

Colossians 1:15–20's "Pauline Christology" and its implications for the Africanness of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church's Angelology

Emmanuel Babalola

Email: babalolaao@yahoo.com

Abstract

African Indigenous Churches must contextualize the gospel when they preach it in order for Africans to understand its significance. The Gospel's message must remain unchanged throughout this process. Some African Indigenous Churches fail to eliminate the African components that are in opposition to the gospel of Christ and the church's living tradition when they strive to contextualize the gospel. Because of this, it is challenging for these congregations to convey the profundity of the Christian message. Africans are not given a more accurate understanding of Christ and his unique position as God and man's mediator thanks to the Cherubim and Seraphim church's contextualization of angelology; on the contrary, they are merely driven farther away. The Africanness of the church's angelology seems to support the need for mediators other than Christ. Here, the dogmatic assertion that Christ is the only one who can mediate between God and man, His superiority over the angels as Paul argues in his letter to the Colossians, and the responsibility of effectively preaching Christ in Africa, a continent that holds to the existence of divinities as the mediators between God and man, are all put in jeopardy. Doing anything otherwise is like hammering a nail into the coffin of the Church since every church's loyalty to the declaration of Christ's Lordship and His exclusive mediatory function is the criteria to assess their commitment to Christ. Given this circumstance, it is essential to look at how the church's angelology is African and how it influences how Africans see Christ.

Keywords: Cherubim and Seraphim(C&S), Angelology, Africanness, Syncretism, Contextualization.

Introduction

The advent of Christianity in Nigeria through the colonial agents has truly made significant contributions to the socio-economic development of the nation. The eradication of obnoxious cultural practices like killing of twins, human sacrifices and abolition of slave trade are parts of the profits derived from the Western evangelization of Africa (Adiele, 2001). But the gradual penetration of the Gospel in Nigeria is not without its problems. The process of Christianisation of Africa was too often a process of Europeanisation. The Christian missionaries never took African cosmology and world view into consideration while evangelizing (Dominic Umoh, 2013). African values, institutions, customs and practices like music, respect of elders, language, communism, belief in existence of evil spirits, and the quest to satisfy physical

needs of man were ignored in the presentation of the Gospel. It is because of these and other related problems that led to the birth of African Independent Churches (Clarke, 2006). Through indigenization of

***Corresponding author.**

E-mail address:

(Rupesh Ajinath Pawar)

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Christianity in Africa, many worshippers from Mission Churches and other Faiths in Nigerian have identified with Cherubim

Seraphim Church. The church has to discern the limit of the use of African elements in the church's presentation of the gospel has affected the proper perception of the person of Christ nor has it helped in preaching Christ effectively among the Africans. If the doctrine of Christ as taught by the Scripture and the Church tradition is impaired, then the Divinity of Christ and His sole agency of salvation, the areas that no amount of logical discourse can bring them side by side with other gods or angels is at stake. Abogunrin succinctly put it thus 'Christology is not just the doctrine about Christ but the presentation of Him to faith and worship as God manifested in the flesh. To do otherwise that is moving faith from this pedestal is like driving a nail into the Church's coffin' (Abogunrin, 2003). The didactic claims of Christ and His role as the true mediator between God and man come to the fore and they form the basic parameter to measure the allegiance of a Church. Any Church that fails to adhere to this parameter can be seen as not putting up sincerely with the ideal of Christ.

In Pauline Christology, for any Christian idea or liturgical standpoint to be effective, it must present the Gospel in such a way to show the adequacy of Christ as the only mediator between God and man. This Paul's Christological assertion as depicted in Colossian 1:15-20 would be employed to test the allegiance of Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Nigeria to Christ as shown in her beliefs and practices.

The Emergence of Cherubim and Seraphim Church

In the words of Tuner, an Moses Orimolade came into limelight with the raising to life of a 17 year old girl name Abiodun Christianah Akinsowon in 1925 in Lagos (Alokan, 2010). That was how Akinsowon became a part of Orimolade's gospel team and later next in rank (with a title "Captain") to Orimolade in the ministry which was in 1926 called Cherubim and Seraphim Church. Although politics, disloyalty, oppression, tussle for leadership power and persecutions had led to many factions in the Church, yet,

made Christianity more popular by presenting the Gospel of Christ to the Africans in Africans' ways. But as the incorporation of African elements into Christianity has contributed to her popularity, so the inability of the church

Independent African Church is the one founded in Africa by Africans and primarily for Africans (Turner, 1967). For fulfilling these three fold descriptions, C & S Church is therefore one of the African Independent Churches. There are different versions of the emergence of the Church in Nigeria. The belief that the Church was not founded by man but Jehovah Jah is strongly believed among some of the members. The naming of the Church after two groups of angelic beings confirms this belief. To the advocates of this view, the Church which had existed in heaven was a gift to the people on earth from God through the Holy Spirit and that Moses Orimolade never claimed to be the founder while he was alive. To the advocates of this view, Jesus pleaded for forty years so as to allow the Church formation on earth, and God with His hosts thought of it critically before the Church was established (Omoyajowo, 1982).

Another version claims that Moses Orimolade was the founder. Some scholars also opine that the Church was co-founded by Moses Orimolade and Abiodun Akinsowon. Irrespective of diverse opinions on the founder of the Church, the most popular opinion among the members is that Moses Orimolade founded the Church and was the first human spiritual head of the Church worldwide. To this view, this study concurs. The Church started as a prayer movement just about the time when the Faith Tabernacle was taking shape (Ayegboyin and Ishola, 2013). This movement was established in 1925 by Moses Orimolade Tunolase.

ministry became they are all regarded as branches of a tree and it is obvious that it is one of the Churches through which Christianity in Africa is making its strongest impact on African soil. The undeniable impact of the Church in African Christianity makes her beliefs and practices as related to Christ and angels worth studying.

The Africanness of Cherubim and

Seraphim Church

Some of the African elements incorporated into the Church and have contributed to the high growth of the Church include the following:

Music, Drum and Dance

Africans are used to singing. Their songs are permeated with their beliefs and employed songs in every sphere of their lives, in worship, in naming ceremonies, in wedding, in funeral, in wrestling, in working, in praising the rulers, in rocking babies to sleep and in many other activities. But the use of Yoruba traditional music was not permitted in and outside the church because they (the missionaries) regarded everything in African culture as pagan and devilish, and therefore unsuitable for the church.

With the advent of African Indigenous Churches, worshippers are allowed to sing their traditional songs during worship, beat drums and dance. As a result of this, people are rushing to attend services in African churches thereby having more converts than the mission churches (Odejobi, 2014). Today, many mission churches in Africa now include African music, drum and dance in their worship. The effect of this innovation is that the worship of these churches became livelier and prepared the people to gain access into supra sensible realms (Oshun, 2014). Some of their musical instruments include *Gáangan*, *Agogo*, *Àkùbà*, *?èkèrèrè*, *Omele*, *Àgìdìgbò* among others. This help in invoking spirit possession.

Gift of Speaking in Tongues

Speaking in tongues is a kind of prophetic prayer which edifies when interpreted. This implies that the speaker speaks in an unknown language. (Acts 2:4-11) If the speaker possesses the gift of interpretation of tongues, such a person may interpret the tongue; but if not, somebody else who possesses this gift interprets. This gift is possessed by some members of the church, and to an extent, it is a measure of spirituality in the Church. This Pentecostal act replaces the consultation of *Osanyin* among the Yoruba in the southwestern part of Nigeria.

Osanyin communes directly with the priest through *Osanyin's* emblem, a type of doll or puppet which a priest manipulates by

means of ventriloquism. This is similar to tongue speaking and interpretation since the language of the *Osanyin* cannot be interpreted by anybody except the *Osanyin* priest.

Practice of Polygamy

African Religion permits polygamy. A man can have more than one wife usually because of his office, for instance, the king. At other times, rich and successful farmers take on more than one wife for reasons of man power to keep up the work load on the farms (Odejobi, 2014). According to the missionaries, monogamy is the acceptable form of marriage while polygamists are seeing as being adulterous. The insistence of the mission Churches on strict monogamy made the acceptance of the Gospel difficult for the Africans. After having access to the Old Testament in their indigenous language, the church have seen that polygamy was accepted by God in the Bible (Gen. 16:1, 3; 25:1); (Gen. 29:23, 28; 30:4, 9) and so there is nothing wrong with today's Christians having more than one wife (Gaskiyane, 2000). Adoption of polygamy by the Church has contributed a lot to the rapid growth of the Church in Africa (Ayegboyin and Ishola, 2013).

Use of Indigenous Language in Worship

One of the greatest problems of the missionaries was how to communicate the gospel to the Africans in their own language. The missionary policy of Education as rightly observed by Hashimi (2009), was largely based on English model. To aggravate the issue, many of the Africans then were not privilege to have formal Education. This made communication difficult and retarded the quick evangelization of Africa envisaged by the missionaries. For African Indigenous Churches, indigenous languages are preferred. Cherubim and Seraphim Church for example have replaced praying for the queen of England in their hymn and prayer books with the *Obas* and Chiefs in Yoruba land. In some mission Churches today, despite that most of the members speak and preferred their indigenous language as means of communication in worship, one could not stop wondering why their clergies insist on communicating in foreign language.

Sacrifice

Sacrifices play an essential part in African Religion. It is a means of establishing and maintaining cordial and intimate relation between himself, and his object of worship. It is a means of expressing one's experience of the supersensible world and the supernatural beings (Adelowo, Dada, 2014). Sacrifices are often called '*ebo*' or '*etutu*' in Yoruba language. They are often offered purposely to appease to the gods or the divinities to avert their wrath or to attract their favour. There are also votive and thank offering. The concept of sacrifice is also recognised in Cherubim and Seraphim Church (Atansuyi, 2015).

Moreover certain symbolic traditional substances which are usually used in the traditional naming and wedding ceremony in Yoruba land, also accompany some naming and wedding ceremonies in the church. For example, banana are used to signify hope of Children in marriage, coconut to signify maturity or secret blessings of God, orange signifies a sound body and mind, kola nut signifies wisdom and knowledge of God, salt during naming ceremonies symbolizes means the child will be a benefit to the society, honey means sweet relationship in marriage or a sweet life for the child (Mbon, 1993). Unlike *Ebo* and *Etutu* which are to appease the gods or avert evils in African Religion, the essence of *Ipese* is either to avert evils or attract God's blessings.

Use of African Religion Healing Methods

The inability of the western missionaries to preach Christ as the healer of both body and soul contributed to the retardation of Christianisation of Africa. Emphasis was too much on Christ as the saviour from sins at the expense of His power to save from oppression, sickness, and affliction which is the reality in Africa. The availability of hospitals, good economic, education, advancement in technology among the western countries might have influenced this unbalanced presentation of the gospel. African Religion worshippers believe in the use of African elements like palm leaves, water, herbs, oil, and many other objects for healing. Unavailability of enough hospitals and money for the available ones' bills propelled Africans to depend on the medicine

men and herbalists for their healing. So much faith is put on the use of objects like herbs, water, oil, palm leaves among others for healing. Likewise Cherubim and Seraphim church uses water, olive oil, salt, palm leaves, candles and wine for healing (Atansuyi, 2015). To Atansuyi, using these African elements is Biblical as at one time, Christ himself used substance like clay to heal. Isaiah, the Apostles, Elisha and many other prophets did same.

The Role of Women in Worship

Olodumare established the need for the male and female to work together for success in life. This might have been the template that informs the roles and status of women in Yoruba Religion (Olademo, 2014). Akintan, (2008) corroborates this by stating that Traditional African women are intelligent, lively, expressive, determined and courageous and enriched with the responsibility of making things happen. Their roles in the social, economic and health development of their communities are vital. In recognition of the importance of women in the society, African Religion apportions some leadership roles to women in worship. Among these roles is the professional priestess role. They are usually called *Olorisha*. She can play prominent roles as the men. She officiates at the domestic and ancestral shrines, where she leads in making offering, libation and prayers to the gods (Quarcoopome, 1987). Moreover, ordinary women are not allowed to move near the substance of worship with the fear of polluting these especially if they are menstruating (Mbong, 1993). This attitude of recognizing the women in place of worship has helped C & S to attract many African women to the Church. Today, there are prophetesses and even women founders in the church. The gifted women see the Church as a place where they can use their spiritual gifts effectively (Atansuyi, 2015).

God and Divinities in African Belief

Before the advent of Christianity in Yoruba land, the tribe from which Orimolade and other early leaders of C & S came from, the religion practiced was African Religion. The fundamental beliefs include the belief in: God, divinities, spirits ancestors and mysterious powers. *Olodumare* is the supreme deity in whom they belief and

worshipped through the divinities. He is believed to be omnipotent, compassionate, transcendent, holy, invisible and immortal. Olodumare according to Quaecoopome, (1987) is made up of three parts: *Olo*, *Odu*, and *Mare*. *Olo* means owner, *Odu* means head, *Mare* means that which is permanent, *Are* is a symbol of uniqueness and refers to the original crown worn by the first Yoruba king. Thus Olodumare means a being who is Lord and Supreme, reliable, stable, dependable and of unique majesty.

Next to God or *Olodumare* are the divinities or *Orisha* created by *Olodumare* and given specific assignments. They are serving arms of God that mediate between *Olodumare* and human

beings (Jemiriye, 2003). They were brought up by God as to serve as ministers and functionaries in the theocratic government of the universe (Balogun, 2006).

Among these divinities are *Orunmila* the one in charge of knowledge, *Obatala* is moulder of human bodies, *Ogun* is the god of war and iron, *Yemoja* is the goddess of water. *Osanyin* is the *Orisha* of herbal medicines (Mc Kenzie, 2014). Next to the divinities are the spirit creatures or *irunmale* like *Egbere*, *Aaja*, *Aroni*, *Oro*, *Iwin* and others. In Yoruba belief, these spirits can be good or bad, beneficent or malevolent. Consequently, they are propitiated out of fear. From Yoruba beliefs in God and divinities, one can infer that in Yoruba beliefs, God is transcendent and that the best means to Him is through the various intermediaries he had created. This is contrary to Christian's belief that Christ is the only mediator between God and man.

The Concept of Angels in C & S Church Beliefs

One of the phenomena given prominence in C & S Church is the concept of angels. The church regards angels with deep respect and has accorded them a high place in her liturgy. The significance of angels in C & S Church is exemplified in the history of her foundation. It was said of Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon, the one through whom the church started to gain her popularity that while she was seventeen years old, was visited in her sleep by an angel who had taken her to distant places usually in the firmament for many days. After Orimolade had been called to pray for her, she recovered

her consciousness and related her celestial experience to the crowd that gathered around her. Omoyajowo (1982) reports further:

The incredible stories caused much sensation and more people poured into her Saba Court residence to see her and hear her stories first hand. Because this 'stampede' inconveniences, Orimolade was asked to take her to his own residence at Ago-Ishofin where she could continue to receive her inquisitive visitors. Here Orimolade himself suggested that those who regularly called to see the young lady, that the group should be constituted into a formal society. Thus the nucleus of what became known as the Cherubim and Seraphim was formed. (p.128)

From this story, one can infer that the foundation of the church is connected with angel's activities in the life of the founders; therefore, given them a prominent place in the church's liturgy would not be strange. This prominence might have consequently popularized the concept of angels in the Church (Omoyajowo, 1982). The young society, however starts to open itself to criticisms since 29 September 1925, the time that the church chose the Archangel Michael as its Captain, and Jah Jehovah as its founder as instructed by an angel. The Archangel Michael in the Bible is regarded as the defender of godly people (Daniel 12:1). In 1931, Archangel Gabriel was named the Deputy Captain. The opposition and persecution from mission churches whose members were joining the church might have informed the adoption of Angel Michael as the church defender.

The members of the church believe that the angels are created by God. They are commonly called *angeli* (angels, *Moleka* (from Arabic *Malaika*) and *Iranse* (mesenger). Often times, they are also looked upon as *awon oogun orun* (the hosts of heaven) or *agbagba orun* (the elders of heaven). The church believes that the angels are innumerable, ageless, and do not procreate. As many as the angels are, it is strongly believed that they all possess names. Some of the names are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Agrantete, Robi and Kase. Most of the names of the angels are claimed to be revealed through dreams and visions

(Ogunbiyi, 2015).

The angels are believed to be intelligent, mighty, powerful and holy. They are so holy that the auditorium is sanctified before the angels are invited to partake in worship. They detest impurities and might punish the unclean. In the Church's believe, angels of God will go away from any erring prophets and also take away the power that might have been given unto him. The angels are believed to be invisible, but they may choose to appear in whatever manner God wants.

Members also hold that the angels are in a hierarchy. At the apex are four angels, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel. Michael is the defender of Christians; he is stationed in the west with the breeze under his jurisdiction. Uriel assists in evangelism. He is in the North and is in charge of the earth, while Raphael heals the sick from the south where he commands water (Ogunbiyi, 2015). Next to these are the Cherubim. These are believed to be the warriors who assist members of the Church. The Seraphim belongs to another group of angels whose function is to praise God always.

The church posits that the functions of angel are to worship God, control the nature, convey the message of God to man and also carry the petition of man to God. The most important of these functions is the fact that they are believed to be in charge of every conceivable phenomenon in the world. In effect, continents, nations, cities, rivers; mountains, rain, towns, villages, are believed to be controlled by one angel or the other. By extension, members strongly believe that each person has, at least, an angel attached to him to guide and guard him (Ogunbiyi, p.117). Different names of angels are read when reading each of the Biblical Psalms.

Regarding their revelatory function, the church believes that there are several ways by which God can speak to man, for example, through dreams, or spirit possession but he certainly sends angels to man to warn him or bring him message of doom or hope and joy. This usually happened when the prophet is under ecstasy. This may be one of the reasons for calling the angels *iranse* (messenger).

A close examination of C & S angelology reveals that there exist striking similarities between the conception of angels in the Bible and the Church. The beliefs that

they are created by God, innumerable, have superhuman ability, pure, and superior intelligence when compared to man, are all Biblical. The idea that there exist certain angels with names in the Bible such as Michael, Gabriel, as well as Cherubim and Seraphim are all in accordance with the Bible position. An examination of the functions also reveals the fact that there are similarities in both conceptions. Angels protect, guide, provide and assist people in the Bible but under the supervision of God.

In spite of these striking similarities, there exist areas of divergence. It is only the names of Michael, Gabriel, Cherubim and Seraphim that are mentioned in the Bible. Names like Raphael, Uriel and others that the members used to write at the doorpost of their houses are nowhere mentioned in the Bible. Ogunbiyi, (2015), is of the opinion that these names could be found in the Apocryphal books. Though the Church claims that the names of these unmentioned angels in the Bible are revealed through revelation, this study is of the opinion that these names are not scriptural based. The claim that the angels are in charge of every conceivable phenomenon appears to be African rather than being Biblical.

These differences pose some problems. If the angels have many names, then the demons must have names too. The difficulty here is how does one know which of them are invoked? It worth mentioning here also that there is nowhere Bible characters invoke or are commanded to invoke angels. Rather God sends angels to man to assist him. But the church invites angels to join in worship, calls them to fight against their enemies. The reasons for these could be attributed to the church sources of angels apart from the Bible.

The different sources that might have contributed to the noticed differences include the self acclaimed revelations, extra-biblical literature like the Apocryphal books. For example, Tobit mentions angel Raphael as a healer (12:18-20). It is possible that the apocryphal books are common in the early period of the Church formation. Another source could be traced to the converts from the Roman Catholic Church who had hitherto been exposed to the concept of saints and angels veneration. They might have contributed to the church concept of angelology. That Michael mass is celebrated on September 29, same day as Holy Michael's

day in Cherubim and Seraphim Church corroborates the possibility of Roman Catholic influence. Islamic concept of angels might have contributed to the present state of the church concepts of angels through the Muslim converts. The possibility Islamic influence is strong when one notices the fact that Islam and Christian concept of angels are similar. Moreover, Cherubim and Seraphim Church call angels *Moleka*, an adulterated form of *Malaika*, the Arabic word for angel.

A Comparative Analysis of C & S Angelology and African Divinities

In addition to all these possible sources that might have influenced C & S Church angelology is African Religion. One might not be far from the truth by asserting that Yoruba world view of divinities as mediators between God and man has influenced greatly the church's angelology. This assertion is due to some observable African beliefs in the divinities that are parallel to the Church's beliefs and practices in relation to the angels. (Okelugbo, 2014) succinctly puts this observation this way:

The intermediary role of the divinities in African Religion has further enriched areas of interaction between Christianity and African Religion, especially in the Christian concept of the 'Communion of Saints' and the 'Ministering angels'. This is because the Supreme Being is intimately linked with both the divinities and human beings in African beliefs and thoughts just as He is linked with the angels and the saints in Christian thought. (p.101).

The cause of the similarity may be attributed to the early converts from African Religion. Though they were converted, yet their African world view remains unchanged. As the angels stand in the unique relationship with God, so are the divinities in the African Religion Theology. The divinities are the ministers of God and the intermediaries between God and man. They derived their existence from God. In Yoruba beliefs, the divinities are emanations from God. In C & S Church, angels are believed to have derived their existence from God.

The divinities in Yoruba beliefs are believed to be delegated with the

responsibilities of governing the universe. They are ministers, each with his own definite portfolio in Deity's monarchical government. *Osanyin* is the divinity in charge of health for he is said to control the portfolio of medicine. *Orunmila* is the one in charge of wisdom, *Esu* is the divine messenger and inspector general, *Ogun* is the divinity of iron and war, *Orisa Oko* is regarded as the patron divinity of Yoruba farmers. A close look at the functions of *Osanyin* and *Ogun* shows that their duties are similar to the duties of angels Raphael and Michael as perceived by the members of C & S Church.

In their world-view, the Yoruba believe that the world is populated by spiritual entities that may be either malevolent or benevolent, so the church belief in the innumerable angels and existence of demons which are the agents of Satan. Another area of similarity is that in Yoruba religion, spirits can be invoked. These spirits in return bring message from God to the people and also take the request of the people to God. This African world view of the spirits is parallel to the C & S Church view of the angels that are spirits. In C & S angels can be invoked. As the angels are conceived to be in charge of every conceivable phenomenon in the world, so it is in Yoruba beliefs. Some of the divinities are connected with natural objects like rivers, rocks, mountains, trees and so on.

In Yoruba belief, the divinities represent God in upholding the social and moral orders in the society. They punish those who disobey the norms of the society with sickness and misfortune. For example, Shango in Yoruba beliefs manifests the 'wrath' of God in dealing with the children of disobedience. This Yoruba world view of seen the divinities as guardians and policemen of public morality is in concordance with C & S Church view of the angels as guardians of public morality. The church believes that angels of God will depart from erring and unrepentant members.

A comparative analysis of C & S Church's perception of angels and African Religion understanding of divinities reveals that the church has truly expressed Christian faith in a way that is understandable to the Africans. The converted Africans could see the angels as better replacement of the gods and better intermediaries when compared to the gods who could not stand the power which the Christians are proclaiming. The

popularity of indigenous churches shows that the Africanness of their worship is effective to an extent.

But an objective analysis of this work reveals that it is as a result of contextualizing the gospel of Christ that the church concept of angels differs from that of the Bible. This difference consequently affects the position of Christ in Pauline Christology and the Church tradition as well as misconception of the person of Christ and God among the Africans.

‘The Christology of Paul’ in Colossians 1:15-20

The authorship of the book is anonymous but the Church fathers and most Scholars contend for Pauline authorship. This position is adopted in this work. Paul purposely wrote this epistle to correct the error that came up as a result of religious syncretism. The amalgam of some elements from the former religions of the Colossians with Christianity made them to be at the danger of returning to their former faiths from which they had been delivered. The theological implications of such integrated elements into Christianity were not taking into considerations. This heresy seems to affirm that God is inaccessible due to the belief that the Holy God cannot allow himself to be contaminated with the evil world. The only means of access is then through the various intermediaries like the angels. This Colossian view of God is in line with African belief in God as a transcendent Being. He can only be approached through the divinities. The harms inflicted by the heresy include the fact that it denies the sole mediatory role of Christ, his immanence as well as the preeminence of Christ over all creations including the angels. Paul therefore uses the letter to set forth a deeper and richer knowledge of the truth concerning Christ.

This passage is one of the best Christological passages in the Bible (Heyler, 1994). Johnson (1953) names it "The Great Christology". Scott, (2007) observes that this passage represents a loftier

conception of Christ's person than is found anywhere else in the writings of Paul. Pollard (1981), have suggested that Christ's supremacy, in this passage, should be understood as over the Torah, Adam, and Israel. Constable succinctly describes this hymn this way:

The Christ-hymn of Colossians 1:15-20 is a powerful statement about the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Christ's supremacy is seen at every turn. The first portion focuses on His preeminent role in creation, while the second emphasizes His work as Redeemer. To any Christian, in Colossae then or elsewhere today, who may have been or is confused about Christ's role in the world, these six verses testify to Christ's absolute authority, which is not to be shared with any person, angel, or demon. (p.24).

From these various comments of scholars on this passage, one can assert that it is one of the best passages in the Bible that clearly reveals the person and work of Christ. This Christological hymn fit to stand alongside the famous non-Pauline passages of John 1:1-14; Hebrews 1:2-4. The reason for using this hymn must be that Paul knows that the members are not willfully unfaithful. It is simply that they are young in faith, with their convictions as yet unformed and immature. Because of this, the speciousness of the visitors' arguments has not been detected. It had not occurred to the Colossians that to welcome this false teaching was to be disloyal to the old (Stott, 45). For proper understanding and application of the person and work of Christ, Paul describes Jesus Christ in three relationships that affirm His supremacy and sufficiency: to Deity, to creation, and to the church.

In relation to deity, Paul says: ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως: 'Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation' (Colossians 1:15). The word εἰκὼν 'image' in this sentence means the 'manifestation', 'embodiment', a 'representation'. Lightfoot (1953) opines also that the concept of "image" involves three things: likeness (Christ is the exact likeness of God, a mirror image [cf. Heb. 1:3]), representation (Christ represents God to us), and manifestation (Christ makes God known to us [cf. John 1:18]). Therefore, Paul saying that Jesus is the image of God means that Jesus is the very being, essence and the embodiment of God visibly.

Paul further affirms the pre-eminence of Christ through his perceived understanding of Christ's relationship with the creation. He

describes Christ as πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως 'the first born of all creation'. The view of the Arians and more recently the Jehovah Witnesses is that πρωτόκτιστος πάσης κτίσεως as it is used here means that Christ is a created being. This is a misinterpretation of Paul's message. Instead, 'firstborn' suggests supremacy. He has been before the creation; He created it and mediates between God and man not any angel or the divinities in African world view. Geisler sums it up this way:

Though it is grammatically possible to translate this as 'Firstborn *in* Creation,' the context makes this impossible for five reasons: (1) the whole point of the passage (and the book) is to show Christ's superiority *over* all things. (2) Other statements about Christ in this passage (such as Creator of all [1:16], upholder of Creation [v. 17], etc.) clearly indicate His priority and superiority over Creation. (3) The 'Firstborn' cannot be part of Creation if He created 'all things.' One cannot create himself. Jehovah's Witnesses wrongly add the word 'other' six times in this passage in their *New World Translation*. Thus they suggest that Christ created all other things after He was created! But the word 'other' is not in the Greek.) (4) The 'Firstborn' received worship of all angels (Heb. 1:6), but creatures should not be worshiped (Ex. 20:4-5).

(5) The Greek word for 'Firstborn' is *prototokos*. If Christ were the 'first created,' the Greek word would have been *protoktisis*. (p.672).

To Paul, Christ is the originator and sustainer of all things. This includes all life (Abogunrin, 1987). The supremacy of Christ is also revealed through the work of the cross. καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι' αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς 'and through Him to reconcile all things to Him(self) whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross (Col 1:20). The purpose of His preeminent in the new creation is the son's work of reconciliation.

From Paul's explanations of the person and work of Christ, one can deduce Paul's

insistence on the fact that Christ is divine because He is God and in His deity He existed before all things. He is the perfect revelation of God. He is supreme in terms of position and authority. His divinity is seen in the fact that the wholeness of the essence of God was pleased to dwell in him bodily. He conquered death by His resurrection and so became exalted over the Church and over all. Therefore, in this

Christological hymn, Paul presents the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. He can never be seen as a creature or a being less than God. He is of the same essence, nature, and majesty of God.

Pauline Christology and its Implication on C & S Church Angelology

From Paul's perception of the person of Christ, He is supreme over the creation and sufficient for man's salvation. In relation to God, He is the image of God. In him, the fullness of essential deity dwells in bodily manifestation. The implication of this is that God is now immanent contrary to the African belief that God is transcendent. Moreover, the intermediary functions of the angels and the divinities come to an end. He is the originator and sustainer of all things.

In relation to the Church, He is the head of the Church and not the angels. It worth saying here that if Cherubim and Seraphim church as she professes accepts Christ as the supreme Lord of all and that is upon him that all other heavenly power depend, then Christ will not require assistance from any dependent authorities or angels in order to bring them to God and at the same time bring God to them. Through His work of reconciliation, He restores man to his through place in creation and to true fellowship with Himself. The act of reconciling the world to God was achieved by making peace through αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ 'blood of His Cross'. This could not have been done by any of the emanations, African divinities, nor by any of the angels known to the members of Cherubim and Seraphim Church. Only Christ in His divine-human nature could bring reconciliation between the world and God.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The impact of Cherubim and Seraphim in evangelising Africa through

contextualization of the gospel is an affirmation of Harry (1978) opinion that the independent African Churches have pointed the way to adaptations of Christian worship to suit the African world view. Africanness of the Church has helped Africa to discover her seemingly lost identity. C & S Church has effectively served as the bridge between the traditional religion, culture and the Christian faith. The rates at which people are trooping into the church is a living evidence. One can expect the Church to continue and that the mission churches to follow suit.

In the process of Africanising Christianity, there is need for conscious incorporation of African elements into Christian beliefs and practices. Failure to do this would lead to maintenance of the traditional religion norms instead of the word of God. C&S Church need to follow in details Paul's Christology. He made the people of Ephesus to understand the superiority of the name of Jesus and the incompatibility of magical arts and the power of Christ. (Ezenweke, 2013) is of the opinion that this led the Ephesians to bring their magical books and burnt them before everyone (Acts. 19:14- 16).

It was in the name of Jesus *Li oruko Jesu* that the early Church leaders healed the sick and delivered the oppressed. Traditional gods proved no match against the might of the name of Christ on which Orimolade highly depends. It is not surprising then that many herbalists, priests, priestesses and other traditional worshippers of their time lost their faith in the gods and magic and consequently embraced Christianity. They planted African Christianity in the name of Christ and not angels.

C & S prophets have helped in redefining Christology in Africa. The Christ of Pentecost was in stark contrast to the Christ preached by the early missionaries. This Christ of Pentecost healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead and gave food to the poor and the needy. This is a relevant theology in African context.

Despite the positive contributions of Cherubim and Seraphim Church to evangelization of Africa, a reflection on Pauline Christology shows that C & S Church angelology is a threat to the proper perception of Christ in Africa and for effective evangelization of Africa.

Misconception of the person of Christ is dangerous for the Church for it is upon the understanding of the person of Christ and His work of salvation that the foundation of the Church is laid.

Misconception of Christ would also make preaching Christ in Africa difficult. For example, adherents of Yoruba Indigenous Religion may interpret Christ as another *Ela* based on the similarity between the two. In Yoruba Indigenous Religion belief, Just as Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:30), so *Ela* is the wisdom of *Olodumare* (Idowu, B. 1962). Like Christians belief, Yoruba belief that *Ela's* second coming will usher in an era of real prosperity and blessing. As the name of Jesus means

savior, so Idowu points out that *Ela* means 'safety'. With these similarities, one would not be surprised to see Idowu feels comfortable to equate Christ with *Ela* (Idowu, B. 1982).

Despite this striking similarity, Abogunrin, (1988) quickly point out the danger of misconception of Christ here as *Ela*. *Ela* was not an incarnation of God, his death was not substitutionary, and instead he still receives blood sacrifice and in addition he was not born by a woman like Jesus. Another danger of misconception of Christ is possibility of misconception of His salvific work. The idea of salvation which is the central message in Christianity is equally in one way or the other present in virtually other world religions. *Ayelala*, *Oluorogbo*, *Eleguru*, and *Moremi* are examples of savior-gods and goddesses in Yoruba Religion. While all these gods were mere sons and daughters of men, Christ is the 'saviour-God's Son. Moreover, Unlike Christ, all the African gods and goddesses could not provide salvation from sin, its power, guilt and consequences. It is hereby recommended that prophets and clergies of the Church need theological training. Reflecting on this need, Omoyajowo (1982) has this to say:

The Cherubim and Seraphim Organisation has been frustratingly defective in literary productivity. Because of this great handicap, and because of the apparent absence of any systematic theology within the Aladura Churches, it has been not been easy to compose the theology of the organization. (p.132)

From Omoyajowo observation, one can easily deduce that there is need for the Church to give sound theological education to the Church's prophets and leaders. Falaye (2010) rightly asserts that theological education will not only broaden the worldview of the Church leaders but also provide basic education in Christian Theology. In addition, it will help the younger ones to adopt the evangelical theological position and also help the church from losing some of her members to churches like The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Living Faith, and Deeper Life Bible Church. Christ is superior to the angels, He is their head, and therefore, angels are not to be worshipped. For effective propagation of the gospel in Africa, the church must ensure that the gospel is assimilated into each culture and context without compromising the heart of the message, or by diluting the authority of the Scripture and the core truths of Christianity among which the sole mediatory role of Christ is fundamental.

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