preferred in the NA27.

alive in the spirit” (v 18), Michaels’ (2002) takes ‘made alive in the Spirit’ to mean “simply that he was raised from the dead, not as a spirit, but bodily” and then develops a theology from there. I argue otherwise. As the text plainly states, Jesus was made alive in the spirit (ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι), yet His death was physical. For three days Jesus existed ontologically as spirit in the time between His physical death and his *physical* resurrection. It was in this time that Jesus was made alive in *spirit*, I argue. This way of thinking, I hold, contributes to a clearer reading and understanding of the verses which follow.

Perhaps one of the most heavily debated passages in Sacred Scripture are verses 19-20, but it is here, I propose, where we also observe the *Christus Victor* motif in Jesus’ death. In the time between Jesus’ death and resurrection, “he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah” (ESV). These verses have been greatly disputed and so I shall tentatively offer my interpretation without exploring other views¹⁷⁰ for the sake of space. I argue that Jesus went (πορευθεὶς) to the place where the disobedient spirits were imprisoned. The transcendent malevolent spirits, whilst held captive, still have power to afflict and cause destruction. Although they are bound in chains until judgement (2 Pt 2:4; 1 Jude 6), Michaels therefore proposes ‘in refuge’ as a more neutral translation of φυλακῆ, “prison”. The verb πορευθεὶς, “went” does not indicate whether this was a descent into Hades or ascension into the heavens to some celestial jail cell and so we should not speculate. Nevertheless, Christ proclaimed¹⁷¹ His victory and judgement to these spirits. Peter therefore makes use of this incident to assure his audience that Christ is supreme over all spirits and powers for He has defeated them and that those who put their faith in Christ need not fear them. Peter’s discourse in verses 19-20 seems parallel with the Jewish tradition in terms of 1 Enoch and Genesis 6:1-8. Christ is also seen, I argue, as a type of Enoch preaching to the transcendent malevolent spirits (Marshall 1991; Michaels 2002).

¹⁷⁰ I acknowledge that there are several other views which hold merit as well.

¹⁷¹ I don’t take this proclamation as a Gospel proclamation that gives those people who were disobedient a second chance of repentance in a state of post-mortem.

Grudem (1988) however views these ‘spirits in prison’ as “those *who formerly did not obey*” (emphasis his), the intended meaning he believes is of human spirits.

For nowhere in the Bible or in Jewish literature outside of the Bible are angels ever said to have disobeyed ‘during the building of the ark’. Genesis 6:5–13 clearly emphasizes the *human* sin which provoked God to flood the earth in judgment... but never is there any hint that fallen angels have a chance to repent—it is only given to sinful human beings (Grudem 1988 cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; emphasis original).

I find Grudem’s argument unconvincing. (1) 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 explicitly talk about angels, spiritual beings, being chained and imprisoned. (2) Disobedience against YHWH was a rebellion from both transcendent spirits *and* human beings (Gen 3:1-13; 6:1-7; En 6:1-8; 7:1-5; 8:2; 9:1-11). In light of Grudem’s statement “nowhere in the Bible or in Jewish literature outside of the Bible are angels ever said to have disobeyed ‘*during the building of the ark*’” (emphasis mine), 1 Enoch 10:2¹⁷² says, “Go to Noah and tell him in my name ‘Hide thyself!’ and reveal to him the end that is approaching: that the whole earth will be destroyed, and a deluge is about to come upon the whole earth, and will destroy all that is on it”. If we read Enoch’s narrative, YHWH’s command to Enoch was in response to the demonic activity. Surely then, the diabolic behaviour of Genesis 6:1-7 continued during the building of the ark and right up to the flood. I therefore take the meaning φυλακῆ πνεύμασιν, “spirits in prison” to be primarily (or possibly only) the imprisonment of transcendent malevolent spirits. If I am correct, then this has significance for the *Christus Victor* motif.

Verse 22 offers description of Jesus’ heavenly position, “who went into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels and authorities and powers subject to him” (NET). Jesus is said to be seated at the right hand of YHWH, a reference to Psalm 110:1. Like other NT authors, Peter too employs ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων, “authorities and powers” indicating the transcendent rulers of the spirit world.

¹⁷² I acknowledge that 1 Enoch is Pseudepigraphical and not necessary historically accurate or divinely inspired.

This might include human rulers on earth as well, according to Arndt *et al.* (2000:264; 353). Thus, all angels, authorities, and powers have been subjected to Jesus Christ. This too harkens back to the messianic themes in Psalm 110.

Peter offers us a remarkable discourse in 1 Peter 3:18-22 whereby both penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs come into play in what appears to be an apparent atonement synthesis theology. This theology engages with the drama of atonement synthesis in biblical narrative at several points, including second temple Judaism¹⁷³.

No doubt the Petrine tradition offers a vigorous discourse on atonement theology in which Peter masterfully elucidates the drama of atonement synthesis in the biblical narrative. He does this by integrating his understanding of atonement in the various atoning themes of both the OT narrative and the NT narrative and discourse.

3.3.7 Conclusion

In what followed, the drama of atonement synthesis in NT narrative and discourse was explored. It was demonstrated how penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs, like in the OT, are significant in the NT as well, but perhaps even more so because it is in the NT where the motifs find themselves wrapped up in the Person of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. Often the biblical authors employed the idea of sacrifice to articulate the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs, sometimes even contributing towards their synthesis. This discussion began with an exploration of atonement synthesis and its various themes in the Synoptic Gospels. They were then examined in the Johannine and Pauline traditions, after which atonement synthesis was examined in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This study was ended by examining them in the Petrine tradition. Atonement synthesis is rich and comprehensible in the NT, enjoying powerful and diverse expression.

¹⁷³ cf. 1 Enoch.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, the drama of atonement synthesis in the OT narrative was examined, as well as in the NT and its narrative and discourse. The above discussions laid out the synthesis of the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs in Sacred Scripture. I have demonstrated that the biblical authors engaged with these two motifs sometimes separately from one another, and other times together in harmonious fashion and in remarkable articulation.

Having explored atonement synthesis in the Church's theology, in light of its socio-historical development, and now in biblical narrative, I am convinced that a theology of penal substitution without *Christus Victor*, or *vice versa*, is not a biblical theology of atonement at all! In much of Christianity today one of the two motifs are overemphasised to the detriment of the other, when surely the two can and should be synthesised harmoniously together. It seems that penal substitution is the means of atonement and *Christus Victor* its purpose. In the next chapter, I hope to demonstrate the implications of my theological and biblical observations of atonement synthesis in African metaphysics, a very relevant branch of philosophy and African thought. This I trust may prove to be helpful for African Christian systematic theology and missiology. It is to this discussion I now turn.

Chapter 4

Atonement Synthesis: Implications for African Metaphysics

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter, *The Drama of Atonement Synthesis in Biblical Narrative*, provided a biblical framework in which to examine and construct a theology of penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs in African metaphysics. In an earlier chapter, *The Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis Theology*, I studied the socio-historical influences that shaped the theological systems and concepts in particular contexts. Here the interplay between atonement theology and socio-historical contexts became evident. In the same way, I shall employ the branch of philosophy, metaphysics, which embodies African life and thought most coherently. I argue, therefore, that African metaphysics is the ‘socio-historical’ context in which atonement synthesis best finds its expression among Africans.

Nkansah-Obrempong himself observes that Western theology has developed via the influence of theological reflection during the European Enlightenment. Not

only this, but it has also sought to take cognizance of various “cultural and philosophical changes taking place in the different societies” (2007:142). The theologies of these cultural and philosophical traditions during various periods developed theology accordingly in light of such socio-historical contexts. But these developments rarely addressed “the experiences, belief systems, cultural values, and needs of African Christian communities” (2007:142). Nevertheless, the very nature of Christian theology requires that theology developed by African Christians should take the teachings of the wider Christian community into consideration as well. In so doing, they are able to gain insight on the Christian faith that others have already reflected upon and thus enrich their own theology. As Africans themselves say, “One head does not contain all the wisdom”¹⁷⁴. It is, of course, proper to subject one’s theology to the Christian tradition throughout its history in dialogue and yet, “theological ideas and theological formulation become more fruitful and relevant if they reflect the thought forms of the recipient’s culture”. Sadly, as Nkansah-Obrempong points out, many evangelicals have failed to take African culture seriously; and that much work is required to work towards a “comprehensive and systematic theology that is biblically and culturally relevant for the church in Africa” (2007:142-144, 149; Chike 2008:238). A theology that is to be African, therefore, needs, “to reformulate or reinterpret the one biblical, historical, Judeo-Christian message in the idioms of the African peoples in response to the issues and concerns confronting African believers in their historical contexts” (cf. Reed and Mtukwa 2010:145), says Nkansah-Obrempong (2007:140).

There is an obvious need therefore, Adeyemo (1976:79) proclaims, to produce a theology that is uniquely African. But even so, Oden argues in his book, that among the Fathers of the Church, Africa has produced some of the most influential theologians, their theology playing a “decisive role in the formation of Christian culture” (2007:9). Therefore, Mbiti believes that Christianity in Africa may even be described as indigenous to this continent. Even before Islam, Christianity was established in Northern Africa, namely in Egypt, Ethiopia and

¹⁷⁴ Ghanaian Proverb.

Sudan. Early African Christianity made some significant contributions which include: participation in ecclesiastical councils, scholarship, monasticism, apologetics, translation of scripture and their preservation, theology, martyrdom, liturgy and even the Catechetical School of Alexandria (Mbiti 1989:223-224). More specifically, Oden says that Africa was instrumental in developing the Greek and Latin theology of atonement, among other salient theologies¹⁷⁵ (2007:60). Nevertheless, it remains that in most of Africa, Christianity is a new religion, and as Turaki argues, a new religion, that is Christianity, is required to address the same psychological and social concerns of the previous religion (2006:19). African Christian theology must, therefore, be contextualised, taking into account the African situation (Bujo 1992:70). Although this chapter is not strictly about ATR, I shall draw from its philosophy and religio-cultural beliefs and practices in order to construct an African atonement theology (cf. Healey and Sybertz 2004:20; Mashaua and Frederiks 2008:109).

It is my conviction that African metaphysics provides an ideal basis in which to explore the implications of atonement synthesis in African Christianity. Moltmann says it succinctly when he writes, "... with the Christian message of the cross of Christ, something new and strange has entered the metaphysical world" (2003:215). The suffering and death of Jesus Christ therefore brings "about a fundamental change in the orders of being of metaphysical thought" (2003:215). Furthermore, Moltmann correctly understood that "the theology of the cross also has cosmological dimensions, because it sees the cosmos in the eschatological history of God" (2003:218). With such pre-eminent theologians like Augustine and Aquinas who employed metaphysics to develop their theological work, it is not surprising that metaphysics has been described as "the longstanding friend of theology". Accordingly, metaphysics has contributed to the historical development of systematic theology (Moreland and Craig 2003:14, 174).

¹⁷⁵ Oden lists the following influential African theologians: "Origen, Athanasius, Clement, Augustine, Tertullian, Cyprian, Optatus, Lactantius, Marius Victorinus and Primasius" (Oden 2007:148; cf. Mbiti 1989:224). This became evident in my chapter, *The Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis Theology*.

In this chapter, the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics will be explored. I shall begin by offering an overview of African philosophy and spirituality together with a description of metaphysics, especially from an African perspective. In my second discussion, *African Atonement* will be examined. These two discussions offer a foundation on which to examine the implications of atonement synthesis in light of the subsequent metaphysical categories. Here I shall discuss: African socio-cosmology, African socio-disharmony, African socio-ontology, and Africa's socio-renewal and cosmic harmony.

4.2 An Overview of African Philosophy and Spirituality

In the discussion which follows I shall provide an overview of African philosophy and spirituality¹⁷⁶. This overview is intended to offer definitions of African metaphysics and spirituality, as well as a context in which to place further discussions of atonement synthesis and its implications for African metaphysics.

It is important to note that metaphysics is a branch of philosophy. Therefore, African philosophy needs to be articulated before forming a definition of African metaphysics. The African philosopher, Gyekye (1995:8), argues that African thought surely encompasses philosophy. But it is a “philosophy that must be distilled from the comprehensive thought of the community, and it is this philosophy that stands in need of elaboration, clarification, and interpretation”. Gyekye believes that it is reasonable to assume “that every culture produces a philosophy”. This is irrespective of whether a particular culture was able to record their philosophy through writing, affording time to interpret, elucidate, refine and develop its philosophies; or whether a culture's philosophy was recorded by means of oral tradition, as in African philosophy (1995:10).

¹⁷⁶ I include African spirituality here because it is closely associated with African metaphysics and subsequent discussions. A study of African metaphysics whilst ignoring African spirituality would simply be inadequate.

Nevertheless, as Imbo explains, there is dispute about the definition and nature of African philosophy among African philosophers themselves, and how it is to be distinguished from Western philosophy. As a result, African philosophy is defined and classified by varying definitions. Imbo highlights two trends that seem to be in vogue, the first is the so called *ethnophilosophy* and the second is the *universalist approach*.

Ethnophilosophy is taken to be philosophy of the traditional thought of African people, usually found in folk tales, myths, proverbs, art and traditional culture (Imbo 1998:xi). Ethnophilosophers say that philosophy may be found “in the mystical, linguistic and religious worldviews of different cultures, and as such philosophy becomes unique to its geographical applications”. In light of this, African philosophy is unique, “laying bare the belief systems and ethnological concepts such as magic, language, personhood, time, and ethics” (Imbo 1998:8). Another African philosopher, Wiredu, acknowledges that “African philosophies as they are available today are folk philosophies”, consisting of what the ‘elders’ have said (1980:28). Wiredu feels that this view of philosophy is understandable to some extent, but that it is erroneous to continue thinking of African philosophy in this way, that is, “in the old ways” (1980:28, 37-38).

The universalist approach on the other hand, is said to be doubtful of a philosophy and its existence if it has never been written. And if such a philosophy did indeed exist, they are sceptical whether it would be able to develop into a sustained inquiry (Imbo 1998:xi). Those who hold to this approach argue that philosophy is not culturally dependant, rather, it is “a systematic and methodological inquiry that should not be altered by its geographical applications” (Imbo 1998:18). Wiredu affirms this approach, arguing that African philosophy “is still in the making”, and is distinct from the African traditional worldviews. It is a philosophy “that is being produced by contemporary African philosophers” (1980:36). I find this argument awkward, especially in light of the Greek Athenian

philosopher, Socrates, whose philosophy was never written¹⁷⁷, and yet he is said to be one of the founders of Western philosophy!

Omeregbe (1998:5) sets forth his argument, quite convincingly I think, that asides from worldviews, myths and proverbs, “knowledge can be preserved in the socio-political set-up of the people. These are the channels through which the reflections and views of African philosophers have been preserved and transmitted to us in Africa”. Such philosophical reflections and thoughts have become, by means of this process of transmission over time, “part of the African way of life, part of the African culture and heritage”. Even though the original individual philosophers of the past are unknown to us, we know that their thoughts were “the fruits of deep and sustained philosophical reflections” (1998:5).

I therefore propose that both approaches are acceptable. Perhaps we can view them as two distinct forms of African philosophy living side by side, engaging with one another. It seems that both approaches have an important contribution to make towards further development of African philosophy.

I now wish to define what is meant by ‘metaphysics’. I take ‘metaphysics’ to mean “the study of being or reality”, as Moreland and Craig puts it. The discipline of metaphysics has enjoyed a distinguished history. Among others, some of the great metaphysical philosophers in history were Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Boethuis, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz and Locke.

Loux explains that philosophers have traditionally disagreed about the character of metaphysics. Aristotle and the medieval philosophers have provided us with two different aspects of metaphysics, (1) the first cause; that is the Unmoved Mover, or God, and (2) “the very general science of being *qua* being”. Yet by contrast, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the rationalists extended the range of metaphysics to include, not only the nature or existence of God, but the distinction between body and mind, the immortality of the spirit and the freedom

¹⁷⁷ Granted, after his death, his student, Plato, wrote down some of Socrates’ philosophy.

of the will as well (Loux 1998:1). Aside from general ontology, Moreland and Craig also identify “personal identity” as a metaphysical interest (2003:178).

Although metaphysics forms the core of Western philosophy, in an African perspective, metaphysics is also central to African thought, according to the African philosopher, Gyekye. He points out that like other people, Africans too have given thoughtful attention “to such fundamental matters as being, God, the nature of the person, destiny, evil, causality, free will, and so on” (1995:7-8). All of these, including, immortality of the spirit and personal identity mentioned above, are essential elements of African metaphysics. In addition, Imbo also highlights the grouping together of “questions about the differences between reality and appearance and questions of things changing from one mode of existence to another” (1998:4). No doubt, ancestors (intermediaries) and ancestral ontology is a case in point in light of things or beings undergoing change from one mode of existence to another.

Considering now the connection between African philosophy and spirituality, Gyekye makes a very important observation. He declares that “religious beliefs and practices in their complexities constitute an important source of African philosophical thought”. The inclination towards philosophical reflection, he continues, manifests in African religious thought (1995:8). In fact Kunhiyop observes how “Africans are incurably religious and religion permeates all aspects of life” (2008:15; cf. Mbiti 1989:2-3). Some of their religious beliefs and practices, Gyekye says, are philosophical, dealing with elementary questions such as the meaning of life, the origins of all things, death, and other related issues. Religion, including African religions, seeks to answer the questions of ultimate existence and yet the concerns of philosophy also seek to solve similar questions of ultimate existence (1995:8).

It is not surprising then that Africans have traditionally understood the universe in spiritual terms. The Western world, however, underwent a philosophical and social revolution which made a forceful distinction between science, or the

physical, and that which is spiritual. This Western philosophy is alien to African thought, for the African, both the ‘physical’ and the ‘spiritual’ are tightly interwoven¹⁷⁸ (Chike 2008:222; Dowden 2009:313). This idea of the physical and spiritual being interwoven is deeply rooted in the religio-cultural lives of the African people. All the same, African philosophy and spirituality share similarities with respect to the cosmology¹⁷⁹, cultural practices and the sacrificial systems found in much of the ancient biblical world (Adeyemo 1976:24).

According to Turaki (2006:19), Africans do not have a “cognitively orientated system” with esoteric doctrines, and strict rules or regulations”. Instead ATR is a very existential and experiential religion that is “more felt than understood” (2006:19). Although ATR appears to be declining as a result of the influences of Christianity and Islam, African philosophy and spirituality is still very much alive and has significant implications in African Christianity and also for atonement theology.

Turaki (2006:31) identifies five parts that make up the philosophical-spiritual system of ATR, these include, (1) Holism, (2) Spiritualism, (3) Dynamism, (4) Communalism and (5) Fatalism. I shall make use of Turaki’s categories in the discussion that follows:

First let us look at *Holism*, which in African philosophy and spirituality is also closely connected to cosmology. According to Turaki, the African’s worldview considers all things holistically, that is, the sacred and the secular are not distinguished. He goes on to say that it might be truer for the African to say that, “this world in essence is spiritual rather than material and that life is saturated with supernatural possibilities” (Turaki 2006:33-34). Whilst there is some truth in Turaki’s words, there is causation between the material world and the spiritual in the sense that the two are tightly interwoven into a single fabric. Kunhiyop writes that Africans have traditionally rejected the dualist notion which was introduced

¹⁷⁸ cf. O’Donovan’s (2002) chapter, *Africa or Western – What is the Difference?*

¹⁷⁹ By ‘cosmology’, I take Adeyemo’s definition, “a theory of the world or of world-order, the term cosmos being in contrast with chaos or disorder” (1978:17).

into many African Christian churches by Western missionaries. This dualist view, Kunhiyop believes, and I think rightly so, is absent in the Judeo-Christian worldview, even though modern Christians seem to be profoundly dualist, in my opinion. Dualism really has its roots in Greek philosophy whereby spiritual matter is exalted and the material is despised (2008:66-67). Bediako calls this a 'sacramental universe' whereby a sharp dichotomy between the physical and spiritual is absent. He says, "One set of powers, principles and patterns runs through all things on earth and in the heavens and welds them into a unified cosmic system" (2004:88). Light develops this idea by saying that there is no division in ATR between the sacred and the profane, the invisible and the visible. For the African, everything is connected to everything else, both above and below, from cosmology to social life, to agriculture, to economics and politics (Light 2010:107; cf. Kasambala 2005:303).

Cosmology is profoundly important for the African, for there exists a close connection between the dependence on nature and an awareness of spirits and spiritual forces, their ancestors and the unity of the physical and spiritual. No human being is understood as an individual in isolation, but finds himself in a unified cosmic universe (Bediako 2004:92). There is, therefore, a "belief in the divine origin of the universe and the interconnectedness between God, humanity and the cosmos" (Khathide 2007:313). The entire cosmos is understood in terms of "participating in the one life of God". As in Postmodernism where humanity is viewed as the centre of the universe, playing "one part of an intricate network akin to the Lion King's, 'circle of life'" (Harper 2001:7), Africans too see themselves as the centre of the cosmos, and of their relationship with God and with nature.

Another significant component in the African philosophical-spiritual system is *Spiritualism*. Idowu (1973:139) recognises five further aspects of spiritualism which include belief in God, belief in lesser divinities, belief in spirits, belief in the ancestors, and finally practices of medicine and magic. There is therefore a deep sense that this world has a very real spiritual dimension to it. Almost all Africans have a pre-Christian concept of God (cf. Mbiti 1970). For the African,

Orobator (2008:141) says, “the experience of God is more important than theology or a discourse about God”. Idowu (1973) and Mbiti (1970) have *even* proposed that the pre-Christian African concept of God¹⁸⁰ is a consistent continuity with that of the Judeo-Christian belief. Bediako (2004:21) holds that upon conversion the African is not introduced to a new God unfamiliar with their traditions and rituals, but to a God who fulfils all their religio-cultural aspirations¹⁸¹.

Furthermore, Turaki explains that all things, in the cosmos, whether nature, humans or spiritual forces, all are infused with an impersonal force, a *mysterium tremendum* otherwise called a ‘life force’. This too is an essential part of dynamism. Along with this life force, Africans believe that “if humans only knew how to master and control the realm of the supernatural, the world would be a much happier place”. Yet, this is really a pursuit of mystical and spiritual power because they hold that their well-being is influenced and controlled by spiritual beings. Therefore, a quest for power enables them to predict and even manipulate or influence these forces for the benefit of oneself¹⁸² (Turaki 2006:24, 26, 47-48). It is in this kind of religious atmosphere that we can begin to understand why the AIC’s and Pentecostalism have flourished on the African continent, together with the health, wealth and prosperity gospel (Kalu 2008:68; cf. O’Donovan 2002).

With respect to *Communalism*, which has much to do with the nature of a person and personal identity, Gyekye (1992:101) highlights the metaphysical question about,

¹⁸⁰ Previously I referred to the Judeo-Christian God as YHWH, except for quotations. In this chapter I shall also employ the Tetragrammaton when speaking of the Judeo-Christian God. However, when speaking of the African God, the ‘supreme being’, I shall speak of ‘God’ with a capital ‘G’, identifying a different god from YHWH. Further, where appropriate I shall refer to other deities as ‘god(s)’.

¹⁸¹ I shall engage with the African ontology of God under *African Socio-Cosmology*, offering what I hope will be a helpful perspective.

¹⁸² Usually this is achieved by consulting “specialists who have special means of gaining access to these powers and spirits and may make use of rituals, divination, ceremonies, sacrifices, incantations, symbolism, witchcraft, sorcery, charms, fetishes, and white and black magic” (Turaki 2006:48).

whether a person, even though he lives in a human society, is a self-sufficient atomic individual who does not depend on his relationships with others for the realization of his ends and who has ontological priority over the community, or whether he is by nature a communal (or, communitarian) being, having nature and essential relationships with others.

Turaki (2006:36) however writes that “People are not individuals, living in a state of independence”, but are a part “of a community, living in relationships and interdependence”. Foster (2010:243) affirms this notion, “Relationships are central to the formation, expression and understanding of who an individual person is”. This is expressed in the African philosophy of *ubuntu*, or *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, “a person is a person through other persons”. The African idea of community and relationships also include the full spectrum of unseen powers, namely, God, the lesser deities and spirits, and the ancestors and even nature (Turaki 2006:36).

Last on Turaki’s (2006:31) catalogue of elements that make up the ATR philosophical-spiritual system is *Fatalism*, this includes causality, free will and destiny. The notions of fatalism or destiny are tightly connected to spiritualism, for Africans believe that the circumstance in which an individual or group find themselves is ultimately determined by external spiritual forces. This fatalism is said to be a gift from God, according to Turaki. He tells us that “individuals, families and groups each have their own unique destiny decreed by the Creator and are accompanied throughout life by their destiny spirits”. Such destinies can either be known or hidden, and if it is hidden one can consult traditional diviners to discover their destiny. Nevertheless, the significant theological implications for traditional Africans still hold true, for they understandably pursue security and protection to counter the attacks from malevolent spiritual powers who seek to change such destinies for the worse (Turaki 2006:40-41). As we shall see later in *African Socio-Cosmology*, atonement synthesis is a powerful answer for addressing these important issues.

For the African, the idea of cosmological balance is also of paramount importance. In the cosmic unity which comprises of both the visible and the invisible, the balance and harmony of all these parts are crucial and must be maintained. The Postmodern worldview is not much different, for it too, as I mentioned, conceives that life on earth is delicate and that we must foster a new attitude of cooperation with planet earth (Grenz 1996:12). If this rhythm of life or cosmological balance is disrupted, negative consequences may manifest and diviners would be consulted to identify the cause of disharmony. Such causes can include transgression of taboos in a particular society, disrespect, witchcraft and magic (Khathide 2007:316). To restore the balance of such relationships, Khathide tells us that diviners would suggest a remedy appropriate to the cause of offence; this might include offering a sacrifice or imposing a penalty for the guilty party. The purpose is for reconciliation: “to restore harmony or to bring balance or equilibrium back to a person’s experience of his or her world, is of paramount importance in the African’s religio-cultural reality” (Khathide 2007:316; cf. Bediako 2004:95). Atonement synthesis, I will argue, has the answer.

Considering African philosophy and spirituality, it becomes evident that Africans are capable of abstract thought (Parrinder 1976:23). In the same way that theology developed by African Christians should take the teachings of the wider Christian community into consideration, it is beneficial for African philosophy to learn from the philosophy of other cultures as well. In so doing philosophies from different ethnic locations and epochs can be in dialogue. Yet, as will become evident in the discussions which follow, African philosophical formulation becomes more relevant and fruitful when reflecting the “thought forms” of a particular culture (Nkansah-Obrempong 2007:144). As I explore the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics, it will become evident that while I do not disregard contemporary African philosophy, I will engage with African metaphysics from the *ethnophilosophical* model. This is because the *ethnophilosophical* modal seems to articulate African experience and traditional thought best, and offers a helpful context in which to explore the implications of

atonement synthesis for African metaphysics, perhaps more so than the *universalist approach*. Further, while African philosophy is often times very different from Western thought, it is not too dissimilar from that of the ancient biblical world. Indeed this becomes evident in my next discussion on *African Atonement*.

4.3 African Atonement

4.3.1 Introduction

In the previous section, I explored African philosophy and spirituality. This has significant influence in both the traditional understanding of atonement in sacrifice and ritual and in African Christian atonement theology. The discussion which follows will begin with an examination of atonement in African traditional sacrifice and ritual by looking at sin and community, the concepts of traditional sacrifice and ritual, cosmology, prosperity and well-being, and victory over malevolent forces. In the next discussion, I shall explore the understanding of atonement theology from an African Christian perspective, especially in terms of a synthesis. Here I shall also explore its socio-cultural influences.

4.3.2 Atonement in African Traditional Sacrifice and Ritual

As I mentioned in my overview of African philosophy and spirituality, community is fundamental to African ontology. If an individual commits sin¹⁸³ the whole community suffers guilt because the individual does not live in isolation and is bound by the rules, regulations and taboos of his or her community. Nkansah-Obrempong explains that even as Africans may not understand sin in theological terms, it is a falling short of social ideals, and therefore sin is not only a personal offence, but also affects society. Shame brought on by sin might be felt by the individual and usually is experienced by the whole community as well

¹⁸³ Or offence.

(2008:825-826). Considering the implications of sin, Nkansah-Obrempong (2008:826) writes,

Sin disrupts the social order and therefore carries social implications for the individual or the community. Sin is an evil that upsets society's equilibrium as well as personal relationships and the cosmic relations such as the spirit world, the ancestors and nature. Thus sin's effects extend even to the cosmic realm.

According to Nyeri (2011), "Individuals, families, clans or communities that commit acts of sin were usually punished by imposing fines or penalties upon them". Such a penalty or fine is meant to be equal to the offence committed and removes the guilt of the offence when the penalty is paid. This is often done ritualistically. It is usually the duty, as Nyeri explains, of a priest to determine the penalty for an offence. This could include either an "animal blood sacrifice, meal or drink offerings or certain objects". With respect to an animal sacrifice, a priest would kill the animal and take its blood and sprinkle it on certain objects of ritual or on the ground as a means of appeasing the ancestors, the spirits or God. The penalty in turn releases the offender from the curse of his offence. In many instances of African sacrificial ritual, an animal suffers and dies on behalf of the offender, as we saw in the sacrifices of the OT. There are also other instances in African traditional sacrifice and ritual where penalty is paid by way of a substitutionary atonement motif (cf. Nyeri 2011).

Nürnberg (2007:38) states that for traditional Africans, life is largely ritualised "because reality consists of dynamistic power flows that need to be monitored and kept in check or channelled in desirable directions". It is apparent, therefore, that atonement is often made to avoid misfortune and evil, during the here and now, should an act of sin or offence be committed. Africans petition God to save them from evil in order that they might have peace and abundant life (Mbiti 1970:70; Nyeri 2011). For the traditional African, sacrifice is a means of ensuring a peaceful relationship between a living community and the wider community of

nature, ancestors, spirits and God, that is, the Supreme Being. The problem is not so much whether the sacrifice is sufficient, though that too, but whether it accomplishes its purpose¹⁸⁴ (Bediako 2004:28). Awolalu (1996:138) says that behind a sacrificial offering “there is usually a definite purpose. There is no aimlessness in making an offering, and we assert that no one ever makes a sacrifice without having a goal in view”. However, there appears to be no singular purpose for they are often offered for the purpose of counteracting against malevolent forces (Adeyemo 1976:36; Awolalu 1996:137). There are, however, various theories for sacrificial purposes that have been suggested, (1) the thank offering theory, (2) the gift offering theory, (3) the communication theory and (4) the propitiation theory (Adeyemo 1978:173; Awolalu 1996:143). Adeyemo (1978:173) notes that among African theologians the gift theory is thought to fit the African worldview best. Certainly all of these theories are appropriate for the traditional African, and whilst I believe many of these overlap, I think the propitiation theory is most significant.

The first of the sacrificial theories is the thank offering which is employed to hold communion with the Supreme Being or other deities and the ancestors. Like many Africans, the sacrifices of thanksgiving are often accompanied with feasting whereby the people and the spirits who receive the offering share a common meal (Awolalu 1996:143). On the other hand, Turaki explains that sacrificial gifts are often offered up to maintain cosmic harmony (2006:79). In light of the communication theory, traditional Africans also offer sacrifices to communicate with the spiritual and mystical forces. The purpose is usually personal and might include protection, security, success or favour from the spirits or the ancestors (Adeyemo 1978:176; Turaki 2006:90).

Of greater significance, I argue, is the propitiation theory. Adeyemo (1978:126) feels that the religious implications that anger appears as a motive of judgement is compelling. For many Africans a penalty paid in terms of a substitutionary sacrifice for an offence may appease the offended spirit, thus warding off

¹⁸⁴ cf. my discussion on Heb 9:11-14.

misfortune due them as a result of an offence (Adeyemo 1978:126; Nyeri 2011; Mbiti 1970:190). Writing about substitutionary sacrifices among traditional Africans, Adeyemo (1976:32) explains,

Under this category sacrifices are offered when a person is believed to be under the wrath of the divinities or some malignant spirits. The end of his trouble would be death; but such a sacrifice, if offered according to prescription, would save him. What is offered therefore is a substitute for him. Almost in every case, a sheep is the victim used as substitute for a human. The sheep is rubbed against the body of the supplant to ensure the transfer of his destiny, as far as the illness and imminent death are concerned, to the sheep. Then the sheep is treated like a corpse and buried with funeral rites as if it were the supplant.

The parallels in Adeyemo's explanation are quite remarkable in light of the OT Day of Atonement and of Jesus being "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (1 Jn 29; ESV). A substitutionary sacrifice is therefore employed to propitiate the anger of the spirits and divinities. This is especially appropriate when Africans experience an outbreak of a plague, famine, crop failures, sudden deaths or other disasters, all of which are attributed either to the anger of those who dwell in the spirit world, the workings of malevolent entities or an error or defilement in a religious ritual committed by a human being. Usually, the cause for the disaster is sought in order to make good by a propitiatory sacrifice which is said not only to purify individuals and the community, but more importantly to turn the favour of the offended ancestor, spirit or deity back towards the people (Awolalu 1996:152; cf. Awolalu 1996:158; Parrinder 1976:88; Nkansah-Obrempong 2008:826).

It is no surprise that blood plays an important symbolic role for ATR. Apparently "ritual sacrifices and the use of blood are believed to empower those who perform them. The sacrificed meat or food is eaten in a prescribed manner, and so is the blood" (Turaki 2006:92). Nyeri (2011) records the use of a blood ritual in an

African community after the offence of adultery has been committed. He explains that the “blood of the he-goat would be taken to the house of the priest or an elder and be sprinkled on the *walls and the door posts*. The same is also taken to the house of the male adulterer and be sprinkled all over his house” (emphasis mine). The imagery is reminiscent of the blood of the Passover lamb in Exodus 12:1-28.

Another OT atonement theme in African traditional ritual is the scapegoat. Awolalu explains that it was once a practice among some Africans to employ a human scapegoat which would carry the diseases, sins and death of the community away. “This human scapegoat was known as *Tele*. The Edi purificatory rite lasts seven days”. On the last day, the *Tele* would be carried away as a ‘special burden’ and would be ritually tied. Through this ritual it was believed that calamities, misfortunes and sins were transferred onto the human scapegoat which was ceremonially carried away into the grove where he would be offered up (1996:179-180). The sacrificial scapegoating played a significant part in some African communities and sought to deal with the internal conflicts within such communities by uniting against a scapegoat. This scapegoat framework was well articulated by René Girard (1997, 1986 and 2001) and S. Mark Heim (2006)¹⁸⁵. The African traditional scapegoat ritual also shares similarities with the OT Day of Atonement (Lev 16:21-22; 23:27-29).

Further, traditional sacrifices and rituals are employed to secure future prosperity. The practice of sacrifices and offerings are common to most, if not all, traditional Africans and has the principal concern of pursuing harmony. However, the notion of cosmic harmony has an even greater ultimate end, the goal being prosperity and wellbeing (Turaki 2006:44-45, 95). Adeyemo (1978:176) argues that “sacrifices are offered to meet personal needs, such as security, protection, communication, success, and favour of the gods”. Bujo (1992:29-30) likewise says that the repetition of traditional rites and formulae expresses the faith of the African people, that their ancestors will bring them prosperity and ward off misfortune.

¹⁸⁵ cf. my discussion on Girard and Heim in *Postmodernism*, Chapter 2.

These rituals, he says, are a means of remembering and re-enacting the past and secures prosperity for later generations.

For the African, such traditional sacrifices and rituals die hard. Christ dying for the world over two thousand years ago appears to have little meaning for many Africans, at least in terms of the Christian doctrines of the West. The African requires a practical solution to his practical problems which, of course, have a metaphysical origin. For him, ritual and sacrifice fulfil these needs (cf. Awolalu 1996:195). I argue that African Christianity should employ that which is useful and biblical from within their African philosophy, spirituality and culture to communicate the Gospel without practising syncretism in such a way that compromises the Truth (Awolalu 1996:195; Duru 2009:21; cf. O'Donovan 1992). In the next discussion I shall explore how this has been done in light of the atonement in African Christian theology.

4.3.3 Socio-Cultural Influences in Atonement Synthesis Theology

Western atonement theology was significantly influenced by a socio-historical development. The religio-cultural context of the African atonement theology on the other hand appears somewhat static. Therefore, I argue that it is best to think of the socio-cultural influences of atonement synthesis theology, rather than social-historical development. With this said, like the atonement theology of the West, Africa also enjoys expressions of atonement synthesis theology influenced by the continent's socio-cultural milieu. The primary interest of this discussion on the *Socio-Cultural Influences in Atonement Synthesis Theology* is not to explore African metaphysics in relation to Christ's death *per se*, but rather to set forth the atonement theology of African theologians and church leaders. Much like the theologians discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation, and their development of atonement theology, so too have Africans developed an atonement theology. This section seeks to outline how African theologians and leaders understand

atonement. I have felt it appropriate to explore this theology early on in chapter 4 which is no doubt very African¹⁸⁶.

In light of African sacrifice and ritual in ATR, the African Scholar Bediako proclaims that Christ Himself, being sinless and of divine nature, in his incarnation willingly offered Himself to death as a sacrifice for humanity's sin and in so doing He has fulfilled perfectly all that sacrifices and rituals seek to achieve. Furthermore, Jesus is not only unique because in his divinity he stands apart from us, but also because He has identified with the human predicament by becoming human himself and thus he is able to transform it. There is then not a single animal or victim that can equal the invaluable, perfect sacrifice offered by Jesus Himself which is copiously effective for all peoples, everywhere and for all time (2004:28-29).

As a result of the fall, Turaki tells us that enmity now exists between YHWH and humanity, and that humanity sits under the judgment and wrath of YHWH, yet these have now been abolished by Christ's work on the cross. Humanity can now enjoy access to YHWH for Christ has reconciled us to Him, and on a horizontal dimension, with one another (2006:40). Therefore, Turaki sees Christ's atoning work as "the basis of God's willingness to make peace with rebellious humanity and to restore fellowship with man and also to restore His fallen creation". Turaki proclaims that all that was lost or altered at the "fall is now being redeemed and regained through Christ" (Turaki 2006:41, 60). Touching on the notion of substitutionary atonement, he writes, "Jesus on the cross became our substitute and paid in full the wages of our sins. On account of this, we come to God having nothing to offer Him except what Christ effected on our behalf on the cross" (2006:69).

Similarly, when considering African sacrifices, Nyeri (2011) perceives a difference in the biblical narrative with respect to the concept of atonement. He

¹⁸⁶ To explore the development of African atonement theology in chapter 2 would have felt somewhat disjointed, and anyway this discussion offers an appropriate background for the rest of this chapter, *Atonement Synthesis: Implications for African Metaphysics*.

argues that in Scripture someone else stands on behalf of or atones for an offender, and thus Jesus pays our penalty for sin by standing in our place. Therefore, Christ's atoning work was more than just a sheer sacrifice, says Nyeri. Christ presented an act of atonement for an offence in order to remove guilt. And so as Turaki points out, Jesus, who is in fact the Righteous Judge, was made sin for us, taking on the way of self-sacrifice in love by shedding His blood on a cross. Whilst we cannot earn the righteousness of Christ, or His justification, these are mediated to us by means of Christ's substitutionary death. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us through faith and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2006:66).

Turaki declares that "a Christian and biblical conception of salvation is always universal¹⁸⁷ in scope and application". He remarks that, "the whole world of religions and cultures is invited by Jesus the Messiah to come to Him so He can be its Lord and Saviour" (2006:12, 14). African theologians have also considered African philosophy, spirituality and the socio influences of their people, and have quite legitimately also incorporated the *Christus Victor* motif. This motif is rooted in Christ's incarnation. Khathide understands the incarnation as an integral part of YHWH's assault on the powers of darkness, from Jesus' temptation in the wilderness to Satan's defeat at Jesus' death and resurrection (2007:199-202). This was developed in my discussion on Atonement Synthesis in the *Synoptic Tradition*, Chapter 3. Turaki, in light of ATR where humans are responsible for performing the rituals required to restore harmony between themselves and the world of spirits, proclaims that Christians hold "that the Supreme Being took action to restore that equilibrium in the miracle of the Incarnation" (2006:65).

Khathide tells us that "at the cross of Christ, an eternal sacrifice was made, so that humanity's sin might be forgiven and that Satan might be utterly defeated" (2007:209). He continues explaining how Christ in the Gospel narrative is a Sacrificial Lamb who laid His life down voluntarily unto death and went to hell to expiate the sins of humanity, and rose from the dead as Victor and is now exalted

¹⁸⁷ Turaki does not have 'Universal Salvation' in mind here.

as Lord over the church and the cosmos (cf. Khathide 2007:225). Khathide, when considering the Apostle Paul's theology, notes that there is "no doubt of Christ's sovereignty and supremacy over the powers", and that Christ defeated the powers of darkness through His death and resurrection. He also acknowledges that Satan's defeat at the cross did not annihilate or destroy him completely, but rather that Satan has been bound (Khathide 2007:220-222, 224). Khathide says of salvation,

Salvation, in Luke-Acts¹⁸⁸, denotes deliverance of human beings in all spheres, whether they be evil, spiritual, moral, political or cataclysmic. It connotes a victory of them from a state of negation, and a restoration to wholeness or integrity in Jesus Christ... that comes from faith (2007:262).

Even in song, African Christians, according to Chike, like to sing of the "power in the blood of Jesus" and his victory over infirmities, sickness, blindness, bareness, evil spirits, and the defeat of Satan. Apparently, when witches come, Christians are encouraged to sprinkle Jesus' blood in their homes (cf. Kunhiyop 2012:124-130). Chike explains that Christians in Africa sense that blindness, muteness, barrenness, witches and the devil are all evil forces massed against the Christian, for which he or she needs greater power to overcome. This is what Jesus does because he is more powerful (Chike 2008:227).

Even the Nigerian novelist, Achebe, picks up on this in his classic, *Things Fall Apart*. He writes of how the Africans gave the European missionaries a portion of the evil forest for they knew the missionaries boasted about victory over death, thinking that this would "give them a real battlefield in which to show their victory". The missionaries who were unaware of this scheme were ever so thankful. It was expected that they would all be dead within four days and yet none died! "It became known that the white man's fetish had unbelievable power. Not long after, he won his first three converts" (1959:149).

¹⁸⁸ Khathide Published his PhD dissertation as a book titled, *Hidden Powers: Spirits in the first-century Jewish world, Luke-Acts and in the African context: An Analysis*.

Within the African philosophy, spirituality and socio-cultural milieu, Chike (2008:232) observes how many African Christians understand their salvation in terms of victory over malevolent spirits as well as in terms of prosperity and good health. Chike gives examples of definitions of salvation from different African church leaders,

“Salvation is deliverance from the power of evil principalities and the enclave of human enemies,” and salvation is “good health... flourishing economic concerns and... having children.” Or, “where one is in unity with himself, with his neighbours, friends and God, he can say that he is in salvation” (2008:232).

It is no wonder then that many African Christians identify with a Saviour who provides prosperity, good health, a flourishing economy and deliverance from evil forces (Chike 2008:233).

In the ATR milieu, salvation is, therefore, largely understood in achieving wellbeing and ensuring one's welfare. In such a context salvation means warding off situations that might diminish wellbeing and seeking assistance from the spirit world to help overcome such impediments so that the fullness of light, mainly in material terms, could be achieved (Ngong 2009:3). It is in light of this that the African seeks to conquer his fears and to rise to such aspirations. In this philosophical, spiritual atmosphere 'Africa's New Christianity' has been preached with much success, portraying Jesus as fostering material well-being. This, therefore, promotes a propensity that is already very much alive in the salvific understanding of ATR and it is this tendency that has found its way into African Neo-Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity (Ngong 2009:10). Ngong explains that Christianity in Africa is about “gaining power to overcome those forces that diminish life” and therefore “material well-being appears to be ultimate in their understanding of salvation” (2009:10, 14). In my discussion below on *Malevolent Entities*, I shall explore how Neo-Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity in Africa

deals with malevolent powers from a metaphysical perspective in relation to Christ's victory.

Furthermore, Kalu does not see the African understanding of well-being as materialist. He says, "Salvation manifests itself in the transformation of material¹⁸⁹, physical, and psychic wellbeing". He continues, "Many African communities share the understanding that prosperity and wealth are not material, but reflect inner peace, satisfaction, contentment, and the maintenance of social networks" (2008:261). This in some ways resonates with the *Christus Victor* motif. Whilst well-being is all that Kalu has listed, it is *also* very much materialistic, as Ngong has pointed out. Kalu in my opinion addresses these issues inadequately. Nkansah-Obrempong (2007:149-150) shares a concern regarding prosperity theology which he feels is leading the African "church into a philosophy of materialism, which, if not checked, could have devastating effects upon Christianity in Africa" (cf. O'Donovan 2002). This he thinks may lead to the undermining of the Christian teachings of suffering and persecution which are important to the Christian faith.

African Christians also see Jesus as the 'Great Healer'. This finds expression in many of their prayers and songs. Logically, faith healing is widespread in many African churches. But Jesus is also said to be the 'Great Provider'. How Christian Africans view Jesus is influenced by their understanding of the working of the cosmos and the perception of their needs (Chike 2008:228-229). Therefore, as Kalu tells us, prosperity theology plays an important role in African Christianity. This apparently emerges from the notion of salvation and Christ's atoning death, for "African anthropology emphasizes vitality of life and abundant life as the chief goals for daily living. These are the ends of every religious ritual: to preserve, enhance, and protect life" (Kalu 2008:261).

Ngong (2009:1) and Kalu (2008) rightly present African Christianity today as undergoing exponential growth especially because of the "Neo-Pentecostal /

¹⁸⁹ "Salvation manifests itself in the transformation of material" is somewhat ambiguous as it seems that he is not referring to material as in wealth and possessions.

Charismatic salvific discourse¹⁹⁰”. Ngong laments that this is because it “treats material well-being as if it were an end in itself”. I concur with Ngong when he argues “that African Neo-Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity draws from a source that has always informed African Christianity / theology in general: African traditional religious thought”. Ngong also feels that an “uncritical appropriation of this salvific discourse undermines the difference within Christianity, thus collapsing Christianity into African Traditional Religions” (2009:1). Ngong, in his article, *Salvation and Materialism in African Theology*, really sought to highlight how African Neo-Pentecostal / Charismatic Christianity “have uncritically appropriated the salvific discourse of African Traditional Religions”. He looks to an Augustinian salvific framework which he believes “may help Christians love material things in a measured manner and love God with all their heart, soul, and might” (Ngong 2009:17). I think Ngong’s article and theology is a welcome contribution to the discourse on African Christianity and theology.

In light of ATR, Turaki also sees that where sacrifices and rituals were performed to restore cosmic harmony, Christianity on the other hand sees YHWH taking action Himself to restore this harmony, or equilibrium through Christ and His incarnation. Yet this is not merely a restoration of cosmic harmony, which it is as well, but ultimately a new creation, says Turaki (2006:42; 65)

In what followed, an African atonement theology by Africans demonstrated an influence from the socio-cultural milieu of the African people constructing an atonement synthesis theology. Whilst the influences on atonement synthesis in Western theology are very different from the African Christianity, it seems that both express penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs as an atonement synthesis.

¹⁹⁰ Some of the most influential churches and leaders in the African Neo-Pentecostal / Charismatic movements include: Kingsway International Christian Centre (pastored by Matthew Ashimolowo), Christ Embassy (pastored by Chris Oyakhilome), Living Faith World Outreach Ministry (pastored by Bishop David Oyedepo), The Redeemed Christian Church of God (pastored by Enoch Adeboye), Synagogue Church of All Nations (pastored by TB Joshua), and Household of God Church (pastored by Chris Okotie).

4.3.4 Conclusion

This discussion explored atonement in African traditional sacrifice and ritual as well as the socio-cultural influences in atonement synthesis theology from an African Christian perspective. The study demonstrated that African philosophy and spirituality proved very influential in both the traditional understanding of atonement in sacrifice and ritual and the African Christian understanding of Christ's atoning work. There were, nevertheless, significant parallels with both historical theology and the biblical narrative. It also became apparent that Africans require a practical solution to their practical problems which are derived from the realm of metaphysics. African Christianity is responsible to prudently employ that which is of use from African philosophy and spirituality to communicate Christ's atoning work. However, I, along with Ngong and Nkansah-Obrempong, reject the prosperity gospel and its theology, finding it an unhelpful and inappropriate theology (cf. O'Donovan 2002). Therefore, in the discussions which follow I shall not promote a prosperity theology, but will seek to demonstrate the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics, for this is the origin of many of the practical problems of the African people. I shall begin by discussing implications of atonement synthesis in African socio-cosmology.

4.4 African Socio-Cosmology

4.4.1 Introduction

By African cosmology, I mean the system by which Africans incorporate the mystery they experience in their 'unseen' lives, acknowledging the metaphysical aspect, or the 'beyondness' of human life. This also refers to how Africans relate to the cosmic forces, that is, how they perceive their lives in relationship to unseen beings. These unseen beings might include God, sometimes referred to as the Supreme Being, and intermediaries like ancestors and other spirits. Within this

cosmic arrangement, Africans feel that they are not left to face life and its troubles alone. They appeal to God for help, but more often than not they relate to him via intermediaries (Kasambala 2005:310-312).

What follows is a discussion on the African ontology of God, that is, the African concept of the Supreme Being. At the end of this discussion I shall position Christ and His atoning work in relation to the African ontology of God. Next the notion of intermediaries and their significance for African people will be explored. Here I shall consider Jesus as the Supreme Ancestor and in so doing demonstrate the implications of atonement synthesis for African Metaphysics.

4.4.2 An African Ontology of God

In many ways the ontology of God is a central aspect of metaphysics. For the African, God is a prominent feature which permeates every aspect of African thought and daily living. In this discussion I shall discuss the nature of the African God and then conclude in articulating how we should approach such a God in light of Jesus Christ and His atoning work. This discussion is important because it provides a background in which to understand atonement synthesis for African metaphysics. On the other hand it also marks out the atonement as the distinguishing factor between YHWH, the God who atones for the sins of His people and overcomes evil, and the non-atoning African concept of God.

The African pre-Christian concept of God is no longer disputed for the notion of God has long since been an integral part of African philosophy and spirituality. Even long before the arrival of Christian missionaries to Africa, most tribes acknowledged a Supreme Being (Dowden 2009:312; Khathide 2007:316; Kunhiyop 2012:43; Mbiti 1970). Nyeri (2011) explains that this knowledge of God is expressed in religious ceremonies, names, myths, proverbs, short sayings, prayers and in song. Turaki states that “it is not necessary to prove God’s existence to Africans”. There is a very deep awareness of a Supreme Being among the African people. Such a definite awareness is apparently lacking in only

a few African people groups (Turaki 2006:52; cf. Mbiti 1970:219). For the many African peoples who have a strong belief in God, they say that he is everywhere at all times. He is greater than everything that he has created, which is why he is called the Supreme Being, and yet God is near to his people, so close that they are able to approach him (Mbiti 1991:60).

Mbiti, in his *Concepts of God in Africa*, says that “Every African people recognizes one God” (cf. Nyeri 2011; Naipaul 2010:266), but that in the cosmology of some Africans there is, “besides him, other divinities and spiritual beings, some of whom are closely associated with him” (Mbiti 1970:29; cf. Adeyemo 1978:25). Whilst Mbiti argues in his work that the African ontology of God is not dissimilar to the Judeo-Christian God, at least as revealed in the OT, Turaki argues otherwise. He says that the traditional African notion of God “is not narrowly defined. God may be viewed in a pantheistic, polytheistic, anthropomorphic manner, as a Supreme Power or a Supreme Being” (2006:57).

However, many theologians, namely Bujo, Mbiti and Idowu, wish to demonstrate in one way or another that there is a “relationship between the ontology of God in pre-Christian African religions and the Christian God” (Khathide 2007:317; cf. Kunhiyop 2012:44). The proclamation of the Christian Gospel, according to Bujo (1992:18), was not a novel presentation of the concept of God, but it was instead a “more complete and definite proclamation of that one God, whom Africa already knew”.

The paradox exists in God’s ontology when he is thought to be in community and relationship and yet his cosmic sovereignty highlights that he is the Supreme Being in the universe (Adeyemo 1978:112). It is he who is said to be “the source and mover of all the powers, from whom life-force flows through the spirits to the people, animals and plants” (Khathide 2007:318). Likewise Kunhiyop (2008:16) says of God, he “is the foundation and explanation of all creation and existence”; And Sawyerr, “He is the essence of cosmic totality” (1970:31).

Kunhiyop (2008:318) states that among African peoples God is known by special names¹⁹¹. These names Khathide (2007:317-318) argues, illustrate a “continuity of God between the pre-Christian era and the period of Christian missionaries”, because most of these names have been employed by both traditional Africans and Christians. Furthermore, Awolalu (1996:15) describes the Supreme Being as “all-wise, all-knowing, all-seeing and all-hearing”. Likewise Kunhiyop also describes his attributes as “being the creator, King and judge who is omnipresent, omnipotent, all-wise, all-knowing, all-seeing and immortal”. He is morally good, merciful, loving and holy and upholds governance and justice. It is he who provides children, good harvests and protection. As God himself is good, he expects his created beings to be good towards one another as well (2008:16-17; cf. Nürnberger 2007:34).

The traditional African also broadly understands that God is both transcendent and immanent¹⁹². Yet God’s transcendence, that is, his remoteness, should not be interpreted merely as isolation as in Western theology, but rather “in terms of a holistic cosmic community in which there is some kind of hierarchy of beings” says Turaki (2006:55). The Supreme Being while said to be very far away in one respect, is at the same time very near to his creation. As judge, guardian and sustainer, God is said to be sovereign over all and above all (Khathide 2007:320-321). Sawyerr points out, God also takes “an active interest in men’s affairs” (cf. Mbiti 1989:33), acting as man’s vindicator, “the relative who is prepared to expose himself to any risk in order to protect a weaker member of his family”. But as Creator “He is also believed to be remotely situated from the everyday events of human life” (1970:5). Mbiti argues that any notion of the African concept of God as being too remote or excluded from human affairs is entirely false (cf. Awolalu 1996:16; Mbiti 1989:32), because God, in the African mind, is simultaneously transcendent and immanent, far and near (cf. Idowu 1973:155). Prayers, sacrifices, offerings, etcetera are notable acknowledgements of God’s

¹⁹¹ A detailed discussion on the African Names of God is beyond the scope of this dissertation; cf. Idowu (1973); Mbiti (1970; 1989); Parrinder (1962); Sawyerr (1970) for further discussion.

¹⁹² How African peoples throughout Africa understand God’s transcendence and immanence, and how he relates to his created beings might vary somewhat. For a full discussion cf. Mbiti (1970).

immanence, and so in theory God is transcendent, but immanent in practice, according to Mbiti (1970:12, 17-18).

Exploring the idea of God as an ancestor, Sawyerr, notes that “the omnipotence of God inheres in this notion of the Great Ancestor” (1970:17). Nürnberger (2007:34) also writes, “The Supreme Being can also sometimes even be seen as the ultimate Ancestor from whom all ancestry is derived”. Therefore, as an ancestor, people can turn to him during anguish, but he is also transcendent, that is, “separate and distinct” and thus “seemingly indifferent to the affairs of man” (Sawyerr 1970:97; 102). Sawyerr proclaims that God “is also the father of the Royal Ancestors..., and so their Great Ancestor..., of course, the Ultimate Ancestor because He is the source of all being, of all existence and value” (1970:31). It is in light of this that I believe that God can be (or is) understood as both Creator and Ancestor by almost all African people.

Despite differences in the African ontology of God, connections do exist in the OT concept of YHWH¹⁹³. Whilst Turaki accepts these similarities, he argues that the traditional African ontology of God and the biblical Christian concept of YHWH are in reality grounded “in radically different theological foundations” (Turaki 2006:53; cf. Khathide 2007:319). Yet both Mbiti (1970; 1989) and Idowu (1973) have, in order to defend their people against the accusation for not having a concept of God, pioneered the idea that the African ontology of God is in fact the same God of the Bible, only pre-Christian. Turaki charges them for falling into the Western philosophical and theological trap by employing its terms to interpret and articulate the traditional notions of the African God. Critics of Mbiti and Idowu, Turaki says, maintain that they have presented an image of God that has “emerged from this new theological reconstruction is in reality neither traditional nor Christian” (Turaki 2006:53). Kato (1974:108-109), a pioneer of contemporary African evangelical scholarship, praised Mbiti’s ground-breaking work in *Concepts of God in Africa* as “highly commendable”. Yet, he perceives

¹⁹³ Such connections might include God’s omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, immortality, benevolence, mercy, loving kindness, provision, protection, life giving power, governance, justice, and God as Creator, the source and origin of all things.

that Mbiti's presuppositions inevitably affected his interpretation of his data, especially where there was a lack of clarity in certain African beliefs. Mbiti, Kato says, sought to highlight the African ontology of God as a *praeparatio evangelica*, "preparation for the Gospel", convincing his readers that the Africans have always known and worshiped God, even if it was a pre-Christian God (1974:108-109; cf. Bediako 1995:97). The question therefore begs to be asked: "Is the African concept of God the Christian God?" The answer I believe is no, but the African ontology of God does point Africans to YHWH (cf. Adeyemo 1978:10).

Indeed, as Adeyemo (1978:62) observes, "While the natural revelation may enable Africans to attain knowledge of God as the Creator of all things, it does not provide them with the knowledge of such mysteries as the Trinity, the incarnation, and redemption". Kunhiyop, in his *African Christian Theology*, writes that the practices and beliefs of ATR, at best offer only a pale and incomplete understanding of who YHWH is. He continues, "The only true source of knowledge about God is his personal revelation of himself in Jesus Christ and the recording of that revelation in the inspired, inerrant and infallible Holy Scriptures" (2012:44). Similarly, the Western theologian, Carson, explains that it is Scripture that tells us about YHWH and the kind of God He is and whilst a dim representation of His "moral attributes are reflected in the human conscious", this knowledge is insufficient to lead anyone to salvation (2010:19-20). Sequentially, if we wish to articulate the implications of atonement synthesis in African metaphysics, we cannot rely on the traditional ontology of an African God, for Christ is absent from such a God. Martin Luther claimed that a true knowledge of YHWH only comes through Jesus Christ and that apart from Christ any encounter with YHWH would be disastrous (Allison 2011:199). Luther once said, "God himself is a terrible God if we want to deal with him apart from Christ. He is a God in whom we find no comfort, but only wrath and displeasure" (Luther quoted in Allison 2011:199). Carson (2010:21) writes,

This Son-centred revelation is found not only in the person of Jesus but also in his deeds. Not only in his teaching, preaching, and healing,

but supremely in the cross and resurrection Jesus reveals God and accomplishes the divine plan of redemption.

The atoning working of Christ is the factor that distinguishes YHWH from the African notion of God. Therefore we need to understand atonement synthesis, not in light of the African idea of God, but in light of YHWH. Whilst the traditional African ontology of God is in some ways similar to the God of Scripture, he is of a very different kind of God, ultimately, he is a God without Christ! And it is the atoning working of this Christ that I wish to demonstrate the implications for African metaphysics.

4.4.3 Intermediaries

In African life the function of intermediaries are crucial. The duty of an intermediary is to form ‘bridges’ between humanity and the Supreme Being. Of those still physically alive, such mediators might include kings, elders, diviners, seers, medicine men, oracles, ritual elders and rainmakers. On the other hand mediators of the spirit kind include divinities, nature spirits (or other) and ancestors (Adeyemo 1978:116; Bediako 1995:29; Mbiti 1989:71; 1991:68). All kinds of intermediaries are relevant for the traditional African. In this discussion, attention will be focused on the ancestors for they are most central to the African religio-cultural life (Adeyemo 1978:28; Mbiti 1970:220; Turaki 2006:68).

As a result of Africans understanding their God as supremely transcendent, they feel a need to approach him via an intermediary, much like one might in social life approach a chief through someone of higher status than himself (Mbiti 1991:68). Adeyemo explains that in the traditional arrangement, power and authority is “exercised through the chiefs and priests believed to be divine representatives on earth. In the metaphysical realm the divinities and ancestors channel the power” (1978:116). Therefore, people go to mediators, to offer up prayers, offerings and sacrifices after having told them their needs (Mbiti 1991:68).

Ancestors are understood therefore as the ‘living dead’ (cf. Mbiti 1989:82; 1970:231) and are believed to still be very much a part of the community of the living. Ancestors are also said to be the spirits of the elders of a village who have died (Khathide 2007:331-332; Nyeri 2011). They are, according to Reed and Mtukwa, “guardians of morality in the community”. If members of a community “diminish the life force of the community” by committing an offence, the ancestors may afflict them with tragedy or disaster. Yet blessing follows those members of a community who please the ancestors (cf. Wright 2008:7). Thus a dichotomy of fear and fondness towards their ancestors exist among many Africans (2010:150). Clark explains that the relationship the ancestors have with the living community demonstrates the ancestral ontology of being an extension of one’s living parents. For that reason ancestors engage with their community in parental fusion. Punishment is administered to those who disobey and disrespect them and health, prosperity and protection are offered to those who honour them. There is, therefore, a reciprocal obligation on both the living and the ‘living dead’ (2010:152). However, Africans care little for the ancestors of other communities because they are not *their* ancestors, and foreign ancestors have no influence, if any, in a community different from which an ancestor originated (Reed and Mtukwa 2010:150). Thus, as Orobator correctly observes, “The family or community recognizes and celebrates its own ancestors”. Foreign ancestors are “merely unfamiliar spirits floating above human existence”. Contra Reed and Mtukwa, Orobator thinks that such spirits are able to cause great harm (2008:114).

Even if Orobator is correct, at least the ancestors of their respective communities are considered as benevolent towards their own people when the people fulfil their obligations. Accordingly, Khathide remarks how ancestors have never been thought of as evil spirits (2007:337). Healey and Sybertz (2004:211) are in accord when they say, “In the complex African cosmology, the living dead are benevolent ancestral spirits who are the link between the living and the ‘Supreme Being.’” Yet Light writes about how there is literally a price to be paid for the benevolent intervention from the ancestors. He points out that the ancestors must frequently be thanked by means of offerings and sacrifices; they should pray to,

honour, respect and obey in order to experience benevolent intervention from the ancestor (2010:105).

Bediako (2004:30) also states, “Ancestors are considered worthy of honour for having ‘lived among us’ and for having brought benefits to us”. Therefore it is believed that ancestors should be honoured and respected, and for good reason. They occupy a privileged position due to having distinguished themselves in service and having lived an exemplary life within their community before their passing. This privileged position enables the ancestor to act as mediator and intercessor on behalf of their living community members and the ancestors are therefore entitled to libations, prayer, offerings and sacrifices (Orobator 2008:75; cf. Bediako 2004:30; Khathide 2007:331). Another qualification for ancestorhood is simply close proximity to the community, says Meiring. As ancestors are still in essence people, they are thought to be the most suited intermediaries between God and human beings. Therefore, argues Meiring, having recently been human beings themselves, they know the needs of their people (2007:742). Whilst ancestors are close to their communities from which they come, and are thought to still live among them, they also enjoy close proximity to the Supreme Being, residing in his presence (Orobator 2008:114; Khathide 2007:333). Therefore, Africans are under severe “pressure to ensure their dead relatives achieve and maintain ancestorhood, as well as to do everything possible to attain and sustain ancestral status themselves after their death” (Light 2010:107). On this point Bujo tells us that “communion with the ancestors has both an eschatological and a salvation dimension”. This salvation concerns both the living and the ‘living dead’ for their actions affect one another in a soteriological sort of way and thus they are mutually dependant (1992:24).

In light of such an ontological arrangement, that is, ancestors being very much a part of their community and being near to God, they have the ability to, as it were, speak a ‘bilingual language’. They communicate in the language of the human beings whom they were a part of, and also the language of the spirits of which they are now a part (Mbiti 1970:230; 1989:82; 1991:69; cf. Meiring 2007:742).

Whereas the living communicate with their ancestors by means of ritual offerings, sacrifices and invocation, the ‘bilingual language’ of the ancestors often manifests itself in the dreams (or visions) of the living¹⁹⁴.

Furthermore, Bediako explains that traditional Africans believe that the welfare of society depend on preserving good relations with their ancestors on whom they depend for protection and assistance (cf. Light 2010:128). Good relations may be preserved by the use of traditional rituals which ensure “the maintenance of the desired harmony between the living and the ancestors” (Bediako 2004:101; cf. Bujo 1992:25; Khathide 2007:332; Reed and Mtukwa 2010:151). Turaki (2006:69) writes,

When misfortune strikes those affected should examine their conduct toward their kinsfolk and neighbours to see whether they have failed to fulfil any duties and obligations. Any act of sin or moral wrong should be *atoned for*, often through the sacrifice of an animal or fowl. Some offences also require the *payment of fines*. Forgiveness takes effect immediately after restitution or *reconciliation*. In this way quarrels between individuals, families or communities are settled through *reconciliation*. *Peace-making* and treaties are conducted under oaths and vows which are usually *sealed by blood sacrifice*.

My emphasis’ in Turaki’s quote evokes several themes highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3, *The Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis Theology* and *The Drama of Atonement Synthesis in Biblical Narrative*, respectively. This causes one to rightly consider the parallels of Christ’s atoning work.

With respect to the blurring of ancestral worship and veneration that is sometimes felt, one might wish to remove ancestors from African thought. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (2010:53) bemoans how evangelical protestant “Christianity has

¹⁹⁴ It is also thought, according to Khathide (2007:332) that ancestors may manifest as animals. Often they may appear as a harmless snake which is usually understood “as a propitious symbol of good fortune”.

often rejected any considerations for the recognition of ancestors in African Christianity” (Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu 2010:53). Especially among Pentecostalism, ancestors and their belief therein are believed by many to be demonic and pagan. It is felt that they should have no place within the lives of born-again Christians (Orobator 2008:117). Bediako (1995:212) argues that studies on ATR have illustrated that these religions are not “passive traditional cosmologies”, but being “dynamic institutions” they are “able to adapt and respond to new situations and human needs in society”. Bujo (1992:41) thinks otherwise. He argues that the ancestors are central to both African philosophy and spirituality as well as to its social structure and that to remove the ancestors from African thought would damage the entire fabric of society (cf. Bediako 1995:216). It concerns Orobator (2008:117) that Africans also have men and women who have gone before them whose lives were exemplary and who still watch over them and love them because they are with God. I feel we should take both positions into consideration. In a moment I shall propose a third alternative, one that I hope will position Christ at the very centre of African socio-cosmology.

Some Roman Catholics have attempted to integrate ancestral belief into the doctrine of the Communion of Saints in order to address the ancestral issues at hand (Bediako 1995:223; Khathide 2007:337). As African ancestors fulfil certain qualifications in order to receive the status as a mediator, so too do the canonized Catholic saints who are officially proclaimed as mediators or intercessors (Orobator 2008:114). Like Catholics who honour and celebrate their saints, so too Orobator argues, Africans celebrate and honour their people who have lived exemplary lives. He continues, “The lives of these saints and ancestors challenged us to become living saints, that is, men and women whose lives are an example for others to imitate” (2008:118). Healey and Sybertz (2004:28) tell us how the saints in Catholicism are special ‘Christian ancestors’. This they believe “is an illumination and enrichment of traditional African beliefs and a new and higher synthesis for African Christianity and the world Church”. Roman Catholic Churches in Africa have therefore, not surprisingly, “incorporated the veneration of the African ancestors in their liturgy” (Healey and Sybertz 2004:216).

I am in agreement with Bujo. I fear that the belief in ancestors are so deeply rooted in African philosophy and spirituality that it would buckle the whole social structure of countless African communities should the notion of ancestors be removed. If such a shift in African socio-cosmology were to occur, it would need to come from Africans themselves. Whilst I am not Roman Catholic and neither do I wish to embrace the integration of ancestral belief into the doctrine of the Communion of Saints as presented by Orobator, Healey and Sybertz, I do commend the Roman Catholic Church for their ingenuity and sensitivity. They seem to have done much more than Protestants, having engaged with ancestral belief.

In light of the above, I contend that African communal ancestors should not be done away with¹⁹⁵. Africans should acknowledge their ancestors, in a similar way, perhaps, as we might honour and respect the authors and heroes of Scripture and the significant figures in church history and the heroes of the Christian faith. Africa enjoys some of the finest theologians and churchmen in Christian history, for example “Origen, Athanasius, Clement, Augustine, Tertullian, Cyprian, Optatus, Lactantius, Marius Victorinus and Primasius” (Oden 2007:148). These were exemplary men whom the African people can honour and celebrate as well (cf. Oden 2007:107, 125).

It is interesting that Jesus exhibits almost all the positive attributes of the African ancestor, but displays them in such an extraordinary way that it seems to diminish the need or even the desire to approach any other intermediary for mediation and intercession¹⁹⁶. The African socio-cosmological structure and its intermediaries, form the setting in which to display the extraordinary exhibitions of Christ and His atoning work. It is, therefore, my hope that Africans would by-pass their ancestors and other intermediaries as a means of mediation, whilst still honouring

¹⁹⁵ I grant that many would wish to disagree and argue otherwise.

¹⁹⁶ I seem to be in good company. After having articulated my thinking here, I discovered Bediako’s reassuring words, “once Jesus Christ comes, the ancestors are cut off as means of blessing and we lay our power-lines differently” (1995:217).

and celebrating the lives of those who went before them¹⁹⁷. Nyende explains that the Author of Hebrews presents Jesus as a mediator, even as a high priest, which itself is a notion of “Christ within Jewish religious cosmology”. This seems to suggest a biblical legitimacy for a conceptualization and interpretation of Jesus which can be easily grasped (Nyende 2005:519). Perhaps for an African, Jesus may be conceptualised as an African ancestor.

Many Africans understand God as a Supreme Being, and sometimes even as the Great Ancestor. It would therefore be appropriate, I argue, to think of Jesus as the Supreme Ancestor, because Jesus in his incarnation is fully human and yet, He is also fully God (YHWH). The African philosopher, Wiredu, writes, “If an ancestor is a ruler, the scope of his activities goes beyond his own family to the whole of his town or kingdom.” (1992:137). If we are to think of Jesus as an ancestor, indeed, the Supreme Ancestor, then Wiredu’s words are very profound because Jesus’ rulership is universal, it is without end (Jn 18:36-37; Heb 1:1-4, 2:5-12; cf. Lk 19:38). That being said, Jesus can be the Supreme Ancestor over all peoples, not to mention the peoples of Africa, because the whole world, the whole universe belongs to Christ, it is His kingdom. Although Jesus can be thought of as an ancestor, I shall demonstrate that He is of a very different kind, by juxtaposing Jesus, the Supreme Ancestor, with ordinary ancestors, who themselves only become ancestors through the Supreme Ancestor and His atoning work¹⁹⁸.

Turaki (2006:22) argues otherwise, “Jesus cannot take a seat in the gallery of religious mediators; He is not one of them. He is different and unique. He does not have their likeness and cannot be likened to them”. Whilst it is correct to say that Jesus is different and unique, for indeed He is YHWH, it surprises me that Turaki ignores Jesus’ incarnation when he says, “He does not have their likeness and cannot be likened to them”. It is precisely because of Jesus’ incarnation¹⁹⁹ that we can and should speak of Jesus as the Supreme Ancestor. He took on humanity

¹⁹⁷ Such celebrations might be expressed through dance, song and feasts.

¹⁹⁸ I trust my above proposal is not presented out of ignorance or misinformation, but rather from a position of knowing the power and significance of Christ and his atoning work, that is, atonement synthesis for African metaphysics.

¹⁹⁹ Jn 1:14; Jn 18:37; Gal 4:4; Phil 2:7; Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 1:1; 1 Jn 4:2; 2 Jn 1:7,

and dwelt among mankind, therefore Jesus is most certainly like any African person! Again Turaki (2006:24) tells us, “Jesus the Messiah is neither an ancestor nor ‘one of them’. He did not originate from within human nature. He is its creator”. Again I agree that Jesus is the Creator of all, including ancestors. Jesus, being Divine and eternal, did not originate from creation whatsoever, but He was born of a virgin²⁰⁰, which in itself is grounds to consider Jesus not only as an ancestor, but as Supreme Ancestor! To be fair, Turaki (2006:24) redeems himself somewhat when he writes,

We do not make Jesus the Messiah look like one of the ancestors, but He can be presented symbolically as One who fulfils the aspirations of those who depend upon the ancestors and therefore stands as their Mediator. Our knowledge of the status, role and functions of the ancestors can help us grasp even more the deep theological and the biblical meaning of Christ’s mediatory role in African societies.

To avoid venturing into the territory on my own, it would be prudent to consider the position of other African scholars on Christ being an ancestor. Reed and Mtukwa note that Bediako thinks of Christ helping Africans understand their ‘natural’ ancestors (2010:153). He writes,

An Ancestor-Christology in African theology is meant to show that Christ, by virtue of his incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension into the realm of spirit-power, can rightly be designated, in African terms, as Ancestor, indeed Supreme Ancestor.

An Ancestor-Christology, according to Bediako, assists in making clear the position and significance of ‘natural’ ancestors. “By making room among the ‘living-dead’ for the Lord, the judge of both the living and the dead, it becomes more evident how they relate to Him, and He to them” (1995:217).

²⁰⁰ Mt 1:18-25.

Furthermore, Reed and Mtukwa note how Bujo “cautions that the term ancestor should be used analogically since to treat Jesus otherwise would be to make him only one founding ancestor among many”. For Bujo “ancestors are forerunners or images of the Proto-Ancestor, Jesus Christ”. Accordingly, Bujo emphasises that Jesus as the Proto-Ancestor lays out the benchmark for what a good ancestor is (2010:154; Bujo 1992:76, 79; Orobator 2008:76).

Reed and Mtukwa are somewhat critical, however, of Bediako’s ‘Ancestor-Christology’ and Bujo’s ‘Proto-Ancestor’. They “find that the image of Christ as Ancestor has an inherent weakness with regard to ethnocentrism”. It is argued that Africa is in desperate need, not of a Jesus shaped in an African image, but of an African shaped in Jesus’ image (2010:162). Firstly, I shall demonstrate how Jesus as Supreme Ancestor does not contribute to ethnocentrism, quite the contrary. Secondly, I propose that Africa can only be shaped into Jesus’ image once it is able to identify Him within its own socio-cosmology. Indeed, Jesus makes Himself accessible by identifying Himself with us by becoming man in His incarnation. The deeply metaphysical world in which the Africans live and think, make Jesus as a Supreme Ancestor a suitable means by which He makes Himself accessible to Africans by identifying Himself within their socio-cosmology²⁰¹.

Reed and Mtukwa offer additional concerns. To be sure, these need to be dealt with as well. (1) Christ as an ancestor may encourage Africans to continue to treat their ancestors as intermediaries when it is taught in Scripture that there is only one mediator, Jesus Christ. Barth wrote of Christ as the “Mediator between God and humanity, He is the one who restores fellowship between them and accomplishes sanctification and justification” (1961:180). (2) It might encourage ancestral offerings and sacrifices that lead to ancestral worship. (3) It might make Jesus a mere human being instead of God-incarnate. (4) Scripture condemns necromancy (2010:157). My response is as follows. (1) A proper understanding of Jesus Christ and the atonement would diminish the need for any other mediator and would set Him as sole mediator (cf. Bediako 1995:217). (2) If Christ is

²⁰¹ Cf. Nyende’s article, *Hebrews’ Christology and its Contemporary Apprehension in Africa*, pp. 361-381.

properly understood as infinitely superior to any ancestor and that ancestors acquire their ancestorhood through Christ, then I do not imagine ancestral worship being an issue. (3) We should understand Jesus as fully human anyway, yet it is as important to understand Him as Divine, fully God (YHWH).

In addition, Jesus shares some remarkable similarities with the ancestors. I shall draw from my discussion on African ancestors above: (1) Jesus is worthy of honour²⁰² for He not only “lived among us”, but also “brought benefits to us” (Bediako 2004:30). Turaki also explains that Jesus “was found worthy by God and was thus made the Mediator and Reconciler between God and man” and that the Apostle Paul also found Jesus to be worthy because of His humility and atoning work (2006:36). (2) Like the African ancestors, Jesus tells us that He is always with us and that He will never leave us. So He too lives among us in our communities²⁰³. (3) Jesus cares for all these communities and has their best interest at heart²⁰⁴. (4) Jesus is benevolent and kind, indeed infinitely more so than any African ancestor who is said to be benevolent²⁰⁵. (5) Just as the living and the ‘living dead’ experience communion and fellowship together, so too we are called to enjoy communion and fellowship with Jesus Christ²⁰⁶. (6) Jesus is a mediator, as are ancestors. I shall develop this point shortly. Despite such similarities, the superiority of Jesus Christ as the Supreme Ancestor over and against African ancestors is telling!

African ancestors are said to be mediators, and whilst Jesus is also said to be a mediator, He renders every other intermediary weak and redundant on account of His infinite power and superiority. Unlike African ancestors, Jesus “is the superior Mediator by virtue of His Deity and work of redemption. The religious practices, rituals, worship and sacrifices of all religions and cultures fall under this super work of Christ²⁰⁷” (Turaki 2006:108). Therefore, as Nyende points out, “Jesus’

²⁰² Jn 5:22-23; Heb 3:3-4

²⁰³ Mt 18:20; 28:20; Jn 14:18-20; Heb 13:5

²⁰⁴ Mt 5:13-16; Mk 3:7-14; Jn 13:34-35

²⁰⁵ Mt 9:36, 10:8; 11:5; 14:14; 20:34, Jn 15:12-14

²⁰⁶ 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Jn 1:1-2

²⁰⁷ 1 Tim 2:5; 1 Jn 2:1-2; Heb 8:6-7; Heb 9:9-14; Heb 12:24

superior mediation, is on the basis of who he is, and what he has done”, as Hebrews 2:5-18 clarifies. Accordingly, in the African context Christ becomes the “*definitive mediator*” (Nyende 2007:367).

The origin of African ancestors is purely human. The Supreme Ancestor on the other hand is Divine, He is the Supreme Being!²⁰⁸ This puts Jesus, as an Ancestor in a very different position than any ordinary ancestor.

Whilst there is confusion as to whether ancestors are worshiped or venerated, it is generally understood that they should be venerated rather than worshiped, and indeed ancestors, while they require veneration, do not require worship. There is no question on the other hand that Jesus the Supreme Ancestor should be worshipped by all people and all spirits²⁰⁹. In fact, as we read in Revelation 5:11-14, all the ‘spirits’ (angelic beings) worship Him on account of His atoning work which by His blood and sacrifice ransomed people for YHWH.

Although ancestors lived admirable, moral lives worthy of honour, being human, they were by no means sinless. In fact, Scripture makes it clear that no human being, except Jesus Christ, is without sin²¹⁰. The Supreme Ancestor, Jesus, on the other hand, is wonderfully unique for He is entirely sinless, He has never known sin²¹¹. Jesus’ sinlessness makes Him infinitely more powerful and superior than any other ancestor or intermediary (Light 2010:195). The worth of a sacrifice offered by a sinless being is of course boundless! As I explained in my discussion on 2 Corinthians 5:21, it was because of the sin of humanity that Christ, the Supreme Ancestor who knew no sin, took all the sin of the world upon Himself and was made to be sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of YHWH (cf. Is 53:10-11). In this way Jesus the Supreme Ancestor presents himself as the (penal) substitutionary offering for us. Not only is Jesus without sin, but he also came so that he may take away our sin and offences as I discussed

²⁰⁸ Mt 28:19; Mk 1:1-3; Jn 1:1-18; 5:17-18; 8:58; 17:15; 20:27-28; Phil 2:5-6; Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:6,8

²⁰⁹ Mt 2:2, 11; 14:33; 28:9, 17; Lk 24:52; Jn 9:38; Heb 1:6

²¹⁰ Rom 3:23; 3:10; 1 Jn 1:10

²¹¹ 1 Pt 2:22; Heb 4:15

in 1 John 3:4-10 (esp. v5a). Ordinary ancestors are unable to take away peoples sin because they themselves are inherently sinful. Despite their ‘admirable’, ‘moral lives’, their sin also means that they practiced lawlessness (v4).

Just like the Supreme Being, Jesus the Supreme Ancestor who is YHWH Himself, is all powerful. I demonstrated in *The Drama of Atonement Synthesis in Biblical Narrative* the nature of His power, and that one day He would destroy every rule, authority and power²¹² and reign until He has placed all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that the YHWH will destroy is death (1 Cor 15:24b-26). The *Christus Victor* motif is a powerful image for Africans here. Not only does the Apostle Paul tell us in Ephesians 1:18-23 of Christ’s immeasurable greatness of His power towards those who believe, but he also provides us with a Christocentric interpretation of Psalm 110. Here he gives a generous description of the spiritual forces subjected to Christ, and that He is seated at YHWH’s right hand, having a status that is above all rule, power and authority of the transcendent spirit world and above all dominion²¹³. No ancestor or African claims such prominence, omnipotence and rulership!

Furthermore, African ancestors were born as human, that is, they have a beginning. The Supreme Ancestor, however, is eternal on both sides of the continuum. He is always existent, without beginning and without end²¹⁴.

Earlier Reed and Mtukwa expressed concern regarding ethnocentrism, when we understand Jesus as an ancestor. I have, however, carefully noted in my discussions on John 10:16 and 12:32, that Christ unites all peoples, both Jew and Gentile, by drawing all people to himself²¹⁵. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 also points out that through the atoning work of the Supreme Ancestor, Jesus Christ, all the world has been reconciled to YHWH. This is beautifully reiterated in Revelation 5:9²¹⁶, where one may infer that Jesus is the Supreme Ancestor common to “every tribe

²¹² cf. my discussion on Ps 110 and Heb 2:14-15.

²¹³ Rev 5:5-13; Mt 28:18

²¹⁴ Jn 1:1-2; Jn 8:56-58; Jn 17:5; Heb 1:2; Heb 13:8; Rev 1:8; 22:13

²¹⁵ cf. Eph 2:11-16

²¹⁶ cf. my discussion above on Rev 5:5-13.

and language and people and nation” (ESV). Here Jesus is unusual because He is not a local ancestor, but is the supreme, universal Ancestor to all African communities. As mentioned, this is inline with Wiredu (1992:137) who wrote, “If an ancestor is a ruler, the scope of his activities goes beyond his own family to the whole of his town or kingdom”. And the rulership of Christ is supreme and universal!

Although African ancestors offer salvation in terms of protection, security and aid, this salvation is almost always uncertain and unfruitful. A read through Africa’s history in Butcher (2008; 2010), Dowden (2009), Guest (2004), Maathai (2009), Meredith (2005) and Naipaul (2010) demonstrates just this! Christ the Supreme Ancestor on the other hand provides an eternal salvation²¹⁷, that is both certain and effectual. Further, ancestors require frequent offerings and sacrifices to evoke their benevolent intervention (cf. Bediako 2004:30; Khathide 2007:331; Light 2010:105; Mbiti 1991:68; Orobator 2008:75). Christ on the other hand, did the unthinkable and offered Himself as the offering and sacrifice for us (Eph 5:2). And, having been made like us in our humanity in every way, made Himself a propitiation for our offences (Heb 2:17). Thus, by the sacrifice of His own blood, not by goats and calves, Jesus secures an eternal redemption becoming a new intermediary, of a very different kind (Heb 9:12-15; 1Pt 1:18-20) from that of the African intermediaries. Now, because of Jesus’ superiority and power, there can only be one mediator (1 Tim 2:5). Consequently, Jesus presents Himself as the Supreme Ancestor who becomes the offering and sacrifice, and because an Ancestor takes it upon Himself to offer a sacrifice of unequal worth, He renders the work of all other ancestors, intermediaries, offerings and sacrifices redundant, for He is infinitely greater (Heb 10; esp. vv 12-14).

The *Christus Victor* motif is explicit in Jesus’ resurrection. His infinite power and superiority as the Supreme Ancestor is sealed and justified through His bodily resurrection. Not a single ancestor has ever undergone bodily resurrection after death, indeed they exist in spirit form among their communities. Conversely,

²¹⁷ cf. Heb 9:12-15; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Jn 3:16; 5:24; 10:13, 28; 1 Jn 5:11-13

Jesus was resurrected bodily (1 Cor 15; 1 Peter 3:21-23). This too places Jesus Christ in the status of Supreme Ancestor, for He alone has literally conquered death²¹⁸. Further, His resurrection as the ‘first fruits’ is a promise that through His offering and sacrifice, His atoning work on the cross, He will one day likewise resurrect our bodies, offering us imperishable salvation²¹⁹! (1 Cor 15:35-58).

In this discussion I have sought to avoid a compromise or even a synthesis between ATR and orthodox Christianity. Rather I have placed Jesus Christ in the very centre of African socio-cosmology and watched it come to life as Christ Himself restructures it for His glory and the salvation of many!

4.4.4 Conclusion

This section on African socio-cosmology began with a discussion on the African ontology of God. Here I described how he is understood by African people as the Supreme Being. I also noted how a God without Jesus Christ, and His work of atonement, is in fact a very different God from the Judeo-Christian concept of God. I acknowledged, however, that the Supreme Being does in fact point us to YHWH, even though he is not YHWH himself. The second discussion focussed on intermediaries, with a special emphasis on African ancestors. I demonstrated the significance of the ancestors for African socio-cosmology. I then sought to place Jesus Christ as the Supreme Ancestor in such a metaphysical construction. By doing this we were able to explore the implications that Jesus and atonement synthesis had on African metaphysics. The implications of which become explicit in marking out YHWH as the atoning God, different from the traditional African concept of God. This would of course affect the African’s view of God if he is to explore the Judeo-Christian notion of God. Further, the superiority of Jesus Christ through His atonement renders the intermediary work of all other mediators redundant and presented Christ as the Supreme Ancestor, the ultimate sacrifice and the ultimate saviour. The implications of which, offer a conception of Christ

²¹⁸ cf. Lk 24:46-47; Jn 11:25-26; Rom 6:4, 9; 1 Cor 15:3-5; Phil 3:10; 1 Pt 1:3

²¹⁹ I shall explore this idea further under *Africa’s Socio-Renewal and Cosmic Harmony*.

that is easily accessible to Africans and presents them with the hope of redemption. In the section which follows I shall consider the implications of Atonement Synthesis within African socio-disharmony.

4.5 African Socio-Disharmony

4.5.1 Introduction

In the previous discussion I explored atonement synthesis and its implications for African socio-cosmology. The present discussion, however, will examine the implications of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs for African socio-disharmony. That is, those metaphysical categories which create disorder, anarchy, suffering, anguish and harm within African societies. Although the end cause of African socio-disharmony is not always metaphysical, the underlying causes usually are. This discussion will explore atonement synthesis in the following: (1) malevolent entities, (2) African concept of sin, (3) witchcraft, and (4) theodicy.

4.5.2 Malevolent Entities

Like intermediaries, “spirits and spirit possession are part and parcel of African socio-spiritual life” (Khathide 2007:370). There are apparently a great variety of spirit beings, many of them malevolent. Some of these evil forces are harnessed by witches and wizards to accomplish malicious deeds (cf. Khathide 2007:326). Yet on the other hand, people can enter a relationship with benevolent spirits and share in their blessings and power, receiving their protection and assistance from evil forces (Kunhiyop 2008:18; Bediako 2004:87). Ultimately malevolent entities are a major cause of socio-disharmony, causing fear, sickness, poverty, barrenness and misfortune.

In African belief, malevolent entities, although oftentimes powerful, are by no means omnipotent like the Supreme Being. They are in fact subordinate to him. These spirits are said to be powerful enough to make people commit evil deeds²²⁰, and are capable of inflicting fever and insanity (Kunhiyop 2008:18). Bujo explains how every individual is always anxious about protecting their life, and those of their families, against the malevolent attacks of evil spirits. Yet apparently such attacks from evil spirits can be appeased by making special offerings through a traditional specialist²²¹. Accordingly, Africa has produced complex systems of ritual to protect life against such malevolence. There is, therefore, an intense preoccupation which haunts the lives of countless Africans (1992:27). The terror of malevolent entities is not peculiar to African metaphysics, but is evident throughout the biblical narrative as well²²².

The concept of Satan in Africa also calls for attention. Khathide argues that in Africa there is hardly an equivalent for the biblical concept of Satan, resulting in Bible translators in Africa leaving the rendering of ‘Satan’ untranslated, they simply Africanised ‘Satan’ (2007:356). Khathide, having surveyed some of these African images of what could be referred to as representations of the Christian concept of Satan, finds no figure in Africa that is comparable to the devil of the Christian scriptures (2007:357). Contrary to Khathide I argue that Africans do indeed have a very real sense of a satanic figure that is very much likened to Satan, or the devil. Mbiti likewise explains that some Africans personify evil itself. He looks to the Vugusu as an example who talk of “an evil divinity which God created good, but later on turned against Him and began to do evil²²³. This divinity is assisted by evil spirits, and all evil now comes from that lot” (Mbiti

²²⁰ cf. Lk 22:3; Acts 5:3.

²²¹ Naipaul (2010:238) recounts a conversation with an African, “... For bigger problems, like charms, you have to go to a master healer. He has been a disciple of a great man for many years. He has learned all the ‘tactics’ of the spiritual world. When it comes to fighting the spirits you have to know the rules, or you can die, because the spirits are very strong”.

²²² Discussions on malevolent entities diabolic and how Jesus dealt with them are found throughout my discussion on *New Testament Narrative and Discourse*, in my previous chapter; cf. 1 Sam 16:14; Mt 4:23-25; 8:14-17; 8:28-34; 9:32; 10:1; 12:22; 12:43-45; 15:21-28; 17:14-21; Mk 1:21-26; 1:29-33; 5:2-20; 7:24-30; 9:15-29; 9:38; Lk 9:37-43; 4:33-41; 6:17-19; 7:21; 8:2; 9:1; 9:37-43; 9:49; 10:17; 11:14; 11:24-26; 13:10-13; Acts 5:16; 8:6-8; 10:38; 16:16-24; 19:11-12; Rev 18:2.

²²³ Ez 28:12-19; Is 14:12-15; Lk 10:18.

1989:199; cf. 1970:116). Whilst this might have had early missionary influences, Adeyemo (1978:38) also makes a similar observation of the Yoruba, who are a major ethnic group in West Africa. He writes that the Yoruba identify one of their divinities as “the Devil” (Esu) and that this divinity is described much like Satan in biblical narrative. Furthermore, Parrinder (1976:14), remembering the words of “William Bosman, a Dutch traveller to the Guinea Coast in the early eighteenth century” writes, “The Devil is annually banished from all their towns with an abundance of ceremony, at an appointed time set apart for that end” (cf. Butcher 2010:201-202).

Further, spirit possession in the African religio-cultural context shares similarities between the biblical narrative and African metaphysics. However, in Africa, according to Khathide, spirit possession is not always feared, but is sometimes desirable and is often induced by ritual activity, drumming and special dancing. Yet, negative possession is said to result in insanity and illness. Khathide highlights the negative effects of possession when it is undesired and harmful²²⁴, “driving the possessed person to leave home so that they live in forests, when it causes them to jump into the fire and get themselves burnt or torture their bodies with sharp instruments or harm other people²²⁵”. The spirit that forces such behaviour is, of course, considered anti-social (2007:364. 368). Yet, as I have highlighted, Jesus understood Himself to be in a battle against the evil forces of darkness, and ultimately has victory over them (Wright 1996:449, 466, 481). A typical, parallel example is found when Jesus arrived in the country of Gerasenes and a man possessed by malevolent spirits who dwelt among the tombs on the mountains came to meet Him. Mark the Evangelist records how the demoniac always cried out and cut himself with stones and that no one could subdue him (Mk 5:1-20; cf. Mt 8:28-34). In Mark 5:9-13 Jesus assumes His role as *Christus Victor* and overpowers the malevolent spirits who called themselves *Legion* (for they were many), and cast them out of the man and into a herd of pigs. When African people are possessed like the Gerasene demoniac, exorcism is sought from traditional doctors and diviners. Usually such exorcism is occasioned by

²²⁴ Not that I think there are some instances of possession that are unharmed.

²²⁵ cf. Mt 17:14-21; Mk 5:2-5; 9:15-29; Acts 19:13-16.

formal ceremonies to drive out the malevolent spirits (Khathide 2007:368-369). Further, like Bujo, Turaki also notes that whilst evil spirits may possess people and inflict disease and suffering, they can be appeased through sacrifices and offerings (2006:65). Aside from exorcism, Africans seek to protect themselves from malicious spirits by wearing protective paraphernalia, namely charms and amulets (Adeyemo 1978:135).

In light of spirit possession and exorcism, the early missionaries to the African continent came with the intention of proclaiming the Gospel, but unconsciously “demonstrated ignorance in understanding and dealing with spirits and spirit possession” (Khathide 2007:358). Today, the AICs and African Pentecostal / Charismatic churches on the other hand engage with the issues of possession and exorcism. Khathide observes that “prayers for deliverance from demons and harmful spirits are offered at many church services even during the week”. He also comments on how there has been a phenomenal growth in African churches of faith-healers and ministers who offer deliverance from malevolent spirits (2007:374). In addressing the ‘primal context’ of possession, Kalu observes something quite different from Khathide. Kalu detects in African Pentecostalism a renewal of the African social system which seeks to critique and redefine ‘possession’. An alternative is provided. A ‘white’, clean possession by the Holy Spirit is now in vogue. Therefore, Pentecostalism (and might I add AICs and Charismatic theology) offers a new form of possession which replaces the old spirit possession, so common throughout Africa, by “deploying an identical mechanism” (2008:172).

Yet, for many African churches, demonic possession and exorcism is still a significant part of African Christianity. As a case in point, exorcisms are featured almost always in the rituals and liturgy of RCCG. Some elements of traditional African cultural practices are thought to be severely demonised and are apparently liable for poverty, sickness, barrenness and misfortune and countless other forms of existential difficulties. Opportunity for deliverance and protection from malevolent spirits can be found within the RCCG in way of exorcism (Ukah

2003:269). Another example is MFM²²⁶ which apparently offers “a deliverance ministry *par excellence*” (Burgess 2008:37). Further, titles to MFM publications also include ‘Dealing with the Evil Powers of your Father’s House’, ‘Overcoming Witchcraft’, ‘Dealing with Local Satanic Technology’ and ‘Power against Marine Spirits’. These publications and others provide a detailed liturgy of prayers to free Christians from malevolent entities and remove impeding barriers to personal prosperity and development. This is a reflection on MFM’s “preoccupation with deliverance from witchcraft and evil spirits, as well as past associations with ‘occult’ powers and traditional religious culture” (Burgess 2008:37). Doubtless this emphasis is not peculiar to the RCCG and MFM ministries, but is evident in countless Christian churches and ministries throughout Africa, especially when RCCG, MFM and others have significant influence throughout the continent²²⁷.

In ATR, evil spirits can be appeased by making offerings and sacrifices through a traditional specialist or healer. These rituals not only provide exorcism, but also protection from malevolent spirits and their harassment (cf. Bujo 1992:27 and Turaki 2006:65). Nyeri (2011) however considers penal substitution and argues that “the debts of sins and offences as *incurred against* the spirits” (emphasis mine) have in fact been paid in full by Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross. There is, therefore, no necessity for sacrifices and offerings to appease any spirit. Those who have put their faith in Christ and His Gospel are set free “from the menacing powers of the spirits”, and indeed are set free from the fear of malevolent entities. Nyeri’s words seem to suggest Origen’s and Gregory of Nyssa’s ransom theory, whose crass caricatures are not without obvious error and theological problems. For Iranaeus, Jesus’ blood was our ransom from Satan’s enslaving bondage. Jesus’ death was therefore a victory over sin, death and Satan. This was later developed by Gregory Nazianzus who described Jesus’ sacrificial death as having destroyed the satanic curse, freeing humanity from slavery. Perhaps Nyeri should

²²⁶ MFM is currently one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.

²²⁷ Unfortunately, however, Khathide (2007:374) highlights some problems. He observes that because the ‘spiritual warfare’ emphasis is largely founded on the charismata without the necessary theological training, most ‘ministers’ promote the demonisation of almost everything and everyone. This often results in hurt and embarrassment of those who seek their help.

rearticulate his thinking as to whom the debts of sins and offences are *incurred against!* Bediako (2004:106) proclaims so brilliantly,

The Church must manifest the victory of the Cross in the concrete realities of her existence in society, and demonstrate that she has begun to be liberated from bondage to the ‘powers’ that rule existence and the cosmic order in that context. Christian conversion and Christian conviction need to find concrete expression in relation to the ‘elemental forces’.

By now it is apparent that Africans view life as a spiritual battle. Such battles not only include overcoming sickness, poverty and malevolent entities, which have their root cause in sin, death and Satan. It is for this reason Africans look to a warrior to assist them. Hence African Christians look to Jesus as the Victor who overcomes the powers of darkness (Chike 2008:233), and offers freedom from fear, as we say in the biblical narrative regarding the Gerasene demoniac. According to Healey and Sybertz (2004:300), Jesus is the ‘Liberator’ and the ‘Conqueror of Evil Powers’. They tell us that “in the African cultural context, Jesus overcomes the malevolent powers of the evil spirits and witches. Being concerned with the whole person, he frees the fearful, heals the sick, feeds the hungry, and helps the poor”. Likewise, Bediako (2004:9) assures African Christians that in their life struggles Jesus goes ahead of them and “he alone is capable of fighting and conquering, leading his people in triumph”. He argues that the “incarnation and the victory of the Cross” are together made meaningful in defeating the terrors of the African world, both in the physical and spiritual worlds (Bediako 2004:9-10). Not only this, Christ, through His victorious death and resurrection also overcomes the terror experienced by many Africans and in His victory He offers them freedom from fear. Among African Christians Bediako notes the following: (1) above everything else Jesus is seen as the *Christus Victor*, for He is supreme over all spiritual rule and authority. This perception, Bediako says, originates from the intense “awareness of forces and powers at work in the world that threaten the interests of life and harmony”. Since Jesus is victorious

over the evil, malevolent forces, He meets the African “need for a powerful protector”. (2) The notion of Jesus as Saviour for the African Christian “brings near and makes universal the almightiness of God”. Christ is, therefore, able to do all things and is able to save in all situations to protect against malevolent forces (2004:22).

The atonement synthesis, consequently, provides a remarkable theology for African Christians who struggle with fear and socio-disharmony on account of malevolent entities. Not only has Jesus offered a supreme sacrifice for all the sins and offences of the Christian, but he has also overcome the power of all malevolent entities. He alone is able to cast out malevolent entities and His victory over them is once and for all²²⁸. African Christians can now live in liberation from fear because sin, death and Satan no longer have a hold on them, for Christ has been victorious and has paid all their penalties!

4.5.3 African Concept of Sin

A consequence of original sin in Genesis 3 is clearly revealed in African socio-disharmony. The African concept of sin should be discussed before I explore *Witchcraft* and *Theodicy* in order to provide a foundation for further discourse. Universal sin has its origin in the Garden of Eden, referred to as ‘the Fall’. The origin of ‘African sin’ is no different. Adeyemo says, “Myths and oral traditions abound in African stories about the fall of man and the separation of heaven and earth” (1976:19). However an African understanding of sin in light of its own philosophy and spirituality may differ somewhat from a strictly biblical notion of sin. It is my hope that I am able to extrapolate from the African concept of sin in order to appreciate the implications of atonement synthesis in African metaphysics.

²²⁸ cf. Mt 8:16-17; 8:28-34; 12:22; 15:21-28; 17:14-21; Mk 1:21-26; 1:29-33; 5:2-13; 7:24-30; 9:15-29; Lk 6:17-19; 11:14; 13:10-13; 13:31-32 ; Acts 10:38.

In African spirituality, sin is largely cosmological, that is, it is caused by external forces which include “principalities and powers” (cf. Kunhiyop 2012:69-70). The forces are said to be in disharmony with nature. However, African spirituality also acknowledges anthropological sin, most notably through witchcraft. For the traditional African communal sin is emphasised above personal sin (Healey and Sybertz 2004:206). Further, as Awolalu explains, “Africans do not have a rigid distinction between an offence committed against a person or society and one committed against a God or other divinities and spirits” (Awolalu 1976:279).

Nonetheless, Awolalu (1976:282) argues that throughout the African continent various myths indicate that there once existed a ‘Golden Age’ where all things were in a state of harmony and bliss. The myths, according to Kunhiyop (2012:69), “give glimpses of the separation of God from human beings”. There existed a close linkage between heaven and earth whereby “man could go to God in heaven and return to earth as he wished, and when he did not need to work before he had his daily bread supplied by the Supreme Being” (Awolalu 1976:282). However, disobedience entered this world and something went seriously wrong! In his *Concepts of God in Africa*, Mbiti offers numerous examples from different societies of African narratives concerning the Fall and original sin. Many of these myths narrate “the coming of death to men to his anger [sic], provoked by the disobedience of the first men”. The Supreme Being who once dwelt upon a paradise earth among men, “in a great rage of fury” punished the inhabitants of earth for their disobedience with death and then withdrew himself from them. As a result, humanity experiences sorrow, misfortune, calamities and death (1970:37, 117; cf. 1991:61). In some African oral traditions there is an even stronger parallel to the biblical account (Kunhiyop 2012:69), for example,

In one Bambuti myth, it is narrated that when the first men ate the fruit which God had forbidden them, he became so angry that he sent death among them... The Chagga have similar stories, in which they tell how the first men made God angry through eating the forbidden

yam, and twice again through their wickedness (Mbiti 1970:97; cf. 1991:86).

Light, along with Kunhiyop, is correct when he observes that ATR believe “in an original ‘sin’ that separated humans from their Creator” (2010:174). It is therefore somewhat peculiar that Adeyemo thinks that “the question of man’s original rebellion against God” is “foreign to their (African’s) considerations” (1976:71).

Even so, Meiring explains that “what traditional Christianity abstractly calls “sin” or “evil” is better expressed in ATR by the concept of “wrongdoing”, “badness” or “destruction of life”²²⁹. Sin depends on a particular community’s norms and context, rather than an otherworldly standard. Although the African’s perception of morality is tangible and pragmatic; metaphysical notions of sin do however exist within in the consciousness of African philosophy and spiritually (2007:740). Mbiti expounds on the African consciousness of sin by articulating that the morals are usually written on the minds and consciences by their upbringing and their observations of what members of their community do and do not do (1991:178). Sakuba (2004:4) argues that sin in ATR and African culture is generally viewed “in terms of the breaking of peaceful relationships within the community”. Similarly, Light declares that sin is not against the Supreme Being, but against the community and its ancestors, it is a breach of “the unity and harmony between members in the community or between humans and the spirit world” (2010:131). Nürnberger also argues that sin is not committed against God, or is even a transgression against a moral code, instead, it is believed to be a “breakdown of the complex structure of human relationships within the community including the ancestors”. The effects of such evil, Nürnberger explains, may only be dealt with by means of “elaborate rituals in which the offender, the offended, the living community and the deceased are reconciled with each other” (2007:28). Adeyemo (1976:71) writes, “Sin is chiefly an offence against one’s neighbour and it is punishable here and now”. Awolalu (1976:280), however, makes it clear in his article, *Sin and Its Removal in African Traditional*

²²⁹ From here on I shall refer to all these categories simply as sin for the sake of clarity.

Religion, that members of African societies fear “divine punishment that follows wrong deeds” (cf. Mbiti 1989:201; 1991:178-179). Idowu (1973:164) also writes, “One element of God’s justice that is emphasized very much, of which Africans are ever-conscious, is that of ‘the Wrath’ of God”. This he explains is conceptualised by cultic-objects in some African shrines. Contrary to Light and Adeyemo, this presupposes that sin or ‘wrong deeds’ are ultimately against God, even though punishment may be meted out by divinities or the ancestors (Awolalu 1976:287). In a later work, Awolalu draws attention to disobedience against the ‘sacred law’ which offends “a divine power” which exposes oneself to danger (1996:156; cf. Mbiti 1989:201). This is in concurrence with the African myths of ‘the Fall’.

African socio-disharmony is therefore the consequence of sin! The concern for African communal harmony is rooted in their perception of community being the theatre for the activity of humans as well as the integrity of African communities which is more salient than that which is abstract and does not originate from within the community (Meiring 2007:739). Turaki states that in ATR an action is termed sinful if it fails to promote cosmic harmony. Yet in Christianity he says, YHWH “is the only true source of legitimate peace and harmony. And pursuit of harmony or peace from sources apart from him and his moral law is illegitimate” (2006:46). Consequently, as Meiring puts it, “Sin creates imbalance in the relationship between God and man or between man and man. Such imbalance is usually attended by catastrophe not only to the offender but also to the whole community” (2007:739). Adeyemo explains that sin upsets the ‘equilibrium of society’ and personal relationships. Yet the consequence of sinful behaviour for the African extends into cosmology and metaphysics. He explains that the cosmic order is disturbed by acts of sin and thus “sin, in this sense, is rooted in personal ontology” (1976:47). As a result, Awolalu proclaims, sin “drives a wedge between man” and the metaphysical world. For this reason traditional Africans do all they can to satisfy God and his intermediaries and by living in obedience to the standards of their particular society. Sin is a grave concern for the African and so

accordingly “they attempt to remove the stain and blemish which sin impresses upon them as individuals or as a community” (1976:283).

This leads us to the issue of the traditional notion of salvation. Both Adeyemo (1976:47) and Kato (1974:61) state that for the African “to be saved is to be culturally accepted”. But for Kato, a distorted view of sin results in a distorted understanding of salvation²³⁰. He says that “if sin is only societal, the social gospel has to be the right solution”. Therefore, for the traditional African, salvation is acceptance by the living community, and then in the ancestral community (1974:61).

Some truth in these African myths can be found, that is, the offence committed by humanity that led to God distancing himself. Yet, they do not offer any suggestion as to whether God (or humanity) made, or will make, an attempt to restore this separation from God and restore harmony. Nor do these myths offer explanation for how evil originated in the human heart (Kunhiyop 2012:69). Mbiti also notes how the African myths do not point us to a solution as to how death might be overcome or removed from the world and how the earth might once again enjoy a sinless state, a state of paradise and bliss (1991:117). Nevertheless, atonement synthesis offers a profound solution, especially as we saw in Genesis 3:15. Healey and Sybertz write, “The symbolism of Christ the lamb who was slain is very meaningful for Africa. A sacrificial victim is slaughtered mainly to remove evil and sin from the community and to prevent death” (italics omitted from quote).

Kunhiyop explains that “wrongdoing will always bring negative consequences until atonement is made”. Sacrifices in ATR are therefore made in an attempt to reconcile the wrongdoer(s) with the recipient(s) of the offence; that is, other people, ancestors, the Supreme Being, etcetera, in an effort to avert the consequences of the offence. This African concept of sin and the need for atonement, Kunhiyop says, “Provides a bridge for presenting biblical teaching about sinful humanity and God’s provision of atonement through Christ”

²³⁰ Kato is speaking from the perspective of the Jaba people, but the same applies I believe to all African people is general.

(2012:70). Jesus, therefore, can be presented as the perfect and final Sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of all African peoples²³¹ (2004:220-221). He is, as Awolalu (1976:286) says, *the propitiatory sacrifice*. Jesus became a penal substitutionary sacrifice for all those who would put their faith in Him and as Christ the Victor; He has not only overcome sin²³² but also the forces of evil²³³ which are in disharmony with nature and society. Athanasius also wrote of how the world was guilty and “was under judgment from the Law; but now the Word has taken on Himself the judgment, and having suffered in the body for all, has bestowed salvation to all²³⁴” (*Contra Arianos* sev. 2, vol.4). Furthermore, Luther understood Jesus’ death on the cross as; (1) YHWH’s attack on sin, and (2) salvation from sin. This attack on sin he says, was a strange attack, for Jesus suffered and died at the hand of humanity. Therefore, whilst there might be physical consequences for sin and immorality as Kunhiyop (2008) explains throughout his *African Christian Ethics*, through His atonement Jesus works through the power of the Holy Spirit to set African socio-disharmony to rights²³⁵. This includes reconciling humanity to each other and to YHWH²³⁶. Similarly, Irenaeus taught that Jesus is the second Adam, having undone the evils brought by the first Adam, and put right every part of the disobedience of Adam and his offspring, thus restoring communion with YHWH.

4.5.4 Witchcraft

This discussion will investigate witchcraft and the fearful and destructive contribution it makes to African socio-disharmony. The significance of atonement synthesis, whereby Jesus Christ overcomes witchcraft, will be demonstrated.

²³¹ Jn 1:29

²³² cf. discussions in Ch 3 on: Mt 26:28, Jn 1:9; Rom 3:21-28; Gal 3:13; Col 2:13-15; Heb 2:16-18; 9:12-15; 1 Pt 2:24; 3:18; 1Jn 2:1-2; 3:4-10.

²³³ cf. discussions in Ch 3 on: Mk 3:22-27; Lk 4:33-36; Jn 12:31-32; 1 Cor 15:24-28; Eph 1:20-22; 2:1-10; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Pt 3:9-22; 1 Jn 3:8; Rev 5:5-13 (cf. Rev 12:7-12).

²³⁴ cf. Hilary’s *Trac Ps* 53.

²³⁵ Col 1:16-20.

²³⁶ 2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 1:15-17; Col 1:20-22

For the African the belief in witchcraft is deeply ingrained in their worldview. Diseases, accidents, untimely death, inability to gain promotions in office, failure in examinations and business enterprises, disappointments in love, barrenness in women, impotence in men, failure of crops and many other evils are said to originate from witchcraft. Witchcraft for the African is not an illusion and neither is it believed to be a figment of imagination. Instead, it forms part of the very fabric of reality (Awolalu 1996:81). The fear and reality of witchcraft in the daily experience of the African people is repressive! Healey and Sybertz are right when they proclaim that one of the greatest needs of the African people is relief from the bondage of witchcraft. They urge that Christianity needs to demonstrate its relevance to the people of Africa by addressing witchcraft. A person, they say, “who has gone through the experience of being bewitched and healed is able to appreciate in a deeper way what God has done for human beings in Jesus Christ” (Healey and Sybertz 2004:218-219).

It is important to highlight in this discussion the distinction between sorcery and witchcraft. Although Mbiti acknowledges that the distinction is an academic one, he describes sorcery as involving “the use of poisonous ingredients, put into the food or drink of someone” (1989:195). Awolalu explains, “A sorcerer uses charms, incantations, spells and magic knowingly and with premeditation” (Awolalu 1996:80; cf. Kalu 2008:177). Witchcraft²³⁷, on the other hand, according to Mbiti, “is a manifestation of these mystical forces²³⁸ which may be inborn in a person, inherited, or acquired in various ways”. Witchcraft and evil magic²³⁹, it is believed, are mingled and produce evil whether involuntarily or deliberately (1975:166-167). Magic plays a significant part in ATR and as Idowu explains, is an attempt of a human being in tapping into and manipulating evil cosmic forces for one’s own benefit. He proclaims that magic, “serves man’s

²³⁷ The distinctions between sorcery and witchcraft are minimal and nuanced and so I shall include them both under ‘witchcraft’.

²³⁸ Khathide (2007) offers detailed discussions on the mystical means employed by witches and their craft in his book, *Hidden Powers: Spirits in the First-Century Jewish World, Luke-Acts and in the African Context* (2nd ed.).

²³⁹ Conversely, Khathide (2007:314) says that ‘good’ magic is valued by African society. The rainmakers, traditional healers and other specialists employ their knowledge to manipulate the mystical forces for the welfare of others in their community.

egocentricity and is for him a short cut to spiritual bliss” (1973:190). Khathide says that this magic is employed to harm others or their property (2007:314). I am in agreement with Awolalu (1996:83-84) who articulates his understanding of magic emphasising the ‘omnipotence of thought’. That is, as he explains, “a man wishes that certain things may happen, and they do happen as he wishes – the wishes may be good or evil”. Thus, while witchcraft is intangible, it “is projected from the mind – it is psychic”. He believes that man is created powerful, able to reconstruct and demolish. When he is destructive, he acts “contrary to the will of his Creator”. In other words, witches promote socio-disharmony.

Perhaps the most prominent feature of witchcraft is its anti-social nature. Kunhiyop is correct when he writes that “witchcraft has nothing good to offer” and that “it encourages disrespect for parents and children”, resulting in “disunity and hatred among families, and even murder” (2008:382). They are indeed as Mbiti (1970:225) points out, “the great enemies of society”. Turaki (2006:103) mentions that witches not only harm their victims, but can sometimes even kill them. Apparently, the killing of a victim can be achieved by casting spells from a distance, or meddling with articles of clothing, nail clippings or hair. Otherwise they may also use poison to achieve their evil ends²⁴⁰.

Mbiti makes an interesting distinction. He says insanity and psychological disturbances are usually accredited to malevolent spirits even though witches might be thought responsible. Witchcraft in contrast is accredited to physical harm and individual illnesses (Mbiti 1989:44). Kunhiyop makes a similar observation when he argues that witchcraft “is the traditional way of explaining the ultimate cause of any evil, misfortune or death”. According to him, it offers convenient explanations for events and their causes that are thought to be unnatural, like premature death, barrenness or sterility, ghastly accidents, etcetera (2008:377-378; Awolalu 1996:87). Conversely, Khathide argues that to attribute every misfortune and every mysterious accident to witchcraft undermines the opportunity for true repentance, and Christian faith. He believes, and I think

²⁴⁰ cf. Khathide (2007:344-347) for a detailed discussion on the anti-social behaviour of witches.

rightly so, that Africans need to learn to accept responsibility for their actions and limitations” (2007:350). Kunhiyop develops this thought insisting that the Christian “needs to understand that the ultimate source of evil is sin”, and that the result of sin is death and suffering (Rom 6:23; cf. 5:12). Evil and suffering he says, are not only a result of Adam’s sin, but are also the consequences of the choices we make, for instance, if we behave promiscuously and are infected with HIV/AIDS, it is not witchcraft that we should blame, but our own immoral behaviour! (2008:387-388).

Yet, early missionaries and African church leaders as Kunhiyop says “have dismissed belief in witchcraft as mere superstition. In doing this, they fail to understand the African worldview” (2008:383). With all of the above said, I as a Westerner, do not wish to discount belief in witchcraft, but rather to engage with it on African terms, because for the African, witchcraft is indeed very real and it needs to be addressed appropriately.

In his article, *Internalism and the Rationality of African Metaphysical Beliefs*, Ikuebobe provides a convincing argument for the rationality (cf. Kunhiyop 2008:378-380) and coherence of the African belief in witchcraft. He argues that “there is an internalist rational basis for African metaphysical belief in witchcraft, which has been considered an irrational belief”. He believes that “those who deny the rationality of Africans’ belief in witchcraft rely on externalist scientific standards”, yet the foundation for a rational belief of such a metaphysical nature cannot be undercut or explained by scientific standards! In fact, scientific myths are more successful than metaphysical myths like witchcraft, Ikuenobe says. Nevertheless it does not imply that African metaphysical myths are irrational. By scientific myths, Ikuenobe has in mind atoms, neutrons and quantum physics. He gives the following illustration, “We can perhaps appreciate why someone who does not understand the workings of electronics and electrical systems will think it is irrational if told that pressing a button on a remote control will switch on a television set” (2000:125, 135-136). Promoting coherence in the belief in witchcraft, Ikuenobe (2000:128) states the following,

It is reasonable to argue that the rationality of the metaphysical belief in witchcraft may be fundamentally construed in an internalist sense to involve the ability to see a coherence relationship among evidence, a set of background beliefs, and the belief. The belief in witchcraft exists and is meaningful for African people relative to the coherent context of their beliefs and lived experiences: this provides the basis for its understanding and acceptance. Thus, the rationality of the metaphysical belief in witchcraft cannot be determined, empirically, objectively, and out of context.

It follows that 'lived experience' provides the context in which one might believe in witchcraft. In Africa it is unhelpful to say that witchcraft is illusionary because for them it is very much a part of their reality and experience (Khathide 2007:342). Awolalu (1996:88) also makes it clear that in consequence of the personal experiences of many Africans, and non-belief in witchcraft for most Africans, is absurd. Therefore, to understand the African belief in witchcraft, I argue, along with Ikuenobe (2000:130), that it should be understood relative to the African's own perspective, lived experience and belief systems, whether we agree with it or not. Apparently, the African conception of cosmology and ontology give credibility to the belief in witchcraft in light of the nature of event causation in their worldview. Within this worldview, coherence exists for the belief of witchcraft (Ikuenobe 2000:133).

Therefore, despite the fact that Africans are inclined to attribute every misfortune and mysterious accident to witchcraft, when in fact their own immoral behaviour or negligence is usually to blame, we should, I believe give them the benefit of the doubt. That is, without compromising a proper understanding of suffering and misfortune in light of the consequences of sin and immorality. When dealing with African metaphysics we should seek to understand the belief as rational on their terms.

Having demonstrated the rationality of witchcraft it would be appropriate to explore the role of the traditional healer, or sometimes called the Witch Doctor. Magic in the hands of these specialists is accepted by Africans as ‘good’ and is honoured by society because it is believed that it treats diseases, counteracts misfortunes and wards off the evil power of witchcraft. It is thought that traditional healers are able to tap into mystical power and provide people access to some of it by ‘infusing’ it into physical objects such as rags, amulets, figures, charms, feathers, and may even be imparted through bodily incisions and special incantations. They are worn or employed to protect their compounds, fields, cattle, other property and family members from evil and witchcraft. In time, the mystical force in such paraphernalia loses its effectiveness, in which case they will need to be replenished. The idea is that the ‘good’ magic will counteract ‘evil’ magic, but this is only if the ‘good’ magic is more powerful than the enemy’s (Khathide 2007:315; Parrinder 1976:123). Turmoil often exists in the lives of African Christians because of their openness to traditional healing whilst feeling that one cannot be a Christian and visit a traditional specialist (Maathai 2009:181).

Khathide (2007:351) argues that there is a problem in the African Christian church that the message of YHWH’s love, the sacraments and the prayers are not entirely adequate in helping them handle witchcraft and the fear it presents. Catholicism, on the other hand, is better at meeting this need, for they have devotional objects, for example, prayer books, the holy rosary, medallions and holy water. They replace the African traditional amulets and paraphernalia. Traditionally, however, Protestants have rejected such devotional objects²⁴¹. Khathide thinks that this has lost many mainstream church members to AICs and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches where their needs are met and they are assisted in opposing witchcraft through deliverance and exorcism (2007:351). Although these are important, I believe the problem is much deeper! I argue, along with Kunhiyop, that African Christians also need a theological and biblical understanding of witchcraft as the ultimate source of evil. Kunhiyop is doubtful as

²⁴¹ Except perhaps prayer books in some traditional Protestant churches.

to whether African churches have seriously engaged with the troubling dilemma of witchcraft from a biblical and theological perspective (2008:383). He explains that “Christian rituals are often seen as new and more powerful protection against the attacks of one’s enemies and those who may be jealous”. It is not uncommon, he says, for mothers to ‘cover’ their children’s beds with the ‘blood of Jesus’ in way of protecting them from evil spirits and witchcraft. The fear of being bewitched is a growing phenomenon (2008:383). Khathide explains that the reality of sorcery and witchcraft in the lives of countless African Christians is apparent, and yet churches do little to take their fears seriously! In fact such discussions on witchcraft were discouraged in churches and “interaction with other spirit beings were swept under the carpet and continued to exist away from the eyes” of clergymen and missionaries (2007:340).

Light observes that the rapid growth of Pentecostalism and the AICs are directly related to their understanding of the Holy Spirit’s superior power over witchcraft. As a result, African preachers of these ecclesiastical movements focus less on Jesus Christ and place greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit and His demonstration of power (2010:301-302). The Holy Spirit and His power is vital in an African context, but as we shall see, Jesus Christ and His atoning work is remarkably powerful as well, in fact infinitely so, as is the Holy Spirit’s. They are, of course, both members of the Blessed Trinity. I believe that emphasising the Holy Spirit over Jesus Christ is in any African church a grievous error!

Despite the reality of witchcraft in the lives of Africa peoples, many are falsely accused of practising as witches. Khathide points out that because misfortune and death are credited to witchcraft, some societies attempt to eliminate all witches and witchcraft. No doubt many innocent people, including children, who are thought to be witches, are eliminated (2007:349). As I have discussed in *Victory over the Diabolic under New Testament Narrative and Discourse*, Jesus Himself experienced similar accusations, being accused of being possessed by Beelzebul and being in cohorts with him²⁴². And yet it is in fact Christ Himself who

²⁴² Mk 3:22-27.

conquers the evil and the malevolent, diabolic entities. The great novelist, medievalist and lay theologian, C.S. Lewis (1950) wrote in his classic children's book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

“It means”, said Aslan, “that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards.

The lion, Aslan in Lewis' work, is a representation of Jesus Christ. Although this is very much a European literary work, Aslan's words are striking for any cultural context, and profoundly so for African witchcraft and malevolent entities. Considering ATR and witchcraft, Awolalu (1996:86) says, “A substitute sacrifice may be prescribed by a knowledgeable priest, to be offered to the witches; and once the witches are satisfied with the offerings, they will ‘release’ the prospective victim”. This concept is not too dissimilar to the ransom theory in patristic atonement theology. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ by His penal substitutionary sacrifice offers Himself up so that the ‘victims’ of sin and Satan may be released. Upon their release the ‘victims’ forfeit the terrible consequences of sin and enter into the rich blessings of YHWH. This is precisely the imagery in Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The White Witch demanded her right to Edmund Pevensie's execution for his act of betrayal. Aslan, however, arranges with the witch and offers himself up in place of Edmund, Aslan being of much greater worth to the witch than the child, Edmund. Aslan is then slain by the White Witch on the Stone Table. After Aslan is dead, the substitutionary sacrifice made, and the departure of witch and her entourage from the stone table, Aslan victoriously arises to life again. Although the imagery is perhaps not entirely biblical, being identified as the ransom theory presented by Origen, Gregory of

Nyssa, Gregory the Great and others, it corresponds clearly with a substitutionary sacrifice offered to African witches as a kind of ransom. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ offered Himself up as a substitutionary sacrifice for us as well, and although this was not offered to witches; the consequence of His atoning sacrifice is similar to that of Aslan's in terms of redemption. Jesus' substitutionary death and resurrection as I highlighted in my discussion in the *Pauline Tradition*, means that no witch or malevolent entity has a hold on any African Christian. But more than Jesus' substitutionary death, He is also Victor and Conqueror! In fact, Healey and Sybertz argue that Christian theology does not present "Christ as an all-powerful saviour who here and now can free people from all fear, especially the fear of witchcraft and superstition, is inadequate". Therefore a proper understanding of Christianity offers "freedom from fear of all kinds of oppression" (2004:22). Indeed, Christ the Victor has overcome all evil powers and they have been made subject to Him. This includes witchcraft. Turaki proclaims that African Christians have YHWH's protection, for He has been victorious over witchcraft. Christians need not fear, for they are promised full protection in Christ the Victor and they have been given "enough weapons to fight and defeat witchcraft in this life" (2006:105). Similarly, Kunhiyop (2008:389) writes that there is great comfort to know that "the Christian has victory in Christ over witchcraft and all its forces" (cf. Rev 5:5-13; 12:7-12).

It is Kunhiyop's conviction that African Christians need to be assured "that the devil and his forces have been conquered and that as believers we have no need to fear demonic forces" (2008:389). I believe that atonement synthesis offers a powerful theology for African Christians who find themselves enslaved to the fear of witchcraft and the socio-disharmony it creates and seeks to promote. Christ alone has offered Himself up as a substitutionary sacrifice and in turn has overcome witchcraft and has subjected it to Himself through His atoning death²⁴³.

²⁴³ 1 Cor 15:24-28; Eph 1:20-22; Col 1:12-16.

4.5.5 Theodicy

The German Philosopher and Mathematician, Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), coined the term *theodicy*, in an attempt to explain the Judeo-Christian God's existence in view of the defects, sufferings and evil in this world. Leibniz considered theodicy and proposed that 'all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds'. Theodicy is then largely a metaphysical problem given that it inquires about the existence of evil and suffering (Blocher 1994:12, 20). Although theodicy originated in Western philosophy, the notions of theodicy are significant for African peoples too, especially when they "are so much aware of evil in the world". Yet most African societies believe "that God did not create what is evil, nor does he do them any evil whatsoever" (Mbiti 1989:199). Wright argues that evil and suffering is not just a metaphysical problem, but it is also very much a practical problem. The problem of evil he says, "As we face it today on our streets and in our world won't wait for clever metaphysics to solve it". Wright continues, "We need a deeper and more nuanced way of answering the question", he says. Part of the solution Wright reckons, is that YHWH is "passionately and compassionately involved" in our world of suffering, pain and loss (2006:40, 43). According to Adeyemo, Africans generally believe that cosmic forces and social tragedies that contribute to disharmony "are controllable and should be manipulated by them for their own purposes" (1978:21). I shall not attempt to solve the problem of theodicy, who ever could?! But, I wish to point towards a hope in atonement synthesis that demonstrates that Jesus has overcome the evil of socio-disharmony.

The suffering and oppression on the continent of Africa are simply profound (cf. O'Donovan 1992; 2002). A casual read through the historical accounts written by Dowden (2009), Guest (2004), Meredith (2005), and others, make this abundantly clear²⁴⁴ (cf. Katongole 2011:61; Kunhiyop 2008:139-140; Mbiti 1989:165). To

²⁴⁴ Together, throughout their works, they describe the following examples of suffering and oppression in Africa: genocide, burned villages, refugees, starvation, unemployment, overcrowding, discrimination, intimidation, violence, murder, sabotage, arson, gangs, poverty, hunger, devastation of war, child soldiers, HIV / AIDS, severe drought, monstrous injustices of the past, bribery and corruption, political instability, inequality, political repression, apartheid,

highlight a few examples of suffering and oppression; Meredith (2005:495) reminds us of “the rapid deterioration of the relations between the two ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi” that led to genocide (cf. Katongole 2011:8-9). The environmental and political activist, Wangari Maathai (2009:10), also makes mention of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Côte d’Ivoire and other African countries whereby there has been maiming and killing “in senseless conflicts as well as forcing vast numbers of people from their homes to live in misery in unsanitary and overcrowded encampments”. She also considers the shifting rainfall patterns, which in part are “a result of global climate change”, directly threatening “the livelihoods of the majority of Africans who still rely on the land for their basic needs”. Although Wright (2008:41) acknowledges human responsibility in part, he also sees HIV/ AIDS as a horrific pandemic in Africa. In O’Donovan’s (2002) book, *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa*, he writes a section titled, *The Remedy for AIDS*, where he tackles this pandemic. Despite all the suffering and oppression in Africa, Christianity is apparently on a rise making it a ‘Christian continent’, Katongole (2011:30) asks the question, “then why all the horror?” Wright also asks, “How can such things happen in a world where God is supposed to be in charge?” Yet, in our pain we “struggle to make sense of things that numb our senses, to find some explanation behind the inexplicable” (2008:41).

Mbiti writes that “afflictions are seen as mysteries which often defy explanation. For this reason, many peoples attribute them to God as either causing them, allowing them to happen, or being in some way connected with them” (1970:80). Whilst acknowledging apparent contradictions in Scripture, Blocher correctly believes that YHWH is not the author of evil or its direct cause. He views evil as opposition to YHWH and its absolute dissimilarity to Him (1994:59). Blocher, therefore, looks at evil from another perspective, different from the African view. He believes that evil is “*the absence of being something*” (italics are his), similarly, “injustice is the absence of justice”, etcetera. Evil then, Blocher argues,

dictatorship, warlords, gross mismanagement, abuse of power, torture and lawlessness, poor housing, low wages, inflation, homelessness (which produces discontent and worsening crime), disease (malaria, yellow fever and other deadly viruses).

is “inevitable in the case of finite beings, who lack being” (1994:20). Although YHWH does not participate in evil, He does exercise judgment. Wright holds that the “effects of global warming and the resultant climate change” may well be “connected to human destructive greed and pollution”, and could “be construed theologically as incorporating elements of God’s judgement, mediated within the natural order²⁴⁵” (2008:48).

YHWH’s judgment, therefore, incorporates the often natural consequence of evil which originates not only in malevolent entities, but primarily in humanity’s sinful activities. These consequences include “disruption, discontinuity, disorder, alienness, that which defies description in creational terms” (Blocher 1994:103), and manifest in natural disasters, poverty (cf. O’Donovan 1992) and misfortune. Meiring says that “natural disasters point to tension or disharmony in the community. God is also part of this balance. An offence against another human, element of nature or ancestors, is seen as an offence to God” (2007:736).

Therefore, original sin, and in fact all sin is “the reverse side of all creation” says Blocher, and yet it merges “with the very mechanism of the Creation” (1994:23). According to Wright, the evil activity of human beings is assimilated with the enslavement of creation. He sees a nexus between evil events caused by humanity’s rebellion against its Creator and “the out-of-jointness of creation itself”. However he argues that when humanity is put back to rights, so too will “the world be put back to rights” (2006:72).

Witchcraft is often held responsible for individual suffering, and deities and spirits in some African cultures, bring about evil and misfortune as well. The Supreme Being however is usually said to be responsible for epidemics (Mbiti 1970-80-83). Wright says the following about evil, “Evil is the force of anti-creation, anti-life, the force which opposes and seeks to deface and destroy God’s good world of

²⁴⁵ Wright, however, makes it clear that one must not affirm or assume “that the actual people who suffer the effects of natural events like earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, hurricanes, floods, and so on (whether connected or totally unconnected with human activity) are worse sinners, and therefore stand more under God’s judgment, than those who are fortunate enough to live somewhere else than where the disaster struck” (Wright 2008:48).

space, time and matter, and above all God's image-bearing human creatures". This is why, Wright and I argue²⁴⁶, that death is graphically presented in Paul's discourse as the last great enemy in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. Indeed we can say that evil and death are defeated because while it had done its worst to Jesus on the cross, He overcame it and conquered it (1 Jn 3:8) by taking its full force and exhausting it and then resurrecting after being dead for three days (2006:89).

Yet there are still recent and current issues that need to be dealt with, for one, colonialism. Bujo fittingly reminds us that colonization contributed something to the ruinous economic situation that exists in Africa today, not to mention the physical sufferings and slavery initiated by colonization, and its mass exploitation of Africa's natural resources (Bujo 1992:9). Nevertheless, Maathai is right, in spite of the need to acknowledge colonialism as a fact in Africa's past, she says that African's "cannot continue to blame her failed institutions, collapsed infrastructure, unemployment, drug abuse, and refugee crises on colonialism" (cf. Kunhiyop 2008:149). Africa is to break free from its own greed and corruption, escaping its "culture of dependency that leads to passivity, fatalism, and failure". It is to begin thinking for itself and to learn from its mistakes (Maathai 2009:5). I like what Maathai says, but it is my conviction that this can really only begin in any meaningful way once African's come to realise the Person of Jesus Christ and His atonement, that is, His government and reign (Ps 110; Eph 1:21-23), His work of reconciliation with YHWH and humanity, and humanity with one another (Eph 2:12-17; Col 1:20-22) and forgiveness of sin (Eph 2:3-17; Col 1:22-23; 2:12-15; 1 Pt 3:24; 1 Jn 1:7; 2:2; 3:5). Berkouwer understood this reconciliation as a victory, saying that the "victorious power of reconciliation and mercy" was inaugurated through Christ's suffering and death on the cross (1965:328-335).

While foreign nations brought colonisation to Africa with untoward consequences, Africa herself on the other hand is solely to blame for its ethnocentrism. Kunhiyop (2008:108) observes that "Most wars in Africa arise from tensions between ethnic groups within the same state". It is a serious concern

²⁴⁶ cf. my discussion, *Resurrection in Pauline Tradition*, in my previous chapter, *The Drama of Atonement Synthesis in Biblical Narrative*.

that many involved in these wars would identify themselves as Christian and who engage in such ethnic atrocities and injustices (Reed and Mtukwa 2010:145). Katongole laments that in the most Christianised African nation, Rwanda, Christians killed fellow Christians in the very places where they had worshiped together, their churches often became killing fields. This raised serious questions about the claimed sense of the sacredness of life and community in African culture. Further, Katongole questions the status of Christianity in Africa and wonders whether it has “become so interwoven into the story of violence that it no longer had a vantage point from which to resist the violence” (2011:8-9; cf. Kunhiyop 2008:109, 140). Kunhiyop argues that ethnocentrism, makes it near impossible for a successful economy in Africa. Added to which, economic victimization together with ethnic wars have a significant impact on Africa’s poverty (2008:150). Yet, despite such dire circumstances, there is hope as Kalu (2008:256) aptly proclaims, “Rather, atonement contains the promise and reality of abundant life. It is an aspiration for the poor and a message that unites people across racial, ethnical, and class boundaries”. It is also Katongole’s (2011:35) hope that authentic African Christianity will “inspire the commitment of African Christians to work for a peaceful social order”. It is in light of this, that I too am hopeful that African Christians may seek to live in peace with their brothers and sisters of diverse ethnic groups, if they are able, among other things, to truly understand the nature of atonement synthesis.

A result of the consequence of sin is of course suffering. Burgess notes how suffering plays a significant part in the African Pentecostal Church, especially in Nigerian Pentecostal theology. Often theologies of suffering have developed as Africans have reflected on their own experiences of crisis in light of Scripture and sometimes Christian tradition. A significant aspect of this theology is overcoming the enemy, usually Satan, through faith. The malevolent persons or spirits employed by Satan to work evil and misfortune “are then counteracted by means of aggressive spiritual warfare”²⁴⁷. No doubt, as Burgess explains, this

²⁴⁷ Ukah quotes Adeboye of the RCCG, “[t]here is no need for every [sic, any] true follower of Jesus Christ to die in sickness because according to 1 Peter 2:24, by his stripes we were healed. He had already paid for our healing”. Ukah argues that it is in this milieu that the RCCG expounds on

demonstrates some continuity with ATR (Burgess 2008:51-52). Contrary to the African Pentecostal theology of suffering, Healey and Sybertz, who are Roman Catholic missionaries to Africa, explain that the cross is a redeeming narrative which tells of a loving God who chooses to make His home among those who are victims of oppression and violence. Thus YHWH does not necessarily “save human beings from suffering, but in and through suffering”. They say that it is in fact the broken Christ who “is the one who heals a broken world” (2004:222).

Here I hope to point the African Christian to a promising solution, a solution that is not without spiritual warfare. Blocher underscores atonement synthesis proclaiming that YHWH at the cross “laid the foundation of our hope” by turning evil against itself “and brought about the practical solution to the problem. He has made atonement for sins, he has conquered death, he has triumphed over the devil” (1994:104). Blocher also reminds us that the evil one has been “disarmed by the expiatory blood which alone washes away sins²⁴⁸” (1994:104, 131). Similarly, Wright too declares that the cross “has decisively addressed” the problem of evil (2006:16). While Wright sees the problem of evil as being a cosmological crisis, he is quick to note that the problem is also very much about us, and that YHWH has dealt with that too on the cross (2006:97).

Wright views three aspects of Jesus’ death which addresses evil. (1) Evil and death are confronted by Jesus on the cross and it is there where its power is exhausted and conquered. This is clear in the Fathers of the Church where the defeat of cosmic powers was almost primary. (2) YHWH’s forgiveness releases humanity from its guilt, but also releases Himself from being angry at a world gone wrong. Wright’s view here appears to be somewhat Anselmian. (3) YHWH, in the Person of Jesus Christ, will ultimately outwork the victory of the cross whereby the final victory over the demonic forces, death and disharmony will show them to be intruders in YHWH’s world, and there they will be stripped of their power (Col 2:15; Wright 2006:136-137).

its theology of spiritual warfare which is a constant theme in their teachings, rituals, and sermons (2003:195).

²⁴⁸ cf. Col 2:14f., Rev. 12:10ff.

Now that Jesus had won the victory through the cross and, having redeemed human beings, they now have the privilege of participating in YHWH's grand narrative as His judicious representatives and stewards. They are called to worship their Creator and to reflect His image in His creation, so that they might "bring his wise and healing order to the world, putting the world to rights under His just and gentle rule (Wright 2006:139). Blocher says it well, he proclaims,

When wild hopes disappear into thin air, the foundation of hope comes into view, the sovereignty of the God who fights against evil, and who invites us to join him in the battle. God battles with evil, and will conquer it. Or rather, God has battled with it and he *has conquered* it (1994:103).

Blocher also highlights Psalm 110:1 where YHWH sets 'my Lord', that is Christ, "commanding him to subdue his enemies". This is the first stage of the kingdom, which is one of conquest and battle. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:25 thus emphasises that Christ "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (ESV), until the resurrection of His saints (1 Cor 15:20-28; Blocher 1994:121). Wright therefore sees the *Christus Victor* motif as the central theme in atonement theology, on which all the other atoning motifs find their place (2006:114). I differ somewhat with Wright. I see penal substitution as the means of atonement and *Christus Victor* as its purpose. Nevertheless, Chike also considers the *Christus Victor* motif within the African context and says, "Africans see Jesus as the Victor because life is, as it were, a spiritual battle. The African Christian is involved in many fights and so needs a warrior on his side". The fight, Chike continues, might include overcoming malevolent entities, poverty or illness (2008:223).

Atonement synthesis, especially in light of the *Christus Victor* motif, therefore offers Africans hope, since Jesus has overcome the evil of socio-disharmony. Blocher tells us that YHWH's response to evil is that He turned it back upon

itself, having conquered it “by the ultimate degree of love in the fulfilment of justice”. He continues, this response “consoles us and summons us. It allows us to wait for the coming of the crucified conqueror. He will wipe away the tears from every face, *soon*.” (Blocher 1994:133; cf. Wright 2006:93).

4.5.6 Conclusion

In this discussion the implications of atonement synthesis for African socio-disharmony were examined. This presented a powerful contribution towards understanding how the synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs engage with African metaphysics. I began by exploring (1) malevolent entities. Here atonement synthesis provides a notable theology for African Christians who struggle with malevolent entities which seek to cause socio-disharmony. Jesus has provided the ultimate sacrifice for all the sins and offences of the African Christian, and yet he has also overcome the malevolent forces, having conquered them. Therefore, African Christians may now live in freedom from the fear of sin, death and the malevolent entities which now have no hold on them because Christ has been victorious. Indeed Aquinas wrote how humanity came under Satan’s bondage, which meant being held in bondage by YHWH’s justice. Humanity is therefore said to be, Aquinas argued, accountable for the payment of a debt of punishment. Yet, Christ’s sufficient and superabundant atonement for sin frees humanity from his obligations (Q.48, A.4; cf. Q.48, A.3; Q.49, A.3; Aulén 1931:93). (2) In light of the African concept of sin, Jesus has become a penal substitutionary sacrifice for all those who would put their faith in Him. In addition, as Victor, Christ has conquered sin and the forces of evil which are in disharmony with nature and society. Through His atonement, Jesus reconciles to YHWH once again all those who put their faith in Him, and through their lives He begins to work harmony back into African society once again. As a result, at the consummation of all things Africa will once more experience socio-harmony, a blissful world without evil and sin. (3) Another important aspect which I delved into and which is a significant cause of African socio-disharmony is witchcraft. Christ alone has offered Himself up as a substitutionary sacrifice and in turn has

overcome witchcraft, subjecting it to Himself through His atoning death. African Christians, therefore, have no need to find themselves enslaved to the fear of witchcraft and to socio-disharmony, for Christ has turned it against itself, destroying its power through His atoning work. Lastly, (4) theodicy seeks to understand the relationship between YHWH and evil. Although I have tried to make some sense of the problem of evil where there is an omnipotent and loving God, ultimately YHWH in Christ the Victor overcomes the evils of socio-disharmony. One day Jesus Christ will inaugurate a renewed earth, a renewed cosmos, one where socio-harmony will be eternal! This inauguration, however, has its beginning now, with a new humanity, a new socio-ontology. This is the content of my next discussion.

4.6 African Socio-Ontology

4.6.1 Introduction

In African philosophy and spirituality, the ontology of the human being is of chief importance, says Kasambala. He explains that humanity is at the very centre of the Supreme Being's creation drama (2005:307). It is no wonder then that Mbiti (1989:210) proclaims that "African ontology is deeply anthropocentric". Yet Africans are defined within their relationships with one another in community as well as with the Supreme Being, the spirits and ancestors, and even with nature (Kasambala 2005:307). Mbiti, however, laments that "the traditional solidarity" is being undermined and challenged and in some ways is being destroyed. Emphasis he says "is shifting from the 'we' of traditional corporate life to the 'I' of modern individualism" as African peoples are being orientated towards individuality as a result of external influences (Mbiti 1989:219). It is my conviction that an understanding of atonement synthesis may well offer optimism and hope in light of the deterioration of traditional African socio-ontology.

The penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs of atonement synthesis are, however, not always clearly distinguishable in a study of African socio-ontology.

Nevertheless, the implications of atonement synthesis in African socio-ontology do find expression, even if not always explicitly. Atonement theology is still very much evident, offering the African Christian purpose and hope. In this discourse, I shall examine, (1) Christian identity: a new African humanity, and closely related to that, is (2) harmony in community.

4.6.2 Christian Identity: A New African Humanity

In the West, the French Philosopher and Metaphysician, René Descartes (1596-1650) proposed the celebrated statement *Cogito ergo sum*, “I think, therefore I am”. An African’s personal ontology is, however, different, being ultimately wrapped up in family and community. Dowden says it well, “Africans feel their identity grows out of family, language and culture”. An African is therefore nothing without a family (2009:21, 63). A play on Descartes, Mbiti says it like this, “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” (1989:219). In this discussion I shall examine Christian identity and its role in the new African humanity established by Christ, in light of atonement synthesis.

Regrettably, though, countless African’s and their cultures have experienced dehumanisation. Maathai bemoans that Africans have not only experienced physical colonization, but also the long lasting effects of “colonization of the mind”, an obscuring of African identity. A disfigured identity is further exhibited in “images of suffering and dysfunction on television, newspapers, on websites, and in fund-raising appeals”. She argues that Africans begin internalizing such imageries (2009:20, 34, 79). Of course, as we all know, such imagery might be true in parts of Africa, but it is a poor and unhelpful reflection on the African people. Furthermore, African communities were told by foreigners “that their culture was demonic and primitive”. Maathai believes that this contributed to a loss of their sense of collective power and responsibility and surrendered them to “commercialism, materialism, and individualism”. This in turn developed into impoverishment and the loss of culture for the most part (2009:165, 276). Despite the present situation, Maathai challenges her fellow Africans to change their

attitude, inspiring them to “believe in themselves again; that they are capable of clearing their own path and forging their own identity”. She proclaims that “they must rise up and walk” (Maathai 2009:20, 165, 276; Meredith 2005:418). Light (2010:286-287) similarly affirms African identity saying that for a Christian African to deny his identity as an African is to be dehumanised, for YHWH Himself has placed His image into every African person, and this makes African culture possible. Yet, without undermining the reality of African dehumanisation, Jesus Himself took on humanity in His flesh so that He too could be dehumanised sharing in the dehumanisation of the African people²⁴⁹. It was in Jesus’ incarnation and then His dehumanisation that He achieved victory by offering up atonement for the sins of the African people, thereby conquering evil. Thus, when He sets the world to rights through socio-renewal, there will be no more dehumanisation, for then all creation will be in harmony and without sin, thus through Christ’s victory dehumanisation will be no more.

Maathai argues that “culture gives a people self-identity and character. It allows them to be in harmony with their physical and spiritual environment, to form the basis for their sense of self-fulfilment and personal peace”. Yet Africans, she says do not sufficiently recognise their cultural heritage (Maathai 2009:160; cf. Dowden 2009:93). However up until recently, to be a Christian in Africa was to become in a way European. The early missionaries to Africa failed to emulate a Pauline methodology in missions by offering “a transposition of the gospel into African categories”. Unfortunately this robbed African Christians of their identity, African heritage, which resulted in lasting consequences (Ferdinando 2007:122; cf. Naipaul 2010:310-311). The consequences according to Maathai included an inferiority complex. Their native life and culture were portrayed by European missionaries as inferior and would have to change should they wish to embrace the Christian faith (2009:39; cf. Oden 2007:97). Nevertheless, Light argues that the Gospel of Jesus Christ does not negate culture and nor does it require deculturalization, except, he says, when the Gospel is contradicted. African

²⁴⁹ Is 52:14; 53:2-3; Mt 12:20-21 (cf. Is 42:103).

Christians do, however, need to be told, Light says, that there is a cost for all Christians worldwide for following Jesus (2010:274).

All the same, there has certainly been a quest for a new African identity. Thabo Mbeki, a former post-apartheid South African President, set in motion a new impetus for an African Renaissance, encouraging a “restoration of ATR and a healthy black self-image and identity after the dehumanization of suppressive colonialism” (Light 2010:137). On that note, Adeyemo explains that an African searches for a new identity in several ways, “through political independence from outside rule, by recovering its own past, by playing an independent, specifically African role in world politics” and by promoting an African ecclesiastical ‘selfhood’. These help us “understand the problem of church indigenization in Africa today”, argues Adeyemo (1976:55). Indeed, as Oden (2007:96) believes, the “quest for a new African Christian identity would have been far less turbulent if it had been less forgetful of African patristic exegesis”. Instead, as Oden argues, this new identity was ‘rerouted’ “in nineteenth-century European forms of philosophy, history, psychology and sociology”. The result is that instead of drawing from its own historical experiences, today’s African Christianity has sought other ways to relate to ATR (2007:96). Similarly, Kalu writes of how “Africans have lost their own story and absorbed another people’s story” (2008:4). This quest for a new identity is made especially evident in AICs and African Pentecostalism. In fact, Kalu underscores “African’s allure to the pneumatic ingredients of the gospel that resonate with the power theme in indigenous religions, the power that sustained the cosmos, the socioeconomic and political structures” (2008:4). Burgess (2008:31) sees this differently, he argues that African Pentecostalism looks to popular notions exactly *because* they resonate “with the pragmatic and power-oriented nature of African indigenous spirituality, while at the same time allowing individuals to break free from the religious and social ties of the past and construct new identities for themselves”.

More often than not, a quest for a new identity in the ecclesiastical arena has led to syncretism. Mbiti asks, “How can one be simultaneously and harmoniously an

African (by culture) and a Christian (by faith)?" (1976:28). Indeed, African theologians have "sought to reinforce African Christian identity by discovering the continuities between Africa's religio-cultural heritage and Christianity (Burgess 2008:30). Mbiti observes that Africans will generally synthesise ATR with their new found faith when they are converted. In so doing they feel they gain from both religious systems (1991:15). Ferdinando highlights four African voices, Mulago, Mbiti²⁵⁰ and Idowu²⁵¹ who promote continuity with ATR, and Kato who rejects any form of syncretism. A fifth voice, Bediako, however favours the methodology of Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr who rejected the polytheism of his day but "was more optimistic about classical philosophy in which he discerned a partial illumination, the result of the universal presence of the Logos²⁵²". Accordingly, Bediako's approach to ATR is exclusivist. "Bediako apparently agrees with Mbiti and Idowu in identifying monotheistic worship as an essential point of continuity between Christianity and African traditional religion". These African theologians seem to be indicating that YHWH and the African concept of God, the Supreme Being, are the same (Ferdinando 2007:123-124, 127). I argued contrary in my discussion on *African Socio-Cosmology*.

Mbiti writes that the Gospel happens within a cultural milieu and thus in Africa it should "be proclaimed within the melodies of our African culture". Despite Mbiti alluding to syncretism, he explains that the African culture needs to grapple with the demands of the Gospel. Yet, culture is not to be thrown out, says Mbiti, quite the contrary; the Gospel comes into African culture and impacts on all of African life (1976:27). On the other hand, Ferdinando is more forthright stating that "conversion to Christianity certainly implies substantial cultural change", though he makes plain that it does not mean a "loss of cultural identity". In fact Ferdinando believes that Christianity strengthens and reaffirms one's African identity which, as I have explained, has been under threat. Faith in Christ offers value and meaning for those Africans who have suffered under political and social

²⁵⁰ cf. Mbiti 1970.

²⁵¹ cf. Idowu 1962.

²⁵² cf. my discussion on Justin Martyr under Greek Ante-Nicene Patristics, in Ch 2, *The Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis Theology*.

evils (2007:137). Katongole (2011:36) too proclaims, “The gospel is and must be a liberating social force that can help Africans ‘rediscover their humanity’ and ‘regain a sense of dignity’”.

Although conversion to Christianity is essential for salvation, it is sometimes criticised on the grounds of “its tendency towards individualism” (2010:247). Boyd, however, views salvation as a facet of a universal cosmic restoration, with Christ’s cosmic victory resulting in our personal salvation, and in this, salvation becomes individualistic as well (1997:250; 2008). Without undermining personal salvation, Foster feels that an overemphasis on individual redemption, a personal experience with YHWH and an understanding of “individual identity in Christ has led to an aberration of Christian anthropology” (2010:247). This, he believes, contributes towards two major problems: (1) the erroneous view that there can be a separation between being human and being in relationship with YHWH. Conversely, one cannot be truly human without being in relationship, and to enjoy a relationship with YHWH requires being in relationship with those whom He has also created. (2) The overemphasis of individuals being the central focus of YHWH’s “creative and redemptive work in the Kosmos” [sic] (2010:247; cf. Reed and Mtukwa 2010:147). Kunhiyop, however, cautions that a “strong sense of community may jeopardize individual creativity”. He argues that there is in fact individuality among African communities and that communities promote a balance between community and individual creativity²⁵³ (2008:23).

Looking towards a new Christian identity, Bujo proclaims that Jesus offers Africans fullness of life. He offers true development. After the pain of colonialism, the slave trade, the awfulness of the refugee situation and all the other horrors that African people experience, Jesus, the Supreme Ancestor, a new Moses, leads them through today’s problems of oppression and poverty to the waters of life” (1992:94). Dehumanisation was Africa’s old identity. Yet, Jesus not only relates to their dehumanisation, but offers a new identity as we read in 2 Corinthians 5:15-17. African Christians were planted with Christ in His death, so

²⁵³ Interestingly, Postmodernism also seeks to encourage both community *and* individualism (Haase 2009:53).

that their old identity was crucified with Him. This means that sin has no official hold or rights over them (Col 2:13). But if Jesus has been raised from the dead, and they are His people, being found in Him, they are a new creation, for “the old has passed away and the new has come” (2 Cor 5:17; Wright 2008:249).

Turaki considers the atoning work of Christ on the cross and how it has affected both the status of humanity and creation which will in Christ be ultimately redeemed, restored and recreated (2006:97). Consequently, the redemption of African culture, Bediako (1995:178) explains, means “the redemption of African humanity”. The African’s oppressive past should be overcome by discovering its position within redemptive history so that Africa can offer its own unique contribution in anticipation for an eschatological hope, a Socio-Renewal and Cosmic Harmony.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, *The Drama of Atonement Synthesis in Biblical Narrative*, both penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs are instrumental in creating a new humanity in Christ (Eph 2:15; Rev 5:5-13, esp. vv 9b-10). This is characterized by a new unity, a new love and a new oneness, which indeed are qualities of peace through Jesus’ atonement (Eph 2:14-15; 1 Pt 3:18). Without negating African culture and identity, Turaki makes it clear that “to become a member of this new humanity and community, one must leave behind all tribal gods and turn to Christ who is the Head of this new humanity and community” (Eph 1:22-23). He proclaims further that the enmities and divisions between African tribes and people groups have now been abolished by Christ’s atoning work on the cross (Eph 2:12-19; Col 1:20-21). Turaki therefore concludes that “a new humanity has been created in Christ which has the capacity to love, forgive, fellowship, commune, worship and to live at peace with itself and with others” (Turaki 2006:43, 45, 53). Despite the unfortunate, oppressive predicaments that African people have often found themselves in, the African’s identity can be fully expressed in Jesus through His atoning work. Ultimately, such a Christian identity will find expression in a new African humanity, together with a harmonious African community.

4.6.3 Harmony in Community

Family and community are central to Africa's social system and are a significant aspect of economic, political, social and religio-cultural life (Orobator 2008:86). Light explains the term *Ubuntu* as that which "captures the community spirit in African communities: it stresses the values of respect, human dignity and compassion" (2010:115). By exploring African socio-ontology I hope to highlight the implications of atonement synthesis for African communities, namely harmony in community. Turaki says it well when he proclaims, "the church of Jesus Christ is the new community of believers founded upon the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. It is a new humanity redeemed and recreated in Christ Jesus". Therefore the church, he argues, should live Jesus' message and mission within the milieu of a non-Christian religio-culture (2006:89).

In a fascinating article, Foster considers an "African theology of relational-ontological identity" by extrapolating from the doctrine of the Trinity "as the source of all true being". He argues that this also has "some impetus for the doctrine of Christian anthropology". The Trinity he says is a "community of being", that is, "a collective of distinct persons", rather than "individuals who happen to relate". A "community of being" is the distinct identity of each Divine person, and each of these identities penetrates the others and *visa versa*. In light of this, the personhood of Africans is said to function similarly. In Trinitarian theology Foster explains, "The very identity of the Son is inextricably linked to the Son's relationship to the Father. Jesus' identity is that of 'the Son of the Father'". Human relationships are a dynamic lived reality which forms the true being and identity of the person (cf. Turaki 2006:36). African ontological identity may thus be likened to the ontological identity of the persons within the Trinity. African socio-ontology promotes shared life which produces common identity *as well as* individual expression²⁵⁴, Foster says. In light of this, while acknowledging personal salvation; Foster understands soteriology as taking cognizance of both

²⁵⁴ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (2010:47) likewise observes how community "as an important cosmological feature with salvific connotations is strongly present in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*".

the individual and others, including creation. He proclaims, “True salvation comes from being in community, from being truly the self that God has created one to become through being in community” (Foster 2010:244-246-250). I find myself in full agreement with Foster; although I would explicitly emphasize the combination of both the individual and communal dimensions of soteriology, for that is really what atonement synthesis is all about.

Therefore, to be human is really to belong to the whole community, Mbiti says. This involves participating in the ceremonies, rituals, festivals and the beliefs of the community. An African who isolates himself from the religion and culture of his group severs his roots, for his community apparently makes him aware of his existence (Mbiti 1989:2). In my view, the isolation from one’s religion that Mbiti speaks of is primarily irreligion. To be sure, Christianity challenges ATR, but if understood properly, it seems to also engage with African thought and culture positively. Furthermore, Turaki argues that the community gives purpose and meaning to life and is both the judge and the lawgiver. There is therefore “no life, no hope, no peace, no identity, no destiny and no existence, in short no salvation” outside of community (2006:118). Speaking of African spirituality, Kasambala explains that to hold African spirituality means to understand the harmonisation of interpersonal relationships (2005:305). That is as Turaki (2006:58) explains, “The community is held together holistically, spiritually, dynamically and communally in a network that defines their relationships, roles and functions”. Such a sense of community stretches beyond a local community into a universal community of beings and so called ‘non-beings’ whose relations reveal a harmonious cosmic order.

The consequences of sin are always, for the African, socio-communal. Sin is said to bring evil or misfortune to the community. It therefore follows, Meiring argues, that the relationships of human beings “with one another has an effect on all the relations in this interdependent universe”. Committing an offence against another person, nature or the ancestors is understood as an offence towards the Supreme Being. Such an offence is said to invite natural disasters which in turn point to

disharmony and tension (2007:736). Sin in an African community, therefore, requires cleansing, a penalty, an atonement; typically by the shedding of the blood of an animal. Such a sacrifice cleanses both the offenders as well as the community and protects them from the consequences of the sin (Nyeri 2011). Although sin clings closely to us and we are to lay it aside by abandoning it, Jesus takes sin upon Himself and deals with it in offering atonement by enduring the cross²⁵⁵. Consequently, He becomes not only the founder, but also the perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2). For African Christians then, and their communities, Christ has dealt with their sin and its relation to metaphysical consequences, and thus no further cleansing, penalty or atonement is required²⁵⁶.

In light of preceding discussions, Chike offers a fascinating observation, underscoring the notion of an African person being defined by his relationship in a community. An idea of who that person is in himself is almost absent from a traditional African socio-ontology. Rather it is the persons function within a community which is important. Logically, this applies to African Christological concepts as well. For the African the question is not so much about who Jesus is, but who He is *to the African*. Africans are therefore not very concerned about who Jesus is within Himself, but rather are concerned with what He does. It is for this reason that they easily accept Jesus as the Provider, Healer and indeed as the Victor (2008:234). Consequently, Christology is tightly tied to soteriology. An African Christian soteriology usually places emphasis on the social and communal aspect of salvation, says Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. He states that “the restoration of the community is also present in the Christian understanding of salvation as a process of reconciliation with God” (2010:60). Aulén was therefore correct when he stated that it is through Jesus Christ the Victor that YHWH reconciles humanity and the world to himself (2003:4-6).

²⁵⁵ Rom 3:24-26; Gal 3:15; 1 Jn 1:1-2; 3:5

²⁵⁶ This is not to say that the offender should not be held responsible for his sin or the disobedience of moral codes. Naturally these cause ‘misfortune’, eg. Sexual diseases might be a result of adultery and promiscuity, and imprisonment for theft or murder, etc.

Turaki explains that the reconciliation of mankind in Christ on the cross is foundational for permanent peace and harmony in community and in the world. It is only in Jesus Christ, he argues, “that we have the basis of destroying human selfishness and greed as well as the enmity between all human beings in their tribes, races, nations and classes” (2006:44). With reference to ATR, Nyeri (2011) is right, saying that it is only through sacrifice “that forgiveness, harmony and communion among human beings and communities took place”, and between the Supreme Being, ancestors and other spirits. Jesus Christ made *that* sacrifice once and for all! This reconciliation, this oneness, as Turaki puts it, is the effect of Christ’s new creation. Humanity is being recreated in Him, working towards an eschatological new humanity and renewed²⁵⁷ creation (2 Cor 5:17; 2006:42). As we have seen, this eschatological hope is firmly rooted in the cross and atonement synthesis.

African life consists of integrated parts making up a whole which “is governed by a law of harmony”. The objective is to preserve a state of peacefulness. Ideally, “the traditional African seeks to live in harmony and to balance his life in a harmonious and peaceful existence with his entire world and especially with the spirit world”, says Turaki (2006:33). Yet, it is only by a divine reconciliation that the *imago Dei* in humanity is renewed. Mankind enjoys restoration with YHWH and in community (Eph 2:17-19). This reconciliation is reason for great celebration! Among African peoples where there has been reconciliation with other peoples or communities, a celebration is usually in order, where meals and drinks are shared signifying peace and harmony among each other (Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu 2010:61). In Matthew 26:26-29, the Eucharistic celebration is precisely this, a celebration of reconciliation between humanity and YHWH, and humanity with one another. The imagery of the blood being poured out (v 28) presents Jesus as the self-giving sacrifice and references not only to the OT Temple sacrifices and ritual, but also to those of African spirituality. This is the blood of a *new* (cf. Lk22:20) covenant, that is a new order, a new order of harmony and reconciliation whereby the sins of many have been forgiven by

²⁵⁷ Turaki has ‘new creation’. I, however, prefer ‘renewed creation’. That is, not an entirely new creation, but one that is made new, made perfect and purged of all evil.

YHWH and His Christ, the Supreme Ancestor (v 28). And so, by his vicarious death, Jesus cancels the guilt and punishment of sin. Although the Eucharist replaces the Hebrew Passover celebration, it is the ultimate reconciliation celebration for the African people, anticipating harmony in a new community, a new humanity and a renewed creation. This newness is already set in motion, and every time Africans celebrate the Eucharist they identify with this newness and reconciliation now and in the future as they experience Christ's presence among them in an extraordinary way.

Khathide says that the Gospel is sufficient in meeting people's needs and living as an example of Jesus in resisting Satan, casting out evil spirits, healing the sick and preaching the Gospel. These he says are all characteristics of the new community (2007:225). Katongole proclaims, "God's dream is the dream of a new generation, a new family, a new community, and a new 'tribe'²⁵⁸ beyond Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa". He records the children of the Maison Shalom²⁵⁹ saying when asked by a journalist whether they were Hutu or Tutsi, "No, we are Hutsitwacongozungu" (2011:180-181). These children affirm the very reality of a new humanity which has been created in Christ "which now transcends the old human divisions and enmity". Those who are 'born again' into the Christian faith, in Christ Jesus, are born into a "new humanity and new creation. "A new humanity, a new community of believers, is now being formed" (Turaki 2006:42). This is made evident in 2 Corinthians 5:15-17, on the foundation that Jesus died for humanity and was raised to life.

When Africans, along with the rest of humanity, are redeemed, they become "genuine human beings in a fuller sense than they otherwise would have been". Further, genuine human beings, from Adam and Eve onwards, are given the command and responsibility to care for creation and to bring order to YHWH's

²⁵⁸ Jn 10:16-18; 12:32

²⁵⁹ Maison Shalom is a children's 'home' (if I can call it that) in Burundi, founded by Marguerite Barankitse in 1993. The organisation takes a community approach and seeks to integrate children into the existing social fabric, that is, community and family. Such children include children of war, AIDS orphans, infants in prison with their mothers, children in prison, children of parents suffering from poverty, street children etc. cf. www.maisonshalom.org/en.

world by creating and maintaining communities (Wright 2008:199). Although not simply maintaining, as Wright says, but bringing it to a state of peace and harmony. In fact, this is the intent of atonement synthesis!

4.6.4 Conclusion

In this discussion Christian identity: a new African humanity and harmony in community was explored. Although the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs were not always clearly obvious, the implications of atonement synthesis in African socio-ontology did find expression. Atonement synthesis implied a purposeful African ontology and a hopeful eschatology. The very heart of African socio-ontology then, in terms of atonement theology, is for African communities to enjoy harmony, which begins now at present, and is ultimately realised in a renewed creation. The Christian community with Christ as its head is founded upon His redemptive work on the cross. Therefore, traditional African identity and African community find their richness and completeness in Christ and his atonement. I shall now develop this examination of atonement synthesis in an even greater eschatological theme; Africa's socio-renewal and cosmic harmony.

4.7 Africa's Socio-Renewal and Cosmic Harmony

4.7.1 Introduction

This discussion on Africa's socio-renewal and cosmic harmony is really the apex, not only of this chapter, but also of African hope. Here Africa's sequence of time, ancestral ontology, resurrection and Africa's ontological balance will be discussed. In this section, I shall demonstrate that the metaphysical implications of atonement synthesis are in fact intrinsically this-worldly and physical, fulfilling the very yearnings of the African people as revealed in their myths and traditions.

4.7.2 Eschatology and Africa's Sequence of Time

African people generally have a different concept of time than the Western world. Traditionally, Africans do not perceive time linearly which explains why they are able to bring the events of Jesus' ministry into the present, even though they occurred long ago (Chike 2008:234). Gehman states that Westerners understand time in terms of abstraction regulated by a clock, and programme events in keeping with a calendar. Africans, on the other hand, conceive of time in terms of the concrete whereby time is experienced with events. Therefore, Africans are event oriented, rather than time oriented. This means that "time is measured by participation in an event" and that time is experienced as cyclical (Gehman 2005:60; cf. Adeyemo 1976:60; Kalu 2008:175).

Moreover, Kalu explains that reality for the African is divided into the physical world and the world of spirits. At death, the life or soul of the person lives on, continuing in "a new lifecycle in the spirit world", thus becoming an ancestor. Death is thought to be, not the end, but the beginning of a "new vista of living" (2008:176). The cyclical view of time means that "there is no break between life and death, but continuity between the two" (Adeyemo 1976:60).

In light of the aforementioned, Mbiti argues that for the African, "the future is virtually absent because events which lie in it have not taken place" and thus do not constitute time. However, he continues, if "future events are certain to occur, or if they fall within the inevitable rhythm of nature, they at best constitute only *potential time*". Africans set their minds on the events that have already taken place, rather than future events (1989:17)²⁶⁰. Therefore, considering the "time dimensions and their relationships with African ontology", Mbiti claims that the African concept of time is uninterested in life "beyond a few months from now", the future is therefore, "virtually non-existent as *actual time*, apart from the relatively short projection of the present up to two years" (1989:21). Neither is there a concept of history moving towards an ultimate end in the future (cf. Mbiti

²⁶⁰ In light of Kato's argument (cf. below), Mbiti's first publication was published in 1969.

1970:22), ushering in a ‘golden age’ in African thought, according to Mbiti. This means that there is no concept of a “messianic hope” or a final judgement²⁶¹ (Mbiti 1989:23).

Mbiti’s arguments on the African concept of time are however not without challenge (Kunhiyop 2012:209-210). Kato (1974), who is also an African, raises dispute with Mbiti, claiming that his “basic premise that Africans and the NT cannot conceive of a distant future²⁶²” is erroneous. Kato identifies three major problems (among others) with Mbiti’s research methodology, (1) Mbiti makes African people think and reason as one people, despite diverse ethnicity, belief and culture, (2) his investigation is selective, and (3) Kato points out, “the African who cannot conceive the future is yet able to plan the marriage of an unborn baby!”, and of course the planning of ceremonies for the rite of passage when the child is still very young is problematic (Kato 1974:91-92; cf. Chike 2008:225). With respect to the NT, Kalu also disagrees with Mbiti, stating that the NT “worldview is constructed on a linear perception of time” and yet the cyclical view of time can also be found in Scripture along with the African concept of time (2008:179).

Furthermore, Kato in a private interview with Ernest Balintuma Kalibala, a Harvard PhD graduate in anthropology, “strongly rejected the notion that Africans cannot conceive of the future”. Kalibala felt that “the African theologian who believes that kind of thing is following what Europeans have taught him. He has not been home to find out things for himself”. He continues, “We absolutely believe in the future. We even believe in a future resurrection. This is demonstrated by burial ceremonies and the contact we maintain with the spirits of the dead” (Kato 1974:94). Kato himself conducted a survey among 500 or so African college students and found that about 90 percent placed their faith in Christ as a result of hearing a message about his second coming in the future

²⁶¹ In this discussion I have avoided reference to Mbiti’s terms, *Sasa* (present) and *Zamani* (past), in his discourse on the African concept of time. Such a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation (cf. Mbiti 1971; 1989:15-28; Kunhiyop 2012:209-210).

²⁶² Mbiti apparently makes this claim in his PhD dissertation, later published in 1971 as, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* by the Oxford University Press (Kato 1974:90).

(Kato 1974:117). Bujo likewise critiques Mbiti, acknowledging that Africans indeed cherish the traditions of their ancestors, not for the sake of the past, but for the sake of the present and the future. In fact Bujo argues, “The present-day African is thinking eschatologically, of those last times when all will be changed” (1992:31).

Although there is little relation of the African’s concept of time to atonement synthesis, this discussion is vital for the development of discourses to follow. Namely, that African people generally *do* think eschatologically and thus a future hope of Africa’s socio-renewal and cosmic harmony are not entirely foreign.

4.7.3 Ancestral Ontology

This brings us to ancestral ontology. According to African philosophy, one’s life does not move in a straight line, writes Adeyemo, but like their concept of time, it “is compared with the circumference of a circle”. Hence there is continuity between life and death. He makes it clear that there is no agreement about exactly what happens after death. It is believed that when one dies, his or her “spirit proceeds to the spirit world for endless existence”. Beyond that ATR is silent. Yet most Africans do not believe in a judgment in life after death (1976:60-74).

Unfortunately, Bujo correctly notes, Christian theology tends to be platonic, dividing human beings into body and soul and teaching a salvation of the soul. And, whilst he says “Africa could never accept this mutilation of the human being” (1992:32), he seems to stop short of offering an alternative. Instead he says that dying Africans are aware of participating in the life-force of their ancestors and that there is no sign “of despair in the face of death, and no sense that one is being deprived of life” (Bujo 1992:124). Ancestors are dependent upon the recognition of their descendants for their continued authority. They become lost once they are forgotten, and their respect as superiors by their offspring is then diminished (Nürnberg 2007:25). Similarly, Mbiti explains that when an ancestor is no longer remembered personally by name by those who are still alive, the

process of death is made complete. Yet it is thought that they do not vanish from existence, but rather join the community of spirits, thus entering a ‘collective immortality’ (Mbiti 1989:26). This, of course, is very different to the Christian concept of resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15:20-28). As I have demonstrated in my discussion on *Resurrection* in my previous chapter, *The Drama of Atonement Synthesis in Biblical Narrative*, Jesus’ atoning work offers us life eternal, a physical resurrection! Nevertheless, as I shall argue, Africans also share notions of resurrection and eschatology, not too dissimilar from that of the Christian faith. As Bujo proclaims, “Our reflections on African attitudes to death make it plain that an important task facing African theologians is to work out an African eschatology (1992:129). It is to this task I now turn.

4.7.4 Resurrection

At the outset, an important distinction needs to be made. Whist I draw on African tradition, this discussion focuses on the implications of atonement synthesis for the African Christian who ought to believe in the resurrection; rather than for ATR. In the very beginning, before the Fall of humanity, man possessed immortality or resurrection. Mbiti (1989:93) records stories of creation from several African societies and writes,

Man was originally put in a state of happiness, childlike ignorance, immortality or ability to rise again after dying. God also provided him with the necessities of life, either directly or through equipping him to develop them, and man lived more or less in a state of paradise.

In a later work Mbiti writes of how many African myths described how man was meant to live on forever. In these myths, apparently God gave one or more of three gifts, (1) immortality, (2) “the gift of becoming young again after getting

old”, and (3) resurrection, that is if a person died they would be raised to life once again²⁶³ (1991:85).

Regrettably this order was disrupted and resulted in tragic consequences for humanity. Before this turn of events, people lived in a golden age, and yet many “others have lost even the mythological sight of it” says Mbiti. Except perhaps for ancestral ontology, he laments that “there is not a single myth” to his knowledge which seeks “to suggest a solution or reversal of this great loss”²⁶⁴. Nevertheless, behind these myths, there is a glimpse that there lies “the tantalizing and unattained gift of the resurrection, the loss of human immortality and the monster of death” (1989:93, 96).

Considering bodily resurrection and the communion of the saints, Orobator, a Nigerian Jesuit priest, believes that the ancestors are “a constant and concrete reminder of this communion and the gift of the resurrection of the body” (2008:113, 119). It is, however, in my opinion, difficult to draw such connections between the communion of the saints and the African ancestors with the resurrection, as does Orobator. Moreover, Mbiti explains that ancestors, while remembered by the living, still maintain their personalities, sexual distinction, and political and social statuses. In fact, although their spirit is separated from their body, their “human activities are reproduced in the hereafter, the wealth or poverty of the individual remains unchanged, and in many ways the hereafter is a carbon copy of the present life”. That is, their “physical-social characteristics of its human life” still remain very much intact (Mbiti 1989:157). However, as I explored in *Ancestral Ontology*, “when the last person who knew him dies, the living-dead is entirely removed from the state of personal immortality”. The

²⁶³ Some of the examples that Mbiti provides included the following: (1) In a Bambuti myth, it is said that God provided the first people, shelter, food, immortality and the gift of rejuvenating when people got old. In those days they lacked nothing and lived happily. (2) The Tswana say that primordial man lived in a state of peace and blessedness; they “neither ate, nor drank, nor died”. (3) The Bushmen, however, say that humanity lost the gift of resurrection and began dying. (4) The Chagga share the same view as the Bushmen but explain that a connection “between heaven and earth was broken, the bliss of the ‘heavenly country’ also disappeared, and men must die in order to return to the other world” (Mbiti 1989:93, 96).

²⁶⁴ Ancestral ontology is by no means a solution to a ‘golden age’ lost, but it does demonstrate for the African that “death does not annihilate life and that the departed continue to exist in the hereafter” (Mbiti 1970:264).

ancestor then sinks into oblivion and joins the community of spirits. Here the ancestor loses his or her personal name and personality and becomes an 'it'. Thus as Mbiti puts it, "Man is ontologically destined to lose his humanness but gains his full spiritness" (1989:157-158). To my mind, Orobator's thought that the ancestors are a "concrete reminder" of the "gift of the resurrection of the body" is nonsense in light of the above.

On the other hand, Christianity itself traditionally has presented a concept of heaven which is similar in some ways to ancestral ontology²⁶⁵. Contrary to the modern view of heaven, N.T. Wright explains that the early Christians rarely spoke about heaven, but when they did, "they seemed to regard this heavenly life as a temporary stage on the way to the eventual resurrection of the body". Paradise is believed to be the "blissful garden" where the people of YHWH rest prior to bodily resurrection (Wright 2008:41). Therefore the ultimate hope of a Christian is not so much about "'going to heaven when you die' but being bodily raised into the transformation, glorious likeness of Jesus Christ" (Wright 2008:168). Although the word heaven might be an appropriate word to express rest after death, the idea is somewhat vague. But this is a prelude to something very different, something that also emphatically involves earth, a renewed earth. For this is where Jesus' reign will take place (cf. Psalm 110). This is precisely why the NT "regularly speaks not of our going to be where Jesus is but of his coming to where we are" (Wright 2008:190). Christopher Wright similarly proclaims that those who die in Christ enjoy a state of rest, waiting for the return of Christ to earth," the resurrection of the body, and the final judgement"²⁶⁶. Wright argues that Revelation 21-22 says nothing about going to heaven, but that

²⁶⁵ The word *heaven* to indicate the *ultimate* end of the redeemed was popularized by the medieval church and later piety and fails to do justice to the Christian hope (Wright 2008:168).

²⁶⁶ Similarly the RCCG teach that, "at death, the born again experience 'the resurrection of the spirit' by passing 'from death to life', which takes place 'immediately we are entering into our heavenly home or house not made with hands'. In addition to the resurrection of the spirit, the church also believes in the resurrection of the body, which is a privilege reserved for holy people who belong to Jesus Christ. This latter form of resurrection will take place when Jesus appears in glory" (Ukah 2003:202).

YHWH will come to earth and will transform the whole of creation in a new heaven and a new earth and that He will dwell among us²⁶⁷ (2008:194).

Maathai argues, and I think rightly so, that “as Christianity became embedded in Africa, so did the idea that it was the afterlife that was the proper focus of a devotee, rather than this one – a legacy that continues to affect development”. She continues her lament; “Putting so much emphasis on the delights of heaven and making it the ultimate destination devalues life in the present”. If all delight is to be found in heaven and not on earth, then this surely encourages people to remain passive (2009:40). I think she is exactly right, but she has altogether missed the proper teaching on the resurrection and the renewed earth in Scripture, which changes everything!

Africans, however, do not have an eschatological hope of bodily resurrection, at least in such a dramatic sense as presented in the Holy Scriptures²⁶⁸ (Adeyemo 1976:71). Yet in a well known African myth, a chameleon “is featured as the messenger who should have brought news of immortality or resurrection, but either lingered on the way, or altered the message slightly or stammered in delivering it” (Mbiti 1989:51). So the notion of resurrection is not altogether foreign from African thought, even if it is conceived as something in the past rather than eschatologically. Actually, it is also thought that an “initiate comes to new life by a kind of death and resurrection and reaches fullness of personhood” (Bujo 1992:85; cf. Mbiti 1989:128). Mbiti also notes “the concept of ‘death and resurrection’, enacted particularly in the training and activities of mediums serving divinities” in Fon and Yoruba belief. They “acquire new personalities dedicated to the service of their divinities and communities”, receiving new names as a symbol of renewal, rebirth, newness and resurrection” (1989:172).

²⁶⁷ Christopher Wright humorously writes, “Even as a young Christian it struck me as an unhealthy attitude to life and the world... ‘This world *is* my home. God put me here on earth for a purpose and I want to live here for him. The angels can go beckon someone else. I’m staying” (2008:194).

²⁶⁸ cf. 1 Cor 15:12.

Unlike the African concept of soteriology and resurrection, the biblical notion of salvation emphasises resurrection as a soteriological, eschatological event. N.T. Wright explains that salvation for the Christian in its fullest sense is not merely about souls (like ancestral ontology), but about the whole human being. This salvation is as much about the present as it is about the future (Contra Maathai's concerns), and it is about what YHWH "does *through* us, not merely what God does *in and for* us" (2008:200; italics original). Wright continues; YHWH longed "to re-establish his wise sovereignty over the whole creation, which would mean a great act of healing and rescue". A major purpose of salvation Wright argues is to "rescue humans *in order that humans might be his rescuing stewards over creation*"²⁶⁹. That is the inner dynamic of the kingdom of God²⁷⁰" (2008:202; italics original).

Resurrection and a renewed earth therefore in my opinion offers an ultimate hope for the African Christian. The *Christus Victor* motif points us to the purpose of Jesus' atoning work, that is, the resurrection, "the annihilation of the power of death"²⁷¹. Resurrection life according to Moltmann "is not a further life after death", but "it means the annihilation of death in the victory of the new, eternal life" (1 Cor 15:55; 2003:170). Moltmann characteristically views the cross of Christ as YHWH identifying with humanity's suffering. Accordingly he writes, "'Easter' was a prelude to, and a real anticipation of, God's qualitatively new future and the new creation in the midst of the history of the world's suffering" (2003:163). Christ's resurrection as well as ours ought to be expressed "materially as the realm of the power of the resurrection in a world which has fallen a prey to death, and thus to the other cosmic powers" (1 Cor 5:20-28), says Moltmann (2003:180). There is no belief of redemption for ATR in terms of resurrection; it is therefore at this point that resurrection underscores the importance and centrality of Jesus, who is Victor over Death. Jesus having risen from the dead is greater than death for he has overcome it (Jn 10:15-18; Healey and Sybertz 2004:232).

²⁶⁹ Col 1:12-14

²⁷⁰ Indeed Maathai would approve of such a soteriological notion, cf. 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Pt 1:18.

²⁷¹ Jn 12:31-32; 1 Cor 15:26

In ATR death is in the end unnatural, usually being attributed to evil spirits, witchcraft and misfortune, death should never have happened. Even though death may result in an ancestral status, it ultimately leads to total loss of personality and identity. Once the ancestral spirit sinks into oblivion, ATR offers no hope! But Christ has conquered the evil spirits, witchcraft and death, and therefore through atonement synthesis, Jesus offers a salvation which begins in this life and stretches forth throughout eternity, finding expression in perfect humanity (Light 2010:183-184).

Resurrection for the Christian anticipates “ultimate salvation, the healing transformation of space, time, and matter”. From the time of Jesus’ resurrection and his victory over death, this “future rescue” that was promised to us has already begun. Considering the meaning of atonement synthesis²⁷², Wright notices the following, though I wish to offer slight adaptation: How can I participate in the resurrection and the renewed creation despite my sin and the punishment I deserve? The answer ought to be, “Because Jesus has born *my* penalty and has made good by offering Himself as a substitutionary atonement²⁷³. And if the question asked, “How can God’s plan to rescue and renew the entire world go ahead despite the corruption and decay that have come about because of human rebellion?” The answer ought to be, “Because on the cross and through the atonement, Jesus defeated the powers of evil and death, which have enslaved rebel humans and so ensured continuing corruption”²⁷⁴ (2008:199). Similarly, Weaver sees salvation as freedom from the evil forces and in our freedom, we are shaped and changed by YHWH’s reign to participate in making the reign of YHWH visible throughout history (Weaver 2011:46). Atonement synthesis I believe is really the ‘engine’ behind the resurrection. Or worded differently, penal substitution is the means of atonement and *Christus Victor* is its purpose²⁷⁵.

²⁷² Wright uses, “theories of atonement”.

²⁷³ Is 53; Jn 1:29; Rom 3:21-26; Gal 3:13; Col 2:13-14; 1 Pt 2:23-24; 3:18; 1 Jn 2:2; 3:5

²⁷⁴ Wright notes that the questions and answers are obviously not mutually exclusive to other possibilities; Jn 12:31-32; 1 Cor 15:20-26; Eph 1:20-23; Col 1:13, 16; 2:15; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Pt 1:18-19; 2:24b-25; 3:18-22; 1 Jn 3:8; Rev 5: 5-10; 12:7-12.

²⁷⁵ Col 1:12-14; 2:12-15; 3:18-22.

4.7.5 Africa's Ontological Balance

Referencing from Romans 8, N.T. Wright highlights Paul's use of the Exodus imagery in relation to the whole of creation. Accordingly, creation is in slavery at present, like the children of Israel in Egypt, or in African philosophical terms, in disharmony. Yet, YHWH's desire was and is to rule creation through His image-bearing people. This however was a promise for the future, that some day a true human being, the image of YHWH Himself, YHWH's incarnate Son, "would come to lead the human race into their true identity" (Wright 2008:103).

In traditional African myths throughout the continent, it is told that heaven and earth were once very close, or joined together, and that God was close to mankind (Mbiti 1989:52). In fact, Adeyemo says that in these oral traditions heaven was so close to earth that one could stretch out the hand and touch it, and that there were no limitations communicating between the two. This "was a happy relationship between God and man" (Adeyemo 1976:53). Sadly, these myths also describe the severing of that place between heaven and earth as a result of man's sin and disobedience (Adeyemo 1976:55; cf. 1978:152).

As I have explored throughout much of this chapter, an "ontological balance must be maintained between God and man, the spirits and man, the departed and the living". Suffering and misfortune result when this balance is upset (Mbiti 1989:59), and as I have demonstrated, the African continent (and might I include the whole world), experiences a plethora of vices. It seems to me that Africa for the most part is in continual ontological imbalance!

Africa's ontological balance includes abundant life in terms of "good health, fruitfulness, economic abundance, the power of procreation", and of course cosmic harmony is at the very centre of this ontological balance and African existence (Asamoah-Gyadu 2010:54). It is no wonder then that African ontology is fundamentally anthropocentric (Adeyemo 1976:53).

A proper understanding of salvation and the African Christian hope ought to be, I believe, the ontological balance, that is cosmic harmony and re-creation. Turaki argues that it was at the cross where the “final consummation of our salvation and restoration of the new created order took effect” (Rom 8:18-25; Rev 20; 21). Cosmic harmony and balance find their meaning and fulfilment “in Christ’s work of reconciliation, re-creation and relevance in Christ’s work of reconciliation, re-creation and regeneration of both the fallen humanity and the fallen creation²⁷⁶” (2006:46). N.T. Wright argues that Christians are designed “to be a sign and foretaste of what God wants to do for the entire cosmos”. More than this, they are “*part of the means by which* God makes this happen in both the present and the future” (emphasis his). It is through these “redeemed humans through whose stewardship creation will at last be brought back into that wise order for which it was made” (cf. Rom 8:18-25; Wright 2008:200).

Christopher Wright takes this a step further than N.T. Wright. He considers Revelation 21:24-27 and argues that the honour of the nations (v 26) is the accrual “of cultural achievement over many generations. Art, literature, music, architecture, styles of food and dress, the richness of language and culture – and so much else – these are the things that national distinctives are built on” (Wright 2008:201). No doubt, the African people will have much to contribute and to participate in, in this renewed creation, with all its diverse ethnicities and cultures.

Wright believes, as do I, that the renewed creation starts “with the unimaginable reservoir²⁷⁷ of all that human civilization has accomplished in the old creation – but purged, cleansed, disinfected, sanctified, and blessed”. And it is the redeemed, resurrected humanity who will have the eternal joy of building upon such a reservoir, in such brilliant creativity. In their resurrected glory, humanity will finally fulfil their creation mandate” (2008:202, 210).

²⁷⁶ 2 Cor 5:17-19; Eph 2:12-22; Col 1:20-22; 2:12-14; Rev 5:9-10.

²⁷⁷ Including: “culture, language, literature, art, music, science, business, sport, technological achievement – actual and potential” (Wright 2008:203).

Without atonement synthesis, that is, penal substitution and the *Christus Victor* motif, there is no victory over sin, evil and death, and thus no resurrection! It is only through atonement synthesis as we have seen throughout this chapter, and the two preceding chapters, that Africans can at this moment not only look forward to its socio-renewal and cosmic harmony, but even now, the redeemed have the privilege in participating in such a grand cosmic project. In fact, as I noted before, Boyd declared that the whole of biblical narrative is about “God restoring his creation through humanity” (1997:113). Writing about Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*, Keshgegian (2009) explains that Anselm understood that sin and disobedience upset the “ordered relationship of beauty and harmony”, the consequence being disharmony and disorder. Jesus Christ, the God-man, however offered Himself up to death which was not required but was freely given to satisfy YHWH’s honour which restored order and harmony.

4.7.6 Conclusion

In this discussion the implications of atonement synthesis in light of Africa’s socio-renewal and cosmic harmony was explored by examining eschatology and Africa’s sequence of time, ancestral ontology and resurrection which all lead up to a climatic discourse on Africa’s ontological balance. This discussion demonstrated that atonement synthesis, whilst metaphysical, is inherently physical and this worldly, much like the ‘golden age’ of which the African traditions speak. Therefore N.T. Wright appropriately says that Jesus proclaimed YHWH’s kingdom, not as a heavenly reality, “but about something that was happening in and on this earth, through his work, then through his death and resurrection, and then through the Spirit-led work” in which many would be called to participate (2008:203). Atonement synthesis together with Jesus’ resurrection was not designed to take us away from earth, but instead to make us a means of the transformation of Africa, and of this earth, anticipating Africa’s social-renewal and cosmic harmony (Wright 2008:201). Even Irenaeus of Lyons, in his development of the *historia salutis* idea wrote of how the fallen Adam was resumed by Christ who inaugurated a new mankind, a new creation, a new

cosmos which would be started, soon finding its fulfilment in Jesus. This new world of Christianity, Light says, will enjoy the elimination of death, the removal of sin and evil and the enjoyment of resurrected bodies. This renewed Africa fulfils “the longings of Africans reflected in African traditional religions are thus fulfilled in Christ and his Gospel” (2010:58).

4.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter examined the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics. Here an overview of African philosophy and spirituality was offered and then African atonement in current scholarship discussed. Following this atonement synthesis in African socio-cosmology, African socio-disharmony, African socio-ontology, and Africa’s socio-renewal and cosmic harmony were examined.

From this research it seems that African metaphysics is not only a suitable and worthy framework on which to construct an African atonement theology, but that atonement synthesis is profoundly suited for African life and thought. The implications of atonement synthesis theology, as I have demonstrated in African metaphysics, are remarkable, offering a sense of liberty and hope and a rootedness in an African Christianity, hopefully without a need to practice syncretism (cf. O’Donovan 1992). As Khathide (2007:375) points out, many African Christians have only known traditional methods of encountering metaphysical problems regarding the spiritual world. Now, in light of the atonement synthesis which I have proposed and defended, African Christianity is more than able to deal with such invisible realities which often manifest in the physical. I have also demonstrated quite sufficiently, in the chapters, *The Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis Theology* and *The Drama of Atonement Synthesis in Biblical Narrative* that the atonement in both the theology throughout much of the Church’s history and in the Holy Scriptures addresses similar issues which concern the African. This chapter examined how these issues address the

concerns of African Christians by considering the implications of African metaphysics.

In addition, atonement synthesis ultimately offers a new hope of Africans being reunited with YHWH now and at the end of this age when the gifts of immortality and resurrection will once again be enjoyed. For the African, the implications of atonement synthesis, I have argued, fulfils a profound need in African Philosophy and Spirituality which without Christ's penal substitutionary atonement and the *Christus Victor* motif had no hope of redemption and the rediscovery of those lost gifts of immortality and resurrection (Mbiti 1991:190). I concur with the exciting prospect proposed by Nkansah-Obrempong (2007:148) that African atonement theology may make a significant contribution to "modern western theology which is now asking serious questions about how to relate the Christian message in a missionary sense to Western culture".

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Review of Research

5.1.1 Objectives

The chief objective of this study has been to discover and explore the implications and significance of a synthesis of penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs for Africans in light of their own philosophy and spirituality.

This objective had three outcomes: (1) it investigated what factors helped shape the development of atonement theology in the history of the Church. This laid out a socio-historical theological framework for discovering the interplay between atonement theology and the African socio-cultural contexts. (2) It explored in the drama of biblical narrative the penal substitutionary and the *Christus Victor* motifs and how they were coherently interrelated and complementary as a synthesis. This outcome provided a biblical framework for the development of an African Christian soteriology. (3) A soteriology was formulated for Africans by examining the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* motifs as a synthesis in light

of the first two outcomes. This outcome then sought to discover the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics.

5.1.2 Design and Methodology

This research was a development from a literary investigation to a conceptual, philosophical construction. The design of this research was divided into three literary tasks: (1) the first task explored the literary works of various theologians throughout the history of the Church. Here I explored the socio-historical development of atonement synthesis theology in order to highlight the Church's understanding of penal substitution and the *Christus Victor* motif as a synthesis. (2) This task examined what the biblical narrative tells us about atonement synthesis. Among other things, it made use of textual analysis, hermeneutics, exposition, textual criticism and discourse analysis. (3) The third task was primarily conceptual, making use of conceptual and philosophical analysis. Here the concepts of atonement synthesis in African metaphysics and traditional life were analyzed. At a philosophical level, this study explored and highlighted the significance and implications of atonement synthesis in African metaphysics.

This research was separated into three main steps: The first step was a theological examination of the socio-historical development of atonement theology. The methodology included, (1) comparing the different views of atonement theology in Church history and analyzing them. (2) Synthesizing and harmonizing two seemingly unrelated atonement theories, namely, penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor*. These two motifs were highlighted as a coherent whole in the history of the Church's theology.

The methodology employed in the second step was an examination of relevant biblical texts which included the following: (1) A lexical and syntax analysis whereby significant words and grammatical features were analyzed and discussed in an effort to discover its original meaning. (2) Textual criticism was employed

to highlight textual variations for consideration. (3) Discourse analysis was employed to determine the biblical author's coherence and flow of thought. (4) The method of structural criticism was used to analyze the literary discourse features and semantic relationships of selected biblical texts. This included discussions on syntax, conjunctions, the use of grammar and the development of logic and literary structure. (5) I then studied the theological meaning and message of the major theological themes in these biblical texts.

The last step was a development of an African soteriology by engaging with African metaphysics. I employed the following procedures: (1) an epistemological study critiquing the African traditional life and its philosophy and spirituality on its own grounds and in light of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures and theological traditions. (2) A dialogical study which sought to engage with African philosophy, spirituality and beliefs. I engaged with viewpoints presented by various African (and Western) theologians. (3) A comparative method was employed to juxtapose African philosophy and spirituality with that of Christianity. (4) Theological implications for African metaphysics were then extrapolated in an effort to construct an African soteriology.

5.2 Conclusions of Research Findings

5.2.1 The Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis

The synthesis of penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs was examined in the work of the Church Fathers, the European Scholastics, the Magisterial Reformers, and the theologians during the Post Reformation and the present Postmodernist period.

By tracing the socio-historical development of atonement theology, a remarkable presence of atonement synthesis throughout much of historical theology became apparent. Despite diversity, this study indicated the relative consistency of

atonement synthesis throughout the history of the Church's atonement theology, but it was not without socio-historical and cultural influences. I concluded that socio-historical influences helped shaped the understanding of atonement in some of the greatest Christian thinkers throughout the history of the Church. It became evident in the writings by most of the theologians studied, that they sought to engage with their social context. They did this by articulating an atonement theology that was meaningful for the cultural and philosophical milieu in which they lived. This resulted in a fascinating interplay between different socio-historical contexts and atonement theology which more often than not manifested in an atonement synthesis. Thus, one can safely deduce that atonement synthesis theology in other socio-historical and socio-cultural backgrounds and philosophies could be articulated and developed in a similar fashion. This became imperative when developing an African atonement theology, and its implications for African metaphysics, in Chapter 4, where, in the same way, an interplay between African socio-cultural contexts and atonement theology emerged.

5.2.2 The Drama of Atonement Synthesis in Biblical Narrative

Although, historically, the atonement theology of the Church has made several developments and has proposed several atonement theories, for the most part, they were grounded in biblical narrative. Further, having examined the drama of atonement synthesis in the OT and NT narrative and discourse, it became clear that the biblical authors engaged with the penal substitutionary and *Christus Victor* motifs in notable articulation. At times these motifs were explored independently from one another by biblical authors, but oftentimes they were described together harmoniously. This study demonstrated that a theology of penal substitution apart from the *Christus Victor* motif, or *vice versa*, is an inadequate atonement theology. In light of biblical narrative and discourse it seems that these two motifs should be synthesised harmoniously together. Therefore, one might say that penal substitution is the means of atonement and *Christus Victor* its purpose. This discussion illustrated plainly how in Sacred

Scripture penal substitution and the *Christus Victor* motifs are, in fact, complementary. If there is going to be an atonement theology for any socio-historical / socio-cultural worldview, then, it needs to be grounded in Scripture. As Scripture formed the basis for much of the atonement theology in the Church's history, so too, it forms the bedrock for other socio-cultural backgrounds. This chapter, then, provided exactly this; a bedrock for the subsequent chapter, *Atonement Synthesis: Implications for African Metaphysics*.

5.2.3 Atonement Synthesis: Implications for African Metaphysics

Here I purposed to discover the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics. This chapter began by giving an overview of African philosophy and spirituality and then discussed African atonement in current scholarship. After this I examined atonement synthesis in African socio-cosmology, African socio-disharmony, African socio-ontology, as well as Africa's socio-renewal and cosmic harmony.

It became apparent that African philosophy and spirituality is very different from the Western world, but in many ways is similar to the biblical worldview. Atonement in African traditional sacrifice and ritual is a case in point. With regards to African atonement in current scholarship, African theologians sought to engage with Christ's atonement in light of their own socio-cultural background. In many ways this is similar to the way the ancient and modern theologians engaged with the atonement, as examined in Chapter 2, *The Socio-Historical Development of Atonement Synthesis Theology*.

In the discussion on socio-cosmology, it was discovered that a god without Jesus Christ is, in fact, a very different god from YHWH. Without Jesus, there is no ultimate atonement and thus no redemption for the African. This notion becomes even more certain once we see Jesus Christ as the Supreme Ancestor who not only cancels the sacrificial demands of all other ancestors, but who also offers himself

up as a final atonement which becomes all powerful, all sufficient, and all valuable. Furthermore, Jesus Christ the Supreme Ancestor, having been resurrected and who is still very much alive today, offers what ancestors and ancestorhood never could, that is, reconciliation, resurrection and eternal life.

In this chapter we also discovered that Africa is in a serious state of socio-disharmony on account of the workings of malevolent entities, sin and the consequences thereof, the practices of witchcraft, and of course, a plethora of sufferings and misfortune. Jesus Christ is not indifferent to Africa's socio-disharmony, for as demonstrated through atonement synthesis, He overcomes and conquers sin, evil and death, by means of offering Himself up as a superabundant atonement for sin and then subjects all things under Himself. There is now no need for the African to fear malevolent metaphysical realities for Jesus has overcome the evils of socio-disharmony. Christ, by His atoning work, begins even now to set the world to rights by creating a new African humanity which then promotes harmony in community. Although this points toward an eschatological hope, it also offers a hope and joy for the present.

Ultimately though, atonement synthesis offers an African eschatological dimension, anticipating a complete African social renewal whereby the cosmos is once again put in a state of harmony forever, inaugurated at the renewal of creation where the cosmos is made new. This renewal addresses the longings of many African people reflected in African myth and culture and is thus fulfilled by Jesus Christ and His atonement.

From this research it was discovered that African metaphysics is an excellent and suitable framework on which to construct an African atonement theology, and that atonement synthesis is profoundly suited for African life and thought. The implications of atonement synthesis theology in African metaphysics have proved to be remarkable, offering a sense of liberty and hope and a rootedness in an African Christianity. In light of an atonement synthesis which I have proposed, Christianity is more than competent to deal with the metaphysical realities in

which the African people find themselves. Furthermore, it became evident that the implications of atonement synthesis for African metaphysics shared similar concerns with the theology of the Church and biblical narrative.

5.3 Contribution of this Research

This dissertation has made a contribution in African soteriology that is rooted in the history of the Church's theology as well as in biblical narrative. It did this by engaging with African philosophy and spirituality. Too often the philosophical and spiritual needs and desires of African Christians have not been adequately met by Christianity. Atonement synthesis in light of African metaphysics, however, provides a significant atonement theology for African Christianity that is loaded with meaning for the African.

On a practical note, the implications of atonement synthesis, I have discovered, fulfil a profound need in African philosophy and spirituality. Without Christ's penal substitutionary atonement and the *Christus Victor* motif, the African would have no hope of liberty, redemption and the rediscovery of the lost gifts of immortality and resurrection spoken about in their legends. Atonement synthesis ultimately offers a new hope of Africans being reunited with YHWH now and at the end of this age when the gifts of immortality and resurrection will once again be enjoyed.

It is my hope that this African atonement theology will also make a significant contribution to the modern theology of the West which is now asking important questions about atonement and how to relate the Christian message to Western culture. Therefore, this unique perspective might contribute to the present turbulent dialogue on atonement theology, perhaps contributing to new trends in the study of atonement theology.

5.4 Recommended Topics for Further Theological Research

- (1) Atonement in Roman Catholicism: a Protestant comparison.
- (2) Implications of atonement synthesis for Postmodern Christianity.
- (3) An African Christian examination of justification.
- (4) Penal substitution and the African concept of penalty and forensic justice.
- (5) Atonement and reconciliation for African Christian communities.

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